



The Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society
Marty Johnson, Editor

Volume 14 Number 3

Sharing Our Past With the Present.

Fall 2015

Join Us For Old Fashion Day



It all happens Saturday, Sept. 26, from 11 a.m.— 4 p.m. at the Clare County Museum Complex. Admission remains \$2/person, 12 years and under free. There will be plenty of activities for kids and adults on this last weekend of the year. See page 6 for more info.

Clare County Historical Society

Our 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. through September. 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.

New Museum Exhibit Installed



We've installed a new exhibit at the museum, our first in many years. It's called "Ruthie's Sewing Room," and it's both made possible and dedicated to Ruth Cleveland Owens, whose period fashions are on display.

Ruth is a retired nurse (she graduated in 1950) and long time Clare County resident who has loved sewing and vintage clothing since she was a child growing up on a farm on the north end of the city of Clare,— where the Big Boy and other restaurants are now located.

Many of the items on display have been in Ruth's family for generations and were made by Ruth's grandmother and mother and by Ruth. The latter include the Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls

on display, just one of 16 pair she made one year.

Ruth always enjoyed playing dress up as a child, and often as an adult, dressing in period clothing during civic parades and during events at the museum.

Ruth has been an active and valued member of the Clare County Historical Society for many decades. Her father, who became a rural mail carrier and minister after selling his farm went to the Dover school and that sparked Ruth's involvement with the Clare County Historical Society.

Over the years, Ruth has shared her time and talents with the group and we are privileged to have her share her vintage clothing and her memories.

We hope you enjoy them too.

Local History at a Local Fair



Fair—in fact a dual presence.

The first was the historical display with glass case brimming with items of historical significance (see photo at left).

The second was the annual Veteran's display that Joe and CCHS

member Dick Vershave put together every year. The display also seems to get bigger and more popular. In fact, it's gotten to be a "must see" place to go while at the fair. This year,

Joe and the display received coverage on TV 9 & 10 News.

The display is not only meant for the veterans it honors, but for people of all ages who can read press war and battle reports, view uniforms and equipment, and learn about individuals who fought for our freedom—and continue to do so.

Joe and Dick are also active in the VFW, and are part of the committee working on the new Veterans' display soon to be unveiled in Harrison.

Thanks to the efforts of Joe Bradley and a number of volunteers, the Clare County Historical Society again had a presence at the Clare County

Late 1800s Historical Words & Phrases

By Jon H. Ringelberg

Match the historical words to a meaning. A perfect

score means that you might be really old or a pretty good historian. All wrong means you

are probably very young or history is just not your thing. Good luck!

1. _____ hen's fruit
2. _____ ear drop
3. _____ decamped
4. _____ croaker
5. _____ silence social
6. _____ White Caps
7. _____ 'treating'
8. _____ Decoration Day
9. _____ War of the Rebellion
10. _____ nobby
11. _____ mugwomp

- A. ear ring
- B. gathering exchanging notes
- C. neat
- D. egg
- E. stealing an item and leaving
- F. independent, neutral
- G. Ku Klux Klan
- H. Memorial Day
- I. bull frog
- J. Civil War
- K. buying drinks for boon (close) companions

1D, 2A, 3E, 4I, 5B (speaking only when host permitted, a type of early party) , **6G, 7K, 8H, 9J** (or War Between the States), **10C** (as in you have a nobby suit), and **11F** (technically a person who bolted from the Republican Party circa 1880s)

Dover or Farwell. Which School was First?

By Andy Coulson

Both Dover (Grant Township) and Farwell (Surrey Township) proudly own the title of having the first school in their respective townships and the first two in the county, but which of them can rightly claim to be first?

The question came up when a new booklet from the Farwell Historical Society stated that the Farwell School was the county's first. The booklet and claim got CCHS member Andy Coulson wondering, and he did some investigating.

Here is his report:

Forrest Meek, in *Michigan's Timber Battleground*--his book on Clare County's history--stated that Dover school first held classes in the summer of 1870. This claim is unsubstantiated, although plausible considering the Crawford and Wilkens families moved into the Dover area in 1866-7. These were the first settlers and built the first permanent settlement in the county.

We have a couple of documents about an early Dover school. One is a legal case from Sept. 11, 1872. when Dover school district, No. 1, (then called Crawford), attempted to gain property for a school. The fact that the school has a designated district number tells us that it is an official township school.

This case leads us to believe that the school existed before 1872, and the district was looking to build a larger structure

for its expanding population. However, the case doesn't tell us when the first school was built. All we have is Meek's assertion of 1870.

Let's consider the Farwell school. Here we only have one document and it is the *Farwell Area Centennial booklet*, published in 1970 and based on oral tradition, (oral tradition might be what Meek used to arrive at his date.) Oral tradition often cannot be substantiated, but shouldn't be discounted since they are based on historical



The 2nd Farwell School, built in 1873.

facts (although they are subject to twisting, which is why documents are needed for verification).

This booklet states that a Farwell school also dates back to 1870, although the first actual school building not built until about Sept. 4, 1871 when the school district was formally organized.

It is very likely that Farwell would have most likely still been in the planning stages at that time, since the railroad had not yet come through the county, and Old State Road had not been built (that did not occur



Dover School about 1939 when the stucco exterior was replaced.

until about the time the rails came through in December 1870). That seems to indicate that there was really no reason for a town to exist where Farwell does now or for people to settle.

So we have both Farwell and Dover schools said to exist in 1870, although no firm proof of dates exist in any documents about either school.

We do have however, have a piece of circumstantial evidence to consider that tips the scales toward Dover. Clare is District No.2 in Grant Township, meaning that it was the second district organized. Meek states that Clare held its first classes on April 22, 1871. Since Dover is District N. 1, its school was most certain organized before held its first class. So although Farwell is District Number 1 in Surrey Township, its school, according to the Centennial account, was organized on Sept. 4, 1871. That means if one looks at the date organized, Dover (sometime before April 22, 1871) again beats Farwell (Sept.

A Mason's Mark

By Jon H. Ringelberg

History sources come about in many different ways.

I was at the lumber yard in July 2014, and entered into conversation with Robert Kennedy, a local builder. He indicated that he was remodeling the bathroom of the parsonage of the St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church (at 1002 N. McEwan, Clare, MI) and that he had observed a "Mason's Mark" there.

My initial naivety completely missed that his reference was to a Masonic Lodge Mason's Mark and not that of masonry mason mark. He described the Mark as being of a 5-inch or so diameter shiny mirror or glass behind which a Mason might put a tool such as a trowel or building plans.

Further, that a person looking up close at the Mason's Mark in

an effort to see who the builder of the house might be, would see his/her own reflection—philosophically on seeing his /her own image, that person would then be 'the builder.'

Finally, the builder stated that he believed, based on church records, that the parsonage had been built in the 1920s and that it had been built to a very high standard in that there are no foundation or structural cracks—even after some 90 years.

On personal observation with the builder, I found the Mason's Mark to be located on the front of the parsonage just above the porch roof line and below the structure's roof line very close to the Southwest corner.

What might be behind the Mason's Mark? Who was the Mason builder?

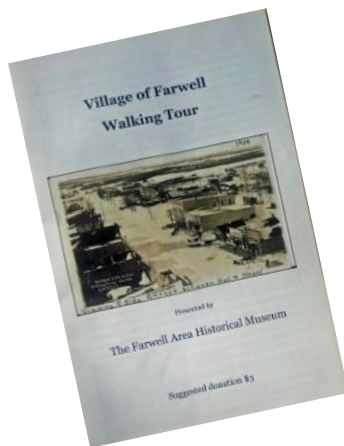
Stonecutters (masons) in history have left their marks—giving rise to the phrase "to leave your mark"—and there are a great number of mason's marks.

There is even a 'play' on the work 'mark' in that at one time "Mark" was a level in the Masonic Order. Internet research has not found a similar Mason's Mark to that on the Lutheran parsonage, yet it seems very logical that the builder, knowing he had built something to the best of his ability, would leave his 'mark'.

Also, builder Kennedy informed me that he has personally observed a similar Mason's Mark on three buildings which were demolished – one in Milwaukee and two in Saginaw.

An ironic twist is present. Builder Kennedy informed me that the German Lutheran's do not countenance the Masonic Order. Yet, the Lutheran par-

Farwell Walking Tour



From a house designed by the architect of the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island to a cannon given to Civil War veterans in 1894, Farwell is filled with history.

Now, as a tribute to the memory of Marilyn Pitchford, a member of the Farwell Historical

Society who always wanted a tour that would make it easy to share the town's history with residents

and visitors, a new booklet is now available. Cost is \$3. The booklet is available at the Farwell museum, located at 221 W. Main, and copies will also be available at our museum complex on Old Fashion Day.

A New Book on Farwell

A new book on the history of Farwell is being written by Angela Kellogg and Nick Loomis. Angie co-authored a similar book on Harrison with Cody Beemer that was published earlier this year. The new book is expected to be published in 2016. We hope to have more information on the publishing date in our Winter issue.

Diggin' History

An archeological dig may take place this fall on the property of one of our members—and if so, CCHS members and the public will be invited to watch the excavation.

Dr. Sarah Surface-Evans, an archeologist from Central Michigan University visited Marty

Johnson's property this summer to look at the remains of what might have been a small logging camp. His property contains several earthen foundations and pits.

Surface-Evans might bring a class out several days in October to map the site and perhaps

conduct a dig.

“This activity will not only allow me to learn more about what is on my property, but also provide CCHS the opportunity to reach a wider audience about our logging history and what neat things our county has to offer,” Marty said.

New Date on an Old Township

Getting 26 years tacked on to one's age is not something that is normally celebrated, but perhaps a little celebration is warranted when its found that a Clare township has really been around a lot longer than people realized.

A sign in front of the Grant

Township Hall states that the township was founded in 1896, but research by Jon Ringelberg of the County Historical Society proved that actual date the township was established on March 11, 1870.

At a recent township meeting, Township Supervisor Dan Dysinger confirmed Jon's

findings and said the sign would be changed.

It all just goes to show that while we know a lot about our history, there is always much to learn and many errors and misconceptions to change. That's part of the fun of historical research and something that people of all ages can do.

Join the Clare County Historical Society!

Membership in the Clare County Historical Society is only \$10 per calendar year. Join this fall and your memberships will be valid through December 2016.

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.

We'd love to have you join us and play an active role in learning about our past—and sharing it!

Name: _____

New Renewal

Address: _____

Address 2: _____

City: _____

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.*



CLARE COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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



Our museum complex is at 3050
Eberhart Rd. at Dover, five miles north
of Clare.

Like us on Facebook!



Questions, comments? Email
museum@clarecountyhistory.org

CLARE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PRESENTS

OLD FASHION DAY

Animals • Blacksmiths • Good Food • Music • Old Tractors • Hayrides • Exhibits and Much More!

SATURDAY • SEPTEMBER 26, 2015
\$2.00
 Per Person
12 and Under Free

11:00 AM - 4:00 PM
 Eberhart & Dover Road
Enjoy our last weekend of the season!