Clinton County Trails

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 2 1987 Looking For Your Roots? Visit us!

A publication of the Genealogists of the Clinton County Historical Society

1987-88 OFFICERS

Officers elected for the 1987-1988 year for the Clinton County Historical Society are:
Randy Phelps, president.
Alta. C. Reed, vice president.
Dorothy Cressman, secretary.
Janet Tiedt, treasurer.
Janet Snyder, Corresponding sec.
Lucille Ernst, director.
Charles Coletta, director.

Officers elected for the 1987-1988 year for the Genealogists are:
Barbara Van Velsor, chair-person.
Dorothy Cressman, vice chair-person
Maralyse Brooks, secretary.
Janet Tiedt, treasurer.
Janet Snyder, corresponding sec.
Librarians, Wilma Sowle, Myrna Van Epps and Lois Fohl.

New committees will be formed for carrying out the various responsibilities.

CORRECTIONS

A correction in " Clinton County Trails" Volume 2, Number 1, page 9, the location of Simmons School should be Section 25, Riley Township on N. Chadwick Road.

Also on page 3 of the same publication, the names of Hewitt Simeon and Terry Lewis should read Simeon Hewitt and Lewis Terry.

NEW MATERIAL

Recent additions to the Archives include 10 volumes of "American Ancestry". The family histories of Hunt-Larkin, Cressman, Geller, Van Velsor and Paine have also been given to us. Another interesting book is the Michigan Centennial Farms Book.

DEWITT TOWNSHIP MINUTES
May 10, 1860

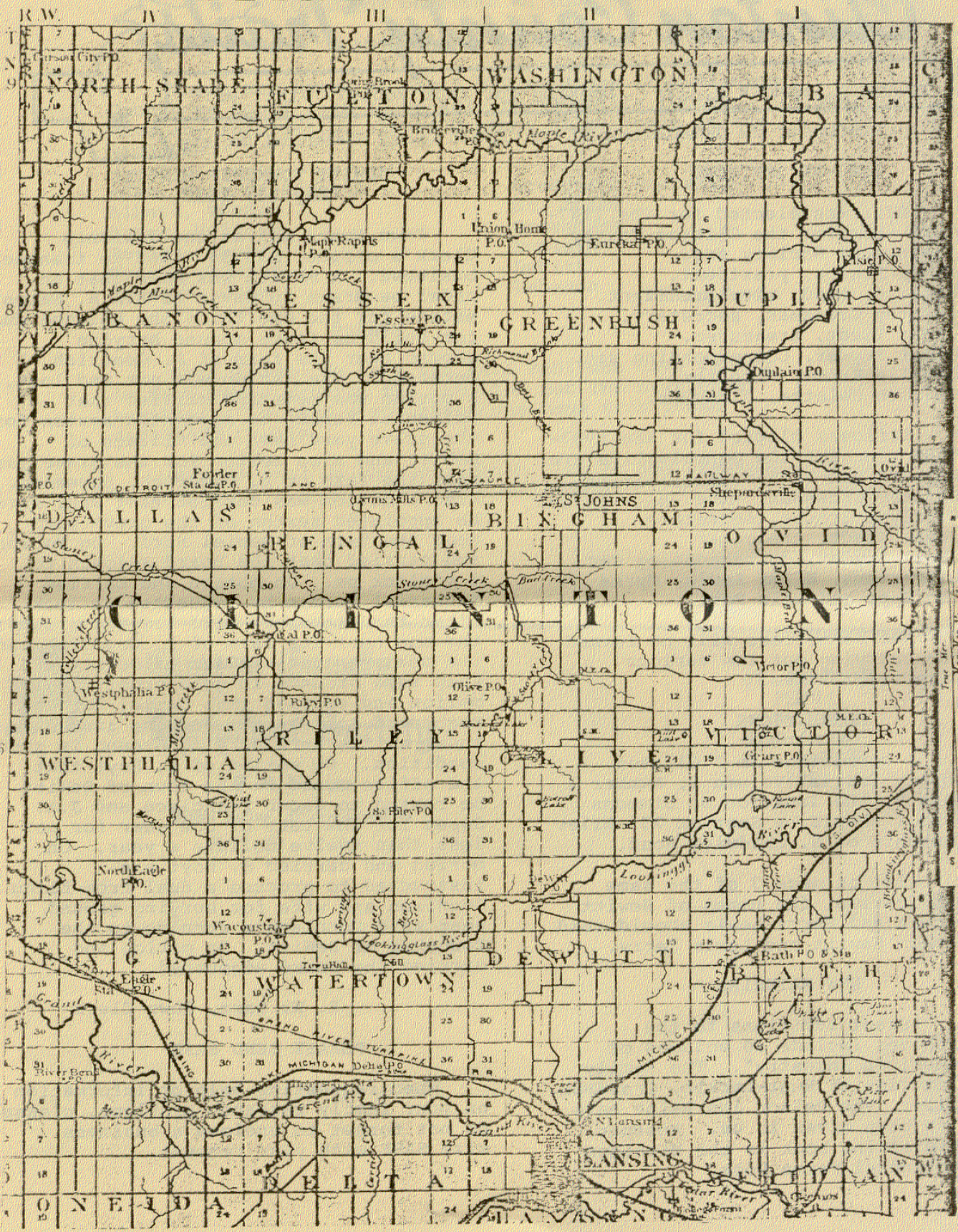
Town Board met at the Township Clerk's office, May 10. 1860 to transact business. A motion was made that an order be drawn in favor of S.A.H. Eaton estate for the one third the balance due for building fence around burying ground near the farm of A. Goodrich, deceased. The motion was put and lost. A motion was made and carried that Nathaniel Forman be appointed sexton for the grave yard near the village of DeWitt and also sexton for the grave yard near the farm of A. Goodrich, deceased. Also a motion was carried that Paul Hurd be appointed sexton of the grave yard near the farm of Daniel Hurd. On motion and carried that the Board adjourn to 1 o'clock pm. On motion and carried Nathaniel Forman be requested to look after the stakes of said burying ground, the one near the farm of A. Goodrich and the one near the village of DeWitt and keep said grounds in good order. On motion and carried that Daniel Hurd be requested to keep the burying ground known as the Hurd Burying Ground in good condition. On motion of S. Hoyt that the office owned by the town of DeWitt be rented to Jacob Francisco and J.A. Sweet for the term of one year for not less than twelve dollars a year. On motion and carried S. Hoyt was instructed to procure a deal from Elihu Gunnison and wife for burying ground near said Gunnison's running to the Township of DeWitt. On motion and carried the Board adjourned.

E. W. Dart, Town Clerk

PLEASE SEND SASE

When requesting help or information on your family research problems, please do not forget to enclose a business size SASE with your request.

CLINTON COUNTY, MICH.



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From the 1873 Atlas of The State of Michigan
by H. F. Walling, C. E.

TOWNSHIP AND COUNTY ORGANIZATION

GOVERNMENTAL UNIT	DATE ORGANIZED
CLINTON COUNTY	March 12, 1839
DeWitt Township	March 23, 1836
Watertown Township	March 20, 1837
Lebanon Township (1)	March 6, 1838
Bingham Township	March 21, 1839
Westphalia Township	March 21, 1839
Bengal Township	March 19, 1840
Duplain Township (2)	March 19, 1840
Ovid Township	March 19, 1840
Eagle Township	March 15, 1841
Riley Township	March 15, 1841
Olive Township	March 20, 1841
Greenbush Township	Feb 16, 1842
Bath Township (3)	March 9, 1843
Essex Township	March 9, 1843
Victor Township	March 9, 1843
Dallas Township	March 19, 1845

(1) Originally called Wandaugon
(2) Originally called Sena
(3) Originally called Ossowa and organized March 22, 1839.

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CLINTON COUNTY

Clinton County, as well as many other counties in the lower peninsula was originally part of Wayne County which was laid out in 1796, by Winthrop Sargent, Acting Governor of the old Northwest Territory. Subsequent proclamations by Governor Cass placed it in Oakland and Kalamazoo Counties. In 1836, the entire area of the county was embraced in a single township - DeWitt. On March 12, 1839, the Michigan Legislature officially organized Clinton County. The County was administered by a county board of three officers appointed by the Governor. This practice continued until April, 1827, when the present Board of Supervisors system was effected.

The greater part of the pioneer settlers in Clinton County, were farmers from the State of New York. It is not surprising, therefore, that agriculture, particularly wheat farming, formed the basis of the county's early economy - a situation which holds true even today. Lumbering was also a major employer as saw mills sprung up at various locations throughout the county. Many of these early settlements evolved as present cities and villages.

The population of the county was 529 at the time of its earliest census in 1837. Subsequent census figures indicated spectacular early growth with 3,060 in 1845, 13,923 in 1860, and over 23,000 persons in 1874.

The first settlement in the county was made at the place now known as Maple Rapids by George Campau in 1826. David Scott, who has generally but erroneously been mentioned as the first settler in the county, located on the Looking Glass River in the present township of DeWitt, in 1833. The county seat was originally established in the Village of DeWitt until 1857 when, by a township vote of 233-3, it was removed to St. Johns.

BINGHAM TOWNSHIP

Bingham Township was organized on March 21, 1839. It was originally a part of DeWitt Township and, at the time of its organization, included the territory of Ovid, Duplain, and Greenbush Townships. It was named in honor of Governor K. S. Bingham. The Township was first settled in 1837 by Lucius Morton. The first town meeting was held April 3, 1839.

CITY OF ST. JOHNS

In 1852, the post office of "Bingham" was established by George Estes to serve a fast growing saw mill community. It was moved in 1854, to the newly established settlement of St. Johns named in honor of John Swegles, its first settler. The village was officially platted by Swegles and eleven associates of March 25, 1856, as the "Village of St. Johns." In 1857, the village received an economic boost with the completion of the laying of the track through St. Johns of the Detroit and Milwaukee Railroad. In January of that year, it received its first passenger

train. A second impetus to the progress of the village was its establishment in 1857 as the Clinton County seat. Early industries included several saw mills, a grist mill, a furniture company, several foundries, a sash and door company, and a bed spring manufactory. Its most magnificent edifice, the county courthouse, was constructed in 1868 for the cost of $45,000, $5,000 of which was raised by the village itself.
In 1905, St. Johns was incorporated as a city and received its home rule charter in 1918.

BATH TOWNSHIP

The territory now comprised within the limits of Bath and Victor Townships, formerly constituted the township of "Ossowa" which was organized in March, 1839. The township was reorganized on March 9, 1843, into two townships, the southern half being "Bath." It was named through the influence of Silas W. Rose, an early settler, for his birthplace of Bath, New York. The township's first settler was Ira Cushman who entered Section 19 in 1836.
The village of Bath is situated on land which was originally part of a land grant given by the government to Dustin Marr, a soldier of the Mexican War. By 1864, a saw mill was successfully in operation and the settlement began to experience increased growth. In the late sixties, largely due to the efforts of Charles Tompkins, the newly opened railway constructed a depot within the settlement. The "Village of Bath" was originally laid out in 1875 but was never officially platted or incorporated.
One of the worst catastrophes in the Region's history struck the community of Bath on May 18, 1927, when a disgruntled citizen, Andrew Keyhoe, dynamited the school killing 45 teachers and students and injuring 58. The story made headlines throughout the world and left Bath with terrible memories, the impact of which are felt even today.

BENGAL TOWNSHIP

Bengal Township was organized on March 19, 1840. The first slate of township officers were elected on April 18, 1840, at a meeting which also appropriated $250 for administrative purposes. Its first Supervisor, Cortland Hill, was also its first settler having arrived in 1837. Agriculture was originally, and still is, its primary economic venture. By 1847, its population had increased to 49 persons, with over 1,000 by 1870.

DEWITT TOWNSHIP

DeWitt Township originally included the land comprising the entire area of Clinton County. An act of the State Legislature organized the township on March 23, 1836. It was named for DeWitt Clinton, Governor of New York and builder of the Erie Canal.
Several small communities were founded within the present boundaries of the township, but only the village of DeWitt has withstood the ravages of time. The first of these was "Middletown" or

"Middleton." It was situated on the north side of the Looking Glass River east of the present Village of DeWitt. The original survey of the village, completed in 1836, showed a settlement consisting of eighty-six blocks, each containing one and three-fifths acres. Block thirty-six was reserved for the village square. On October 12, 1842, after a dismal beginning, the lots of the village were sold for unpaid taxes.
The village of "New Albany" was first platted in 1833 by Hiram Sheldon. It was located on the south side of the Looking Glass River and contained twenty-nine blocks. It, also, failed to achieve desired expectations and was sold for taxes in 1840. Final sale prices of the lots ranged from seventy-four cents per lot to a dollar and six cents per lot.
The plat of "Old DeWitt" was originated in 1837 by Frederick Bowles. It was situated east of and adjoining New Albany. The village consisted of seventy-eight blocks each containing eight lots. Old DeWitt also failed to develop and was advertised for unpaid taxes in 1842. Although the lots ranged in price from ninety-five cents to one dollar and twenty-four cents, none were apparently sold.

CITY OF DEWITT

Captain David Scott, his wife and two sons, arrived at the site of the present City of DeWitt on October 4, 1833. Scott built his home on the Looking Glass River and, because of a rapid influx of settlers, he also constructed a hotel to accomodate them. "Scotts Place" was known far and wide in the 30's and 40's as a gathering place and soon attracted permanent settlers. It became the administrative center of the county simply because it was the only settlement of any size when Clinton County was organized in 1839. Although county buildings were never constructed, DeWitt's prestige as the county seat was clearly responsible for its active early development. When the county seat was removed to St. Johns in 1857, it marked an abrupt end to the villages rapid growth patterns. At the time of its greatest development, DeWitt contained a hotel, two general stores, a drug store, two millinery shops, a shoe store, a wagon shop, three blacksmith shops, two saw mills, a flour mill, and two churches. It was officially incorporated as a village in 1928, and became a city of the fifth class in 1965.

DALLAS TOWNSHIP

A legislature act, approved March 19, 1845, detached Dallas Township from Lebanon Township. The naming was left to two men, one who favored the name "Polk" in honor of the newly-elected President, and the other who wanted "Dallas" in honor of the newly-elected Vice-President. The two men drew lots and the township was officially christened Dallas. The first township meeting was held April 23, 1845, where 27 votes were cast for township officers. In 1857, one hundred and sixty acres of land was purchased for the purpose of founding a village. Its name

was to be "Dallas" and its purpose was to furnish the location for a depot on the newly constructed Detroit-Milwaukee Railroad. A hotel was erected, as was a general store, and several lots were bought. Despite valient efforts, the village was a dismal failure from the start. The surrounding country was so swampy that travel to and from the village was an impossibility. After ten years of existence, village inhabitants began looking for a new location. With the aid of F. N. Fowler, of Detroit, as well as the railroad, the entire village was moved three-quarters of a mile west to the present site of Fowler.
F. N. Fowler platted his village in 1867 and named it Isabella, after the County of Isabella where he had large landed interests. The name was quite unpopular and, at the request of the villagers themselves, Fowler renamed it after himself in 1869. The plat of the "Village of Fowler" was filed February 1, 1870. By 1880, the village had a population of 350 persons and consisted of two hotels, two general stores, two hardware stores, a boot store, two groceries, two drug stores, and a furniture store.

DUPLAIN TOWNSHIP

Duplain Township was organized on March 19, 1840, and originally called "Sena". The name was one of three submitted with the organization petition, the other two being "Sinai" and "Napanee." On March 20, 1841, the name of "Duplain" was officially recognized. It was named for the French word DuPlain meaning "of the plain." The first township meeting was held April 23, 1840.
In 1845, the Craven brothers settled on the Maple River and established a saw mill. A village was platted, although never recorded, and several stores were erected. The settlement was unofficially called "Craven's Mills" or "Corners." It was abandoned in 1857 in favor of the Village of Elsie.
A Second settlement, called "Rochester Colony" was founded on February 29, 1836. An association was formed in Rochester, New York, which sold shares in the Michigan colony for $125 each. Each shareholder was entitled to one vote, eighty acres of farm land, and one village lot. The first settlers of the colony set out for Michigan in July of 1836. It consisted of sixteen persons, ten of which were children. The colony gave its collection of village lots the name of "Mapleton" and by 1852, it had grown to a size large enough to support four physicians. The entire colony consisted of more than four-thousand acres.
The Village of Elsie was platted June 18, 1857. Its eary population consisted of former residents of Craven's Mills and was named for the daughter of Franklin Tillotson, the settlement's first postmaster. By 1880, the village contained three general stores, a hardware store, a grocery, a drug store, two shoe stores...two taverns, and a cheese factory. It was incorporated as a village in 1885.

Continued to next issue.

Genealogy begins as a hobby and ends up as an obsession.

STOLL FAMILY

John Stoll family came from Germany in 1853 to Cleveland, Ohio. Their son Casper Stoll and Sophie (Brickman) Stoll family came to Watertown, Clinton Co., Mich. in 1864.
Casper Stoll's were in 1870 census of Bengal Twp., Clinton Co. Their daughter Louise Stoll married William Oppenlander, Mrs. Caruss grandfather.
Stoll Road in Clinton Co was named for this family.
If anyone wishes more information Mrs. Caruss will be happy to share what she has on these families. Her address is Thelma Caruss, 11142 Bishop Rd., Lansing, MI 48911.

CARUSS, BYRON P.

Lansing

Age 76, died March 1, 1987 in Lansing. He was born December 1, 1910 in Owosso and retired from Reo Motors in 1972. He was an active member of the Dimondale First Presbyterian Church, a member and past master of the Dimondale F.& A.M. #449 and the Valley of Grand Rapids A.A.S.R. Mr. Caruss is survived by his wife, Thelma; 3 sons, Delos (Cathy), Warren, Wayne (Zana), all of Dimondale; 3 daughters, Wilma (Rev. Richard Bayles) of PA, Theda (Charles Langstaff) of Lansing and Adla (Steve Parker) of Dimondale; 14 grandchildren; a sister-in-law, Martha Caruss of Lansing; nieces, nephews and many friends. In keeping with Mr. Caruss' wishes his body was cremated. The family will receive friends in the Parlors of the Dimondale First Presbyterian Church from 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. Tuesday. Masonic and memorial services will be held at 3 p.m. Wednesday at the Church with Rev. John A. Toth officiating. In lieu of flowers, the family has suggested memorials to the Dimondale First Presbyterian Church or the Michigan Masonic Home in Alma.

AP PHOTO BY DALE ATKINS

Thelma and Byron Caruss with painting of 1833 Commerce Township home of pioneer Henry C.S. Caruss.

Thelma Caruss has written a book, "Windsor Township, Eaton County."

CARUSS FAMILY

Henry C. S. Caruss & Temperance (Bishop) Caruss came to Oakland Co., Mich. from Genesee Co., N. Y. in 1833. Son Richard B. Caruss came to Essex Twp., Clinton Co. in 1862. He was Supervisor of Essex Twp. and in the State Legislature, he also raised "Galloway Cattle." Son Carlos Caruss came to Union Home in 1865 and his son William & Caroline (Hosner) Caruss came to Greenbush Twp., Clinton Co. in 1864. The Hosner family came to Michigan in 1833.
William and Caroline Caruss had one son Carlos Delos who lived in Clinton Co. until 1923 when he and his wife Mary (Miller) Caruss and their three sons William, George and Byron moved to Lansing, MI. The Caruss's have traced this family and now have a Michigan Sesquicentennial Certificate.

WARREN FAMILY

David Warren son of Levi and Abigail (Hammond) Warren of New York came to Monroe Co., Mich. in 1832 with an older brother and sister after their mother died.
David married Caroline Robards, their son James was born in Pulaski, Jackson Co., then the family of 8 children moved in 1853 to Clinton Co. Three of the sons served in the Civil War.
James married Frances Pratt also of Clinton Co. James had three daughters their names were Lola, Rolla and Maud Warren. Lola was Mrs. Caruss mother and she married Lewis Oppenlander, both were born in Clinton Co. Mrs. Caruss parents had four children....Paul, Verne, Thelma and Della. Thelma married Byron Caruss and they have three sons and three daughters. The Caruss also have a Sesquicentennial Certificate on this family.

PRATT FAMILY

Seth and Elizabeth (Arnold) Pratt came from New Ashford, Mass. to Riley, Mich. in 1851.
Henry Lewis Pratt the 9th child of 12 was Thelma Caruss great grandfather, he married Hannah Elizabeth Irish. Her grandmother Frances Pratt second of 9 children of Henry married James Warren.
Mrs. Caruss mother was Lola who married Lewis Oppenlander also of Clinton Co. Doris (Pratt) Snyder lives on the Centennial farm on Pratt Rd., Riley Twp.

OPPENLANDER FAMILY

John George Oppenlander and Mary (Stortz) Oppenlander came from Wittenberg Germany in 1870 to Wacousta, Clinton Co., Michigan. Their six children were, Mary Schuon, Wiehelmina Widmeyer, Fred Openlander, William Openlander, Louisa Kapp and Libbie Henning.
William married Louise Stoll, also of Clinton Co. They had Lewis, Emilie, Albert, all born in Clinton Co. While Edward, Alice and Nellie were born in Delta, Eaton Co., Mich.
William was Mrs. Caruss grandfather and Lewis her father.

COULD ONE OF THESE BE YOUR

ANCESTOR?

These are names of civil war soldiers from Clinton County we would like to be able to indentify further. If you have any information please contact Wilma Sowle at the Archives.

Adam, Russ or Russell	Greenbush Township
Albert, Thomas	St. Johns
Bates, William	Greenbush
Beebee, Thomas	Duplain
Bodell, Edward	DeWitt
Dewstoe, John	Lebanon

Wilma Sowle

THANKS

Many thanks to Lois and Earl Fohl who have worked so many hours putting the material for the newsletter together. So many good happenings come from these dedicated people.

Please send us what you would like to see printed. We welcome all imput into the newsletter.

Clinton County
Historical Society

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Saint Johns, Michigan 48879

Vol 2 #2

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