


**Comments**

 **BRANCH**  
DISTRICT LIBRARY

Tell us how the library is doing.  
Turn this card in at the library or by mail.


Date: 2-9-24 PM Time of Event: Word

Library Branch or Department: Union City

Wonderful help getting material printed

Check here if you wish to have the library respond to your comment.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

 **Branch District Library**

Tell us how the library is doing.  
Turn this card in at the library or by mail.

Date: 3-8-24 Time of Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Library Branch or Department: Put the Holiday books all together.

Check here if you wish to have the library respond to your comment.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

*Google Reviews for the Coldwater Branch, retrieved on March 12, 2024*



**Imeldalee Lopez**

Local Guide · 23 reviews · 1 photo

★★★★★ a month ago

Very helpful....



*Google Reviews for the Union Twp. Branch, retrieved on March 12, 2024*



**Douglas Riggs**

7 reviews

★★★★☆ a week ago

**NEW**

Helpful staff. Took Three visits to read one book with out having to sign it out.



**Ruth Smith**

45 reviews · 2 photos

★★★★★ 2 months ago

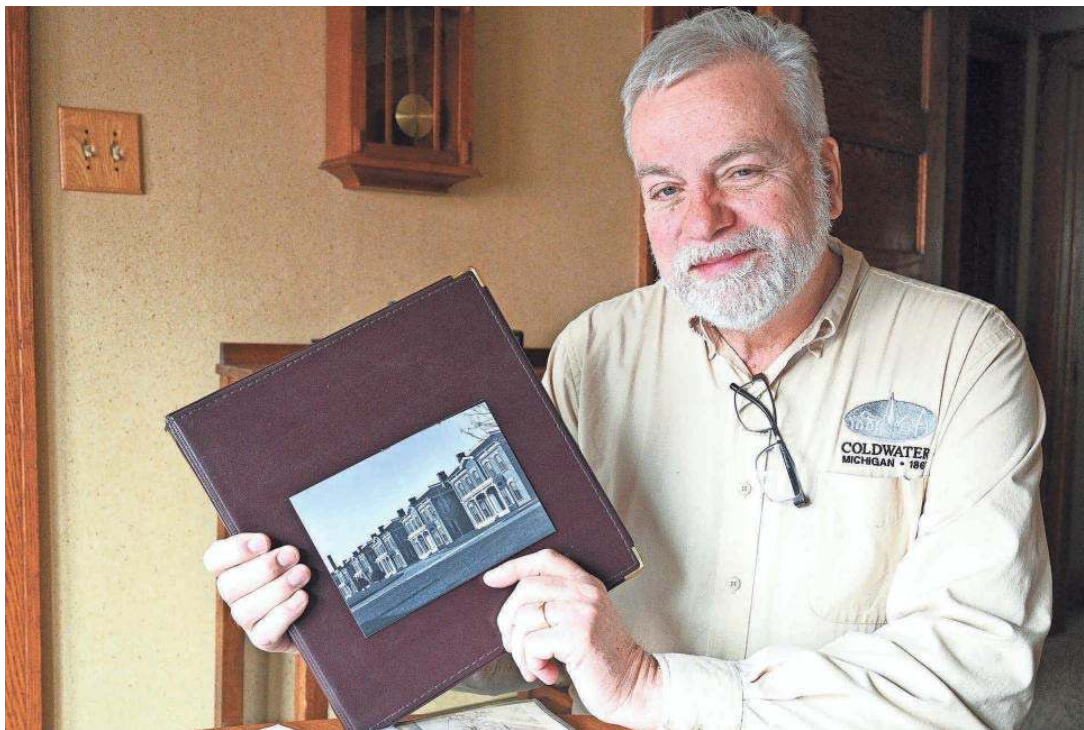
Very nice there.



## Publicity

*The Daily Reporter*, February 27, 2024, p.A1

### Library to receive State Home history from Hazelbaker collection



Randall Hazelbaker showed an album from Ken Klein with pictures of the original cottages on the cover.

DON REID/COLDWATER DAILY REPORTER

# ‘It was just amazing’

#### Don Reid

Coldwater Daily Reporter | USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

COLDWATER – Randall Hazelbaker, known locally as Mr. History, will prepare a book and presentation of the now-gone Coldwater State Home.

The site, as it evolved over 150 years, remain a major employer in the city.

While most kids collected baseball cards, “I collected post cards,” pictures of places in the communi-

ty most now long gone, the city councilman and county commissioner explained.

The city library advisory board received city council approval on Feb. 12 to use \$2,000 from the Library Memorial Fund for a 100-page scrapbook project covering the history of the former Coldwater State Home and Training School, which later became the Florence Crane Correctional Facility.

**See COLLECTION, Page 3A**

# Collection

Continued from Page 1A

“I have a vast collection of photographs and text that’s been written about the history,” Hazelbaker said.

Plans are to digitize the scrapbook so copies will be available for purchase.

Ken Klein, the home athletic director in the 1930s, gave Hazelbaker a book filled with photos and allowed him to copy a 16 mm film of the home before Klein’s death.

“It was just amazing,” Hazelbaker said.

## The purpose of the State Home evolved before becoming a prison

The state legislature created Michigan’s State Public School at Coldwater in 1871 after state Sen. Caleb Randall arranged the donation of 160 acres of land, and the community provided some money, Hazelbaker said.

The school was opened in 1874 with an administration building, schoolhouse, and nine, two-story brick “cottages,” generally for orphans ages 2 to 12.

“The young boys, and some girls were quickly adopted out to families where they were needed to work the farms,” Hazelbaker said. “Those with physical problems and disabilities stayed behind.”

State records showed 155 “inmates” at the home on Marshall Road in 1905.

The farm was self-sufficient, growing much of its food in gardens and greenhouses. Those that lived there, who were able, helped, Hazelbaker said.

There are pictures of the farm in his vast collection.

## The state repurposes State Home to serve mentally challenged

In 1935, the State Public School was renamed Michigan Children’s Village and began restricting admission to children with mild mental impairments, as explained by the Michigan Historical marker on the site.

Locally, it became “The State Home.”

The original brick Italianate structures “Were replaced with modern brick buildings. One was a huge hospital built in the 1950s. It was a state-of-the-art hospital better than what we had here,” Hazelbaker said.

Hazelbaker said some original beautiful historic buildings existed until the early 1970s.

By the late 1970s, national efforts focused on integrating those with mental and physical disabilities into the community.

Then called the Coldwater Regional Center for Developmental Disabilities, the facility was closed by 1979 and sat empty for several years, Hazelbaker said.

## The State Home site became a prison in 1985

The state transformed buildings and constructed



An engraving in the 1879 History of Branch County showed the newly built State Home on the inside cover.

PHOTOS BY DON REID/COLDWATER DAILY REPORTER



In June 2019, crews demolished the last of the buildings used by the State Home now on the property of Lakeland corrections facility.

new ones so Florence Crane prison could open on the site in April 1985.

The state added the modern dormitory-style Lakeland Corrections Facility when Crane opened.

New housing units and a food service building opened in March 2000.

The older Florence Crane prison was closed on June 1, 2011.

In the summer of 2019, the last buildings from the state home in front of Florence Crane were torn down.

The remaining parts of Florence Crane off State

Street fell into disrepair.

Lakeland continues to operate.

Hazelbaker will outline the history of the State Home on-site in the double-sided 100-page book thanks to another local historian, Chuck Woodward who had interests like Hazelbaker.

Woodward, whose family operated a lumber yard on W. Chicago Street, left money specifically for the Heritage Room at the county-run District Library to fund local history preservation.

Contact Don Reid: [dReid@Gannett.com](mailto:dReid@Gannett.com)

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