



# CLINTON COUNTY TRAILS



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## The Railroad and Railroad Men of St. Johns, Michigan in 1860, 1870 and 1880

by Alice J. and Peter G. Murphy



**St. Johns, the halfway point between Detroit and Grand Haven**

The town site of St. Johns, Michigan was chosen because it was on the highest ground in Clinton County on the planned railroad line between Detroit and Lake Michigan and, most importantly, at the midway point. The railroad made St. Johns the busy commercial center it became and the location of the county seat. It created a population boom that continued during the late 1800s. Along with the boom, and well into the 1900s, the thriving railroad industry prospered and provided jobs to a great number and equally great variety of workers, detailed below for the earliest days of railroading in St. Johns.

By 1844 the Detroit and Pontiac Railroad was functional between Detroit and Pontiac. Subsequently, the Oakland and Ottawa Railroad was formed for westward expansion. In 1855 the company name was changed to the Detroit and Milwaukee Railroad and this line reached St. Johns in January of 1857 and Grand Haven in November of 1858. By 1878 the financially strapped company was sold to the Great Western Railroad of Canada and was renamed the Detroit, Grand Haven and Milwaukee Railroad.

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Each steam engine was driven by an engineer who was responsible for safely driving his section of track and making sure the engine was performing well. His fireman (often his apprentice) was responsible for keeping the firebox in fuel (wood until 1860; coal 1860-1880 with some overlap). Passenger trains had a conductor who took tickets, helped with baggage and kept passengers happy and sometimes *in line*. Freight trains had a brakeman who walked on top of the cars to adjust each brake wheel as needed, especially on downgrades, and in emergencies walked down the track behind the train to warn oncoming traffic of a breakdown. The freight conductor coupled and uncoupled cars and made sure they were attached to the correct train.

Depots of any size required a variety of workers. Each depot had a telegrapher responsible for all messages sent up and down the line concerning schedules, emergencies and other train business. He might also work for an Express Agency and handle commercial and private correspondence. The station agent (or station master) sold tickets, helping with luggage, kept records and sometimes acted as a tender of track switches. In small depots, one person did all these tasks. A freight agent weighed and tagged all commercial goods, collected money, made sure all freight got on or off the correct train and kept records. The section master and his maintenance crew daily inspected their assigned section of track (5-25 miles) and made sure any damage to track or telegraph wires was corrected. The switch tender was responsible for all track switching in the area of the depot. In St. Johns, three tracks went through the downtown area, the main line and two side lines as well as several dead-end side tracks to local businesses. The watchman was in charge of crossing gates. A wood agent bought wood when steam trains used it for fuel. A timber inspector scouted trees to harvest for rail ties and telegraph poles.

The population of Bingham Township and later St. Johns grew quickly with the arrival of the railroad. In 1845 the township had only 72 people, and only 185 in 1850. By 1860, just three years after the arrival of the railroad, the population of Bingham Township had increased to 1460, and to 2963 in 1870. In 1880 the population of St. Johns alone (within Bingham Township) was estimated at 2500 people.

In 1860, according to the national census, 42 men who lived in Bingham Township worked for the railroad (2.8% of the township population). Ten were engineers, 7 firemen, 2 depot masters, 2 telegraphers, 2 baggage handlers, 1 wood agent, 1 night watchman and 17 other employees. Twenty-two lived in hotels while four black or mulatto employees lived near, but not in one of the hotels. Seven rented or owned private homes with their families and the rest boarded in private homes. The average age was 29 years (21-45). Nineteen were born in New York, 1 in Maine, 1 in Ohio and 1 in Michigan. Eight were born in Ireland, 4 in Scotland, 3 in Germany and 1 in England. No place of birth was noted for the 4 black or mulatto employees.

Fourteen railroad men lived in the hotel owned by **William L Hicks**. This hotel was located on or near the NW corner of Clinton Ave and Higham St. (replaced by the Steel Hotel in 1887). It was originally called the Railroad Exchange when opened on July 1, 1855 and must initially have housed the men laying the tracks. A year later it became the St. Johns Hotel also known by some as the Hicks Hotel. In May, 1855, **Thomas Long**, a railway employee, was killed by a fellow laborer in a fight 4 miles west of St. Johns. The first railroad worker buried locally was **Joseph McKinney** who died July 17, 1857.

The 1860 depot in St. Johns was a wooden building. It housed the telegraphy equipment and also had storage space for freight. At least during the census of 1860, multiple steam locomotive crews lived in St. Johns whereas no locomotive crews were recorded as living in Grand Haven, Grand Rapids, Lowell, Ionia or Owosso, all stops on the rail line. The wooden building burned down and was replaced with a brick and mortar depot at the foot of Oakland St in 1869.

A train crew in 1860 was expected to travel about 100 to 150 miles of track in both directions, so as to know all the key places and difficulties of that stretch of track. The crews in St. Johns travelled to and from Grand Haven (90.9 miles) or to and from Detroit (98.1 miles).

In the 1870 Bingham Township census, 17 men worked for the railroad (0.6 % of the population) only one of whom had worked for the railroad in 1860. The township housed a telegraph operator, a station agent, 2 freight handlers, 1 switchman, 1 foreman of track hands, 1 inspector of timber, 1 conductor and 9 laborers. Of the 16

new men, 2 were born in Michigan, 3 in New York, 4 in Scotland, 3 in Germany, 2 in Ireland and 2 in England. Three men lived in hotels while the others lived in a home with their family or as a boarder in a private home.

In the 1880 census, 7 men in St. Johns (0.3% of the town's population) worked for the railroad. The town housed 2 telegraph operators, 2 night-watchmen, 1 brakeman, 1 freight agent and 1 foreman of a track section of the rail line. Of these 7 men, 4 worked for the railroad in St. Johns in 1870. The other 3 men were born in Michigan, New York or Scotland. All lived or boarded in private homes.

**Robert M Steel**, the richest man in St. Johns in the late 1800s, was a railroad contractor/builder. His business, with partners Hayden and Ross, had the contract for all railroad superstructure between Detroit and Grand Haven. That included building all bridges, laying track and putting in water and signal towers, etc. He moved to St. Johns in 1856 to be near the action and completed his railroad work in 1858. He was not included in our analysis of rail workers in 1860-1880 as he was not working for the railroad in St. Johns during those years. He continued to live locally while building other railroads in Michigan, the Midwest and the American Northwest. Although he did not work for the local railroad after 1858, he did rely on it for his many commercial enterprises: the St. Johns Manufacturing Co, St. Johns National Bank, Clinton County Savings Bank, Whipple Harrow Co, St. Johns Evaporation and Produce Co, Electric, Heat and Power Co, Mutual Gas Co, RM Steel Co. Furniture, St. Johns Mercantile Co and the Steel Hotel.

The railroad had an important commercial impact on St. Johns. During 1879, 16,813 passengers departed the depot while 16,682 passengers arrived. That same year, 19,395 tons of freight were shipped from town and 4,922 tons arrived. Receipts from outbound passengers totaled \$15,521.82 and for outbound freight \$38,519.41. Grain accounted for 99% of goods shipped from St. Johns.

In 1860 St. Johns was a major hub on the Detroit to Grand Haven rail line. Multiple train crews as well as depot personnel were housed in town. By 1870 and 1880, the locomotive crews were gone and only depot and local maintenance workers remained but commerce was booming! Early St. Johns railroad history was exciting and made vibrant by the great diversity of the people hired by the industry: about half born in the American Northeast, about half immigrants from Western Europe and a few Michiganders. In many ways, the railroad made St. Johns an important Michigan city.

**Railroad men who came from or settled in Clinton County during 1860-1880.** (St. Johns= SJ; B=born; I=immigrated; M=married; E=employed; D=died; Bur=buried; Cem=cemetery)

- **Allen, James.** B: about 1824, Ireland. M: **Rosanna (Rose) Glynn.** E: 1860, RR worker SJ; 1870, day laborer SJ; 1880, laborer SJ. D: May 16, 1886, St. Johns. Not buried in Clinton Co.
- **Bromley, Thomas Sr.** B: Mar 12, 1839, England. I: 1847. M: 1865, **Maria Simmons** in Gaines, Genesee, MI. E: 1870, station agent SJ; 1880, telegraph operator SJ; 1900, capitalist SJ; 1910, retired and lived at 300 S Oakland St. SJ. D: 1922 in St. Johns. Bur: Mount Rest Cem.
- **Coakley, John K.** B: about 1831, Ireland. I: about 1857. M: **Mahalia Schellenberger.** E: 1870, RR laborer SJ; 1880, RR laborer SJ. Not buried in Clinton Co.
- **Dooling, Jeremiah.** B: Aug 29, 1828, Ireland. I: about 1830. M: about 1853, **Mary E Dunn** in Michigan. Lived in St. Johns from at least 1860 until death. E: 1860, RR worker SJ; 1870, RR switchman SJ; 1880, night watchman SJ; 1900, retired in SJ. Civil War veteran, 8<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry. D: Aug 13, 1903 in St. Johns. Bur. Mt Elliott Cem, Detroit.
- **Hatley, Thomas.** B: about 1828, Ireland. M: about 1850, **Elizabeth Flynn** in Ireland or Canada. E: 1850-1870 in Canada; 1880, Night watchman SJ. D: Jan 24, 1892 in St. Johns. Bur: Mount Rest Cem.
- **Johnson, John.** B: about 1819, Scotland. M: before 1860, Paulina. M: 1890, **Fanny Doty** in St. Johns. E: 1870, RR laborer SJ; 1880, laborer SJ. D: 1898 in St. Johns. Bur: Mount Rest Cem.
- **McAuliff, Charles.** B: between 1827 and 1835, Ireland. I: about 1852. M: **Margaret Colhun** in the US. E: 1860, RR worker SJ; 1870, farmer in Bengal Township; 1880, RR worker in Bath; 1900, day laborer in Owosso; 1910, retired in Ann Arbor. D: Sept 28, 1919 in Ann Arbor; death certificate noted he was a retired RR man on Detroit and Milwaukee RR.

- **Oding, Frederick Carl Wilhelm.** B: Dec 11, 1832, Mecklenburg, Germany. I: 1857. M: 1857, **Maria Sophia Dorteia Pringle.** E: 1860, RR worker SJ; 1870 until death, farmer in Wacousta, Riley Township. Civil War veteran, 10<sup>th</sup> Michigan. D: May 11, 1909, Riley Township. Bur: Boughton Cem, Riley, MI.
- **Petrie, George.** B: about 1834, Barry, Forfarshire, Scotland. M: June 30, 1864, **Mary Marshall** in Cobourg, Ontario, Canada. M: Mar 28, 1877, **Annie Ogston** in Wellington, Ontario, Canada. E: 1880, RR track foreman SJ; 1900 and 1910, RR foreman, South Bend, IN; 1920. Retired in Decatur, Van Buren, MI. D: 1929. Bur: Mt Rest Cem.
- **Placer, Charles** (son of Lewis). B: about 1853, NY. M: **Mary M Castler (Minnie).** E: 1870, RR laborer SJ; 1880, farm laborer, Olive Township. D: July 11, 1891, Ovid. Bur: S Ovid Cem.
- **Placer, Lewis.** B: June 11, 1818, Hesse, Germany. M: 1845, **Elizabeth Resinger** in Germany. E: 1851, Rochester, NY; 1860, Tyler, VA; 1870, RR laborer SJ; 1880, farmer Elba, Gratiot, MI; 1900, day laborer, Ovid. D: June 18 1906, Ovid. Bur: S Ovid Cem.
- **Placer, Thomas Ira** (son of Lewis). B: May 10, 1851, Rochester, NY. M: June 28, 1905, **Fanny Louisa Pollard** in St. Johns. E: 1870, RR laborer SJ; 1900 & 1910, farmer, Ovid. D: Apr 3, 1934, Ovid. Bur: S Ovid Cem.
- **Ryan, Michael.** B: about 1820, Ireland. M: **Catherine Scanlin.** E: 1860, farmer and RR worker Bengal Township and St. Johns; 1870, farmer Bengal Township; 1880, farmer Bath Township. D: Sept 12, 1886 Bengal Township. Not buried in Clinton Co.
- **Steel, Robert M.** B: Oct 21, 1833, Craftsbury, VT. M: Mar 13, 1860, **Carrie A Hyatt** in MI. E: 1860, Railroad contractor Detroit, MI; 1870, Railroad contractor SJ; 1880, Railroad builder SJ. D: Nov 16, 1897 SJ. Bur: Mount Rest Cem.
- **Vredenburg, Franklin L.** B: about 1856, Ingham Co, MI. M: Dec 1, 1878, **Linda Cook** in Maple Rapids, MI. E: 1870, RR laborer SJ; 1880, telegraph operator SJ. D: Dec 16, 1889 in St. Johns where he was noted on his death certificate as the freight agent for the railroad. Bur: Mount Rest Cem.
- **Wilson, Frank H.** B: about 1857, Cooper Township, Kalamazoo, MI. M: Oct 14, 1885, **Mary E Smith** in Pine Grove, Van Buren, MI. 1860, lived with parents in St. Johns; his family housed the telegraph operator and station master. E: 1880, brakeman SJ; 1900 and 1920, machinist, Kalamazoo, MI. Noted as a carpenter on death certificate. D: June 28, 1923, Kalamazoo. Bur: W Cooper Cem, Cooper, MI.

#### References:

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 History of Shiawassee and Clinton Counties, Michigan. 1880.  
 DW Ensign and Co. The American Railway: The Trains, Railroads and People who Ran the Rails. 1893.  
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**St. Johns Railroad Station – Built in 1869**

# ST. JOHNS BOWL FACTORY

Submitted by Myrna VanEpps

## Do you have an old wooden bowl?

At one time there was a thriving industry on Clinton Ave. in St. Johns which utilized local labor and lumber suppliers to produce wooden bowls. **L. G. and H. F. Hamilton** were the builders of a factory which was constructed between Steel and Lincoln Streets in 1864 conveniently near the railroad. No other information could be found about these two men, even to establish that they ever lived in St. Johns. L. G. Hamilton's name was used in the company's advertisements for a long time though. In the 1870 census **Harvey W. Carrington** was the proprietor of the St. Johns Bowl Factory and he is listed in the *Michigan State Gazetteer* of 1875 as the manufacturer of wooden bowls.

Management, as early as May 5, 1868, was advertising for maple "bowl blocks." Blocks were requested in four sizes, 19", 21", 24", and 27", for which cash from 10¢ to 35¢ each would be paid upon delivery to the factory. The editor of *The Clinton Independent* visited the factory in March of 1872. He reported it was producing 250 bowls each day and shipping most of them to western markets. Eight men were employed at that time, including **Charles Vredenburg** who was doing finishing work. Management claimed it was spending \$5,000 to \$6,000 annually for blocks plus a large amount for logs.

The last advertisement found to be signed by L. G. Hamilton was in *The Clinton Independent* on Feb. 20, 1873. On Nov. 16, 1876, ads signed by H. W. Carrington started appearing regularly in the *CI*. The last ad found (*CI*, Dec. 13, 1877) announced, "100,000 bowl blocks wanted. I will pay cash for maple blocks delivered at my factory in St. Johns. Don't believe parties who say I do not buy." No advertising to sell these bowls locally was discovered but its logical that some of them would have ended up in households of the surrounding area. The description (in *The Clinton County Republican-News*, July 19, 1956) of ancient items displayed in downtown store windows during Centennial Week included "large wooden bowls made here 85 years ago."

On Nov 3, 1877, Harvey Carrington married **Rose Belle Sharpnack**. She had also moved, at age seven, with her mother from Medina, Ohio, to Greenbush Twp. This couple parented five children including **Harvey, Jr.** who served in WWI and **Mabel R.** who married **James R. Davies**, son of **Robert Davies**, owner of the Greenbush Fanning Mill factory.

It seems the bowl factory ceased operating well before 1885 at which time Carrington began selling off pieces of factory property. At some point he had associated himself with **Warner Bunday** in the dry goods business but in 1885 he sold both his interest in the Bunday Co. and his home in St. Johns. Harvey and Rose relocated to Greenbush Twp. where he took up farming in section 21 on east side of the present US-127, between French and Mead Roads. He was said to be a successful farmer. In 1899 he was elected Clinton Co. Drain Commissioner and served for several terms in that capacity. Carrington and his neighbor, **D.S. French**, were connected to the Crowley Telephone system on the St. Johns Exchange In 1896.

In 1897 **Frank Jolley** was building a house for the Carringtons and the 1910 census shows Harvey and Rose living in retirement at 411 Wight Street in St. Johns. He had sold his farm in Jan. 1910 and auctioned off his personal property there. Harvey died of pneumonia on May 16, 1914, and Rose died Jan 3, 1929. They are both buried in Mt. Rest Cemetery.



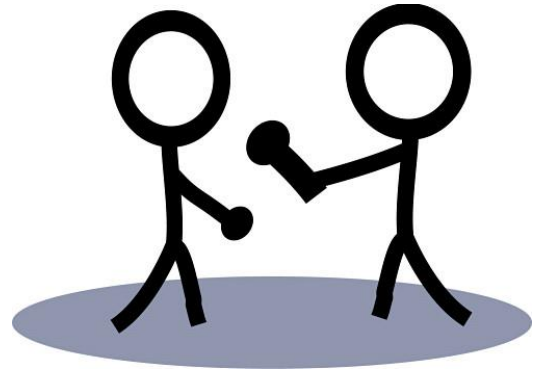
# ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Wayne Summers, Julie Peters, Myrna VanEpps

In 2019 The Oral History Committee resolved to transcribe those interviews which were taped the 1970's and 1980's by the CCHS. The tapes were held at the Archives and digitized in 2017. The Archives staff posted these old interviews online and began to collect new interviews. Some recorded panel discussions have also been transcribed and posted. All these sessions can now be heard and read at [www.dewittlibrary.org/CCHS/oral histories](http://www.dewittlibrary.org/CCHS/oral_histories).

The 2019-2020 interviewees are:

- **Charles “Chuck” Ferguson**; recalled his career in the U. S. Army and the Michigan National Guard.
- **James Church** gave a history of the Bath School Disaster.
- **Marilyn (Staub) Coin** talked about DeWitt in the 1930's & 1940's, Fuerstenau School, and her historic quilt collection.
- **Brunetta (Mazzolini) Graham** and **Mary (Mazzolini) Dunn** shared memories of the Mazzolini family business in St. Johns and detailed Brunetta's career in opera.
- **Doris (Heathman) Swatman & Lexa (Swatman) O'Brien** reminisced about growing up in St. Johns, the Heathman family business, and **Forrest Swatman's** military duty in WWII.
- **Gloria Miller** detailed her lifelong conservation activism and her canoeing excursions.
- **Margaret (Peck) and Karl Schaefer** recounted their lengthy involvement in 4-H, Camp Smith, fairs, and trips.
- **Art Wainwright** shared his career in local radio and news media. The annual Michigan Rushers celebration in Shepardsville was also discussed at length.



Listen to some of the more than 30 recordings available. The pandemic seriously curtailed interviewing in 2020 but the committee hopes to resume next year. **If you know of someone who is knowledgeable in some aspect of county history or has an interesting life story to relate, please so inform the CCHS so plans can be made to capture their unique stories.** MVE

# Local Radio Comes to Clinton County

By Wayne Summers

The year 2020 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of radio in Michigan. On August 20, 1920, WWJ-AM (8MK at the time) in Detroit began broadcasting a daily news program and was the first radio station in Michigan and arguably the first in the world with a regular broadcasting schedule. WKAR-AM at Michigan State University began broadcasting regular programs on August 18, 1922, as Michigan's first educational radio station.

Clinton County would need to wait until the late 1950's before it got its first local radio station. **Justin Marzke**, who had been in the appliance business for about 30 years, applied for and was granted a permit to construct a radio station in St. Johns with transmitter and studio on Parks Road. At 10 am on October 23, 1959, WJUD began broadcasting at 1580 on the AM dial as a full-service local station with local announcers playing middle-of-the-road music and covering Clinton County events and news.

In 1965 Marzke, having some health issues, sold the station to **Robert and Beverly Ditmer**. Ditmer had been the station manager at a radio station in Houghton Lake prior to buying his own station here. At first **Robert Ditmer** wanted to change the call letters to WJRB, however, WJR in Detroit objected and so he settled on WRBJ which included the first initials of his family members. Also moving to St. Johns from Houghton Lake with him was his wife's younger brother, Art Wainwright<sup>1</sup>.

Art had been working as a disc jockey at the Houghton Lake station since he was in high school before moving to the morning shift on WRBJ. Upon his arrival at the station Art took over the existing 10 am Homemaker's Hotline show and converted it into primarily a call-in show where people could talk about anything of local interest. During this show he was able to display his light-hearted interviewing skills which allowed him to have success later as a newsman for WILS-AM in Lansing and as a human-interest reporter during his regular *Route 10* features on WILX-TV channel 10.

He has many memories of his seven years at WRBJ. Art says a typical day would mean arriving before sunrise to turn on the transmitter before the start of each day's broadcast. Since the station was a daytime only station its day began at local sunrise and ended at sunset. During a major snow storm with the roads nearly impassable, he once drove his John Deere tractor from his home north of St. Johns to the station clearing a path as he went. Another time he remembers his brother-in-law, Robert Ditmer, allowing a circus to store a lion overnight in the station lobby which caused a bit of a fright the next morning.

In 1972 Ditmer added a FM sister station as WRBJ-FM (now WXXM) at 92.1. After he sold both stations in 1981, they went through several call letter and format changes. Ditmer bought the AM station back in 1986 and changed its call letters to the current WWSJ. In 1995 he sold WWSJ to **Steve and Cheryl Evans** of Mint City Radio who operated the station for about a year as a full-service oldies station.



**Robert "Bob" Ditmer - ca 1955**  
Photo compliments of the Ditmer family.

109 Linden, SJ  
ca 1907  
(Randolph Strickland)



## Randolph Strickland and the Strickland Mansion

By Wayne Summers

One of the prominent lawyers in the early history of Clinton County was **Randolph Strickland**. Randolph, the oldest of **Obed and Sarah's** three children, was born in Dansville, New York, on February 4, 1823.

On October 25, 1835, his mother passed away and his **Uncle Chauncey and Aunt Mary Strickland** stepped in and helped raise Randolph and his siblings **Elizabeth Ann and Obed Francis**<sup>1</sup>.

About 1844, at the age of 21, he moved to Michigan<sup>2</sup>. Randolph taught school in Ingham County and studied law with **Joab Baker**. In October of 1849 he was accepted into the Bar and briefly practiced in Detroit before moving to DeWitt the following spring. There he met and married **Mary Ellen Gooch**, the youngest of the three Gooch sisters<sup>3</sup>. In 1852 he was elected prosecuting attorney for Clinton County, a post he held for ten of the next twelve years, a streak only broken by two years spent as a Michigan State Senator.

With the removal of the county seat to St. Johns, he, his wife, and four daughters<sup>4</sup> left DeWitt for St. Johns in 1862. Two years later in 1864 he purchased a house at 109 Linden facing the courthouse square. The house had been built in 1856 by **Doctor Crawford** and was the first brick residence in the new village. Shortly after moving in his brother-in-law, **Seth P. Marvin**, committed suicide in the stable<sup>5</sup>.

Just prior to moving into his new house Randolph had been appointed **Provost Marshall** for the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District by **President Lincoln** and held that office until the end of the war. While serving in this position he added on a large brick upright along with landscaping converting his house into a mansion.

In 1868 Randolph successfully ran for Congress on the Republican ticket. He believed that suffrage should be granted to all freed slaves and women. These controversial views caused many in the district, including the Democrat Party advocating *Clinton Independent* to publish numerous articles filled with unsubstantiated rumors including that his lavish brick mansion had been purchased by embezzling money while **Provost Marshall**.

After serving a single term in office his progressive views caused the Republican Party to select a different candidate who then lost in the general election. Randolph left the Republican Party and eventually joined the Greenback Party.



The Strickland mansion during this time was the scene of many parties and gatherings in the large room that extended the width of the house behind **Randolph Strickland's** study where he would often challenge others in chess. People attending these would dress in their finest as these galas were the highlight of the St. Johns social scene.

**Mrs. A. O. Hunt's** dress was described for one gala she attended. "It was of yellow and blue changeable silk, made with immense sleeves, a full skirt to accommodate the large hoops, and neck slightly low. Her hair was dressed in the prevailing fashion then, parted in the middle and combed low over the ears with a huge back comb. Of course, the fan, scarf and huge poke bonnet were not lacking." [*Clinton Republican* 2May1907 p. 1]

Randolph contracted tuberculosis and died at **Dr. John Kellogg's** Battle Creek sanitarium on May 5, 1881. The body laid at rest in his house until the time for removal to the funeral service held in the Congregational Church across the square. His remains were then transported to DeWitt for burial next to his father on the Strickland lot in the DeWitt Cemetery. His grave is simply marked and gives no indication of his fame or accomplishments.

After Randolph's death, the parties at the Strickland mansion ceased. His widow, Mary Ellen, continued to live in the mansion renting out unneeded rooms.

At about 1 a.m. on July 7, 1897, Mary Ellen fell from the second story landing and was found the next morning at the foot of the stairs in a pool of blood by **Florence Wilson** who was renting rooms for herself, her mother and brother. **Dr. Gillam** was called and while she survived, she suffered from paralysis and needed constant care. The family moved her to her daughter's (**Harriet Allaben**) house in Rockford, Illinois, where she spent the rest of her life.

During the time of Mary's absence, the Strickland mansion was rented out to **William H. H. Chapman** and probably others. When Mary Ellen passed away on October 10, 1905, her body was brought back to the Strickland mansion where the funeral took place on October 13<sup>th</sup>. The body was then taken to DeWitt and laid to rest next to her husband.

In March of 1907, it was announced **Lawrence Price**, a prominent Lansing Catholic, had purchased the Strickland mansion and given the current occupant, **Dr. Hyslop**, notice to vacate the house. By early May it was announced the 50-year-old house would be razed to make room for a Catholic church to be built on the site. Mr. Price wanted a larger, more impressive church building in a prominent location to replace the wood frame one next to the railroad tracks on the southeast corner of Railroad and Whittemore. In August **Mr. Price** officially transferred the land to **Father John Lynch** who agreed to take over the \$4,000 land contract which Price still owed.

Today St. Joseph Catholic Church sits on the Strickland mansion site where the cream of St. Johns society once gathered.

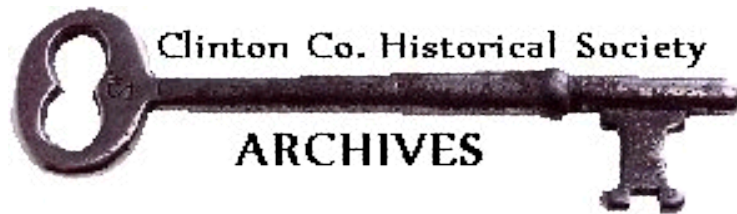
<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Ann married Almon Green and Henry J. Lyvere and lived in Ovid; Obed Francis married Pearl Keeney, was a Supreme Court judge in Utah, and moved to St. Johns after the death of his wife.

<sup>2</sup> Randolph's father, siblings, and Uncle Chauncey's family all came to this area at the same time or shortly thereafter.

<sup>3</sup> The sister's mother drowned on the way to Michigan from Maine on the Erie Canal. Their father settled briefly in Wayne County where the oldest, Olive, married Stephen Hill and later settled in Watertown Twp. The other two came to DeWitt where Betsey married Seth P. Marvin and Mary Ellen married Randolph Strickland.

<sup>4</sup> Martha (1853-1935) [see CCT September 2006], Mary Allida (1859-1927) married William H. Eastman and lived in Grand Rapids, Jessie (1861-1888) married Herman Ostrander and lived in Lansing, and Harriet E. (1863-1934) married John E. Allaben and lived in Rockford, Illinois.

<sup>5</sup> [see CCT December 2018]



## March – November 2020

I woke up this morning thinking I should write some sort of Archives Report for the end-of-year newsletter. My thoughts were clearer in the solitude of my bedroom than they are now with real life trying to invade the process. It is November 10 and my windows are open so the usual outside noise of a busy street is what I'm hearing. Not that I'm complaining but it's just one more of the unusual things for 2020. What a year! And it still continues...

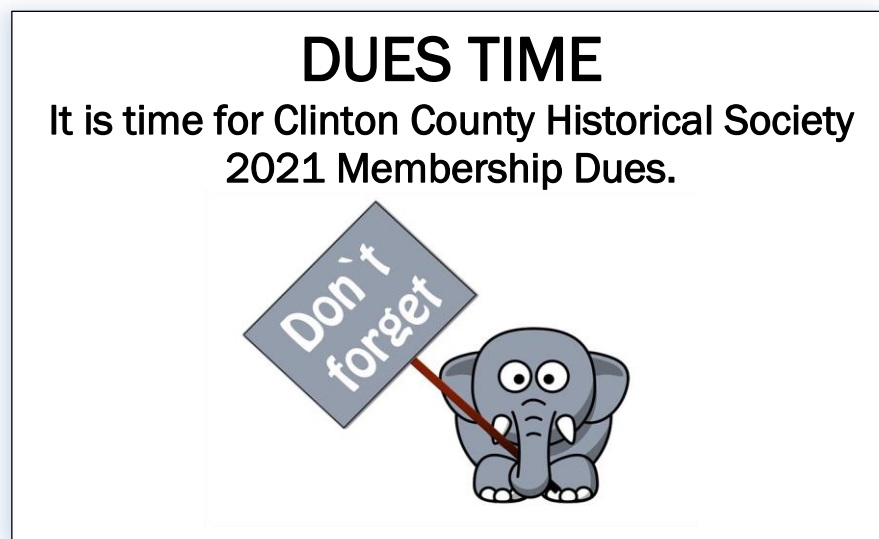
I am glad I am in the business of keeping our history because I can count on it not changing. What I read in the documents, newspapers and books back in March of this year will still look exactly the same the next time I can return to the Archives. People have still been contacting the Archives with questions which we try our best to answer with the resources we have available at home. Other kind people who have had extra time to clean their attic or closet have donated items that will go through the acquisition process and find their place on the shelves at the Archives when we return.

We did do a fund-raising project this fall of selling puzzles with a picture of the 1890 Clinton Court House. I want to thank everyone that purchased a puzzle, or two. I know that "social distancing" sometimes made it a little difficult for the pick-up or delivery process but we did prevail. From the comments I've heard, I'm pretty sure there will be another puzzle for next fall. We also thank the SJIndy and Clinton County News for the project advertising.

Another big project will be starting to roll out after the first of the year. It's called "Chronology of an Address." There will be more information coming.

We couldn't have our annual program in June so I didn't get the chance to recognize the wonderful volunteers that work with me at the Archives so I'm taking a line to do it here. Rowlan Smith (my go-to guy), Ralph Temple (our computer tech and genealogy guy), Janet Dunn (the greatest obituary clipper), and Myrna VanEpps (our photo collection and my back-up person) are the ones that keep this organization running. We are always looking for others that would like to help so please contact us if that is you. The pay is lousy (\$0) but the reward is great! 😊

With kind regards and sincere wishes for your safety through the pandemic,  
Julie Peters, Director, CCHS Archives



"Regretfully, due to present COVID circumstances, the Clinton County Historical Museum (Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum) & the Archives will be closed until further notice."

**This item is from *The Clinton Republican* 21 Apr 1892.  
Lots on Brown's addition, on Oakland St., 40 x 150 feet, now on sale at the uniform price of \$47, with a chance of drawing a new \$800 house.**

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](mailto:ccgensoc@yahoo.com) Web page: [dewittlibrary.org/CCHS](http://dewittlibrary.org/CCHS).

CCHS members have free usage of the Archives, non-member cost \$5.00 donation 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 Redeemer Church – St. Johns Campus 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 **Clinton County Historical Museum** complex is located on the west side of the courthouse square in St. Johns. [pgsmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:pgsmuseum@gmail.com). To join the Friends of the Museum and make a donation of \$25, contact them at: [www.pgsmuseum.com](http://www.pgsmuseum.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: \_\_\_\_\_

Do we have permission to share your information with other researchers: (please circle Yes or No on each):  
Name & Address: Yes No E-Mail: Yes No

New \_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_

Membership for the Clinton County Historical Society is \$20 annually.

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Send me Clinton County Trails by e-mail \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

Annual Dues to join the Clinton County Historical Society are \$20.00 per household. Membership is based on the calendar year and includes subscription to the quarterly newsletter, *Clinton County Trails*. Checks should be made payable to the Clinton County Historical Society & mailed to **P.O. Box 174**, St. Johns, MI 48879.



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

