

BUILDING CLARKSTON HISTORY at 90 North Main

It has been a building of many uses for many people.
It was built as Clarkson High School in 1910 and students learned and played here until 1930. In recent years, it was a community center and the Independence Township Hall. But in 1940 the property was bought by Henry Ford to manufacture parts for military and other vehicles during World War II. Ford added a power plant with a smokestack at the back, creating steam power with water from Pine Lake behind the building. Local workers here made vehicle straps and seat cushions.

YOU AUTOKNOW
At its factories, Henry Ford always checked the power generators with windows so they could be easily seen.

12
Along sidewalk at 90 North Main Street

15
Along sidewalk in front of Township office on Waldon Road

CHANGES IN THE LAND A History of Independence Township

The landscape has created history
In Independence Township for thousands of years, native tribal peoples lived here, hunting and fishing among the dense forests and lakes. After the township was formed in 1817, settlers first cleared the forest for farm fields in the flattest portion of the township, where the Clinton River spills through sparkling lakes. Mills were built using water power to cut lumber and grind grain. When the railroad was built through the area in the 1850s, the first tourists were drawn to the lakes, woodlands and clean air here. The landscape continues to be a valuable part of life in Independence Township.

Pine Knob is the highest site in southeast Michigan, at its 1,150-foot elevation.

Exploring our Historical Markers

Together the Clarkston Community Historical Society and Independence Township have placed a total of 17 Historic Markers throughout the village of Clarkston and the surrounding area. Use this guide to locate and view each one. There are 10 in the village within walking distance of each other. The rest can be found along Independence Township safety paths. Grab a guide, hop in your car (or take a walk), and enjoy some local history!

13
In front of home at 18 North Holcomb Road

A HISTORY OF BIRTHS at Mary Green's Maternity Home

She was known as "Grandma Green" by everyone in Clarkston.

As a midwife, Mary Green was trained and licensed to assist mothers in giving birth to babies. After the death of her second husband, Rev. Oliver Green, in 1913, she began to help local doctors deliver babies in women's homes. In 1932, she opened a maternity home at 18 North Tolcomb Road, and for several years she delivered over 500 babies here. Mary Green offered the comforts of home, including washing, meals, laundry and housekeeping, in the days before Clarkston women went often went to hospitals to give birth. Her maternity home was a special place in the hearts and memories of the residents of Clarkston.

TRAINS, PLANES, AND AUTOMOBILES Col. Sidney Waldon, Transportation Pioneer

Nothing was more important than transportation
to Col. Waldon. When he was a teenager in the 1880s, he emigrated with his family from England, he worked on railroads in Pennsylvania, then gained remarkable success as a leading engineer and officer for the early Packard and Cadillac automobiles in Detroit. He knew the Wright Brothers and helped establish an airfield in Mt. Clemens that later became Sillitoe Air Base.

But his mission was public service, and he retired early in 1918 to serve in World War I, where he developed aircraft for America's first air force. He later was a leader in the planning of streetcar and highway systems in Detroit. In the late 1920s, he built the landmark Pine Knob Estate on 840 forested acres on a hilltop in Independence Township. A Detroit News article in late 1933 described Colonel Waldon as "a Detroitian whose dreams come true."

16
On Waldon Road near Pine Knob Golf Course entrance

THE NELSON CLARK HOME A Pioneer's Living History

Nelson Washington Clark was a builder.
He and his brother Jeremiah joined the flow of pioneers in the 1820s from New York State to Michigan where they bought 2,000 acres of land along the Clinton River in Independence Township. Nelson and his brother built a grist mill and dam. The dam formed the Mill Pond and, from 1834 to 1839 Nelson built the house and farm property along the east bank of the pond. This home was a landmark of the prosperity that became Clarkston, as Nelson with a school, another mill, a store, and the first fish hatchery in Michigan.

1
Along sidewalk at 71 North Main Street

A CHURCH AND A HOME at 29 Buffalo Street

At this corner, this church has been many things.
In 1841, the First Methodist Episcopal Church built a windowless, wood-frame structure here, and it housed the congregation for 32 years. In 1873, this brick and stone church was built for the growing membership. In 1961, the church congregation moved to a new site on Waldon Road, and this building was purchased by the Salvation Army, then abandoned in 1974. In 1981 it was bought, renovated and occupied by a private family, and it has been an expressive landmark home ever since.

14
In front of the church building at 29 Buffalo Street

17
In front of home at 23 South Holcomb Road

THE FRANK WALTER HOME A Merchant Making His Rounds

He was a welcome sight in the farmlands around Clarkston.

In 1880, Frank Walter's family moved into this house and opened a store in the small building at the back. Frank's family tended the store as he rode his horse-drawn wagon to farm households in the region, delivering groceries and supplies, often trading with them for their fresh milk, eggs and wool. Among the isolated rural farmers, he also was a cheerful source for local information and gossip. In 1919, F. Walter & Son Dry Goods, Footwear & Groceries moved to the handsome brick building at 5 South Main Street in downtown Clarkston, where customers were welcomed for many years.

2
Robertson Court & North Main Street

DR. CHARLES GRAY ROBERTSON Sharing the Gift of Medicine

In the Civil War and in Clarkston, Dr. Robertson served the people of his community.

Born in Scotland in 1829, he traveled with his family to America to carve out a farm in southern Michigan. After earning a medical degree in 1862, he served in the Union Army as a surgeon. He joined the 8th Michigan Cavalry and took part in General Sherman's March to the Sea. Returning to Michigan, he became a physician and, in 1880, he bought eight acres of property along Main Street in Clarkston. He built a home here and opened an office on Main Street, spending much time on horseback treating patients at their homes. After his death in 1901, his son Wilton subdivided the family land, built this road, and moved the family home onto Robertson Court.