



# The TELEGRAPH

VOLUME XLVII Issue 2

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## Will Carleton, Michigan's Farm Poet

by Jean Whisler Walker

Did you know Michigan Public Schools are required to observe the birthday of Will Carleton on his birthday, October 21st? Many school districts and many teachers are not aware of this act and if, and when informed of it, ask "Who is Will Carleton, anyway"?

The name, Will Carleton, has long been forgotten by many but in the late 19th century, he was one of the well known orators and poets of his time. Will enjoyed the lecture circuit with the likes of Mark Twain and Walt Whitman and traveled the country entertaining audiences with his lectures and poetry. He was a poet of the people, especially the farm community, as his poetry touched the hearts of the people who read his works. He would reflect in his writing and poems the hardships and feelings so many in the rural farm country of which they were familiar.

Carleton was born in 1845, the last of five children to Celeste and John Carleton. The couple had moved to the area just outside of Hudson, Michigan only five years before, clearing the vastly forested land and building a log home. The year Will was born, a frame house was built and the family was well on their way of making a living of farming in the wilderness of southern Michigan.

The pioneer Michigan families suffered the hardships of clearing lands, protecting livestock from wild animals and suffering from disease, especially the dreaded "Michigan Augue," a malarial disease caused from the mosquitoes in the Michigan swamp lands.

Will, being the son of a farmer, was expected to work the land with his father and brothers but farming never really agreed with him. When still in a high chair he was said to pay strict attention to the preacher and would imitate him by pounding his fist on the table and repeating parts of the sermon.

As a child his father would often find him off behind the barn reciting poetry to the birds and wildlife, so by the time he was fourteen he began writing his own poetry in a diary. Will's poems were often somber some of the titles of which were *The Dead Blacksmith*,

*The Dying Indian Chief* and *Long Before Autumn*.

At the age of fifteen his sister, Mary Ann died of consumption. He wrote a poem dedicated to her and read it at her grave site. The poem would later be called the *Faded Flower* and would be published in the *Hudson*

*Gazette* and later in his first book of poetry.

Will was still hard at work helping with the farm and would attend school whenever he could squeeze in the opportunity. He began attending Hillsdale College in 1861 but found he wasn't yet mature enough for college life.

About that time, the Civil War broke out. Lenawee County was very patriotic to the Union cause and many in the area were abolitionists. The Carleton farm was a stop for the underground railroad which likely made a huge impression on the young writer.

Henry, Will's brother, enlisted in the 18th Michigan infantry. Will also tried to enlist himself, but was turned down

because of his small stature and was told he would never make it as a soldier. This was the first of three unsuccessful attempts Will made to join the army.

It seemed that Will was destined to stay at home and help his father since Henry was no longer there and his father was getting older. This made finding time to study harder than ever. Toward the end of the war Henry was

(continued on page 5)

"The 21st day of October in each year shall be observed with appropriate exercise in the Schools of Michigan as Carleton Day in memory of Will Carleton, Michigan Pioneer Poet. . .on such day it shall be the duty of each teacher of any grade above the fifth grade to read. . .at least one of the poems of Will Carleton and may, in addition provide each other proper and fitting observance of such Carleton Days as they desire."

-Public Act 51-1919, Michigan State Legislature



Visit us online:  
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## FLAT ROCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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### OUR MISSION

*The Flat Rock Historical Society seeks to preserve and communicate to residents and visitors the history and spirit of those who have lived in and near the City of Flat Rock from the beginning of human habitation, or its vision, to bring our community together for the enjoyment, discovery, and learning our past to create our future.*

## OUR 2021 SPRING FLEA MARKET

IS

SUNDAY,

MAY 2<sup>ND</sup>\*

MARK YOUR  
CALENDARS



## BAKE SALE

Our Flat Rock Historical Society Spring Flea Market will be held on May 2nd at the Speedway. Please note this date is subject to change because of the governors orders. Check our Facebook page for any updates. As always we need your help. Dawn Bartok and Kathy Fisk, have volunteered to manage the Country Store during this Flea Market.

Members are asked to bring their home baked goods for the Country Store to the Hotel on Saturday, May 1st between 12 and 4 pm. In the age of Covid, it would be very helpful to have items individually wrapped if possible.

Please let us know if you can help sell baked goods during the flea market. We often run out of baked goods, so we depend on you!

If you are going to visit the Flea Market on Sunday, please consider supporting the Historical Society's Country Store Booth at the Speedway. The proceeds from the baked goods go directly to the society and support artifact conservation and historic programming. Since we were unable to have neither the Spring nor the Fall Flea Market last year, your support is vital to continuing operation of the museum. Thank you in advance!

## GRATITUDE

We would like to thank the following folks:

\* Mike Sollars for helping to digitize collection photos and load them into our Past Perfect Database.

\*The family and friends of Gertie Younglove for the generous memorial funds.

\*The family and friends of Ruth Vack for the memorial funds.

\*Mary Washko for sending out holiday postcards.

\*Subject to change based on government restrictions.

# 2021 Calendar

## Open House Schedule\*

1 - 4 pm Saturday, April 10th Saturday, May 1st Saturday, June 5th	1 - 4 pm Saturday, July 10th Saturday, August 7th Saturday, September 11th	1 - 4 pm Saturday, October 2nd Saturday, November 6th Saturday, December 4th
<i>Needlecrafts &amp; Textiles</i>	<i>Blue Ribbon Summer</i>	<i>Home for the Holidays</i>

\* Some buildings and exhibits may be closed based on spacing rules and government restrictions. Schedule is subject to change.

## Flea Market Dates

**Spring Flea Market - May 2nd**  
**Fall Flea Market - October 3rd**  
**7am-3pm @ Speedway**

## Membership Meeting Dates

Thursday, June 17th 5pm Members Picnic  
 6pm Members Meeting/Election  
 7pm "Eloise" by Tyler Moll

Thursday, September 16th 5pm Members Chili/Soup Off  
 6pm Members Meeting  
 7pm Speaker TBD

Thursday, December 16th 6pm Member's Holiday Party

EST. 1974



**FLAT ROCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
*presents*  
**2021 GHOST HUNT**  
*at the Flat Rock Historical Museum\**  
 THE EVENINGS OF  
**MAY 8<sup>TH</sup> & OCTOBER 23<sup>RD</sup>**  
 ORDER TICKETS @  
[HTTPS://GHOSTHUNT MUSEUM.EVENTBRITE.COM](https://ghosthuntmuseum.eventbrite.com)  
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*Tickets on Sale starting April 1st*



PARANORMAL SEEKERS SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN

**LIMITED NUMBER OF TICKETS AVAILABLE**

[www.ParanormalSocietyofMi.com](http://www.ParanormalSocietyofMi.com)



**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2021**  
**AND**  
**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2021**  
**(HELD ON CAMPUS DUE TO COVID)**



# Huron Valley Sentinel

## Huron Valley Sentinel Newspaper Digitization Project

by Lesley Gilliland Harkai

The Flat Rock Historical Society has received a generous gift of memorial funds in honor of George and Gertie Younglove. After careful consideration, the Board decided to use a portion of those funds to purchase a new scanner that would enable us to digitize the last remaining issues of the Huron Valley Sentinel.

Mars Dunn donated several boxes of the Huron Valley Sentinels in 2005 to the Society. The newspapers had belonged to his wife's grandfather, James Ertel Mote, also the publisher.

James E. and Nora Mote moved to Flat Rock from Wyandotte, Michigan around 1920. They became the publishers of the Huron Valley Sentinel, Flat Rock's own local paper. The first volume, issue one was published December 10, 1920. Each volume contained 52 issues and each issue contained eight pages. Mr. Mote continued publishing his local newspaper well into the 1940s.

There are no other volumes of the Huron Valley Sentinel known to exist, except for the volumes in the museum. Therefore it is very important to preserve them. It should be noted that these newspapers not only cover Flat Rock history, but extend to Carleton, Exeter, Rockwood, Waltz, New Boston, and other communities, some as far as Wyandotte and Monroe.

The Society sorted out the newspapers into volumes as best they could, there were some duplicate issues, but there were many missing issues as well. Some of the issues are heavily damaged while others are pristine.

Our new scanner arrived recently. It is the type of scanner that scans from above and does not physically touch the paper. This is wonderful as some of the issues have had to be patched together with heat bonded

archival film. We are thoroughly impressed with the crisp clear text scans even on the most damaged copies. It has capabilities to scan books too and we have many hand written diaries and ledgers that in time, we hope to digitize after the newspapers are completed.

The software that came with the scanner runs Optical Character Recognition (OCR) on the pages and saves the files as searchable PDFs. The PDFs are loaded into the Society's PastPerfect Database. There is some Board discussion on upgrading the database subscription to allow for public use. At this point we are focused on get the papers scanned and uploaded as quickly as possible to best preserve the fragile newspapers.

We have started to digitize the Huron Valley Sentinels and have set up a stand alone station dedicated to scanning the papers. If anyone is interested in volunteering time to help us digitize we would welcome the help. Please just call the museum office at 734-782-5220. Its not such a hard process as monotonous. And its hard not to see an article or ten that catch your attention and slow you down. We will be sure to provide and update on this most important project.



## Will Carleton, Michigan's Farm Poet

by Jean Whisler Walker

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taken prisoner in Georgia and although he was released at the end of the war, he never made it home. He was too sick from being at the prison camp to make the journey. Henry died at the camp and is more than likely one of the eighty-six unknown soldiers moved to the Marietta Georgia National Cemetery from a mass grave. This was quite a loss for Will as he was close to Henry and spent many hours writing to him while in the service. Carleton would later write a poem, *Cover them Over* as a memorial day tribute to the fallen Civil War troops.

In the fall of 1865, Will was finally able to return to Hillsdale College and graduated with honors reciting his poem as valedictorian, *Rifts in the Clouds*. After completing his education at Hillsdale, Carleton starting working for and contributing to major newspapers in the Detroit and Toledo area.

In 1871, the *Toledo Blade* published Carleton's poem *Betsy and I Are Out* which became an immediate hit reflecting many emotions of the readers of the farming community.

*Draw up the papers, lawyer, and make 'em good and stout:  
For things at home are crossways, and Betsy and I are out.  
We, who have worked together so long as man and wife,  
Must pull in single harness for the rest of out natural life.*

The poem continues on for twenty more verses expressing life experience, humor, and sadness many had at one time experienced themselves. The poem became a hit and was picked up by newspapers nationwide. Will's first book, *Poems*, was published about this same time which included poems he had written for earlier newspapers. This time became one of inspiration for the young poet and he was soon to write his most famous poem, *Over the Hill to the Poorhouse*.

*Over the hill to the poorhouse I'm trudgin' my weary way-  
I, a woman of seventy, and only a trifle gray-  
I, who am smart an' chipper, for all the years I've told,  
As many another woman that's only half as old.*



This poem, as most of his works, originated from Will's life experience. He would often visit the elderly at the local poorhouse while attending school at Hillsdale College. The poem brought about an awareness to many of the conditions and poverty that faced the elderly and the poem became a prompt for FDR and others in the legislature to create the social security system.

Will's career took off and from then on he began making a good living giving readings and lectures. He was said to be such a great speaker as to hold the audience's attention for hours. He began publishing books and eventually his own magazine, *Everywhere*.

Dan Mathews, an avid reader of Carleton, built a hotel in the Michigan Wilderness just miles from Flat Rock. As residents began to move into the area, Mathews decided to name the village Carleton after his favorite poet. Will had never met Mathews but was invited to visit the town named after him in 1909, a town he didn't know existed until two weeks before his visit! The county line road at the south end of Flat Rock leading to the village of Carleton is also named for the poet. He came back to visit his namesake village a number of times, often for publicity receptions where his poems were read aloud to a captive audience.

Carleton married later in life, but never had children. After moving to New York City, the poet lost connection with his rural audience, the people who were so endeared to him. Will died December 17, 1912, with only \$5,000 to his name and not quite enough to square his debts. He left behind, however, a wonderful collection of books and poetry depicting the rural farm life and daily struggles of our 19th century ancestors.

The Flat Rock Historical Society would like to thank Cindy Fesko for the donation of a set of Will Carleton's series of books: *Farm Ballads*, *Farm Legends*, *City Ballads*, *City Legends*, and *Farm Festivals* along with several issues of Carleton's magazine, *Everywhere* (as seen in the photograph above).



## *In Memoriam*

**Carol McLaughlin Klingel**

(December 9, 1936 - February 9, 2021)

We are sorry to report that another of our older members suddenly passed away this Winter. Carol McLaughlin Klingel was born December 19, 1936 in Monroe County and died February 9th the age of 84.

A Carleton native, Carol was Valedictorian and graduate of Airport High School in 1954. In 1956 she married Ron Klingel, who passed away just 8 months ago.

She was active in the Ladies's Auxiliary of the Flat Rock Fire Department for many years. A Charter member of the Flat Rock Beautification Commission and served on that board for 25 years.

Carol loved history and research. She even published a book about her ancestor John McLaughlin, a Revolutionary War Veteran (Available in Local History Room). In 1993 she helped found the Monguagon Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). She was instrumental in obtaining a DAR marker for Michael Vreeland's grave and published a book on Michael's Family.

She and Ron were both lifetime members of the Historical Society. As a Society board member she served as Treasurer for many years. While she was not an official member of the Historical Commission, Ron was, and she worked side by

side with the board helping with the restoration of the Flat Rock Smith Hotel. They are both greatly missed.



Three methods to sign up depending on how you access your Amazon account.

Click on the following LINK:

**<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7376837>**

---OR---

- A. Visit [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)
- B. Sign in with your Amazon.com credentials
- C. Choose a charitable organization to receive donations, or search for the charity of your choice
- D. Select your charity
- E. Start shopping!
- F. Add a bookmark for [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile

---OR---

Turn on AmazonSmile in the Amazon Shopping App

- A. Make sure you're signed up for AmazonSmile (use your web browser to visit [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com))
- B. Download or update to the latest version of the Amazon Shopping app for iOS or Android
- C. Open the app and find "Settings" in the main menu
- D. Tap on "AmazonSmile" and follow the on-screen instructions to turn on AmazonSmile in the app.

*Welcome New & Renewing Members!*  
 Roberta Gonyea (renewal)  
 Jeanne Micka (Life)

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Annual membership dues are due for the 2021-2022 membership year. Our membership year mirrors our fiscal year July 1st - June 30th. Dues can be mailed, brought to the museum office, given to any board member or paid online.

Since the Covid/Pandemic began the Society didn't feel that membership dues should not be assessed because the museum was closed. But, your dues mean more than just visiting our buildings. They help support in the maintenance and cleaning of the Wagar House, Smith Hotel and Munger General Store. It's keeping the buildings alive. Even though the buildings have been closed we still have our Curator, Lesley scanning, cataloguing and entering in our database artifacts that have been donated. Donations have been coming in on a daily basis. A handful of volunteers do come in sporadically to help in any way to get our museums up and running when the time comes. If you are not a member and would like to become one don't hesitate to contact our office or maybe you know of someone who enjoys history. Volunteers are always welcome! I know it's been a rough year for all of us but, the Historical Society still needs your support.



## Flat Rock Historical Society 2021-22 Membership Application

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal Membership No. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
 City

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 State

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 ZIP

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 @  
 Email 1 Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
 @  
 Email 2 Address

☐ Landline

☐ Cell

☐ Texting

(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone #

*Please tell us a little about your connection to Flat Rock or interests on the line above.*

CHOOSE ONE:

☐ \$10 Individual Annual Dues (July-June)

☐ \$15 Family Annual Dues (July-June)

☐ \$5 Student Membership

☐ \$100 Life Membership (per person)

Make checks payable to: "FRHS"  
 Mail application & check/money order to:

**Flat Rock Historical Society**  
 PO Box 337  
 Flat Rock, MI 48134

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## *The Last Laugh:*

*Vintage Cartoons from the Hometown Paper*



"An Annual Occurrence" *The Huron Valley Sentinel*  
(Flat Rock), 30 March 1928, p. 1.

## MUSEUM UPDATES

Our Museum Office is located on the lower level of the Munger Store and (at least at this stage) is open by appointment. We have been given clearance by the city to allow for volunteers to work onsite and we have a number of major exhibit resets that we are working on.

Additionally, we are working on cataloguing items into our new web database system. This is potentially something that could be done from home if anyone has a computer and would like to volunteer their time. Please call the museum for a volunteer application and additional details.

We are currently in the planning stages for our 5th Annual Diggin' Up Local History event planned for this fall. If you would like to participate in this fun event, please call the museum, 734-782-5220.

## PICTORIAL HISTORY OF FLAT ROCK

The Flat Rock book published by Arcadia Publishing is still available for \$22 from the Museum Gift Shoppe. Books are also available at the Blue Heron Trading Company in downtown Flat Rock or by calling the museum office 734.782.5220.