

Clinton County Historical Society
Genealogists of the

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Clinton County Trails

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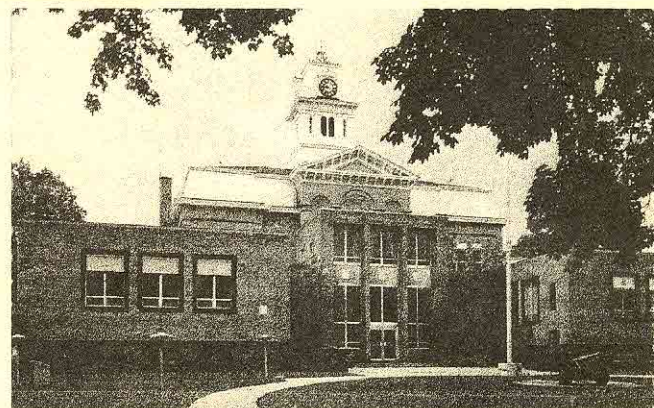
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A FOND FAREWELL



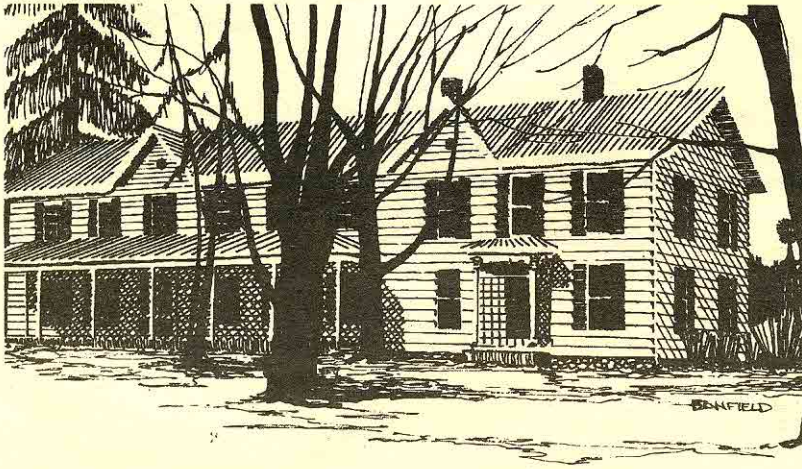
Clinton County Court House 1886



Clinton County Court House, 1998

Take a good look at her, for she will soon be only
a memory☺

FRENCH'S CORNERS



This farm house was built in 1856 and was originally called Coleman's Tavern and used as a stagecoach inn.

Colonel David French bought it in 1879, closed the tavern, expanded the house and renamed it the "Park House" advertising it as a summer resort. It has changed hands many times since. The Walsworth owned it the late 1920's.

FARM MEMORIES

Elizabeth A. (Brunson) Kutsche

Mrs. Kutsche was born in St. Johns 12 May 1924, the daughter of Laurence William and Olive Anna (Beach) Brunson. She now lives in Richland, MI. She worked at the Veteran's Adm. Medical Center in Battle Creek for nearly 20 years before her retirement. Her article first appeared in the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, 28 June 1997. She writes of her Aunt Mary Walsworth's farm at the corner of French Road and US-27 in Greenbush Twp. which is commonly called "French's Corners."

In the late 1920's and into the 30's I spent a lot of time at my Aunt Mary's farm just north of St. Johns. Many years ago it was a stagecoach stop, and even had a ballroom on the third floor. I can still remember walking about, aware of the musty smell, the tattered-but-fancy wallpaper, and even a tiny stage. At harvest time 10 or 12 threshers would be hired. I remember struggling down the back steps and across the yard to plank "tables" under the trees, with giant pans holding huge roasts, piles of mashed potatoes, vegetables, freshly made bread, pies, cakes, cookies, and buckets of

coffee and lemonade. Stuffed with food from their noon dinner, the men would flop down under the trees for "forty winks," and then return to the fields.

The barns were huge and smelled of sweet hay, and I enjoyed swinging from ropes attached to beams high above.

If I was especially good, I would be allowed to ride one of the huge plow horses when they were led to the woods to fell trees. It seemed so far off the ground, I held tight to the mane, my little legs sticking straight out over its fat sides.

Almost every spring there would be a lamb to feed, warm and wiggly and fun for a city kid. The tenant farmer's family provided playmates, and he built a playhouse for us. Lambs, cats, dogs, and piglets were our "children." the only pet names I remember were Aunt Mary's mallard ducks, "Mr. and Mrs. Hassenpfeffer."

When my brother was little, my mother let us spend time together on the farm, but he was less than well behaved! He discovered the shallow pans of milk cooling in a low cupboard, waiting for the cream to rise.

Quick as a wink, his grubby little hands were swishing 'round and 'round. Stopped from that he grabbed the ash drawer in the wood stove and yanked it upside down onto the linoleum. While that was being rescued, he ran over to the kitchen table. Over went the ink bottle! My mother declared to her sister, "You just didn't keep him busy enough!" Not a well-received idea, for sure.

To this day when I smell the fragrance of tomato leaves, I am transported back to Aunt Mary's great kitchen, off which was my bedroom. Lying there on a hot, still summer afternoon, admonished to take my nap, I would hear the music of the sink faucet, "drip, drip, drip." So peaceful, so soothing for a tired child.

One night the big tabby cat, my favorite, had her kittens on the foot of my bed. Such excitement, all the rustlings and squealing.

I had been warned if this should happen, to lie very still so as not to disturb her.

My aunt had a problem one cold, wet spring. Lambs began arriving, and it was too cold for them in the barn. So she spread tar

paper and straw on the floor of the den where they stayed until they could brave the weather. One day when she came home from errands they had gotten out and were jumping over sunbeams from the windows in the living room!

Mice are not welcome on a farm, but there was a tiny field mouse that used to come out of the woodwork whenever music was on the radio, seeming to move with it, and scooting to its hole when it stopped.

One of our chores on the farm was to help move rocks to build stone walls, and over time two outdoor fireplaces. Enraged at a neighbor who was going to plow over a pioneer cemetery [French Road Cemetery], Aunt Mary hitched the horses to the stone boat and gathered up the few headstones that were left. They found a new resting spot in her fireplaces and stone walls.

My Aunt Mary was quite a gal and definitely made a difference in her world. Children today really miss out on the simple pleasures of childhood and its slower, healthier pace. ☺

HISTORIC DEDICATION OF MARKER FOR MUSEUM

Mark Wednesday, July 29, on your calendar.

Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum staff, directors and volunteers have shifted into high gear preparing for the 7 p.m. July 20 sign dedication in front of the museum across from the courthouse in St. Johns.

This is your personal invitation from everyone at the Museum, and from your president. Please come and bring your family and friends. A gala evening is planned.

Better yet, if you want to help call Catherine Rumbaugh at 224-7402 (home). There are all kinds of projects and committees to prepare for this event and everyone's help is welcome.

Included will be the formal unveiling of the sign, which was a gift to the Museum from the St. Johns Rotary Club. The sign is an official Michigan Historical Commission marker and will add prestige and draw visitors to our Museum.

Following the dedication, refreshments will be served and guided tours of the Museum will be given.

Hope to see you there

Betty Jane Minsky,

Historical Society president. ☺

