



The Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society
Marty Johnson, Editor

Volume 18 Number 1

Sharing Our Past With the Present.

Winter 2018

Memberships Up for Renewal

Our fiscal year and membership term run January through December. That means it's time again to ask you for your support for 2018 with your \$10 contribution that helps fund our museum complex, printing and mailing this newsletter, funding our website, as well as continuing maintenance and capital expenses.

As usual, no membership contribution is required for those 80 years and older, your membership is free (although donations are always gratefully appreciated).

Clare County Historical Society

The mission of the CCHS 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 a Museum, the Dover one-room schoolhouse, Ott Family Log Cabin, and Blacksmith Shop. The complex is open Saturdays from 1-4 p.m. May 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 or visit us on Facebook.



Planning Meeting March 10

Our annual CCHS planning meeting will be Saturday, March 10, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the lower level of the Pere Marquette Library in Clare. This meeting provides an opportunity for board members, volunteers and those with an interest in local history to lay out ideas for 2018.

The meeting is also a great way to learn about our organization if you are thinking about getting involved (and we hope you are!)

Everyone is invited and light refreshments will be served.

We also appreciate the Clare District library for again allowing us to use their facility.

Museum Opens May 5

Snow covers the steps, porches and roofs of our buildings and the doors remain locked.

While the snow will be long gone (we hope) by May 5, the first Saturday in May, that will be the day all the doors are opened to the public at our museum complex and we officially open for the 2018 season. We will then be open every Saturday, including holiday weekends, until the last Saturday in September. As usual, hours will be 1 to 4 p.m.

So, please mark your calendar and we hope to see you at our season opener. We also hope you come some Saturday to sit on our porch and relax and talk a little local history.

Old Fashion Day Was Another Fun Day



out and the visitors who attended.

The day was filled with live music on the music porch and the smell and flavor of homemade soup in the Ott Family Cabin. The weather was warm and sunny and that always makes for a great day and a better

downstate, but came up for the day to celebrate with us and even sang a couple of songs with the band. Members wore special buttons with a photo of George and we were glad to have him with us, even if only for a brief time.



Thanks to all who helped make our Annual Old Fashion Day the last Saturday in September a grand event. That includes all the volunteers who helped, the vendors who came

turnout.

It was also a special day in which we honored long time member George Dunham and his late wife Nancy. George is now living with family

Of Rumors, Rivers and a Railroad Depot

Historians hate information that can't be substantiated but that is talked about as gospel. Every county has them and Clare County is no different. Rumors around Clare include a secret passage in the city of Clare that leads from an old hotel that was used by the Purple Gang. Or a tunnel that led from a gangster's home to the river that could be used as an escape route. Or even an old steam locomotive that came off the tracks and lies buried to this day in some swamp or lake.

Sadly, all those rumors are false (honest!). However, there is one rumor that is intriguing and CCHS would love to prove true or false. And that is the rumor of a cabin deep in the woods near Harrison that would house some of Chicago gangster Al Capone's men who

needed to get away from the heat of the law and so would come to this area to lay low.

The basis of the rumor is a county resident who claimed to have worked with Capone in Chicago. He had a home and some accommodations beside a lake that could have served as a retreat for gangsters looking for a bit of R&R. There is even a cabin in the woods where the men were rumored to have stayed. Did they? Ahhh, who knows? But we'd love to find out one way or another.



Ever been to the Lumberman's Monument along the Au Sable River near Oscoda? *The Michigan Historical Review* had a nice article on its history in the Fall 2017 magazine. Among the facts presented were the names of 91 men or

lumbering firms that contributed to the monument's \$50,000 cost (the equivalent of nearly \$750,000 in today's dollars) and appear on the monument's base. Among them names that played a part in our county's history that are appear there are W.S. Gerrish, Hackley & Hume, Edmund Hall and Ammi Wright.



The Clare Railroad Depot is expected to reopen this summer. Final fundraising is underway that will allow the depot to receive its occupancy permit. It's looking great and we invite you to visit it during the Irish Festival this year. We also invite you to contribute if you have not yet done so (or even if you have). Every dollar gets us closer. Contact Diane Lyon at Clare City Hall or go to claredepot.com.

A Ship, A Crest and A Missing Book

In Clare Memorial Park is a monument with a ship's crest (also called a badge) that generally goes unnoticed by passers-by. The crest is from a WWII British destroyer called the HMS Clare and the crest was presented to the city in 1950 by representatives of the British Royal Navy who also gave the city some type of record book.

The monument contains an inscription that can be found below. Sadly, the record book is nowhere to be found. The last recorded mention of it was in 1994, when the late Hugh Maxwell sent a letter to the *Clare Sentinel* asking if anyone knew of the book's whereabouts. There is no evidence that he ever found the answer. So we are asking again: Does any-

one know what happened to the book, or at least have an idea of what it looked like? It's another mystery we'd love to solve!



"This is a ship's badge from HMS Clare. In 1940, the U.S. sent 50 old destroyers to England under our Lend-Lease program. The USS Upshur was one of the first to sail.

The British renamed her in honor of our town.

For 5 wartime years, she guarded the sea lanes, protected the vital ship convoys, rescued sailor of torpedoed ships, and hunted down enemy submarines.

HMS Clare took part in the North Africa, Sicily, and Italy Invasions. On Nov. 2, 1942 she attacked and "probably sunk" a Nazi U-Boat 150 miles north of Oran.

HMS Clare was retired from active service in 1948.

In 1950, a British delegation came to Clare and presented the city with this badge and a record book of the WWII history of the 50 old four-stackers."

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

Please check the membership label to see if it's time for you to renew your Clare County Historical Society membership. **Most memberships expired at the end of December 2017.**

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 so we have a record of your interest).

Your support makes it possible for us to run our museum

complex, publish our newsletters, host our website, run events and promote Clare County history, tell its stories and protect its artifacts.

If you are not a member, we'd love to have you join us.

Name: _____

New Renewal

Address: _____

Qualify for a Free Membership

Address 2: _____ Email (optional) _____

City/Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

\$ _____ Total enclosed*

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

* 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.



CLARE COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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



Our museum complex is at 7050
Eberhart Rd. at Dover, five miles north
of Clare. It opens the first Sat. in May.

Like us on Facebook!



Questions, comments? Email
museum@clarecountyhistory.org

2017 was (Another) Busy Year

A new roof on the schoolhouse; a new wall on the pavilion; trees trimmed, garden's planted and weeded; the pump in the Ott Family Cabin fixed; new exhibits (and wiring) in the museum; painting in the schoolhouse; museum office cleaned and tidied; a 2-day hot dog sale fundraiser; and more. Whew! It was another busy year at the Clare County Historical Society's museum complex.

The biggest change was the new roof on the historic Dover Schoolhouse. Thanks to a grant from the Clare County Foundation, we received enough funding to put a metal roof on the school that should help it last another 100 years. We couldn't have done it though without

Angela Kellogg who wrote the grant and Jon H. Ringelberg who purchased materials and oversaw the project.

But, there were a lot of people who helped out this past year with projects and volunteering as docents so we could be open every Saturday. Here are just some of them: Sam Sellers, Lee Wixom, Jennifer Greene, Marv Anthony, Joe Bradley, Jackie Bradley, Dick Vershave, Carron Nevill, Gene Bodnar, Andy Coulson, Nelda Murphy, Deb Carbeno, Marty Johnson, Dennis Carbeno and Floyd Fair.

Speaking of Dennis and Floyd, our blacksmith's shop continues to be a big hit with visitors young and old(er) and we really

appreciate Dennis and Floyd, along with others like Al Vanderbrink who stop by once in a while to help .

To all of you named and unnamed whether you were there on a regular basis or just once during the year (like at our Old Fashion Day, THANKS!

Please join our ranks this year as we hope to do even more.

