

The Clinton River: An Historical Sketch

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WATERSHED COUNCIL

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OUR VISION FOR THE RIVER

Individual and community actions protect and improve the health of the Clinton River, assuring that its natural, economic, and recreational value enhances the quality of life of those who live, work, and play in the Clinton River watershed and Lake St. Clair.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Clinton River Watershed Council is to protect, enhance, and celebrate the Clinton River, its watershed, and Lake St. Clair.

OUR VISION FOR THE COUNCIL

As the leading resource and advocate for the watershed, the Clinton River Watershed Council develops, fosters, and sustains innovative education, stewardship, and watershed management initiatives and practices.

DEFINITION OF THE WATERSHED:

The Clinton River watershed includes the river system and all of the lands that drain into it.

The Clinton River: An Historical Sketch

The Clinton River played an important part in the initial settlement and continued development of Oakland and Macomb Counties. Besides being a primary source of food for hunters and early settlers, the river transported people and goods into the interior of each county. The 200-foot fall from the headwaters of the Clinton River in Independence Township to the mouth of the river in Mount Clemens provided many opportunities to build mills to grind farm products and to manufacture goods for the pioneers.

Early Settlement In Macomb County

Indian and French settlements dotted the countryside along the Detroit and Clinton Rivers and Lake St. Clair when the first settlers appeared in Macomb County. The French were fur traders and traveled the "Huron River", the name given by the Indians to the Clinton, Huron and Rouge Rivers, in their flat-bottomed "batteaux". The name was changed to Clinton River in 1825.

The first settlers in Macomb County arrived in the late 18th century. A small band of missionaries, intent on Christianizing the Indians, settled along the Clinton River in 1782. The Moravian missionaries, who fled from their Ohio settlement during the American Revolutionary because they were believed to be spies, traveled to the British Fort at Detroit. Through the efforts of British General DePeyser in Detroit, an agreement was reached with the Chippewa Indians to allow the Moravian's to build another community on a high bluff above the Clinton River. General DePeyser furnished the missionaries and their Indians converts with a vessel and provisions, two milk cows and other necessary things to begin their new settlement.

The new settlement, called "New Gnadenhutten" (new tents of grace) after their former community in Ohio, was built near present day Moravian Drive. Under the guidance of Reverend David Zeisberger the settlement soon contained two rows of log houses, fifteen on each side, and a Moravian Temple. Fifty-three people, both white and Indians, comprised the original settlement and eventually, about 106 individuals lived in the 40 acre community. The missionary group planted shade and fruit trees, some still remaining today. During 1785, the Moravians built a twenty-three and one-half mile road from New Gnadenhutten to Tremble's Mill on Connors Creek near Detroit; the first inland road built in Michigan.

The Indians, jealous of the Moravians, resented sharing their hunting grounds with the German missionaries and brought pressure on the settlers to make them leave. On Thursday, April 20, 1786, final religious services were held in the temple and the Moravians traveled to Canada and Ohio. The improvements of the settlement were sold to Major Ancrum and John Askin of Detroit for \$450.

The only Moravians remaining were Richard Conner and his family. Upon his death in 1808, his widow and four sons were each awarded private claims to lands along the Clinton River. The four sons, James, John, William, and Henry and daughter Susanna remained in the area. Susanna's husband, Elisha Harrington, was appointed justice of the peace and their son, Henry, became one of the most prominent farmers in the locality. Henry Conner was a very influential man among the Indians and served as Indian Paymaster for many years.

While the Moravian missionaries were living at the settlement, the Indians helped a white man, William Tucker, build a large “double house” of hewn logs farther north. Kidnapped by the Chippewa Indians from his home in Virginia, Tucker spent much time with the Indians at a semi-permanent camp somewhere in the vicinity of Mount Clemens. After many years of living with the Indians, he returned home to Virginia and shortly afterwards married a white woman. Tucker and his wife arrived back in the area in 1783, and were given a large tract of land, presently Selfridge Field, under a treaty between the government and the Chippewas. The tuckers brought a black slave family from Virginia to work in the tobacco fields on their Macomb County farm.

General Lewis Cass, interested in finding out what lays beyond the wilderness of Detroit, sent out a surveying party to explore and map the land north and east of Detroit. In September of 1795, the surveying party reached a site bordering the Clinton River “the Huron”. Two years later, a distillery was built on this land near the banks of the river by Nathan Williams and Jared Brooks.

A military surveying party, laying out a military road from Detroit to Port Huron, briefly stopped at this site in 1798. One of the members of the party, Christian Clemens, noticed the rapidly flowing river alive with freshwater fish. Returning to this site of log cabins along the Clinton River, he made a personal survey of the area and found the river navigable for miles. In 1801, Clemens petitioned the U.S. government for the 500 acres he had surveyed and purchased the existing distillery. Christian Clemens called his new settlement “High Banks”.

However, it was not until the end of the War of 1812 that Clemens was able to plat the settlement, which was later to become the Village of Mount Clemens. By this time there were almost thirty permanent homes in this community on the high banks of the River. A sawmill was constructed in 1821, and a general store was built by Ellis Doty in 1822. The Clinton River transported the wares and trade goods from his store to the families settled along the river. In 1821, Christian Clemens commissioned Issac Russ to design and build the first schooner in Macomb County. Named the “Harriet” after the Clemen’s eldest daughter, it navigated between Mount Clemens and Detroit and also made a trip to Mackinac and Sault Saint Marie.

Through his efforts and discussions with Governor Cass, Christian proposed counties be created throughout the territory. He further recommended a county be established with Mount Clemens as its seat. Macomb County, named after a close friend of the Governor’s, General Alexander Macomb, was organized in 1818 as the third county in Michigan. Christian Clemens offered his personal residence as the first county government building, deeding his land and residence at no cost to the county. On this land stands the present and past county Courthouses.

Water transportation and improved internal roads attracted more settlers to Macomb County. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 had a great affect on the settlement of southeast Michigan, since it provided an easy way for people from the state of New York to migrate to Michigan. Present day Romeo’s first permanent settler was the Asahel Bailey family. They arrived in January of 1822, after traveling from New York on the first steamer on the Great Lakes, “Walk-in-the-Water”. They were soon followed by Mr. Hoxie, who built an Inn in 1822, and the little settlement was re-named Hoxie’s Settlement. By 1837 there were three dry goods and grocery stores, a wagon shop, tannery shoe shop, a foundry, copper shop, shoe factory and hoopskirt factory in the village. Incorporated in 1838, it was

named the Village of Romeo by Laura Taylor, who felt the new name "short, musical, classical and uncommon."

Shelby Township was organized in 1827; ten years after Nathaniel Burgess built the first house in the township. Ira Preston and his wife Deborah purchased 320 acres lying along the middle branch of the Clinton River in 1826 and established the first sawmill in the area shortly afterwards. The Village of Utica served as the center of activity for the township, which had grown to a population of 1,153 by 1837. "By the late 1830s, Macomb's three flourishing communities offered two stream sawmills and a glass factory (the only one in Michigan) in Mount Clemens, an iron foundry and a branch of the University of Michigan in Romeo, and an academy and a three run of stone flour mill in Utica."

Fertile land, an abundance of birds, deer and game attracted many settlers to Washington Township. When Michael Bowerman established his 200-acre farm in Washington Township in 1813, he planted peach pits, which he reportedly brought from Gorham County, New York. William Austin Burt settled in the township in 1820, followed by Elon and Nancy Andrus in 1821. The Andruses built a large white home, which still stands in the township. Their son built the famous Octagon House in 1860. Washington Village was one of the largest communities in early Michigan and the total combined population within the township and village was 1,314 residents in 1840. The picturesque, rolling countryside attracted immigrants from Scotland to Bruce Township, which officially became a township in 1837.

Pioneers settling in Warren Township and the Village traveled around a vast cranberry swamp, using the Clinton River and Red Run to reach tillable land. As the swamp drained, more settlers arrived and by 1850, 750 people lived in Warren. The high ground between the Red Run and Connors Creek, a former Indian and Animal trail, was called "Center Line" by the French. Kunrod's Corners, established at the intersection of the Old Moravian trail and present day 10 Mile Road was a scheduled stop for stagecoaches by 1830. Catholic farmers who traveled the difficult and often muddy road to St. Mary's Church in downtown Detroit built St. Clement's church in Centerline in 1854 near this site, and within four years was assigned a resident pastor.

Early Settlement In Oakland County

Pioneers coming in by the Clinton River and Indian trails settled in Oakland County during the same period. The first identifiable white settler, James Graham, his son Alexander, his son-in-law Christopher Hartsough and their wives came to Oakland County in 1817 from Mount Clemens, and squatted on land in the City of Rochester. The Grahams made the difficult trip by traveling along the Old French road, which paralleled the Detroit River and Lake St. Clair to reach Mount Clemens. From there, following directions given to them by the Indians, they traveled westward, skirting the swampland until they arrived at the juncture of Stoney and Paint Creeks. The Grahams found a land of virgin oaks, pine, elm, maple and beech with three fast streams to provide power for a mill. The following year, the first white settler's child in Oakland County was born to Alexander Graham and his wife.

A natural resource, waterpower, gave Rochester the foundation for future growth. Settlers for New York, who either came overland from New York through Canada or sailed from Buffalo to Detroit on the steamship "Walk in-the-Water," migrated to the Rochester area and settled near the Clinton to take advantage of the power generated by the River and its streams.

The first mill in Rochester was built on land purchased by John Hersey in 1818 at the present site of the municipal building. John Hersey and William Russell, the owners of this sawmill on Paint Creek, began operation in the summer of 1819 and soon added a millstone to stone to grind flour. The mill attracted businesses to the area. A wagon shop, established by George Shaw, operated near Paint creek between 1824 to 1829 and Hiram Higley opened a furniture factory in 1828. The original mill was torn down by Charles Larned and replaced by a distillery in 1826.

Across town, a mill was built on the Clinton River near the current site of the Paper Company by Colonel Stephen Mack of Pontiac. Near the present day South Bridge, Milo Newberry built a dam and sawmill on the Clinton River and Mr. Green built another sawmill on Avon Road north of the Clinton River, near Michigan Christian College. George Postal, Sr. and Gad Norton built other mills, utilizing power from the river. Jacob Miller and partners Griggs and Taylor built distilleries on Paint Creek.

Governor Cass and a surveying party made the original plat of the Village of Rochester in 1826. By the following year, nine small houses were located in the village and population in Rochester continued to increase rapidly. Seventy-two parcels were purchased in Rochester between 1823 and 1824 and within the following twelve years, every piece of property in Avon Township (now Rochester Hills) was purchased from the Land Office in Detroit.

In 1823, Lemuel Taylor with sixty members of the Taylor family purchased 400 acres on Stoney Creek where he opened a shop to make chairs and wheels. His great-great granddaughter, Sarah Van Hoosen Jones, managed the farm, which is on the National Registry of Historic Sites, until her death in the early 1980s. The John Herseys moved from Rochester to Stoney Creek in 1824 and in partnership with others built a mill on Winkler Mill Road, utilizing water from Stoney Creek to saw lumber and grind flour. The Stoney Creek area continued to flourish and eclipse Rochester. Four mills, one utilized by Levi Cole to Card wool, were in operation within one mile of each other in Stoney Creek.

Oakland Township, which bordered Avon Township on the north, attracted settlers in the early 1820s. A steady influx of pioneers, primarily from Rochester, New York, established homesteads, cleared land and planted orchards in the Township. By 1827, the assessed valuation of property in Oakland Township was \$77,466. A flourmill with waterpower, supplied by a dam built across Paint Creek was built by Needham Hemingway in 1837. Orion Township attracted its first settlers, Judah Church and John Wetmore in 1819. Samuel Munson followed them from New England and Jessie Decker, the Biglers and McAlveys of New Jersey. Samuel Munson built the first sawmill in Orion Township followed by Joseph Jackson who built a sawmill on Paint Creek in 1835.

A major community in the Clinton River, which was to become the County Seat, was established in the second decade of the 1800s. A group of men from Detroit made a trip to the area around the junction of the Clinton River and the Saginaw trail to consider the area's potential for settlement. Their enthusiasm for the area led to the formation of the Pontiac Company and the purchase of 1440 acres to lay out and establish a town. The property was purchased by company agent Stephen Mack on November 6, 1818 and on February 19, 1819 the original plat of Pontiac was laid out. On March 28, 1820 the Village of Pontiac became the county seat.

The first settlers to arrive in the town were the families of Joseph Todd, Orison Allen, William Lester and Mr. Thornton. Arriving on January 16, 1819, they built a 20 foot square log cabin to temporarily house the fourteen people in the group. A sawmill, believed to be the first milling operation in the county, was built in the spring of 1819 and cut the posts to mark the corners of the original plat of Pontiac.

Another flour and gristmill was added in 1819, a trip hammer and blacksmith shop in 1820, a distillery in 1823 and a woolen factory in 1824. The Pontiac Company gave free lots to the first six mechanics who agreed to settle permanently and a lot each to a blacksmith and a clothier. John Jenkins constructed the milldam and sawmill in 1833, the first water power used below the lakes areas, which he sold to Charles Dawson in 1849. Dawson added a building and a gristmill using the whole stream as the millrace. Within the next four years, fifty houses were located in the village.

The settlement was incorporated into the Village of Pontiac in 1837. "Municipal issues of those village days included flooding, pollution and the rightful level of the millpond. A modern resident of Pontiac would not have felt altogether out of place. In the spring, "says on account" (the Clinton's) floods menaced a good part of the community and often did heavy damage... discharges from the growing number of outhouses, and the practice of dumping dead animals, including horses, into the water, also made the river troublesome."

More Pioneers came to Oakland County after the building of the Turnpike between Detroit and Pontiac. Constructed in 1824 of logs laid side-by-side, a spur was added to connect Rochester and the City of Royal Oak in the southern part of the county. These roads are the present day Woodward and Rochester road. A trip from Rochester to Detroit took two days.

Pioneers from New York, the territory and other states established new communities in Oakland County. Waterford Township was first settled in 1819 by Major Oliver Williams who brought his family to the shores of Silver Lake, one of the numerous lakes connected by the Clinton River. Alpheus Williams and wife, Williams' brother-in-law, and Archibald Phillips settled in Waterford the same year and constructed a dam and sawmill on the Clinton River near its crossing with the Saginaw trail.

Eleven years later, at a site a short distance northwest of the Williams' another gristmill and sawmill were built. Other pioneers established homesteads near this new site. A new settlement was established at Drayton Plains in the mid-1830s after Daniel Windiate, an Immigrant from England, first built a gristmill and several years later a tavern and hotel. The three communities, each of which had stores, taverns, blacksmith shops plus the mills continued as centers of trade for Waterford Township for many years.

Land in the City of Orchard Lake was purchased before 1830, where several parcels of land, one including a 38-acre island in the center of Orchard Lake, had been set aside for Indian reservations. The isthmus between Orchard Lake and Cass Lake was settled by James Dow in 1830 while William Gilmour established homestead on the southeast corner of the lake one-year later. The present business section of the City of Orchard Lake is located on Gilmour's former farm.

The Clinton River was important in attracting pioneers to the Clarkston and Independence Township area. Settlers came to the Village of Clarkston after Butler Holcomb purchased 2,000 acres along the Clinton River in 1830. Digging a half-mile long canal from

the Clinton River to the East Side of the present millpond, Holcomb built a sawmill in 1832, which became the trading center of the village and township.

The mill was purchased by Jeremiah and Nelson Clark who later added a gristmill and flourmill. The Nelson's built a dam 200 feet long across the Clinton which gave them a fall of 22 feet, enough water to propel an overshot-wheel 20 feet in diameter and grind four hundred bushels of grain a day. Judge Melville Door built a second saw mill on a branch of the Clinton River two years later. By 1840, a general store, blacksmith shop, wagon and harness shop, shoemaker and tailor shop were operating in the Village of Clarkston. In 1867, Nelson Clark established the first fish hatchery in the Village followed shortly by the second hatchery in Drayton Plains.

Settlers kept pouring into Michigan where land sold for \$1.25 per acre. Between six and nine hundred people landed daily in Detroit on one of the three steamboats, which sailed to Michigan, while hundreds migrated to the state after the opening of the Erie Canal in New York. Others traveled on the wagon roads and leading toward Pontiac and Mount Clemens. In the late 1820s, leaders in Macomb and Oakland counties formed the "Clinton River Navigation Company" for the purpose of making the river navigable for boats and thirty miles between the Village of Mount Clemens to Mack's lower mills in Pontiac. When completed, they were to collect a toll from the anticipated shipping freight and passengers.

The Clinton – Kalamazoo Canal

While a plan for a Clinton River was being formulated, Michigan was admitted to the Union in 1837. The new legislature recognized the need to improve internal transportation through the construction of turnpikes, railroads and canals. The new legislature adopted a plan, which called for the establishment of five lines of communication, three railroads and two canals. The Clinton River, its name changed from Huron to Clinton in honor of New York's Governor DeWitt Clinton after the completion of the Erie Canal, figured prominently in this state plan.

The Clinton-Kalamazoo Canal was selected as the first "public works" project in the state. The canal was to provide a waterway, cut across 216 miles of dry land, linking Lake St. Clair and Lake Michigan together, with Mount Clemens as the eastern port. Farm products grown within the Clinton River watershed would be taken there for boarding upon ships sailing the Great Lakes. From Pontiac westward, the canal would transport new settlers and supplies into the interior of the state and eventually connect with the thriving Lake Michigan port of Singapore. The western port was to ship freight as well as passengers to Chicago. In 1837, the legislature approved a five million-loan bill for the sale of bonds, part of which was to finance the construction of the Clinton-Kalamazoo Canal.

A festive celebration was held in Mount Clemens on July 20, 1838 at the start of construction on the Clinton-Kalamazoo Canal. Governor Mason was present to dig the first shovel full of dirt for the canal. Other celebrities present for the ground breaking were Judge Ross Wilkins of the U.S. District Court at Detroit, U.S. Marshal Conrad ten Eyck and Judge Christian Clemens. Hundreds of citizens joined the celebration, which started with a thirteen-gun salute, the sound of a fife bugle and the beat of the drum. A splendid oration was given by Robert P. Eldredge, Esq.. The group was directed to the site where the Governor placed the spade "amid the deafening shouts of" lookers on, "and roaring cannon, and the mighty thundering of heaven's own artillery." A sumptuous dinner was served that afternoon.

The grand visionary scheme ended after only twelve miles of canal were completed. Economic conditions pulled the state treasury into bankruptcy and the state withdrew its support because of its inability to find lenders. Work on the canal stopped in 1842 leaving many contractors and their workers payless. The unpaid workers vandalized the construction and pilfered iron from the locks before setting them on fire. The forces of nature caused further deterioration of the canal and only of the canal are visible today. Future support for the canal ended with the coming of the railroads.

The water rights and title to the land were given to the Crissman family of Utica, which kept the canal open from Rochester to Utica. Mills, such as the Utica Milling Company used canal water, for over a century to grind farm produce. A commemorative plaque, first placed by the Michigan Historical Commission, recognizes the historic but unsuccessful canal project. The marker, dedicated on June 26, 1957 and placed in Bloomer State Park near Rochester, includes a large map of the canal route and a long inscription.

Internal Transportation

Although the ill-fated canal did not open Michigan as envisioned, pioneers continued to settle in Macomb and Oakland Counties. Railroads and plank roads provided key internal transportation routes for the movement of people and goods. A state act passed in 1848 to authorize private companies to “pave” highways by laying boards on one side of a road and to charge a toll, usually two-cents per mile. For the next sixty years wooden blanks remained the sole method of improving roads in Michigan.

The plentiful forests in Macomb and Oakland Counties provided oak and black walnut for the wooden planks that we laid cross wise on heavy stringers. Local sawmills were established along the roads to be “paved”, such as Romeo Plank Road. One of the first plank roads in Macomb county, Utica Road, connected Roseville to the Village of Utica. Gratiot, Van Dyke, and Mound Roads were planked with black walnut. The plank roads brought in more settlers to Macomb County, especially German immigrants who were attracted by the rich agricultural lands in Macomb Township and other townships.

Planks covered the Saginaw Trail from Detroit to Pontiac by 1854, and encouraged the transport of goods from the rich farm out of the county and the migration of new people into the county. However, the rotting and warping planks were difficult to repair and deteriorated rapidly. Eventually, the roads were covered with gravel. Where possible, roads were built on glacial ridges.

The coming of the railroad in the mid-1850s hastened the influx of newcomers and new industries to Oakland and Macomb Counties. The Detroit and Pontiac railroad, the first in the county and sixth in the state, provided service between Detroit, Royal Oak, and Birmingham by 1838 and to Pontiac by 1843. Within the next forty years, three rail lines serviced Pontiac. Pontiac, incorporated as a city in 1861, gained importance as a shipping point for agricultural produce, and later, for manufactured goods.

Communities along the rail lines continued to grow and prosper. Other jurisdictions, such as Stoney Creek in Avon Township and adjoining Washington Township in Macomb County, were by-passed by the Detroit and Bay City Railroad, and declined as the Village of Rochester expanded. The Detroit and Bay City followed the Clinton River Valley, with the portion between Utica and Rochester laid on sections of the old canal banks, and reached

Orion and Oxford in 1872. By 1907, eight passenger trains and 25 freight trains per day were scheduled to stop in the Village of Rochester.

The Michigan Airline Railroad Company provided an east-west route throughout the state, connecting Richmond to Romeo and within a decade, to Rochester and Pontiac. The Detroit–Port Huron branch of the Grand Trunk Railroad served Mount Clemens with the first train arriving in 1859.

A new type of railway provided transportation in the late 19th century: the inter-urban. The tracks, which ran down the middle of roads, were called the people's roads because they ran past farmhouse doors and the middle of main streets in towns and villages. The inter-urban connected Detroit, Royal Oak, Rochester, Romeo and Lake Orion by 1899 and reached Oxford the following year. By 1920, the inter-urban electric railway provided service between the major communities in the two-county area as well as Detroit.

Some companies moved to the outlying communities because of the transportation provided by the inter-urban. The Ferry-Seed Company moved to Avon Township in 1902, and the Parke-Davis Company in 1907. U.S. License No.1 was granted to the Parke-Davis Company to produce biologicals in the United States at its farm in Avon Township. The inter-urban trains passed by the successful Detroit Creamery Farms along Gratiot Avenue in Clinton Township, which provided milk for the Walker-Gordon Dairy in Detroit. The advent of the automobile led to the demise of the inter-urban railway system by 1930.

Industrial Development in the Watershed

The Clinton River and the mills built during the initial settlement of the counties continued to play an important role in the expansion of industry. The existing mills, many converted to manufacture products other than flour and wooden planks, used both waterpower and steam to generate energy and produce products for export as well as use by the local population by the late 1880s. Rochester became known for its woolen and paper companies, Oxford for the manufacture of agricultural implements and marble works.

In Mount Clemens, the Donaldson Brothers manufactured carriages, wagons, sleighs, and agricultural implements for sixty-two years, from 1865 to 1927. Sawmills, such as Hubarth and Schott's on the Clinton River in Mount Clemens, grew into large lumberyards to support the growing businesses in the downtown area as well as new residential construction. The famous rose industry in Mount Clemens was established in 1882 by the Breitmeyer family along the Clinton River and expanded when their daughter married Herman Klagge. Former employees of Breitmeyer or Klagge started additional green houses. The Mount Clemens Pottery was formed in 1914 and grew to the largest pottery-making unit under one roof in the world.

The men who settled in the numerous villages and townships during the later part of the eighteenth century brought many skills and entrepreneurial talents with them. The abundance of hardwood forests and ample water resources for the production of steam were the raw resources, which attracted wagon and cart makers to Pontiac in the mid-nineteenth century. The success of inventors like R. D. Scott in improving carriage, wagon, and cart design, and manufacturers like Charles Vleit Taylor who built a carriage factory for wholesale distribution, laid the foundation for the future automotive industry in Pontiac.

Pontiac became the carriage and buggy capitol of Michigan by 1899, with fifty-five firms employing 4,984 people. Martin Halfpenny produced the first self-propelled vehicle in Pontiac in 1900, and other entrepreneurs jumped into the production of the machine. General Motors Corporation purchased individual firms, which manufactured cars in Pontiac, between 1909 and 1910. The population in Pontiac jumped from 14,532 to 34,173 in the following decade.

Resort Industry

The railroad and inter-urban brought manufacturing to established communities in Oakland and Macomb County. They also brought significant numbers of people to enjoy picnicking, fishing, boating and swimming along the Clinton River, tourists to the many resorts located around the lakes in Oakland County and to the famous “mineral baths” in Mount Clemens.

The City of Mount Clemens became known worldwide as “The Mineral City”. The first bath house was built in 1873 by Dr. Henry F. Taylor, and his son. By 1893, the Original Bathhouse had given 750,000 baths to those seeking cures or relief from a variety of ailments. A bath in the Original cost seventy-five cents when attended, or fifty cents without an attendant. The success of the baths brought more hotels to the city, such as the Medea Bathhouse, which could give 1,500 baths per day. Over forty hotels, some very large and ornate, others small and intimate, provided lodgings for the ten bathhouses in the city at the height of the industry. The ornate Park Hotel and bathhouse contained a bowling alley, gymnasium, elegant dining room and 200 rooms. It attracted famous people such as Henry Ford, Mae West, Babe Ruth and William Randolph Hearst.

Attending theatres, musical concerts, horse racing, art auctions or strolling down the tree lined streets sipping the sweet artesian well water from the Panacea or Pagoda springs provided diversions for patrons after their daily mineral water bath. Excursion boats, such as the steamships Mascotte and Atlantis, plied the waters of the Clinton River from Mount Clemens to Lake St. Clair past “the Venice of America” which was lined with hotels, boat houses, private clubs and cottages. Privately owned boats were available for charter and canoeing was a favorite past time during the later part of the nineteenth century. The bathhouse industry began to decline during the second decade of the of the 20th century when new theories of medical treatment were introduced after Word War I, the automobile caused changes in vacationing, and the Great Depression.

While the “Mineral City” attracted people from all over the world, many summer visitors from Detroit, Royal Oak and other suburban communities spent their weekends and vacations in the lakes region in western and northern Oakland County. Lake Orion was a favorite spot and tourists and residents alike gathered at the Bellevue Hotel in the township to partake of its famous fish, frog and chicken dinners. Visitors at the popular Park Island in the Village of Lake Orion took the steamer, “Little Dick” to the islands in the middle of Lake Orion or walked across the bridge to the amphitheater, dance hall and viewing tower. The Deer Lake Inn in Independence Township, the Caribou Inn and Vliets on the Hill in the Village of Clarkston were such popular resorts the railroads put on twelve coaches each weekend for city people who liked to swim, boat and fish in the numerous lakes in Oakland County.

Population Growth Leads To Environmental Problems

Although population continued to increase in Macomb and Oakland Counties between the two World Wars, the end of World War II ushered in an explosive population expansion. Centerline's population grew from 2500 in 1935 to 7,643 by 1950. Warren Township grew into the largest city in Macomb County, with a population that peaked at 170,000 by 1970. The City of Warren, home of the famous Chrysler Tank Plant, which produced 800 tanks a month during wartime, attracted more than 800 industries with a value in excess of \$650 million to its community. Sterling Heights, which incorporated in 1968, became the second largest city in the county, and boasted 93,000 residents by 1975. Between 1950 and 1970, Macomb county's population had increased more that three times, from 185,000 to 625,000.

Oakland County experienced the greatest growth of any county in Michigan during the 1950s, nearly 300,000 people, with the growth spread throughout the county. Another 511,870 people migrated into Oakland County during the next twenty years and the population increased to 907,871 individuals. Over one million people lived in the county by 1980. High-tech industry and research parks are being drawn to the county because of environmental amenities. The 1,100-acre Oakland Technology Park along the Clinton River in the City of Auburn Hills is expected to bring in thousands of employees who require housing and other services.

The population increase in the watershed accelerated environmental problems that were evident prior to the population explosion starting in the mid-forties. The water quality in the Clinton River system was seriously affected by this growth. The river, which once attracted people and industry to settle in the watershed, became a depository of the wastes of modern society. No live fish could be found in the river between Pontiac and Lake St. Clair in the 1960s.

Industries, businesses and municipalities discharged into the river or its tributaries. The construction of homes on the lakes in the northwest part of the watershed and along the river and creeks increased the runoff from fertilized lawns and nutrients form malfunctioning septic tanks. For several decades, sewage and storm water flowed into county drains that dumped into the Clinton River. The Red Run Drain, serving southern Oakland and Macomb Counties, received untreated sewage as well as storm water until the Twelve Towns Relief Drainage project was completed in the early 1970s. The massive relief system now intercepts sanitary sewage before it enters the Red Run Drain and transmits the sanitary sewage to the Detroit Wastewater Treatment Plant for treatment.

Increased flooding occurred in the more density settled southern part of the watershed. The flooding was caused by growth further upstream, large expanses of paved surfaces which decreased the amount of water that could be percolated down into the soil and sedimentation from construction and agricultural activities. Modern man reduced the capacity of the Clinton River while at the same time it was required to carry a much larger volume of water after each rainfall.

Low-lying land in Mount Clemens and Harrison Township experienced five major floods between 1938 and 1950. To alleviate these re-occurring floods, a two and one-half mile spillway, 116-feet wide, was constructed from Gratiot Road entering Lake St. Clair to the South of Metropolitan Beach. Today, besides carrying excess water, the spillway is used by the Detroit Boat Club Rowing Team for practice, and American and International races. In downtown Pontiac, the river was enclosed in concrete and buried.

A Success Story

The passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972 initiated major municipal and industrial projects, which have dramatically improved the quality of the Clinton River. The cities of Pontiac and Warren built tertiary wastewater treatment plants while other communities elected to join the regional Detroit Wastewater system. Industries, which discharged into the Clinton River, were required to bring their effluent up to state and federal standards before discharge. Many industries chose to discharge into a municipal system instead of constructing pollution abatement systems themselves. Although problems remain, the river is making a comeback and is regarded as one of the nation's success stories.

The residents and municipalities in the river basin, and the Department of Natural Resources are recognizing the Clinton River as a valuable resource. Communities along the river are acquiring and developing parks to provide a variety of recreational activities and open space for residents. For example, the Rochester-Utica State Recreation Area, which includes the best remnants of the Clinton-Kalamazoo Canal, is a favorite spot for families and people to enjoy the river and Yates Cider Mill, which still presses cider by waterpower. Twelve miles of abandoned railroad right-of-way were purchased by four communities, the City of Rochester, City of Rochester Hills, Oakland Township and Orion Township for a trailway which closely follows Paint Creek and the Clinton River before reaching the Rochester/Utica Recreation Area.

The City of Sterling Heights is developing a park along several miles of the river's floodplains. Biking and hiking paths, canoe liveries, bridges and many water access points have been planned to take full advantage of this urban river resource. The Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority has developed a large regional park around the impoundment of Stoney Creek on the border of Oakland and Macomb Counties and has a second large regional park under development on the North Branch.

Youngsters and people of all ages are found angling for steelhead, perch, walleye and other varieties of fish planted by the Department of Natural Resources through out the river system. Trout found in cold water streams such as Paint, Stoney and East Pond Creeks offer a challenge for many in the metropolitan region. Canoeing on the Main Branch in Waterford, downstream from Pontiac to Sterling Heights and in Mount Clemens is increasing each year. Swimming and boating of all kinds is commonplace in the lakes in western Oakland County while the river downstream of Mount Clemens harbors numerous marinas full of pleasure boats.

The Clinton River played a key role in the settlement of two of the most populated counties in Michigan. Although not presently used to transport people and goods, or for supplying power to growing industries, the Clinton River continues to be a focal point for citizens who live, work and play in the watershed. The Clinton River meanders gently, sometimes swiftly and angrily, but proudly from its headwaters in Independence Township through beautiful and clear lakes, through sparsely settled and densely settled communities to Lake St. Clair. During its journey, it brings much pleasure to the people in the watershed.

Historical Markers Near the Clinton River

Lac St. Clair, St. Clair Shores, MI

Selfridge Field, M59 near Mt. Clemens, roadside Selfridge Air Base, Mt. Clemens, MI

Alexander Macomb House, Court House Plaza, Mt. Clemens, MI
(Macomb County Historical Society and Museum, 15 Union, Mt. Clemens, MI)

Thomas Edison, Cass Avenue, between Grand Avenue & Railroad, Mt. Clemens, MI

Moravian Road, Moravian Drive, south of Mt. Clemens vicinity, MI

Upton House, 46555 Utica Road, Sterling Heights, MI

Village of Warren, Mound & Chicago Roads, Warren, MI

Romeo, Michigan
(See Wolcott Mill, Ray Township)

Simpson Park Campground, 70195 Campground Road, Bruce township, MI

Holcomb Beach, archaeological site, 16 Mile and Dodge Park, Sterling Heights, MI

Clinton-Kalamazoo Canal, Bloomer State Park No2, end of John R. Road, Rochester, MI
(Yates Cider Mill, Dequindre and Avon Roads)

Winkler's Mill, 6381 Winkler Mill Road, Rochester, MI

Stony Creek Village. Tienken Road, east of Rochester Road. Rochester, MI
(Rochester Historical Museum)

Troy Corners, Ledge Barnard lane, 5945 Livernois, south of Square Lake Road, Troy, MI

Wattles' House 3864 Livernois, Troy, MI

Predmore House, 244 N. Broadway, Lake Orion, MI

Meadow Brook Hall, 480 South Adams, Rochester, MI

"Pine Grove" 401 Oakland Ave, Pontiac, MI
(Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society)

Chief Pontiac, Orchard Lake Public Fishing Site on M-218, Orchard Lake, MI

Sashabaw Cemetery, 5331 Maybee Road, Clarkston, MI
(Village of Clarkston)

Wolcott Mill, Ray Township, Indian Trail Road, north of 29 Mile Road