

CLINTON, MICH.

Main Street

Ca 1900
Mainstreet, Chicago Road, view West



Visit Clinton's Historic Marker:

At the Clinton Village Offices near the Post Office:

“Early settlers who came here from New York via the Erie Canal named this community in honor of DeWitt Clinton, the governor of their native state. First settled in 1829, Clinton became an important center of trade because of its location on the Chicago road at the River Raisin. Only a decade after its settlement, the village had ten general stores, several blacksmith shops, and a hardware store. Five religious groups organized and built churches during this early era. In 1832 Clinton's first school was established; four years later a flouring mill began operation. A railway with wooden rails constructed about 1837 ran for a few years and by 1857 it had steel tracks. In order to utilize local wool production, village businessmen organized the Clinton Woolen Mills in 1866 which employed many area people until closing in 1957.”

Historical Society of Clinton

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Railroad, River &
Road
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Mainstreet, view East, Bandstand can be seen, ca 1920's



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1825

TIME OF SETTLEMENT

1825 -Chicago Military Road is surveyed following the Sauk Trail; John Tyrell, Vermont explorer, visits this area and purchases 400 acres. **1829**-Alpheus Kies, first permanent settler builds log cabin where the Clinton Inn now stands /names the settlement Clinton, after Dewitt Clinton of New York State. **1830**-Around time the Stage House was built on the north side of the Chicago Rd. **1835**-St. Patrick's (now St. John's) Episcopal Church is organized. **1836**-A grist mill is built on the River Raisin, now Atlas Feed and Grain. **1837**-First railroad on wooden tracks comes up from Adrian, but does not become permanent. **1838**-Village of Clinton is incorporated
1840-Jira Payne builds his distinctive Greek Revival home.

1853

TIME OF DEVELOPMENT (1850-1900)

1853-First passenger train comes on steel tracks. **1859**-Clinton Union School is built of brick; houses all grades. **1866**-Clinton Woolen Mill is incorporated. **1869**-Clinton-Tecumseh Township splits. **1872**-Bank organized by Alonzo Clark. **1876**-Town Hall is erected; Masons build their hall on the 2nd floor. **1884**-Clinton Local begins publishing (Clinton News published: 1879-1884.) **1893**-Electric Light Plant is built by the Village.

1901

TIME OF REBUILDING; PROSPERITY AND BUST (1900-1940)

1901-Clintonian Hotel is built by Alonzo Clark. **1903**-Fire destroys some buildings on the north side of Chicago Rd. **1905**-School is built to replace first Union School. **1925**-State paves Chicago Rd.(Villagers voted bonds for extra width paving in 1924.) **1926**-Water Works System Bonds approved by voters. **1931**-Village has \$20,000 surplus and cancels taxes. **1933**-State Savings bank closes for seven months. **1939**-Last passenger train through Clinton.

1941

TIME OF CHANGE/EXPANSION (1940-1990)

1941-Village builds first public owned Sewer System and Disposal Plant. **1943**-Clinton Machine Company begins, becomes Clinton Engines. **1951**-Clinton builds present Elementary School; country schools close. **1957**-Clinton Woolen Mill closes (DST purchased buildings in 1963.) **1963**-Clinton celebrates 125th Anniversary of incorporation. **1964**-Budd Co. and Peerless Gear begin operations. **1965**-Pleasant Valley Estates begun in N.E. Section. **1969**-Bond issue of \$2.2 million is passed for new High School and remodeling of Middle School. **1971**-Tri-County Logging and Lumber begin operations. **1973**-First Fall Festival is begun with Sidewalk Sales and Demonstrations. **1979**-52 Acre Tate Park established, purchased with matching government funds. **1970**-Mobile Home Park, Water Wheel Estates opens near dam. **1984**-Libbey-Owens Ford buys former Budd Company on Tecumseh-Clinton Rd. **1986**-Village annexes land east of the River Raisin-land purchased by Busch's
1990-Clinton Township Public Library opens in new building at 100 Brown Street.

1990

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School History The first school in Clinton was in the log house of Alpheus Kies where the Clintonian now stands. By 1832, Clinton built a one-room log schoolhouse. Sometime later, a frame one-room schoolhouse was built on the Commons near Old Burial Ground.

The Union School, the first public high school in Clinton, was then built on the “Public Square” on Tecumseh Road in **1859**. The village was proud of their new three story brick building with four rooms, an assembly room, and four teachers. A bell in the tower called the children to school. A distinctive landmark, it was considered dangerous when it was torn down in 1905.

Clinton School 1906-1971

While this new public school was built, children attended classes in the Smith Hotel (the Old Stage House) and the Town Hall. The school opened in 1906 with seven teachers for K-12th grade. In 1926 an addition was made which included a gymnasium, a science room and the homemaking department. From 1940-1950's rural schools Clinton were closing and this more than doubled the number of students, and so the elementary building was built in 1951. In 1958 another addition was made, which included the Middle School gym and cafeteria. In 1971 the new High School was built and the 1906 building was torn down.



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The Stage House, ca. 1830-

In 1927 Henry Ford purchased the Stage House from Mary Ella Smith. Now at Greenfield Village it has had many names; Park's Tavern, The Eagle, The Union, Smith's Hotel, and when it was moved, The Clinton Inn. It was one of earliest roadside hotels built to accomodate travelers between Detroit and Chicago. Many houses along the Sauk Trail/Chicago Road were pressed into service as inns due to the immense number of people coming to buy land and build a new life. Springtime mud meant a stage-coach might only go a mile or two before nightfall and the travelers would walk back to the previous night's lodging, often again and again.

The Clintonian Hotel, in 1935



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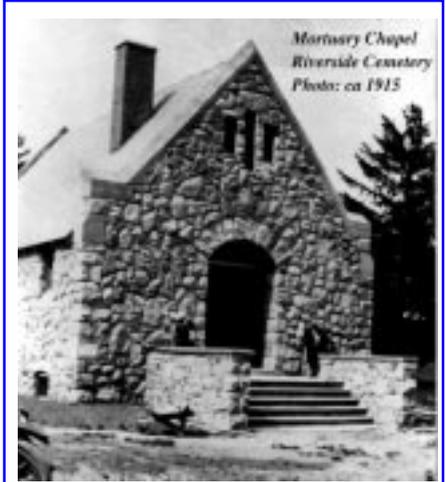
in 1926





The Atlas Mill 1836-Present

Early settlers built a mill on the Raisin River, soon after their arrival. It was called the Red Mill. The present mill can be documented back to 1836, when C. W. Pomeroy, D. & H. Owns contracted with Edwin Smith and Hiram Dodge to build a three story Greek Revival style mill. It was named Atlas Flour and their product was known throughout the state. In 1955, Charles Carlton and Max Steffens purchased the mill and flour milling was terminated and the business became feed milling. Atlas Mill is one of the ten oldest operating businesses in Michigan.



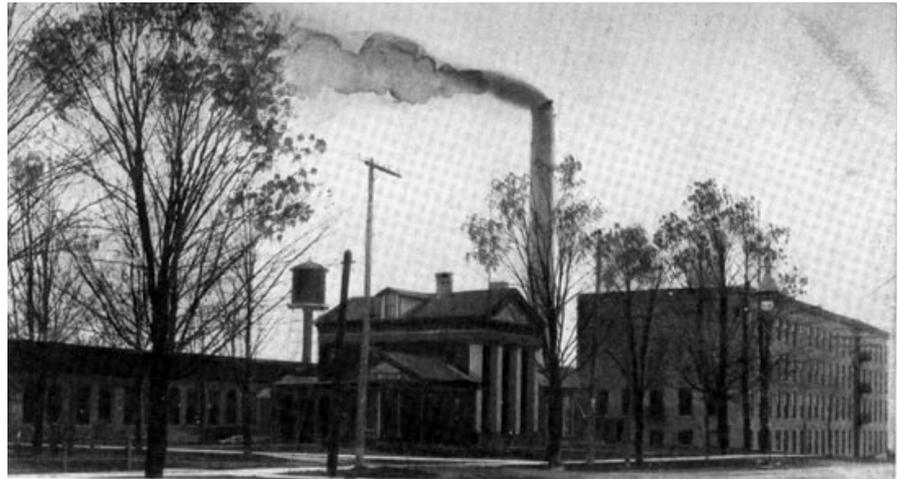
Riverside Mortuary Chapel, 1913-Present

In 1910, the Clinton Culture Club undertook the task of soliciting money for construction of a Mortuary Chapel. Four hundred people contributed to the fund and the Chapel was dedicated in 1913. It is a fine example of stone work and has a slate roof.



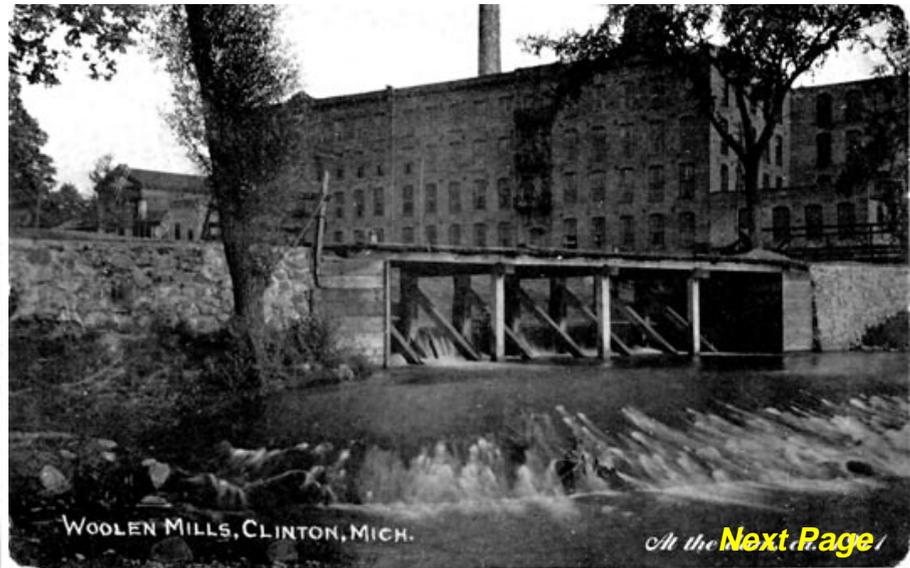
Clinton Woolen Manufacturing Company, 1866-1953

The Woolen Mill was organized by local businessmen and farmers on March 3, 1866 and began operations on a small scale the following year. The original four-story brick building made mostly fabric for men's wear. When it burned in 1886, local people, in three weeks, raised \$10,000 to rebuild the mill. Just before the turn of the century, the mill began to manufacture cloth for uniforms. In 1925 the mill employed 200 workers, while the village population was 2,000. In 1942, the mill received the Army-Navy Award of Excellence, but the rise of synthetics and wages, brought the mill to a close in 1957.



Rebuilt ca. 1886

WOOLEN MILLS, CLINTON, MICH.





Smith-Kimball Community Center 1840-Present

The Center was donated to the Village of Clinton in 1955 by Mrs. Leander W. Kimball (Blanche). The early portion of the building dates back to 1840, and was built by Jira Payne. In 1849 it was called Pomeroy Hall after its owner George E. Pomeroy. John Smith purchased the home in 1862, and when the home passed to his son Edwin R., major enlargement and remodeling was done. The portico has been called "one of the most monumental in Michigan." The home has always been considered a center of social life in the community. Today the home and grounds are used for many meetings, parties, reunions and festivals.

Located on Tecumseh Road, 2 blocks South of US12.



The Town Hall 1886-Present

The Town Hall was built by both the Village and the Township. The Masonic Fraternity built the second story as Mr. Woodward, chairman of the building committee was a Mason. The government use included elections, meeting rooms, storage and jail cells. All the special events in town were held here, including lectures, plays chataqua, graduations, church suppers and dances. It was used jointly by the Village and Township until the village offices/post office was built in 1947. The State Police were housed here from the 1930's until 1958. When they moved out the Justice of the Peace office was in the meeting room. The Library used the building from 1937-1990. The Township and the Mason's now own the building.

Located on US12.

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United Church of Christ 1844-Present

This church was organized as the First Congregational Church in 1843. The first place of worship was the District School House, where the water tower now stands. In the winter of 1843 and 1844, the men of the church sawed down the oaks and whitewood trees to build the church on land donated by Jira Payne. The building was enlarged between 1855-1859 and the Kirker Memorial addition was made in 1923.

Located on Tecumseh Road, 3 blocks South of US12.

St. Dominic Catholic Church 1867-Present

The Catholic church bought the old Baptist Church and moved it to the older part of St. Dominic's Cemetery, refitting it in 1853 for their church. Then in 1867 the present church was built by Father Ferdinand Allgayer. The first burial in the Catholic cemetery was in 1837. The first baptism occurred in 1855 and the first marriage ceremony was in 1858.

Located at the corner of Brown & Edgar, North of US12.



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St. John's Episcopal Church 1835-Present

St. John's Episcopal Church is one of the oldest, if not the oldest Episcopal Church structure west of the Alleghenies. The original building was started sometime between 1833 and 1834, with the first service held in 1835. The church was known as St. Patrick's in the early years. Rev. William N. Lyster was almost totally responsible for the building of the church. Additions were made such as the tower in 1982 and Lyster Hall in 1953.



Located on Church Street, East of Tecumseh Road



Clinton United Methodist Church 1840-Present

This is *the* oldest Methodist Church in continuous use in Michigan, soon to be abandoned. It was built from 1837-1842 of local brick in a Greek revival style. After the Civil War beautiful Gothic style stained glass windows were installed. In 1879, a bell tower was added and an annex in 1917. The Educational Building was completed in 1966.

- Note twin carriage steps for ladies to safely exit the horse drawn carriages.

Located on Church Street at corner of Tecumseh Road

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The Railroad Clinton Branch



In 1849, Michigan Southern Railroad continued construction of the original 1837 railroad northward from Tecumseh to Clinton. The first steam train to arrive in Clinton was on December 31, 1853, and a gala party was held. The Clinton Branch was now an important line from Toledo to Jackson. The railroad yards were often full of sheep and cattle, coming into Clinton for fattening. Apples and wool were also important products shipped. In 1938 passenger service ceased; except for troops shipped over the lines in WWII. In 1965, the tracks were taken up between Manchester and Clinton. Service continued 15 more years from Toledo to Clinton, but Conrail abandoned the line on March 11, 1982.

The Souther Michigan Railroad Society purchased the Clinton Branch in 1984. Today they maintain a Railroad Museum in Clinton and make passenger runs, from Clinton to Tecumseh, and seven miles south on the line out of Tecumseh.



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The Sauk Trail

also known as: Chicago Road, US112, Chicago Military Road, Chicago Pike, Michigan Avenue and US12

Clinton, as did many other towns, grew up at the convergence of a road and a river; The Chicago Military Road and the River Raisin. In 1825, the United State Congress appropriated \$3,000 to have the road surveyed, the second in the nation to receive Federal funding. The survey followed the Sauk Trail, used in seasonal migration by the Native Americans and prior to that by animals such as the mastodon (remains found in Saline Township to the East), buffalo, and deer. As trails followed the higher ground skirting swampland the present roadway (US12) has also, in most places, followed the old trail. If the original survey had been used, Clinton would have been a couple of miles North on the River Raisin. However, Musgrove Evans, of Tecumseh, was in charge of this portion of the road and wanted it to run through Tecumseh. The compromise was to run a winding road just into Lenawee County. This diversion brought the road through swampy ground and made it difficult for wagons and stages coming to Clinton. The journey from Detroit to Chicago, by stagecoach was about eight days. Clinton is about 50 miles from Detroit. This location on the Chicago Pike and the efforts of early business people made Clinton the greatest trading point West of Detroit as early as 1836. Due to the coming of the automobile, the Chicago Pike was paved in 1925. It continued to handle most of the Detroit-Chicago traffic until the opening of I94 expressway to the North in the 1960's.

The River Raisin

The Native Americans probably canoed the river to Monroe for access to Lake Erie. The Pottawatomie were the main tribe in Lenawee County when the first settlers came in the 1820's-1830's. In Clinton, the trails ran on either side of the river, the Pottawatomie on one side and the Sak [Sauk] on the other. A large campground of about 600 was reported North of Clinton near Fisk Road. The river provided food and furs for the Indians and early settlers. Mussels, and a variety of fish could be harvested. Muskrat, mink and raccoons were trapped and deer and wild turkey hunted. The River Raisin, was named by the French trappers as they observed huge amounts grapes growing and also, being dried along the river banks by Native Americans. The source of the meandering Raisin is in the swamps and lakes west of Brooklyn. The river is about 135 miles long and has a basin of around 1,000 square miles. It provided necessary water power for the mills of the settlements who needed to grind flour and saw wood. Robert Ripley of "Ripley's Believe It or Not" noted that the River Raisin was the "most crooked in the world".



*Looking Northeast on US112
ca 1951*

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MAP OF CLINTON

Scale. 400 ft. p. inch.

Key (1874)

1. Old Stage House, now in Greenfield Village
2. Hotel (Lancaster)
3. Churches

St. Dominics
 Baptist (no longer in existence)
 Methodist
 Congregational
 Episcopal

To Detroit

Commons

Burial Ground

1874

[Return Home](#)

