



Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society

Volume 12, Number 2

History, we're still making it!

Spring-Summer 2013

Another Great Season of History Underway!



Our doors are open and another season at the Clare County Historical Museum complex is underway. The museum is open Saturdays through September from 1 - 4 p.m.

Clare County Historical Society President Joe Bradley, the board

of directors and CCHS volunteers have a lot of things planned for 2013. They include:

- The dedication of the Tom Sellers Memorial Pavilion. (The pavilion will also be the site of an August wedding.)
- Installation of the first set of bricks for the new walkways.

- Expansion of the Spikehorn collection.
- Upgrades to the parlor exhibit.
- Creation of a new exhibit honoring local historian Forrest Meek.

Joe said the family generously bequeathed Meek's archives to the CCHS. "They include many wonderful old photos we want to display, photos that illustrate our history in ways words don't always do as well," Joe added.

He said that the group also hopes to get a computer to better track accessions. (The current computer is nearly old enough to be a history display).

Joe concluded by saying getting the projects will take time and he urges patience. "We have some great exhibits now, so please come see us. Plus, we'll have an even better complex and more to offer visitors when we are done," he said.

Clare County Historical Society

The mission of the CCHS is to preserve, advance, and disseminate knowledge of the history of Clare County and the surrounding area.

The Society was founded in 1970, and now oversees the museum complex located at the corner of Dover and Eberhart Roads:

Learn more at clarecountyhistory.org or on Facebook.

Quick History Hits



Old Fashion Fun Day is Sat. Sept. 29: This is a great family event with displays and activities for everyone.



Once you tour our museum, head over to Farwell. Their museum, which deals primarily with the history of the Farwell area, is at 221 W. Main and open Wed - Sat. from noon - 4 p.m.
Go to farwellmuseum.com.



Thanks. Member George Dunham repaired an old plow donated by Dan Bay.



If you have not taken the opportunity to mail in your membership renewal—or you wish to join—please use the form on the back of this newsletter. Membership is only \$10 per year, per family. We very much appreciate your support.

New Railroad History Kiosk Dedicated

A railroad once ran through it—Mid Michigan Community College, that is—and now a kiosk, dedicated on May 10, gives visitors information about an old railroad grade that is part of the MMCC trail system.

During the county's lumber boom in the late 19th century, trains made regular runs over the grade between Clare and Dodge. Once the lumber was gone, the rails were pulled out and only the

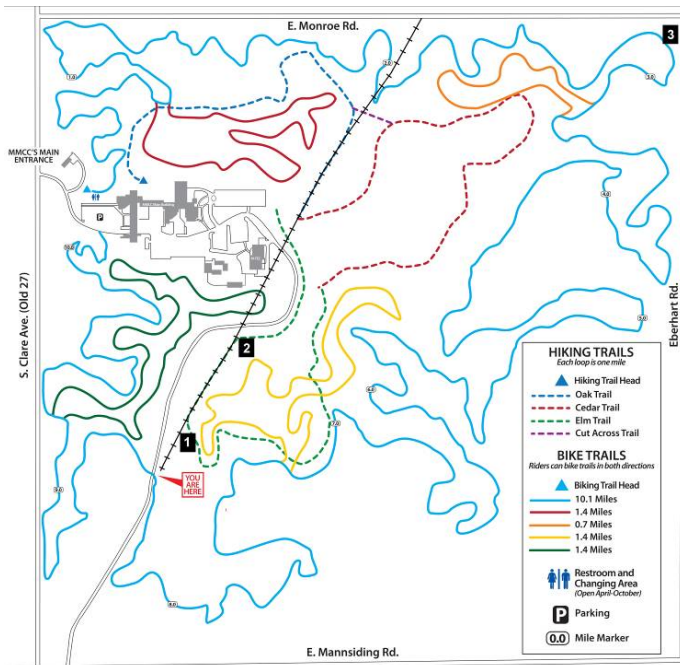


grade remains. "MMCC's trails are popular and users enjoy a peaceful experience. But most who walk them don't know that once noisy, powerful steam locomotives regularly hauled passengers and lumber over some

of the same ground," said CCHS member Marty Johnson, who helped supply content for the display. "We're hoping the kiosk increases people's knowledge and sparks an interest in local history," he said.

The kiosk is the result of a partnership between the College, CCHS and the Friends of Clare County Parks & Recreation and is located at the south end of the campus off Mannsiding Rd.

Walking the Old Railroad Logging Spurs



by logging companies to carry timber out of a particular section. The tracks were then removed with only the grade remaining to show a railroad ever existed in that area.

The following information was gathered by CCHS member Andy Coulson who spent time researching the property. He notes that walking the spurs is

difficult and can be dangerous. The safest course is to stay on the marked trails and not go off-trail as he did.

Spur 1.) Directly across from the school near the south campus entrance road: This spur runs northeast until a low lying wet area is encountered. An additional spur heads north at this

point, until both are stopped by a large hill. It appears that the spur was serviced by a short logging road at the top of this hill.

Spur 2.) Off the main grade just south of where the campus road crosses the south trail railroad grade: This spur heads northeast and then east and crosses the drive again. The spur then travels due east until it reaches a modern clearing. Directly across from this clearing, there is a hill with evidence the spur was dug into it to make loading logs easier.

Spur 3.) Evidence of this spur is best seen near Monroe and Eberhart Roads: It is believed this spur originated just south of the "Cut Across Trail that is part of the Oak Trail, near the east end.

If you know anything about old railroads on MMCC property, please contact Andy at museum@clarecountyhistory.org.

Note: A color map can be downloaded at clarecountyhistory.org

The new kiosk at Mid-Michigan Community College has information about Clare's railroading and logging history. One item not in the display concerns several old railroad spurs on the property. Exactly when in the 19th century the spurs were used is not known, but spurs like these were often built

Historical Accuracy (Being Picky)

Reflections by Jon H. Ringelberg

In doing historical research, I find that things get misstated or twisted—and quite often. Some examples of follow—from the obvious to the not so obvious.



First: In the book *Michigan Place Names* by Walter Romig, Harris Creek is listed as 1882 Clare County hamlet at the junction of Little Thornapple and Coldwater Rivers in Hayes Township. Well, unless two rivers in Clare County have been renamed since that time, this junction (more properly a confluence) never existed;

furthermore, there is no other known reference to a Harris Creek anywhere in Clare County.



Second Forest Meek in *Michigan's Timber Battleground* relates that so many trains passed

through in 1880 that “the wait in Clare was up to two hours at a time” just to cross the tracks.

It may be entirely possible that Meek did not grasp what Clare County Press editor A. Good-enough meant as humor when that editor published a commentary to the effect that young couples were telling their parents they could not get home by their curfew because trains were running through Clare all the time and that fact made crossing the tracks impossible. That doesn't even take into account the fact it would have been impossible back



then to coordinate train schedules so they ran that frequently.

Third: Many articles make much noise about the relocation of the county seat to Harrison after the courthouse fire of 1877 with Farwell and Clare each wanting the honor (and money that came

with it).

Forest Meek plays it up in *Michigan's Timber Battleground*, including stating a fear that lumberjacks would be brought in to sway the vote.

Meek correctly points out that never happened, yet this story is still repeated. The 2013 issue of the *Mid-Michigan Business and Visitor's Guide* states, “The Courthouse was moved to Harrison in 1877, after a horde of lumberjacks came in from surrounding lumber camps and voted to move it to a more central location in the county.”

A voting horde of lumberjacks never existed here. Harrison was chosen because the county seat had to be in the center of the county. Also, the year is wrong, a temporary courthouse in Farwell was built and used until the new Harrison courthouse opened in Nov. 1879 (not 1877).

CCHS Fundraisers

Anyone with an interest in local history, or the law, might want to pick up copies of old Clare County court cases summarized and published by member Jon Ringelberg. The two books (about 70 pages) are available at the museum for \$10 each and cover the years 1871—1875 and 1875—1880.

Jon is generously donating the proceeds (including printing costs) to the CCHS. A \$3 charge does apply for mail orders.

For mail orders, contact Jon at (989) 429-7912 or via jbringelberg@hotmail.com.



Our organization continues to sell commemorative bricks for walkways near the Museum, Ott Cabin and Dover Schoolhouse. The brick sale help support the museum complex, which relies totally on donations.

Cost of a brick is only \$25, which includes up to three lines of text with a maximum of 12 letters, numbers and spaces per line.

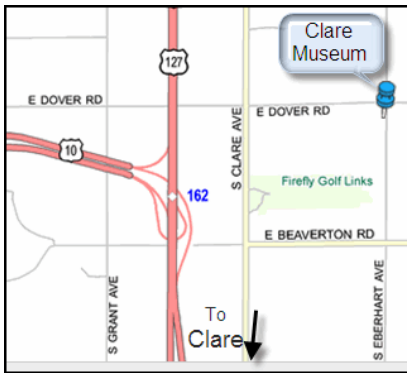
The bricks are a great way to memorialize a loved one or show support for Clare's history. Donors may, if they prefer, choose which of the three locations they'd like to have their brick installed.

The first set of bricks is scheduled for installation early this summer. We invite those who have purchased the bricks to come out and see them. Please know we greatly appreciate your support.

Application forms can be picked up at the museum or can be emailed to you by sending a message to museum@clarecounty-history.org.

CLARE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

7050 S Eberhart Ave
Clare, Michigan 48617



Our museum complex is located 5 miles north of Clare.

Like us on Facebook!



Questions, comments? Email museum@clarecountyhistory.org

Join/Renew the Clare County Historical Society

Membership in the Clare County Historical Society is only **\$10** per year and runs from Jan. 1—Dec. 31.

Your support makes it possible for us to run our museum complex; publish our newsletter; host a website; run events; promote

Clare County history and tell its stories; and protect and display its artifacts.

Please join (or renew) with us.

Name: _____

New Renewal

Address: _____

Address 2: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

\$ _____ **Total enclosed***

** Donations in excess of \$10 are greatly appreciated and will be used to improve our museum complex and promote local history.*

Make checks payable to: Clare County Historical Society and mail them to:

CCHS, c/o Jon Ringelberg, Treasurer
3062 E Colonville Rd
Clare, Michigan 48617-9448