



# The Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society  
*Marty Johnson, Editor*

Volume 15 Number 1

*Sharing Our Past With the Present.*

Winter 2016

## New Signs for



*The Old 27 Roadside Park has new signs to alert drivers they are nearing the historic park. The signs were paid for by CCHS and created and installed by the Clare County Road Comm. We also thank member Marv Anthony for the idea.*

## Clare County Historical Society

**O**ur mission is to preserve, advance, and disseminate the history of Clare County.

*The Society oversees a complex located at the corner of Dover and Eberhart Roads northeast of Clare, which includes the Dover one-room schoolhouse, Ott Family Log Cabin, Blacksmith Shop and a Museum. The complex is open Saturdays from 1 –4 p.m. April thru Sept.*

*We also have photos, books, old newspapers and documents in our archives. Access to these is by appointment. Learn more at [clarecountyhistory.org](http://clarecountyhistory.org) or visit us on Facebook.*

## Harrison, Clare History Plans



**T**his year, Harrison will celebrate a very significant milestone: its quasiquintennial, which is the 125th anniversary of the city's founding. The event, which takes place, Aug. 26-27 will include the Old 27 Car Tour, antique snowmobiles, a printed walking tour of historic houses, kids carnival, petting zoo, craft show, street dance, entertainment and more. CCHS will have a display with items related to Harrison's history.

We urge you to mark you calendar for this fun weekend.



**T**he city of Clare has submitted a request to have its downtown listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Such a listing would be recognition that the property is significant to the nation, state and community and makes the property eligible for federal tax incentive and other preservation assistance.

The downtown area has many beautiful buildings that were built in the late 19th and early 20th century.

CCHS has written a letter in support of this designation.

## Endowment Fund Created

**T**hanks to an anonymous donor and a donation of \$10,000, an endowment fund has been created through the Clare County Community Foundation.

The Foundation provides grants to Clare County non-profits to serve the local community. If you would like to make a tax-deductible addition to further build our endowment

(and some people already have!), please send a payment to the Foundation at P.O. Box 391, Clare, MI 48617. Earmark your donation for CCHS Fund #744.

The CCHS board also wants to express its gratitude to the anonymous donor. We are very grateful to you for what you have done to further history in our county.

## WPA Bridges of Clare County

By Robert Knapp

In June, 1938, the Works Projects Administration announced that it would replace three bridges in Clare. In July, 1938, the WPA reported on the progress of the bridge work. (*Clare Sentinel*, July 15, 1938)

So far, no other articles have been found except for a Common Council report on July 4, 1938.

The three bridges were all probably completed before winter, 1938-39. Often a date or a "WPA" was stamped into cement work. There is no sign of this on the Clare bridges.

There are four bridges located

### Maple Street WPA Bridge



This bridge is quite corroded, especially the railing on the east side. The side cable supports are missing. Note: The decoration on the stanchions matches that on the Sixth Street bridge

### Sixth Street WPA Bridge



This is the most genuine of the bridges, although both sides are corroded. Note: The decoration on the stanchions matches that on the Maple Street bridge. In addition, The original cable and stanchions survive.

where the Tobacco Drain crosses Maple, McEwan, Fifth, and Sixth Streets while the notice mentions only three bridges. Below are photos of the two surviving WPA bridges (Maple, Sixth) and two others, one of which was originally a WPA bridge. As neither of these two is in its original form, it is not possible at the present time to tell which of the two was the third WPA bridge. Further research in city archives would answer this question and provide more information about these bridges that are another piece of our Clare County history worth preserving.

### McEwan Street Bridge



This bridge is not mentioned as being built by the WPA. It is the same construction as the bridge at Fifth Street and both were built after 1940. Note: The decoration on the stanchions matches that on the Fifth Street bridge.

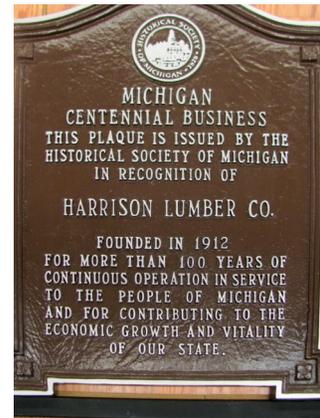
### Fifth Street Bridge



This may be a replacement for a WPA bridge. Note: The decoration on the stanchions matches that on the McEwan bridge.

## New Harrison History Marker

Harrison Do-It Best Lumber was incorporated in 1912 as Harrison Elevator and the firm now has a centennial marker to



celebrate more than 100 years of continual service.

What might not be known is that in 1919,

industrialist Henry Ford who owned a farm west of Harrison (now commonly known as the Kitty Kurtis farm) was interested in having the Elevator build a flour mill for the purpose of milling the wheat grown at his farm and around the area.

There are letters to that effect in the Benson Ford Library in Dearborn stating the Elevator's board of directors was in favor of the proposal, providing Ford purchased \$5,000 worth of Elevator stock.

However, one side or the other backed out and the mill was never built. There is also a tantalizing note that Ford at one time proposed building a manufacturing plant in Harrison but "the community was not in favor of it," this according to an article by Ford Bryan, author of "Henry's Stump Farm."

Whether this plant and the flour mill are one and the same thing is not known., but someday hope to discover.

# Diggin' History

**D**r. Sarah Surface-Evans, an archeologist and professor at Central Michigan University and 17 students spent several days in October conducting a dig of an old logging camp on property owned by a CCHS member. The students found a number of artifacts, including a

pipe bowl with marker's mark, which can help determine when the pipe was made.

Dr. Surface-Evans will spend the winter to catalog artifacts found, create a map of the property and determine where to work when the team returns.

Once the artifacts are

returned, they will be donated to the Clare County Museum for display and interpretation.



## Video Memories of Dover School

**D**uring some recent cleaning and archiving at the museum, a 16-mm movie whose contents were unknown was found and converted to digital format.

The movie—really two of them—were of events that took place at the Dover School in the

1960s. One of them, of a Christmas celebration, was posted on YouTube and promoted on Facebook.

A second video from the movie was posted in early January. The children featured in the movies are parents and perhaps

even grandparents. If you had a child in the Dover area in the last '60s or know someone who did, send them to our Clare County Historical Society Facebook page or to YouTube (search for "Dover School Clare").

## It's Time to Renew Your Membership (or Join!)

**P**lease check the membership label to see if it's time for you to renew your in the Clare County Historical Society membership. Most memberships expired at the end of December.

Membership is only \$10 per

calendar year—unless you are 80 or older in which case your membership is free! (but we still ask you mail in the form).

Your support makes it possible for us to run our museum complex, publish our newsletters, host our website and run

events and promote Clare County history within our county and around the region, tell its stories and protect its artifacts.

If you are not a member yet, we'd love to have you join us and play an active role in learning about our past—and sharing it!

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Email (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

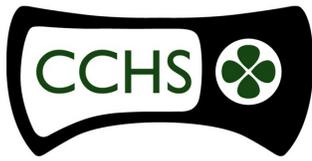
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Total enclosed\***

**New**     **Renewal**

**Qualify for a Free Membership**

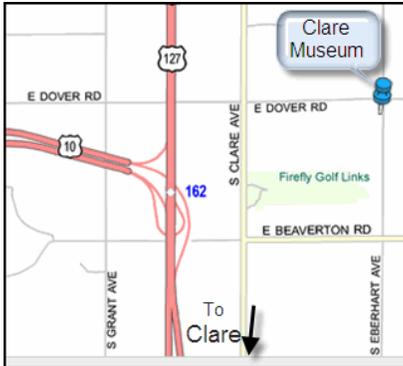
*\* Donations in excess of \$10 are greatly appreciated and will be used to improve our museum complex and promote local history. The CCHS is a 501(c)3 organization and your donation may be tax deductible.*

Make checks payable to: Clare County Historical Society and mail them to  
CCHS, c/o Jon H. Ringelberg, Treasurer  
3062 E Colonville Rd  
Clare, Michigan 48617-9448



CLARE COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Clare, Michigan 48617-9448



Our museum complex is at 7050  
Eberhart Rd. at Dover, five miles north  
of Clare. It reopens in April.

Like us on Facebook!



Questions, comments? Email  
[museum@clarecountyhistory.org](mailto:museum@clarecountyhistory.org)

## 2016 Wish List

**T**hanks to the generosity of people around this area, each year we add to our collection of photos, documents and artifacts. There's a lot we know about Clare County's fascinating history and its people. However, there's also a lot we think is true but find out later is wrong (like so many trains ran through Clare that it sometimes took two hours to safely cross the tracks); things we think are true but don't know for sure (like what Jim Carr looked like), and things we still don't know.

Examples of the latter include the article on page 2 about Harrison Lumber that mentions a manufacturing plant Henry Ford talked of building but didn't. We don't know exactly

why Ford didn't follow through—but we'd love to know!

In the bridge article on the same page, Robert Knapp would like to know whether the McEwan or Fifth Street bridges replaced a bridge built by the WPA in the 1930s.

We received a note from member Andy Coulson looking for photos he's like to see in 2016 posted at the end of this article. It's a great list and we here at CCHS would love to see them too.

We've also run across an article in a 1929 edition of the *Clare Sentinel* that refers to items from decades back, such as a famous Vernon funeral

eulogy that ended with, "You devil, rest in peace," but we know nothing more. Or something about a Dover resident Joe Hudson's "hole cut in the woods" or his "bear scrap."

So if you know anything about these, please let us know. We'd LOVE to find out!

### Got Photos?

Here's the list Andy put together of photos or drawings he'd love to see. Know of any?

- 1.) Farwell courthouse
- 2.) Jim Carr/Carr establishment
- 3.) Town of Hatton
- 4.) Town of Jonesville
- 5.) Town of Meredith
- 6.) The first Farwell school