

"The Clinton Independent"



1985

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

memories



FLORENCE WHITE GAY

(EDITOR'S NOTE) The following information was supplied by CCHS member Helen Barrera of Alma. Barrera is a daughter of Florence & R.V. Gay).

Florence White Gay died last May in St. Louis, Mi. She was 88 years old. She was born in Owosso, the daughter of John and Anna (Becker) White and later moved to Clare and then Toledo. She purchased land rights for the Pennsylvania Railroad and studied voice in Toledo; then entered Ohio State University to study civil engineering,

following in the footsteps of her father, John White, chief engineer of surveys and superintendent of construction of the Ann Arbor Railroad, 1883-1893.

She married R. V. Gay of St. Johns in 1923 and they opened architectural offices there. They designed schools, hospitals, and other structures that dot the map of Michigan, including 5 in St. Johns: St. Joseph School, 1924; Clinton Memorial Hospital, (and nurses home), 1926-39; First Methodist Episcopal Church, 1937; Perrin-Palmer School, 1939; and the Municipal Building/Bement Library, 1939.

Gay was born in St. Johns & in 1921 was one of a group of young architects from the U. S. chosen to travel in Europe to study reconstruction of the Reims Cathedral in France.

In 1942 he was appointed



Michigan's planning commissioner, an office he held when he died in 1943.

Gay's maternal grandfather, Cornelius G. Barnes, was one of the builders of the Clinton County Courthouse and the John Hicks residence.

His paternal grandfather, Richard E. Gay, came to St. Johns in 1854 and was known as "the Pioneer Shoemaker," as he made the 1st pair of shoes there.

By the way...

WANTED: Wilma would like people donating items for the Nov. 8-9 genealogy rummage sale to bring it to the Archives, 4700 Brook Rd., (DeWitt Township Hall) as soon as possible.

THANKS: To Janet Snyder for her program on the Revolutionary War in October.

To Linda and Tom Sutton for arranging the Weatherbee basket program last month.

NEEDED: Cedar trees the week of Nov. 17 for decorating Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum for Christmas. Trip to the swamp to gather trim and greens is Nov. 23.

Anyone with a tree or greens to donate should call before then: 224-2894 or 224-7402. Also call if you wish to join in the swamp trip.

PAINTED: Paul Roof & John Rumbaugh assisted by the JC's (Mike Maillette, chairman) painted the trim on PGS. Thanks to them & to Betty & Jim Moore who loaned a heat gun with which 125 years of paint was removed from the PGS front entry.

THANKS: To the congregation of the Lowe Church for hosting our August meeting.

BY-LAWS: Ford Ceasar is chairman of a committee to revise our by-laws. Others are Betty Moore, Dorothy Cressman and John Caudy.

ACQUISITION COMMITTEE: Alta Catherine Reed, Arlynn Gantz, Janet Snyder, Ford Ceasar and Charles Coletta will serve as our Acquisition Committee.

THANKS: To Bath School officials for hosting a recent meeting.

Principal Hixon said items in the museum include composite pictures of graduating classes & other memorabilia dating to the first one room school built there at a cost of \$75.

Information about the class of 1902 is missing. If anyone has info contact Hixon at the Bath School District.

Other information Bath residents shared included: The statute of the little girl & her cat was purchased with pennies donated by children

from around the world after the Bath School Disaster. When rebuilt it was named the James Cousins Agricultural School in honor of Cousins who made a substantial gift. The district also has a short film, made from pictures, about the disaster.

A Memorial Park now occupies the ground where the old school stood.

PGS GIFTS: Catherine Rumbaugh reports recent gifts to PGS Museum include: An 1882 dry sink & pine table from Max and Harriet Field. Carl Weiber gave a Velosipede jig-saw. Bud Sage gave a picture of the employees of the Hayes Wheel Co.; Alvin & Joyce George & the Rumbaughs gave medical equipment; Mildred Robson gave a woven coverlet; Joan Wiegel, a shawl; Mrs. Oliver Darling, a wedding sheet; Lillian LaRue, a 25th anniversary plate of Central School, 1910; Olive Watt gave the personal collection of 75 years of Boy Scout items of her late husband, Dr. Wally Watt; the Parish Family of the Episcopal Church gave Frace Estate memorabilia.

SLIDE SHOW AVAILABLE: Alta Reed reports that Caroline Lewis has lithographs of old Clinton County residences; and slides of how those look today and is available for programs.

PICS FROM GLASS NEGATIVES: Gary Larsen, a St. Johns High School teacher can make pictures from glass negatives.

THANKS: To the Clinton County News for negatives given CCHS recently.

MARKERS: Your CCHS board of directors has approved purchasing a historic marker for PGS Museum. Cost is estimated at \$1,500. Contributors will receive certificates. Send donations to PGS MARKER FUND, c/o CCHS, Box 174, St. Johns, Mi. 48879.

Also planned is a marker for the grave of Clem Sohn, an early Clinton County flyer,

who is buried in the Holy Trinity Church Cemetery in Fowler. Send contributions to Sohn Marker, CCHS, Box 174, St. Johns, Mich. 48879.

Alta Catherine Reed reports that the DeWitt Memorial Board will place a stone with bronze plaque on it in front of the DeWitt Memorial Building listing all veterans of the DeWitt area who fought in the last 4 wars.

BATH SCHOOL PROJECT: Jeanne Temple and Arlynn Gantz represented the CCHS at a recent meeting with Bath residents who plan to move the old one-room #9 Watson/Ballentine, Bath & Victor Fractional School to the south side yard of the present elementary school. It would be then used for community functions. Temple shared her knowledge from a project now going on which involves turning the old Rochester Colony School into a community center.

MAPLE RAPIDS SCHOOL PROJECT: The Village of Maple Rapids recently acquired the old Maple Rapids Elementary School from the Fulton School District for \$1. At a workbee residents reroofed the gym which will be converted to community use. The rest of the building will be renovated later. Anyone wishing to donate money to help cover cost of renovation can contact any village official or Rev. James Longhurst at the Maple Rapids Congregational Church.

FIRST SURVEY: Alta Catherine Reed reports that DeWitt Charter Township now has a copy of the first township survey made by

NEEDED: Tables, chairs and showcases for the Archives.

OVER 200 GOAL: We have exceeded our goal for 200 members. Pres. Coletta reports we have 210 paid-members. Lets try for 300 in 1986.

Florence Gay (continued from page 1)

Prior to her death, in an interview with an Alma reporter, Florence Gay said she didn't pay much attention to her minority status as an engineer; she just followed family tradition. Her father had come to the U. S. in 1882 as a project engineer for the same railroad company she later joined. (One of her sons is an engineer; and a grandson is studying engineering.)

Barrera said her mother was the first female drafting student at Clare High School. A skilled rider, the family has a picture of Mrs. Gay straddling her horse. Barrera said she slit a skirt up

the middle and sewed the two parts together, forming pant legs, much to the dismay of Clare townfolk.

Once, arriving to purchase land she lunched next to a group of men talking about "this fellow" F.M. White who was coming to buy land. They didn't realize F.M. was a lady - sitting next to them.

After her husband's death she worked as a bridge design engineer for Michigan and designed the first three-level interchange in the U. S. - the Willow Run Interchange near Detroit.

In the 1960's she served as housemother for Delta Delta Delta fraternity at MSU, comprised of engineering students.



**A TIME
FOR REJOICING**

Mark your calendar

CCHS. MONTHLY MEETING

Nov. 21 7:30 p.m. at Capitol
Fed. Savings/Loan in
St. Johns. Jeanne
Temple will talk on
restoration work now
going on at the
Rochester Colony
School

GENEALOGY

Nov. 4 Meeting at Capitol
Savings & Loan, St.
Johns, 7:30 p. m.
Arlynn Gantz will
talk on finding your
roots in Ohio.

Nov. 8-9 Rummage Sale, Nov. 8
from 6-9 p.m.; & Nov.
9 from 10 a.m. - 4
p.m. at the Archives
at DeWitt Township
Hall, 4700 Brook Rd.

ARCHIVES: DeWitt Township
Hall, 4700 Brook Rd
Mon-Wed: 8 a.m. to
3 p.m.

PAINÉ-GILLAM-SCOTT MUSEUM

Open: Wednesdays, 2-8 p.m.
Sundays, 1-5 p.m.

Victorian Christmas Hours:
Dec. 1 through Jan. 2....
Sundays, 1-5 p.m.
Wednesdays, 2-8 p.m.
with candlelight.

Dec. 7 Special Tour, 1-9
p.m.; donation;
Group Special groups by
Tours... reservation on
other days. Call
224-2894 or 224-
7402.

Dec. 16 2nd annual "Arts of
Christmas" in even-
ing in sponsorship
with Clinton County
Art Council & Senior
Citizens.

Dec. 19 CCHS Christmas
Party and cookie
exchange at the
museum, 7:30 p.m.
Guest Speaker, Susan
K. Collins of Mar-
shall, new presi-
dent of the Mich.
Historical Society;
& her husband, John
a past MHS presi-
dent. Both have
been active in the
Marshall Home Tour.

Clinton County Historical Society

P. O. Box 174

Saint Johns, Michigan 48879

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AMSPACE
DAY
NOVEMBER