

Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society

Marty Johnson, Editor

CLARE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



1970-2020

50 Years...Sharing Our Past With The Present!

Volume 20 Number 3

Sharing Our Past With the Present.

Fall 2020

Closing Time

We're closed for the year. And what a year it was. Covid-19 changed how we operated and what we could do. We opened our doors each week, which is something many museums, including Farwell couldn't do. We were able to celebrate our 50th Anniversary, but sadly had to cancel our Annual Old Fashion Day Celebration.

We got a lot done this year as you'll see inside the pages of this newsletter. We hope 2021 will be a better year for our community and our organization. We enjoy history but not the history of this kind. Stay healthy and we'll see you next year. Oh, and thanks for your continuing support.

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 a Blacksmith Shop. We also have photos, books, old newspapers and documents. Access to these is by appointment. Learn more at clarecountyhistory.org or visit us on Facebook.

Historical Society Celebrates 50 Years



On Friday June 24, 1970, the Clare County Historical Museum opened its doors to the public for the first time in its only building, the Dover Schoolhouse.



It was the culmination of project that began in Jan. 1967 when the idea of a county historical society was first discussed.

On June 25 of this year, we invited the public to help us celebrate our Golden Anniversary



with hot dogs and ice cream. We hope you were there. Jacki Bradley chaired the committee that put the event together that was held on a beautiful Saturday.

It worked so well that we are



discussing hosting a reunion of all former Dover School students and their families next summer. It would be a time to capture some of the memories that students have of attending this former one-room schoolhouse.



Museum Complex Gets New Fence



Thanks to Jon H. Ringelberg and his dedicated team of volunteers the museum complex has a brand new no-maintenance fence. The work was done in two phases and will eventually include four handicap parking spaces on the museum

side of the road.

Special thanks to

_____ who came with his tractor from 30 minutes away. The tractor with its attached post hole digger made quick work of the

old wooden fence that was getting rotten and dug new holes for the new posts that were placed in concrete. He even stuck around to help install the fencing.

The new fence really dresses up the area. Your continuing financial support makes projects like



this possible.

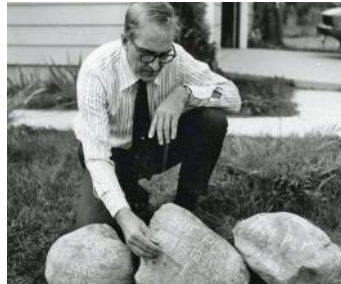
P.S. Jon also assembled a team and repaired several of the picnic tables at the Old 27 park that had rotted boards. He also filled in many of the holes on the park road. We very much appreciate his hard work and initiative, as well.

Uncovering a Fake in Our Collection

No one likes to be taken advantage of, and that includes museums. Unfortunately, it sometimes happens that an item in a collection, sometimes even a prized artifact or piece of art is exposed as fake.

Nearly all museums big and small have been victimized at one time or another. Now, the list includes our Historical Society. Earlier this summer we confirmed that three tombstones in our museum, thought to date from the 1830s are 20th century fakes.

Local historian Forrest Meek came in possession of the stones that were said to have marked the final resting place of the Ply Family, Tim, Sue and an infant. The stones were supposedly found when Harrison High School was built in the early 1970s. Meek even included a photo of himself puzzling over



the stones in his book, *Michigan's Timber Battle-*

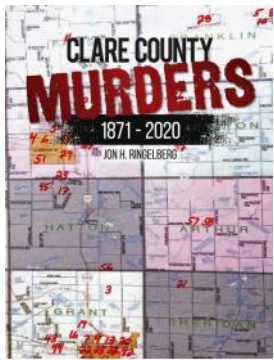
ground, published in 1976, and stating the Ply party was the first known white visitors to what would become Clare County.

Several members of our organization had expressed reservations about the stones over the years. First, there was no reason for people to be in the Harrison area in the 1830s, which was then all wilderness without roads. The county didn't experience real population growth until the coming of the railroad in 1870. Second, the names "Tim" and "Sue" were uncommon during the early 19th century. Third, no U.S. Census rec-

ords have been discovered with a Tim or Sue Ply. Finally, the discovery of old tombstones should have resulted in a news story, or someone remembering the discovery, however; that is not the case.

There had been rumors the stones were created in the early 1970s as a joke. It wasn't until recently that we were able to track down individuals who were able to attest to that fact. We still don't know why the stones were made, since Meek and those who carved them are deceased. The important thing is that we do know the tombstones are fake, and so a decision was made by the CCHS board to move them and use them as part of a display to remind people to question even longstanding beliefs when something appears wrong. As President Ronald Reagan was fond of saying, "Trust, but verify."

Murders in Clare County: New Book Published



Isaiah Leebove's murder at the Doherty Hotel in 1934, is the best known of murders

in Clare County, Michigan.

Sadly, it's not the only one.

A new book called *Clare County Murders* and written by former Clare County judge and attorney Jon H. Ringelberg, looks at 70 murders that have happened within Clare County from 1871

when the county came into being until the present.

The book includes four additional murders because of their individual uniqueness – including Rover, a dog whose grave on Mannsiding Rd still is cared for to this very day, a burned body discovered in an icebox, and a single fingerprint that helped solved two murders each over 10-years old

The book is a fascinating look at the dark side of Clare County. While we hope there won't be a need for an update, human nature being what it is, that may be wishful thinking.

Enjoy History This Fall



Take a walk. Or a ride. In any

case, enjoy all Clare County has to offer this fall. One of the nicest bike rides is from Farwell to Lake Station along the Pere Marquette State Rail Trail. . Along with wonderful color, you also ride past the old coal tower, one of only 15 in the state. Watch the awe in your kids and grandkids eyes when they first see it. And also see if they can find some coal used when steam locomotives once ran the rails.

Join or Renew Your Membership

Memberships end at the end of the calendar year. Beginning in 2021, **we will send you a newsletter for one extra year if you "forget" to renew.** Due to increased postage cost we cannot continue to send copies to non members.

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 com-

plex, 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: _____

Address: _____

Address 2: 9 State: _____ Zip: _____

\$ _____ Total enclosed*

New Renewal

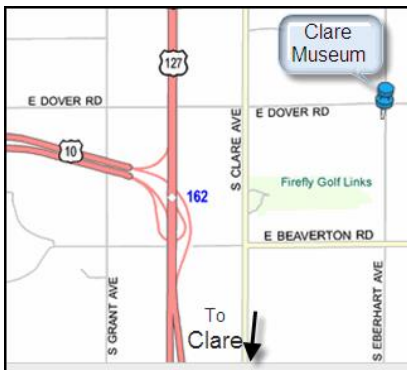
Qualify for a Free Membership

* 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



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 is open the first Sat. in May to the last Sat. in Sept. from 1-4 p.m.

Like us on Facebook!



Questions, comments? Email museum@clarecountyhistory.org

Local Site Updates



If you have been by the Surrey House lately

you have seen renovation activity. Earlier this summer they replaced the roof over the banquet room (above). Now they are working at taking care of the lead paint in the building and fixing the porch roof.

The Clare Depot (right) has

gotten a new sculpture in front of its building in downtown Clare along with several new pieces of art associated with Clare's past. Even though we are closed, the depot is open all year long. Stop by and see them the next time you are in town.



The 1918 Flu



Clare had 100 total deaths in 1918, down from 107 in 1917. Between January 1918 and April 1919, the county's monthly death toll ranged from a low of four in June and August to a high of 17 in March 1919.

Clare had an estimated population of 9,308 in 1918. The current population is more than three times that number.

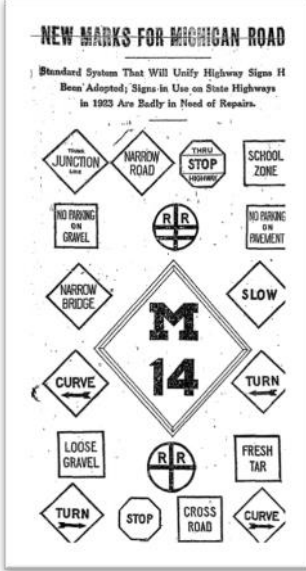
Statistics from Michigan Public Health records.

Corrections

In the last issue of our newsletter, we included the names of our donors and members. However, we left off the names of **Marianne Faught** and **Timothy Faught**. We apologize for the error.

Clare County Roads—Part III

By Andy Coulson



Roads have been crucial in the development of Clare County, bringing people to the land and their products to market.

In the last issue we looked at James Hill, an obstacle to building Clare roads. In this issue we look at a State Road called M-14.

In the 1920s, before concrete and expressways, one of those roads connecting Clare and Harrison was a series of small roads that Michigan designated as M-14.

M-14 started in Clare near Cherry Grove Cemetery heading north and crossing a bridge over the Tobacco River. Here

M-14 was also called Dover Road since it passed through an early farming community of that name located four miles north and where our Museum Complex now stands.

From Dover, M-14 turned east, then north becoming Cornwell Avenue, named after W.C. Cornwell, one of the biggest ranchers in the county. It was partly because Cornwell had improved the road that ran past his ranch, (and to bypass James Hill) that the state made Cornwell part of the State road.

At Manssiding Road, M-14 ran west 1.5 miles and then turned onto Larch Road. This corner would eventually be where Old 27 and Gladwin Roads (neither which existed during this period) would intersect, and where Spikehorn Meyer—about a decade later—would open his popular tourist stop.

M-14 meandered west to Larch Road and then to County Farm Road. Early travelers heading into Harrison from Clare would

see the County Infirmary on their right and then cross the Harrison Branch of the Pere Marquette Railroad before entering Harrison's city limits.

When U.S. 27 was finally built, it really opened up Clare County and the north to tourism and became one of the most heavily traveled roads for until the expressway opened in the early 1960s to the west. The expressway took the name of US 27 and the two-lane road that had been the main Clare-Harrison connection became "Old" 27. Then, about 50 years later, this portion of U.S. 27 would become U.S. 127. And the cool thing about that is "Old" 27 was still Old 27, and always will be.

Although M-14 as a State road disappeared when U.S. 27 was built, it's name hasn't disappeared completely. There is still a gravel section of the road bearing the M-14 name that serves several houses. A remnant of a time and road from long ago.

Donate to Preserving Our History



As a 501(c)3 charitable corporation, we have an account (#744) in the

Clare County Community Foundation valued at approximately \$26,200. This is an endowed fund, which means we can only access \$2,845 of it. However,

we hope not to access any of it at present, but to let it grow and use dues and your generous donations to fund needed projects, including repairs to the schoolhouse chimney and perhaps a sidewalk to make it easier for the elderly and people with disabilities to visit our buildings.

If you would like to make a

donation to our endowment or to our treasury for our projects or to freshen up our exhibits, please contact Treasurer Jon H Ringelberg at (989) 429-7912.



Clare and the Flu Pandemic of 1918



James Garrity was a Clare County farm boy, the only boy in a family of four sisters. He was 19 years old

when he convinced his mother, over the objections of his father, to join the Navy. James wanted to join his cousin, Arthur Looker, a Gladwin county resident, who had just joined the Navy. That was in Nov. 1917. In Jan. 1918, Arthur died of the flu at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station in Illinois. Jim Garrity died the next day. Both men were brought home by train for burial. Jim's obituary described him as bright and cheery with a host of friends. It added that he was to have graduated from Harrison High School the following June.

Their deaths occurred before what is now called "the Great Flu Pandemic" had even gotten started. Peaking in the winter of 1918, this worldwide event would sicken more than a half a billion people, killing between 21 million and 100 million of them.

In the U.S., about 28% of the population (then at 105 million) became infected, and 500,000 to 675,000 died. Deaths were especially high in young men, the group that included military men like Garrity and Looker. The flu became pneumonia and the buildup of fluid in their lungs, is what ultimately caused death. However, it was those with the

strongest immune systems who were especially vulnerable. An estimated 43,000 American servicemen died, more than were killed by German bullets. Roughly 1 in 4 military personnel came down with the virus, and of those who did, 1 in 5 died. Death often came quickly, sometimes even within hours of the first symptoms. Pneumonia, not flu, was put on many death certificates of that period.

Garrity was not the only Clare County resident killed by the flu. In total, 22 out of Clare's 450 soldiers and sailors died from the flu, according to local historian Forrest Meek, author of *Michigan's Heartland*, a history of Clare County from 1900 to 1918. Meek also writes that at least 59 county deaths were directly related to the flu. Clare County had only about 8,300 people at the time.

The *Clare Sentinel* during that period is filled with mentions of families and individuals coming down with the flu, battling the flu, recovering from the flu, or dying of it. There were also numerous mentions of church and school closures, sometimes for weeks at a time.

Public service announcements

Coughs and Sneezes Spread Diseases



As Dangerous as Poison Gas Shells

warned of the dangers of coughing and sneezing in public and advertisements hawked products to those stuck indoors. In Heartland, Meek writes that doctors of the community worked overtime during the outbreak. Meek said that Dr. William Clute of Clare, hardly left his car for days. He had a chauffeur who took him on his calls and "those few moments constituted his night's quota of slumber."

There wasn't a shelter in place requirement but then there wasn't much of a need. Clare County was not a vacation destination at that time, and few good roads of any kind.

Although people could travel by train within a state and across the country, travel internationally, other than war related travel, was rare. It was not until after the Second World War that regular international flights began to take place. During WWI, that meant what happened in China and other countries, including health problems, tended to stay in those countries. Of course, soldiers returning from foreign battlefields and lands could carry diseases back with them. But eventually the flu disappeared and Clare County, Michigan, and the world returned to normal.

James Garrity was buried in a small cemetery in Hamilton Township. A marker and an American flag mark his grave. His is a story more than a century old, but also a story that's still relevant today.

Thanks, Members and Donors!

Below is a listing of our supporters who have mailed in their dues for 2020 or beyond, as well as our Gold Members (those 80 years and over), many who have continued to support us financially, although their memberships are free. **Thank you so much for your support!**

If your name should be on the list but isn't, we apologize! Please contact us so we can make it right. And if your name isn't showing because you have not yet mailed in your membership dues of \$10 for 2020, please do so when you are able using the form found elsewhere in this newsletter. We will publish updates later in the year.

Dan & Shirley Abbott
Dennis Allen
Mike Allen
Marv Anthony
Bill Beemer
Gene Bodner
Joe Bradley
Marie Brandon
Jerry Burger
Herb & Cheryl Byers
Liz Crafton
Jim Crawford
Damon Dubois
Duane Dysinger
Dennis Goth
Philip Goudie
Judy Grant

Dennis Guerriero
Art Guzowski
Thomas Hamilton
Angela Kellogg
Erma Kleinhardt
Robert Krell
Robert Knapp
Dave & Sherry Kyle
Weldon Martin
Fred J. McCally
Theo Mickle
Jerry & Sandra Mogg
Nelda Murphy
Arnold Bill Newman
Jean Ott
Ruth Owens
Ellen Rice

Jon H. & Liz Ringelberg
Frank & Sandy Rowley
Carol Santini
Jane Sartor-Key
Julia Kathryn Saxton
Joyce Schellhaus
Gertrude Segar
Margaret Serviss
Richard Snyder
Anthony Stanfield
Les & Jackie Stiner
Lee and Beth Turner
Jeff & Julie Walker
Valerie Yodhes
Elaine & Dale Richardson
Ken & Shirley Wenzel
John & Fern White

A Look at Gangsters 'Up North'

Northern Michigan has for decades drawn millions each year to its beautiful lakes and rivers. *Gangsters Up North* adds a new and exciting dimension to the colorful lore of those lands.

What were gangsters doing in Michigan's vacationlands during the Prohibition years? Al Capone, the Purple Gang, Fred "Killer" Burke, other Public Enemies and many other hoodlums found their way north in fact or in fiction. They became heavily involved in the gambling and bootlegging that were pervasive

in up-scale resorts in Charlevoix, Little Traverse Bay, and Mackinac Island. They kidnapped and murdered. But most usually, they just hung out and relaxed.

Up North, people far and wide claimed to recognize those faces in their various backyards. They said they saw Al Capone in this hotel, that lake, or some cabin. Rumors of John Dillinger coming to town threw citizens into a frenzy of fear.

Gangsters Up North draws on newspaper accounts, numerous interviews, rare images, and unpublished

material to paint the real picture of mobsters and their associates in Michigan's northland.

Robert Knapp, author of books on Isaiah Leebove and Sam Garfield, unweaves the tangle of tales and truth. Knapp will be in Clare later this summer for talks and book signings. More details soon!

