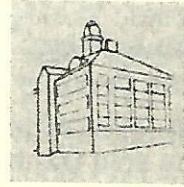




CLINTON COUNTY TRAILS

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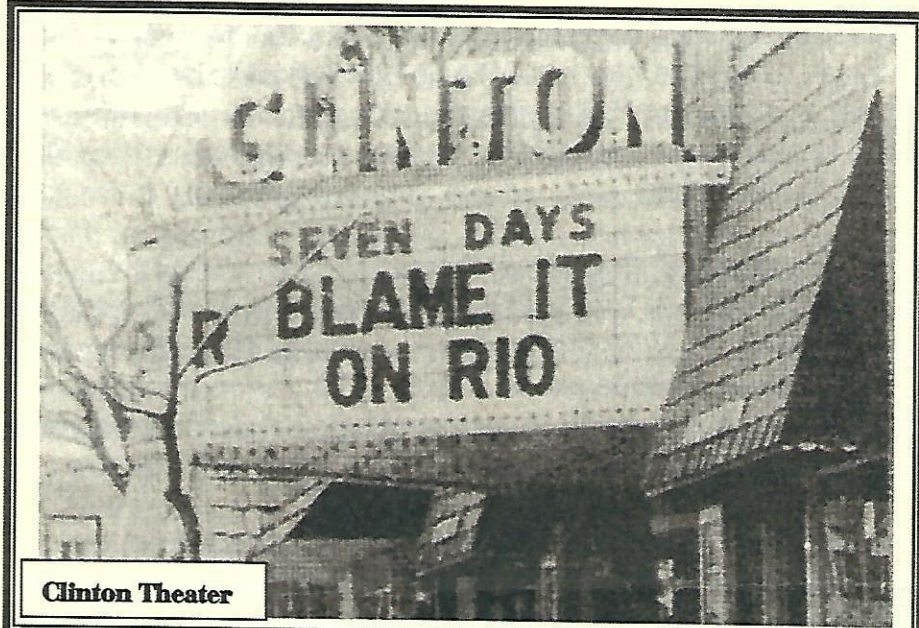
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Clinton County Goes to the Movies Part II – St. Johns Theaters By Wayne Summers

St. Johns was probably the site of the first moving picture show in Clinton County. **Fred Tremper**, an active participant in the early history of motion pictures in the city, recalled the first theater came to St. Johns "in 1906, I think, and was operated by a man named **Pilbeam** in **Alex Morrison's** building on Higham St. Pilbeam put in a few folding chairs, a picture machine that wouldn't make a good magic lantern today, and rented a few reels of film. There was a banjo player on the side and admission was a nickel. Not long afterwards, **Ed Webb**, a butcher here, bought him out. Ed and his daughter sang and their vocalism replaced the banjo." (*Clinton County Republican News* 31Oct1935)

In 1907 **Fred Tremper** brought an Edison film machine to St. Johns and set it up in his brother-in-law **O. L. Esler's** second floor Allison Theater (also known as the Opera House). They showed movies by turning the crank by hand.

Tremper continued, "A few months later, Morrison bought

Contents.....	Page
Clinton Movie Theaters – Part I.....	25
First Professional Football Game.....	29
Joseph Cooper	30
Rochester Colony History.....	31
Recent Acquisitions.....	32
Back Thru the Years.....	34

the store building" (today near 212 N. Clinton Avenue) "just south of **Con Stephen's** place and asked me to equip it for a theater and run the business for him. I did so. We ran illustrated songs with our pictures and had quite a place. After four months I bought Alex out and set up on my own. Morrison sold the building and I went around the corner on Higham where Webb had been. This theater was called the Morrison and was the first real movie house in town." (*Clinton County Republican News* 31Oct1935) The Morrison Theater had indirect lighting and a piano. Shows would be announced by standing on the corner with a megaphone to entice customers to come in.

The next early movie theater was the Gem Theater built by **E. E. Cranston**. It opened on February 9, 1914, in what had been the **John H. Corbit** hardware store on the north side of W. Walker Street at a location that is now a parking lot. Mr. Cranston had gutted the interior of the building and turned it into a vaudeville theater seating about 250. By 1916 it had been converted into mainly a movie theater.

Fred Tremper purchased the theater and ran it for a short period. It was sold to **Mrs. Charles Atkinson** who in turn sold it to **Raymond J. McLaughlin** in 1917 or 1918 who renamed it the Victory Theater. In 1920 the theater was sold to **C. R. Beechler** and closed for remodeling on May 24, 1920. When it reopened on July 1, 1920, the roof had been raised, floor lowered, and screen moved several feet back. A new ventilation system had been added along with increasing the capacity from 250 to 415 seats.

Another early theater was the Vaudette. An article from the *St. Johns News* of May 20, 1920, states that **Raymond McLaughlin** changed the name of the Vaudette to the Victory Theater about 1918. This would indicate the Vaudette was at that time operating in the same theater as the Gem and Victory. To complicate matters, newspapers in February of 1916 have ads for both the Gem and Vaudette meaning at the time they were two separate theaters. The only way this seems possible would be for the Vaudette to have been initially at a different location, perhaps at the old Morrison Theater on Higham Street. The owner, possibly **Mrs. Charles Atkinson**, could have bought the Gem, closed the Vaudette theater, and then renamed the Gem the Vaudette.

In November of 1920 the Victory Theater along with the Iris were sold to the **Fitzpatrick-McElroy Company** of Chicago who converted the Victory into a weekend only theater. The Victory is believed to have closed a few years later.

Clifford E. Riesau and **H. C Smith** built and opened the Iris Theater managed by Fred Tremper, "one of the best equipped and prettiest little moving picture houses in the state", on December 31, 1919, with the showing of *The Birth of a Race*. [*St. Johns News* 25Dec1919] Located at what is now 123

N. Clinton Avenue, the 500 seat theater was described this way. "From beneath the brightly



Clinton Theater - 1938
Photo compliments of Jack Miller

illuminated apron, or canopy, which overhangs the box office, one enters through swinging doors into the lobby, decorated with ivory tinted walls and electrified dome lights. Two flights of stairs ascend to the balcony and another short flight to the main floor of the theatre. The color scheme of ivory and gold is maintained throughout and gives a beautiful effect to the interior. The white screen, set off with a gold panel, is hung on the dark green background of a heavy velour curtain. Above is a gilt latticework decorated with foliage. Amber-colored hanging and side lights cast a golden glow over the whole." [St Johns News 25Dec1919] Along with the latest in fire protection and motor driven projectors, the theater also boasted a double suction syphon ventilation system and advertised itself as having "perfect ventilation".

The Iris Theater was originally equipped with a 50 pipe automatically playing orchestra organ with piano, violin, horns, and drum. This was replaced with a larger 300 pipe organ in 1928. In the late 1920's it added a Vitaphone sound system and began showing talkies. The Vitaphone system paired a film projector with a 33 1/3 rpm record that played the sound. While it produced excellent sound quality, any number of things could cause the sound to lose its sync with the movie.

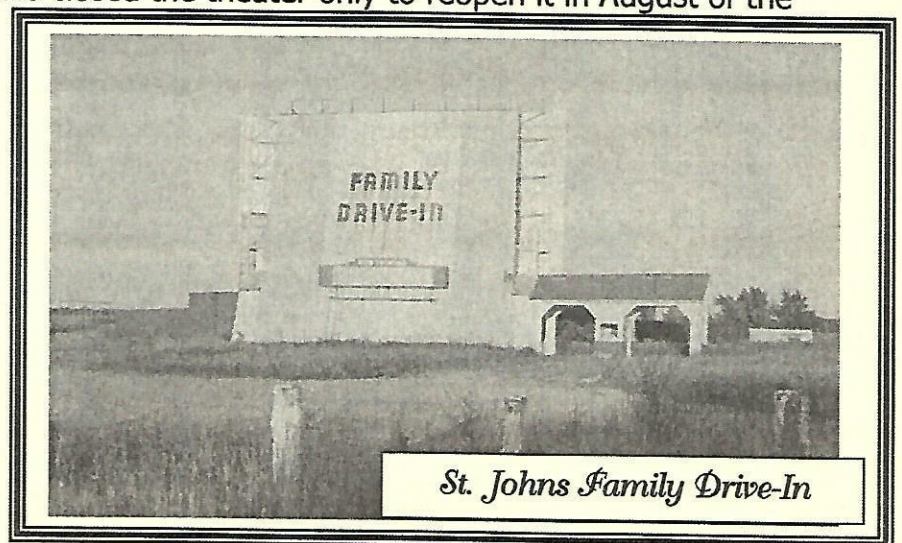
C. R. Beechler bought the Iris, which he had been managing, in 1924 and ran it for 9 years before selling it to his brother, **Roy Beechler**. The Iris was so successful **Roy Beechler** decided to replace it with a new larger theater. A site just a few doors down at 109 N. Clinton Avenue was acquired and construction on the Clinton Theater, using mostly local labor and materials, began in April of 1935.

The Clinton included 530 seats on the main floor and another 120 in the balcony. It featured a cry room for mothers with infants to enjoy the show, a heating and cooling system, toilets, and a large marquee.

The Iris Theater closed permanently on Oct 27, 1935, so the projector and sound equipment could be moved. The Clinton Theater opened on November 1, 1935, with Margen Dress Shop owned by **H. E. Jennings** occupying one front store and Parker's Barber Shop and Clinton Beauty shop the other. Prices at the Clinton were the same as the Iris: 25 cents for adults and 10 cents for children. Newsreels and comedy shorts accompanied the main feature film. In 1951 the seats were replaced and a new marquee installed along with other updates.

With the arrival of television in the 1950's fewer people went to the movies, choosing to stay home instead. In July 1959 the Beechlers closed the theater only to reopen it in August of the following year. It closed again for about two years around 1964. On June 10, 1966 **Howard Kortés**, who owned the Family Drive-In, leased the Clinton from **William and Jack Beechler** and reopened it.

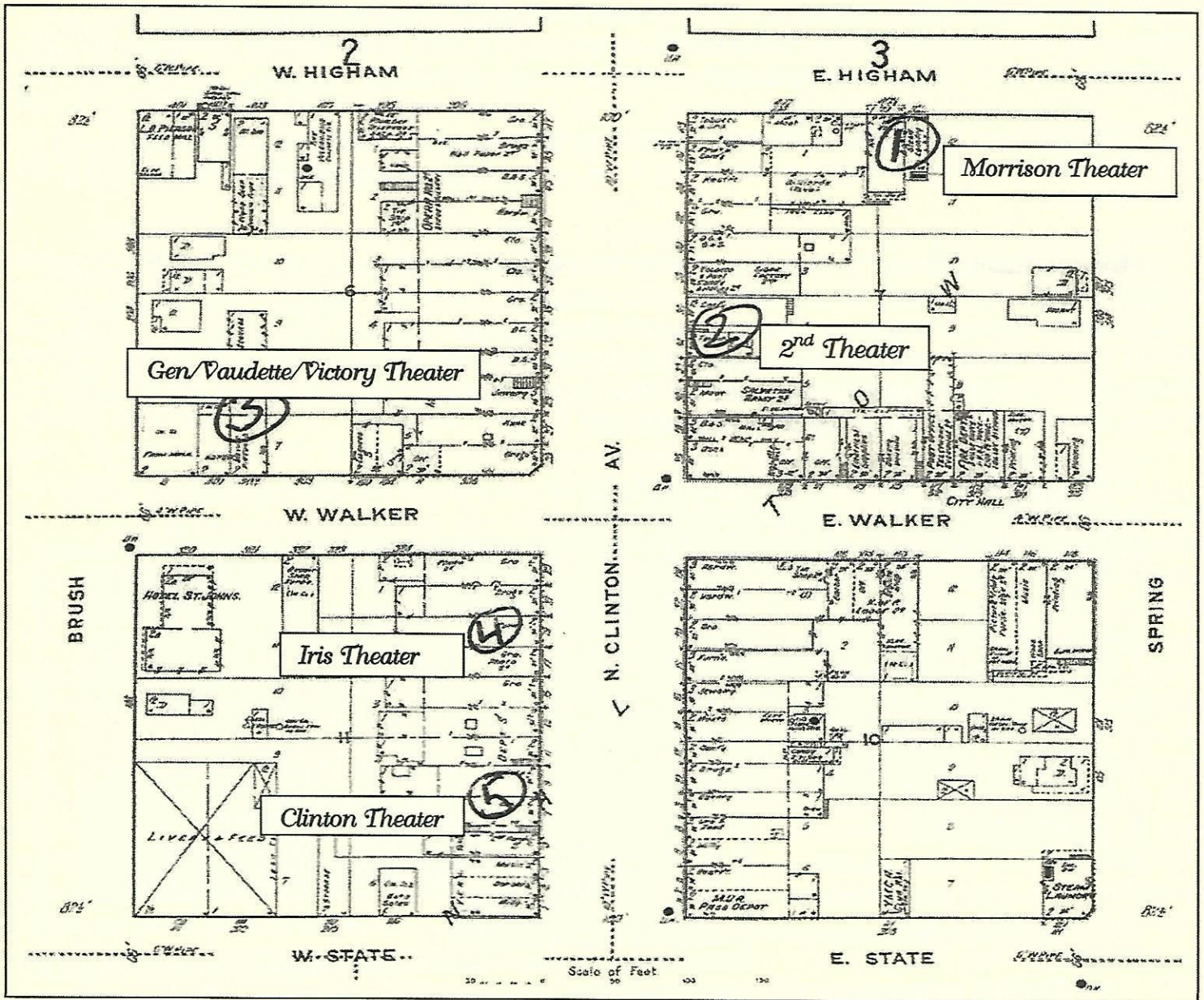
Bob and Maxine Miller bought the Clinton in 1977. In 1982 they went from showing movies three days a week to seven with 99 cent movies, an arcade, and snack shop. A new screen for 3-D movies was added in 1984. **Bill and Jean Clark** purchased the Clinton Theater in 1985. They closed it permanently about two years later after purchasing the Cinema III.



St. Johns Family Drive-In

The Family Drive-In at 2300 N US-27, built by **Leon Robbe** who also owned the Elsie Theater, was the first real drive-in in Clinton County. Although parts of the 400 car capacity drive-in were still under construction due to weather delays, it opened on June 10, 1950, with the showing of *South of St. Louis*. Robbe sold it in 1953 to **Howard William Kortes** after opening the Northside Drive-In in DeWitt. Kortes operated the theater until about 1975. Like most other drive-in theaters, the Family Drive-In succumbed to a decrease in attendance in the 1970's due to daylight saving time and VCRs and closed about 1985. According to **Jack Cockrum**, a later owner, the Henry Ford Museum investigated purchasing the marquee in 1987. The theater sat unused and deteriorating until it was razed around 1991.

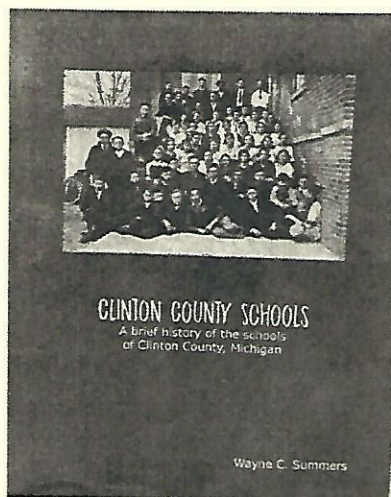
Roger Brownfield built the Cinema III in the Southpoint Mall with the grand opening on December 21, 1984. In 1987 **Bill and Jean Clark** purchased the theaters and closed the Clinton Theater. They increased the number of screens and renamed the theaters Cinema 4. The theaters, the last in the county, closed in 2009 ending over one hundred years of movie theaters operating in St. Johns and Clinton County.



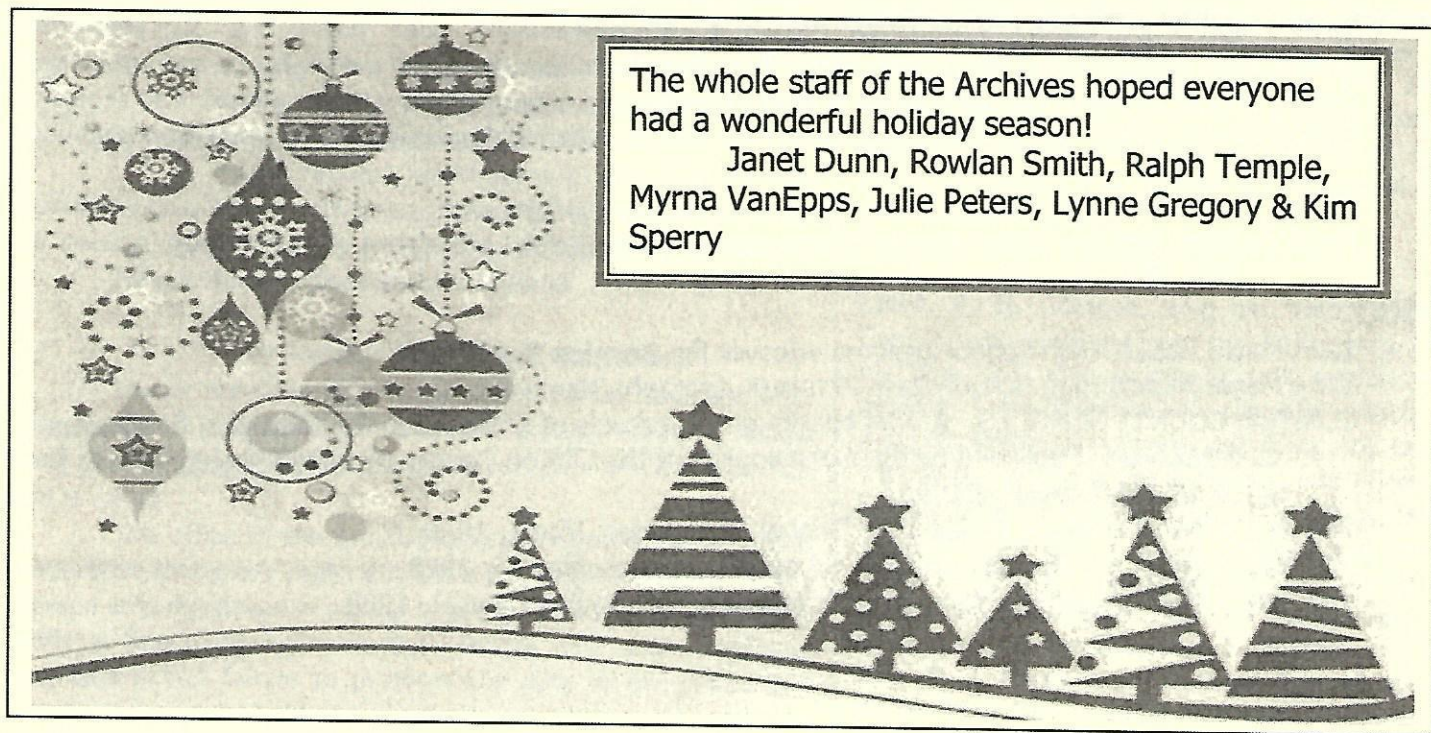
Recent Acquisitions

The Archives Update...

In September, October, and November, we had 33 visitors. The big item we have for this quarter is the completion of the new book, by Wayne Summers, *CLINTON COUNTY SCHOOLS - A brief history of the schools of Clinton County, Michigan*. It is a soft cover, 8 1/2" x 11" 250 page book that contains school census records for 1905, 1915, and 1925.



It has wonderful pictures of school buildings and groups of children attending those schools. It has been published by the Archives and is for sale. The cost is \$20 (plus \$3.60 s&h if mailed). You can stop in to the Archives to pick one up (16101 Brook Rd., Lansing) or send a check of \$23.60 with your information to CCHS, P.O. Box 174, St. Johns, MI 48879 and we will get a book right out to you. You can send us an email at ccgensoc@yahoo.com for more information. It would make a great gift!



REPORT OF ACQUISITIONS & RESEARCH

2017 SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER:

FAMILY FILE:

- County Record and Obituary for **Martha Holdrum Locher**

PHOTOS:

- **Bernice E. Nichols** 1934 Maple Rapids Senior Picture, b/w, 7 x 9"
- 50th Reunion Photo, 1934 Maple Rapids High School, 3 1/4 x 3 1/4", color
- **Ernest, Clara and Earl Day** c/a 1914; 7 x 11"; b/w
- **Earl Day**; c/a 1918; 4 1/2 x 2 3/4"; b/w
- **Earl Day**; c/a 1921; 2 1/2 x 4 1/2"; b/w
- Ed's Refinery Station; 15700 North East St.; Lansing; 4 x 4"; b/w
- Ed's Refinery Station; 15700 North East St.; Lansing; 5 x 4"; b/w
- **Gene Vettrano** pumping gas; Leonard Gas Station; 11530 US-27, DeWitt; 4 x 4"; b/w
- **Gene, Elsie, Tony, Rebecca, & Vince Vettrano**, Leonard Gas Station c/a 1960; 11530 US-27, DeWitt; 3 3/4 x 5 1/2"; b/w
- **Gene, Elsie & Vince Vettrano**, Leonard Gas Station, 1964; 11530 US-27, DeWitt; 6 1/4 x 4"; color photo
- **Larry Whiting**, Leonard Gas Station, 1964; 11530 US-27; DeWitt; 5 1/2 x 3 3/4"; color photo
- Leonard Gas Station, 1971; 11530 US-27, DeWitt; 5 x 4"; b/w
- Gene's Total Service, c/a 1975; 11530 US-27, DeWitt; 6 x 4"; b/w
- Total Service Station, aft 1975; 11530 US-27, DeWitt; 5 1/2 x 3 1/2"; color photo
- **Gene & Elsie Vettrano**, Total Service Station, 11530 US-27, DeWitt; 3 1/2 x 5"; color photo
- **Gene Vettrano**, Total Service Station, 11530 US-27, DeWitt; 5 3/4 x 4 1/2"; b/w
- Flash Drive of Photos from the Michigan Rushers Memorabilia time capsule
- DeWitt High School Class (1929? 1930? 1931?); 4 x 6"; b/w
- DeWitt High School Group Photo with **Reva Treadwell**; unknown year; 7 x 6"; b/w
- DeWitt School Group Photo with **Ruth & Bea Marzke**; unknown year; 4 x 6"; b/w
- DeWitt Grade School Group Photo with **Beatrice Moon, Nina & Stewart White**; unknown year; 4 x 6"; b/w
- Clinton Co. Courthouse; May 9, 1923 after a snowstorm; 4 x 3"; b/w
- **Fred DeWitt, Nelson Jolly, Gayle Vauconsant**; 1921, Curtis Lake, MI; 4 x 2 1/2"; b/w

SCHOOLS:

- 1934 Maple Rapids High School Diploma w/cover for **Bernice E. Nichols**
- 1934 Maple Rapids High School Class Picture/Autographs/Name Cards
- CLINTON COUNTY SCHOOLS, A brief history of the schools of Clinton County, Michigan; by **Wayne C. Summers**; Published by the Genealogists of the Clinton County Historical Society; 2017; 8 1/2 x 11"; soft cover; 250 pp.
- THE WILSONIAN, Rodney Wilson High School Newspaper; May 1, 1928
- THE WILSONIAN, Rodney Wilson High School Newspaper; May 15, 1928
- THE WILSONIAN, Rodney Wilson High School Newspaper; February 21, 1928

OF IMPORTANCE TO REGISTRANTS

**EVERY REGISTERED MAN MUST NOTIFY HIS LOCAL BOARD IF
THERE HAS BEEN ANY CHANGE IN ADDRESS**

FAILURE TO COMPLY MAY RESULT VERY SERIOUSLY

**SPECIAL EMPHASIS IS MADE THAT EVERY REGISTERED MAN
MUST KEEP POSTED**

The following telegram from **General Crowder** is published for the information and guidance of all concerned:

"Washington, D.C., November 29--Governor of Michigan, Lansing, Mich. Number 10948. Please cause the broadest and most extensive and continuous possible publicity to be given through the adjutant general, local and district boards, the newspapers, and by all other possible means of warning to all registrants who may have changed their places of abode and post office address to communicate immediately with their local boards, where they are registered and furnish their present address, so that questionnaires which will begin to be mailed December 15, will reach such registrants without delay. Registrants are bound by law to keep themselves advised of all proceedings in respect of them and failure to do so, may result in their losing right to claim exemption or discharge.

Please request newspapers to give this warning board and continuous publication, from this time until the process of mailing questionnaires has been accomplished. Crowder."

John S. Bersey, The Adjutant General

All Former Exemptions Cancelled.

Under the new regulations every person registered for selective draft is restored to his original status, section 4, stating that all exemptions and discharges made prior to December 15, are revoked.

The office of the Provost Marshall General declares it is imperative that every registrant know his "order number". Every person who registered or should have registered June 5 is charged with a knowledge of selective service law and additional regulations and failure to perform any duty so prescribed is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for one year and may result in the loss of valuable rights and privileges and in immediate induction into military service.

(Clinton Republican. 6 Dec 1917 p1,c5)

"Our Boys" in the War



Fred D. Stichler, who enlisted in October in the first aid medical department and has been stationed at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, has received an honorable discharge because of physical disability, and has returned home. Mr. Stichler was greatly disappointed because he could not remain in the service.



Fred B. Post and **Leo Schoendorf** went to Chicago Saturday to enlist in the quartermaster corps. Mr. Post was accepted and has returned home to await his call, which will probably come sometime this month. Mr. Schoendorf was rejected because of overweight. **George Osgood** and **Charles Holland** left for Chicago yesterday to try for the same branch of service.



Co. 38, shipped packages to the following Clinton county boys this week: **Carl Letts, Reno Barrus, Clare Letts, Elmer Ridenour, Roy Peterson, Sgt. Nester, Roy Fletcher, George Coty, James Neil, Victor Cook, Herman Altvater, Louis Pohl, Edward Werner, Howard Selleck, Dee Decker, Wesley Green.** The Comfort Committee has cards from **Leo Miller** and **Fred Groff** but no address given. Packages will be held for them until friends give correct address.



Lieut. R. H. Gleason, who has been stationed at Camp Custer since the opening of the camp, has left for Fort Sill, OK, where he will receive special training. Lieut. Gleason was one of 7 officers who were chosen to take special schooling and each one will study a different line of work. Lieut. Gleason has been attached to Company D, 339th Infantry and was transferred to the officer's headquarters company recently. He had been under the surveillance of the colonel but three days when he was picked for the special work in fortifications. He is the son of **Mr. & Mrs. E. J. Gleason** of Ovid and was commissioned second lieutenant in the first officers' reserve camp at Fort Sheridan, IL.

(Clinton Republican, 6 Dec 1917. P1, c1)



In Thousands Of Families

Instant Postum is regarded as one of the regular staples of the pantry, along with flour, sugar, and other "necessities" of life.

Instant Postum looks and tastes much like coffee, but causes none of the discomforts of coffee. It is a pure food-drink, rich in the nourishing goodness of choice wheat, including the mineral elements of the grain so essential for perfect health.

Here is a beverage that children as well as the older ones can safely enjoy. It is ideal in its convenience (made instantly in the cup) and delicious flavor. A ten days' trial shows

"There's a Reason" for

Instant Postum

(Clinton Republican, 22 Mar 1917, 13, c4)

FAMOUS RAT CASE RESUMED IN COURT

JUNE TERM CIRCUIT COURT TO CONVENE TUESDAY, JUNE 27, JURY DRAWN

On Tuesday, June 27, at 9:00 a session of the June term of circuit court will be called to try the case of **James E. Brown** vs the City of St. Johns for injuries received from falling roof on Walker Street near the side entrance of Fowler & Ball's hardware store. This case, which is known as the "rat case" was postponed from the March term of court and is receiving its third trial.

The jury has been drawn as follows: **Floyd Anderson**, St. Johns; **A. M. Bacon**, St. Johns; **M. F. Birmingham**, Shepardsville; **Glenn Bliss**, Riley; **Loren Castle**, St. Johns; **Lyman Cobb**, Dupllain; **James Delong**, St. Johns; **Chauncey Dixon**, Lebanon; **Richard Gay**, Riley; **R. B. Goodwin**, Watertown; **Henry Hall**, Olive; **Andrew Holt**, DeWitt; **Wm. G. Hunter**, Ovid; **Homer Jenison**, Bathh; **Hays R. Jolly**, St. Johns, **Theodore Jorae**, Victor; **Lewis Kebler**, Eagle; **Clyde Lapham**, Bingham; **James Long, Sr.**, Dallas; **Frank Newman**, Bengal; **U. G. Phippeny**, Greenbush; **George R. Royse**, St. Johns; **Edward Smith**, Victor; **George Snow**, Westphalia; **Chas. Stoy**, Olive; **Miner Sutton**, Bengal; **Chester Waldo**, Watertown; **Willard Webster**, Bath; **Glenn Wilbur**, St. Johns; **George Wohlfert**, Westphalia.
(CR June 1916)

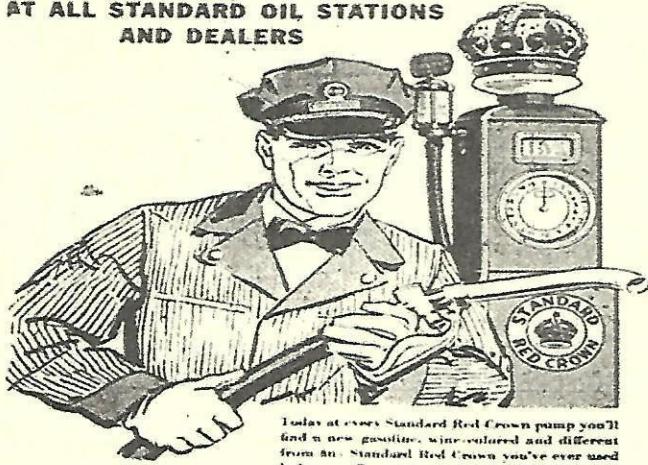
NOTE: Postum is a powdered roasted-grain beverage once popular as a coffee substitute. The caffeine-free beverage was created by Post Cereal Company founder C. W. Post in 1895 and marketed as a healthful alternative to coffee.

Postum brand instant hot beverage is a caffeine-free coffee alternative. It is made from roasted wheat, bran and molasses. The production of Postum was discontinued in 2007 by a large food company. Since then, Eliza's Quest Foods, LLC has recreated and reintroduced Postum, and they are now non-genetically modified organism project certified.

Now AN ENTIRELY NEW SUPERFUEL

AT THE PRICE OF REGULAR !

AT ALL STANDARD OIL STATIONS
AND DEALERS



Today at every Standard Red Crown pump you'll find a new gasoline, wine-colored and different from any Standard Red Crown you've ever used before. We want you to try it. We know you can't buy anything better unless you pay more.

The Complete Superfuel!

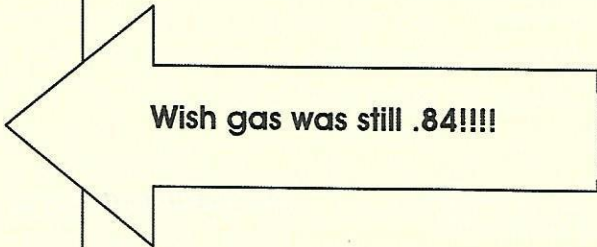
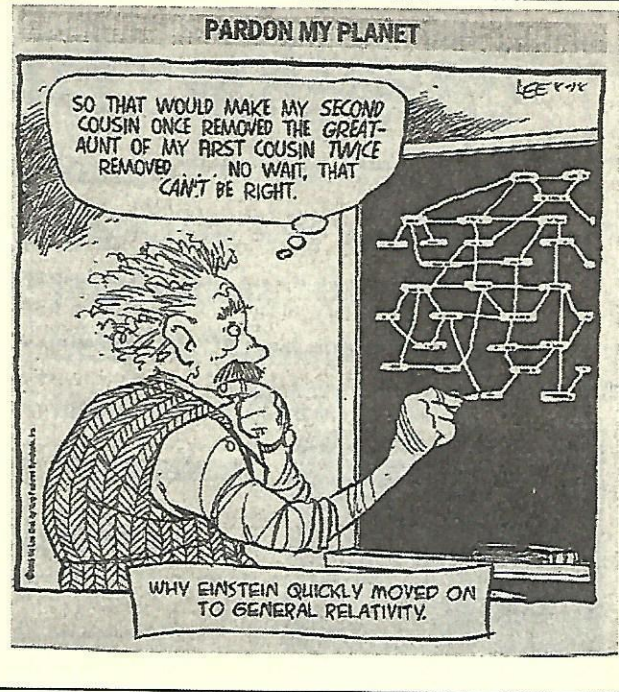
Some regular gasolines equal Standard Red Crown in one or two qualities—not one surpasses it. And we believe that not one equals it in all the essentials of good gasoline.

- 1 Top anti-knock rating for its price class.
- 2 Unsurpassed in starting, acceleration or mileage.
- 3 Free from harmful sulphur and gum.
- 4 Seasonally adjusted for maximum power.
- 5 Absolute uniformity in performance.
- 6 Faster because of Standard popularity.
- 7 Sells at the price of regular.



STANDARD REDCROWN Gasoline

SOLE DISTRIBUTORS OF ATLAS TIRES



THE FAMILY CIRCUS'

By Bill Keane

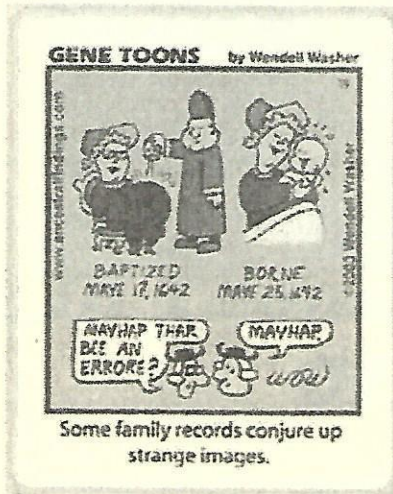


Genealogy Funny Quotes &.....

"Genealogists live in the past lane."

It's hard to be humble with ancestor's line mine!

- "Genealogy is all about chasing your own tale."
- "Genealogy is sometimes about proving that bad family traits come from the other side of the tree."
- "Moment of Truth for a genealogist: discovering you are your own cousin."
- "A great party is when everyone joins in the gene pool."



Genealogy: it's not a hobby; it's an obsession"

"Can a first cousin once removed be returned?"

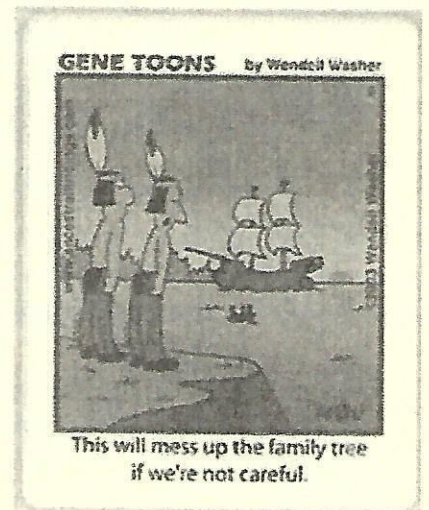
"In a Thurmont, Maryland cemetery:
Here lies an Atheist;
All dressed up
And no place to go.

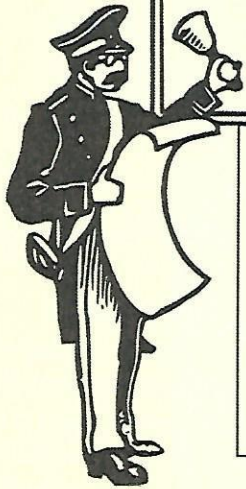
- "Genealogist are time travelers."
- "A great genealogist is a time unravelers."
- "Genealogy: In the end, it's all relative."

- "An in-law is someone who has married into your family; an outlaw is an in-law who resists letting you do their genealogy!"
- "If your family members won't talk about a particular relative, a seasoned genealogist knows they are keeping mum about something very interesting."
- "If you don't know who the family black sheep is, it's probably you."
- "Definition of mythology: genealogy without documentation."

"I'd rather be looking for dead people than having them looking for me!"

Lawyer's epitaph in England:
"Sir John Strange,
Here lies an honest lawyer,
and that is strange





**It is time to renew
your dues again!**

A hard copy of the newsletter is being mailed to all of our members. Please check the expiration date in the upper right hand corner on your address label. If it shows the date of Dec. 2017 please send us your renewal. Thanks.

Notice: The Archives no longer has the "Postcard Book" for sale and the publication, "One Room Schools" updated version is now available as of November.

The **Archives of the Clinton County Historical Society** is located at 16101 Brook Road in Dewitt Township Community Center. Volunteers are there to give research assistance from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Mondays and Tuesdays and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Thursday. Phone: 517-482-5117 Ext. 2. E-mail: ccgensoc@yahoo.com Web page: dewittlibrary.org/CCHS. CCHS members have free usage of the Archives, non-member cost: \$5.00 fee per day.

The **Historical Society** meetings are held on the first Monday of each month at 1:00 pm Nov. through March and at 7:00 p.m. Apr. through Oct. at the First United Methodist Church on State Street, at the northeast corner of the courthouse square in St. Johns, with entry through the south backdoors. Regular meetings are not held in June & December.

The **Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum** complex is located on the west side of the courthouse square in St. Johns. www.pgsmuseum.com. To join the Friends of the Museum, contact them at: pgsmuseum@hotmail.com; or PGS Museum, P.O. Box 174, St. Johns, MI 48879

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Mr./Mrs./Miss _____

List 5 Names you are Researching: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ New ___ Renewal ___

Do we have permission to share your information with other

E-Mail Address: _____

researchers: (please circle Yes or No on each):

Date: _____

Name & Address: Yes No

E-Mail: Yes No

Send me Clinton County Trails by e-mail ___ Yes ___ No

Annual Dues to join both the Clinton County Historical Society and the Genealogy Committee are \$15.00 single and \$20.00 a couple/family. Membership is based on the calendar year and includes a subscription to the quarterly newsletter, *Clinton County Trails*. Checks should be made payable to the Clinton County Historical Society and mailed to **P.O. Box 174, St. Johns, MI 48879.**



St. Johns Liberty Band

If anyone who can identify any individual(s) please contact, Lynne Gregory or the Archives.

CLINTON COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 174
ST. JOHNS, MICHIGAN 48879

