



Clinton County Historical Society

Museum & Archives



Volume 2 Issue 7

September 2025

CCHS Fall Meeting

Ron Matson

We lost an important part of the CCHS family with the passing of Ron Matson on July 29, 2025.

Ron was born on February 5, 1938, to Ernest and Elizabeth (VandeWege) Matson in Zeeland, Michigan. Shortly afterward his family moved to St. Johns where his father was employed by a dairy farm and later to Ovid after his father took a job of making cottage cheese with the Detroit Creamery Company.

Upon graduating from Ovid High School, Ron joined the U. S. Air Force and spent three years in France as a radar technician. After leaving the military he married Maxine Hale and together during their 65 years of marriage they raised four children.

Ron was employed for 35 years as an over-the-road truck driver.

Ron was a long-time volunteer at the Clinton County Historical Museum where he served as museum historian. As historian he organized thousands of photographs and documents. He wrote *The Old Machine Shop and the Ashery that Preceded it* and *Pouring Iron in St. Johns*, and *A History of St. Johns, Michigan, Foundries*.

Ron was instrumental in the erection of the Rushers Marker at Shepardsville commemorating the first professional football game.

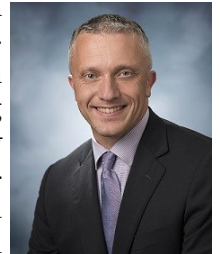
Along with his many hours spent assisting at the museum, Ron was also a member of the Clinton County Historical Society Executive Board for many years.

Ron's constant smile and years of service to the CCHS will be greatly missed.

Obituary with life video can be [viewed here](#).



The fall CCHS meeting held on Thursday, September 18th will feature Kris Rzepczynski, archivist with the Archives of Michigan, presenting *Wills, Thrills, and Chills: Digging into Probate Records*. Kris is a well-respected speaker who has presented at numerous Michigan and National conferences. His presentation will include specific information on Clinton County probate records.



The meeting will begin at 6:30pm at the Bingham Township Hall, 2057 N. Lansing St., St. Johns.

The event is free for Museum and CCHS members and \$5 for non-members. Light refreshments will be provided. For more information see the attached flyer.

Fall Cemetery Walks

Alice and Peter Murphy will be presenting a Mt. Rest Cemetery guided tour on Sunday, September 21 at 2pm with the mausoleum open prior to the walk at 1:30. This is a free event, however, donations are accepted.

Wayne Summers will be presenting the ABC's of the DeWitt Cemetery in conjunction with the DeWitt District Library on September 10th. [Sign-up is available here](#). Join waitlist if full.

Johanna Balzar will be conducting a walk of the Gunnisonville Cemetery on September 18th at 10am. [Sign-up is available here](#).

Upcoming Events

September 7 to October 15 — Westphalia Farm Exhibit
September 10 — DeWitt Cemetery Walks @ 10am & 6:30pm
September 13 — *Preserve Our History* at DeWitt Dist. Library
September 18 — Gunnisonville Cemetery Walk @ 10am
September 18 — Fall CCHS meeting at Bingham Twp. Hall.
September 21 — Mount Rest Cemetery Walk @ 2pm
September 21 — Westphalia Cemetery Walk @ 2pm

Meet the Volunteers

Glenn Ernst

I was born in Ionia Michigan in 1955. My mother was born and raised in South Ionia, and my father was born and raised in St. Johns. We lived in Lansing Michigan for 10 years as my father worked at Oldsmobile in Lansing. I attended Pleasant Grove school in Lansing for Kindergarten through 3rd grade, then Reo Road elementary for 4th through 6th grade. In 1967 we moved to a 34 acre hobby farm on East Alward Road, Victor township. I then attended Central School in St. Johns for 7th and 8th grade, RBW for 9th grade, then the "new" St. Johns High School for 10th through 12th grade. My Great grandparents, grandparents, father, and myself all attended Central School in St. Johns. After high school I spent 5 years at Michigan Tech studying Mechanical Engineering.



I met my lovely wife Karen while riding the bus to school in my senior year. Her family had moved to Williams Road from East Lansing the summer before her Junior year, and we associated with each other for various activities with family and friends over the next several years. We were married in Lansing Michigan in November 1978. We have two wonderful daughters, Laura (Matt Zelenka), and Sarah (Pat Oddan).

My interest in genealogy and antiques has come from several sources. One, from attending family reunions, which I did not fully appreciate at the time, two, from attending farm and estate auctions and sales over the years, and three from researching family history with my wife at various libraries in the early days before "ancestry.com".

My wife and I first attended a CCHS meeting on March 4, 2019, at the encouragement of then president Lynn Gregory. We attended several more meetings before the onset of COVID-19 sent everything into lockdown.

Eventually we were able to start to meet again in person and I was elected as a trustee on the board from Nov 8, 2021 until July 30, 2024. I participated in most of the events for the 50th anniversary celebration in 2024 and also gathered and assembled items for the time capsule that resides in the display case on the first floor of the Clinton County Courthouse in St. Johns. The time capsule is to be opened at the 100th anniversary of the CCHS in 2074. I have also enjoyed working on the oral history committee, doing some indexing for the archives, attending the cemetery walking tours, and keeping in touch with all of the wonderful people that are part of the Clinton County Historical Society.

Preserve Our History Event

The DeWitt District Library invites community members with ties to DeWitt to attend this special event on September 13th from 10am-2pm at the Woodruff Annex behind the DeWitt District Library. Enjoy a variety of activities centered around community history, including opportunities to share your own DeWitt memories. If you have items at home such as family photographs or documents that offer insight into DeWitt area history, we encourage you to bring them to the event! Items will be scanned and the digital copies added to the library's local history collection (and a copy saved for your personal collection if you're interested). We are looking for unique items that relate to DeWitt area people, places, and events - past or present.

New CCHS Board Members

At its August meeting, the CCHS Executive Board voted unanimously to elect Mary Donald to fill the trustee position vacated by Judy Hubler and Jim Parr to a new Board position.

Both have a strong interest in Clinton County history and are great additions to the Board. Also, Jim has taken on the additional role of museum historian from Ron Matson.

Westphalia Summer Exhibit

The Westphalia Historical Society is presenting their summer exhibit: "Our Farming Heritage: Crops and Tools" on the following dates at 120 W. Main St.:

Sunday, September 7 from 1-4pm

Wednesday, September 17 from 5-8pm

Sunday, October 5 from 1-4pm

Wednesday, October 15 from 5-8 pm

There will be examples of milking parlor equipment, farming photos, old farming journals and magazines, tractor parts, and more. An 80 page photo album of last year's exhibit will be available for those who may have missed it.

CCHS Annual Meeting

The CCHS Annual meeting and lunch will be held on December 10th at the DeWitt (Valley Farms) Community Center with a special RBW High School panel discussion.

Save the date. Additional details will be announced in a future newsletter.



MONTHLY REPORT OF ACQUISITIONS & RESEARCH

July 2025 Acquisitions

Meeting: Aug. 13, 2025

We had 13 visitors in July. Work continues as usual. The use of the big work space came in handy last week when we had 4 visitors at the same time. The day flew by.

ACQUISITIONS JULY 2025

ABSTRACTS:

- 610 Wight St, Block 86 Lot 7; St. Johns

CHURCHES:

- 1991 The United Church of Ovid Directory
- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns: A beige ledger book that contains a list of all church members from 1860 through 1951. [CH 282J]
- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; A tan and burgundy ledger book that contains meeting minutes from the church Sewing Society from the 1890's [CH 282K]
- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; A thin, light gray ledger book that has "Record" on the cover, that contains lists of the names of church officers and committee members, from the early 20th century. [CH 282L]
- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; one small multi-colored ledger book containing trustee meeting minutes from 1862 through 1885. [CH 282M]
- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; one small multi-colored ledger book containing minutes from the Missionary Society meetings from 1880 through 1892. [CH 282N]
- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; one tall reddish-brown ledger book containing minutes from both the trustee meetings and the congregational society meetings from 1885 through 1893. [CH 282P]
- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; one small black and burgundy ledger book containing trustee meeting minutes for 1894 through 1924. [CH 282Q]

-- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; One small black binder that reads "Board Meetings" on the cover, that contains trustee meeting minutes for 1945 through 1955 [CH 282R]

-- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; one full sized white 3-ring binder containing trustee meeting minutes from 1997 through 2001. [CH 282S]

DIRECTORIES:

-- St. Johns Rural Directory 1925 - 1926

GOVERNMENT:

-- Calendar of the Circuit Court, Clinton County, September Term, 1924

PHOTOS:

- Saw Mill on Ed Emmons farm (3304 W. Taft Rd.)
- Old Fowler School
- Floating dredge on Stoney Creek, 1905 or 1906; taken on Ed Emmons farm on W. Taft Rd. (W 1/2 of the SE 1/4 of Section 30, Bingham Twp.)
- "The Little Old School" Fowler
- Alfred & Clarence Stackman
- Bob, Charles, Keith, Julia Wilson; Spring 1953
- Ed Wilson, Grandpa Binger, Will, Charles, Leah, Julia, Ralph, Virginia, Betty
- Julia Wilson & Cliff
- Myrtie Lake or Myrtie TenEyck
- Bobbie Wilson 1940
- Leah Wilson and Bob Morrill
- Leah Wilson & Eddie

- Grandpa & Grandma Brace
- Murriel & Julia Wilson July 14, 1918
- Julia, Thurza, Thelma, Leah, Waldo, and Bob Wilson
- Edward Wm Wilson, 11 mo
- James Wilson
- Jim & Leah Wilson
- George, Ralph, Leah, and James Wilson
- Grandma Wilson & Uncle Charley
- George Patrick
- Ralph Wilson
- Ralph Wilson, 1969
- Jim Wilson and mother
- Leah & Bob Wilson 1940
- Ed Wilson
- Esther Wilson with wedding cake 1944

- Frank & Ella Patrick; 1932
- Frank & Ella Patrick
- Dad & Uncle Charley Wilson
- Flood in Ovid 1940
- James Wilson 1924
- Julia, Jim, Leah, Ralph Wilson
- Ralph Wilson

SCHOOLS:

- 1977 St. Johns High School Yearbook Over Under Back Again
- 1941 St. Johns Schools Video; Superintendent Beemer [S 565]

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Peters



**IN MEMORY OF
RON MATSON
1938 – 2025**

Rest in peace my friend.

Clinton County Historical Society

Museum & Archives

Wills, Thrills, and Chills: Digging into Probate Records

SEPTEMBER 18

Doors open at 6pm with program at 6:30
Bingham Township Hall
2057 N. Lansing St., St. Johns

Presented by Kris Rzepczynski

A Senior Archivist at the Archives of Michigan, where he specializes in family history and Michigan research, Kris has worked in the genealogical community for more than 20 years. He holds a Master of Library and Information Science from Wayne State University and a Master of Arts in History from Western Michigan University.



Kris has presented at national, state, and local conferences, including the Federation of Genealogical Societies, National Genealogical Society, Historical Society of Michigan, and for dozens of local genealogical societies and public libraries.

Free for CCHS/CCHS Museum Members
\$5 for Non-members
Light refreshments provided.



PRESERVING DEWITT HISTORY

Saturday, September 13
10 am - 2 pm

DeWitt District Library Annex
13105 Schavey Rd.

EVENT DETAILS:

Bring in photos or documents to be scanned for historical preservation

Enjoy exhibits and activities related to area history

Record a short oral history of a DeWitt memory



517-669-3156 | dewittlibrary.org

Scan for more info