

Byron Center Historical Society



byronmuseum@sbcglobal.net

byroncentermuseum.com

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Meet Our Board Members

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Trustee	Lynne Rich

DOWNTOWN

Located in the Historic Byron Center Town Hall

Located at:

2506 Prescott St. SW

(Mailing Address: P.O. Box 20)

Byron Center MI 49315

MUSEUM

Regular Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays
9 AM to 12PM (Noon)

**The TownCenter
Newsletter
Issue No. 2 2024**



Save the Date

Polar Express at the Depot

Date: Friday, Dec. 6, 2024

Times: 6pm, 6:45 pm, 7:15 pm

Address: 2120 76th St. SW

Sign-ups are required to join us as space is limited to 30 guest per time slot.

Wear your pajamas and join us for a "Polar Express" experience. Check out our train display, visit with Mr. and Mrs. Santa, and listen along to the story as the movie plays during your visit.

Reserve your tickets today! Cost is \$5 per person which includes a prize drawing entry and take home gift.

Call 616-862-1157 or stop by the Byron Center Historical Museum, 2506 Prescott, between 9 am-noon Tuesdays or Thursdays.

PayPal accepted to username Byron Museum.

John Gill

I want to talk about my dad. Many of you know him, John Gill, or Clayton John to family, founder of Gill Industries, father of 12, lover of life, and former private pilot.

He turned 90 last month. He still golfs and snow skies, bakes bread weekly from wheat he grinds, plays a mean game of cribbage, teases his grandchildren and great grandchildren, which number over 100, and just loves life everyday!

What else does he do? He builds airplanes. He is nearly finished with his fifth and sixth, which he's painted bright yellow and named "Thing 1" and "Thing 2." They are bi-wing planes. There were no kits. Dad has fabricated every part from prints.

If I sound like I'm bursting with pride, I am. He's been hoping to live long enough



John Gill next to one of his recently completed planes.

to get through these last two planes built. I hope he has time to build another.

Joani Gill



Come for a Stroll through History

Christmas Open House

Dec. 7, 2024

4-6 pm

Byron Center Historical Museum is having an open house during the Byron Christmas Celebration. Stop by and take a tour of the museum. There will be personnel in many of our display areas to share information on how life was in the early days.

Scavenger hunt and wreath making project also will be taking place.



John and Rita (Williams) Gill, center on sofa, and their six daughters and sons. Photo circa 1982.

Rita (Williams) Gill

In honor of International Women's Day (which was March 8, 2024), I would like to recognize my mother, Rita Williams, maiden name Gill.

Rita was rejected from the convent as young girl for a "bad heart" and so she began her career as a young mother, married at 19. She and John Gill wanted 8-10 kids. She had 12 by age 32. When the youngest of her children entered school she decided to further her own education and graduated as a licensed practical nurse (LPN). She worked in a local hospital for years until taking on a managerial position in the 1980s in the company her husband and brother started, Gill & Williams Tooling, which later became Gill Industries.

Sometime in the early 1990's dad retired and mom took over as president. She thrived and became a strategic and visionary leader. The company grew to become a global mechanism supplier to the automotive industry as well as an important local supplier to Herman Miller and Steelcase.

Not only was Rita well respected and loved by hundreds of employees, she won numerous awards including being one of the top 50 Women in Manufacturing in *Automotive News* in 2000.

She also won several local awards in West Michigan. Although she is 90, she still works out with a personal trainer twice a week.

Joani Gill

Byron Centre Museum and Historical Society
P.O. Box 20
Byron Center, MI 49315

Membership has its privileges!

If you wish to continue receiving the TownCentre Newsletter check the mailing label for your membership expiration date.

Please complete this form and return it with your check payable to:
The Byron Center Museum and Historical Society, PO Box 20, Byron Center, MI 49315

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Individual.....	\$15
Family.....	\$25
Business.....	\$50
Patron.....	\$100

Membership dues are tax deductible 501(c)3 non-profit organization Lic #12251

Volunteers are always needed!
Please call the Museum at 616-878-0888

Visit us on Facebook:
Byron Center Museum & Historical Society
Website: www.byroncentermuseum.com