



# Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society

Volume 13, Number 2

*History, we're still making it!*

Spring-Summer 2014

## A New Season Begins!

**T**he doors are officially open. A new season of old stuff is underway.

- ◆ Get rid of cabin fever by stopping by the historic **Ott Cabin**.

If you think log cabins were only used back in the lumberjack days, you'd be wrong. We recently learned the Ott cabin was in use during the Great Depression when members of the Ott family were forced to move back to Clare from the Detroit area because of the Great Depression. That meant going from city living to having to use a hand pump.



- ◆ Get schooled in old-time education by visiting the **Dover Schoolhouse**.

This one-room schoolhouse was filled with students from the surrounding area known as Dover,

one of many small communities that once existed in Clare County, but now can only be found on old maps.

- ◆ Cover three centuries with a tour of our **History Museum**.

When your kids complain that their lives are hard take them for a walk through the museum and have them imagine what life was like for their ancestors and how they paved the way for them.

But our museum is not meant to be stuffy. We have a military display, a railroad and lumberjack display and old general store and doctor's office and much more.

### Clare County Historical Society

**T**he 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](http://clarecountyhistory.org) or on Facebook.*

## We Need Your Support

**T**he word is getting out about our history! We have more members, more Facebook friends and more visitors to our website. All thanks to your support.

Last year, we also installed a pavilion, updated our museum, provided an historical display case at Mid Michigan Community College and more. All thanks to your support.

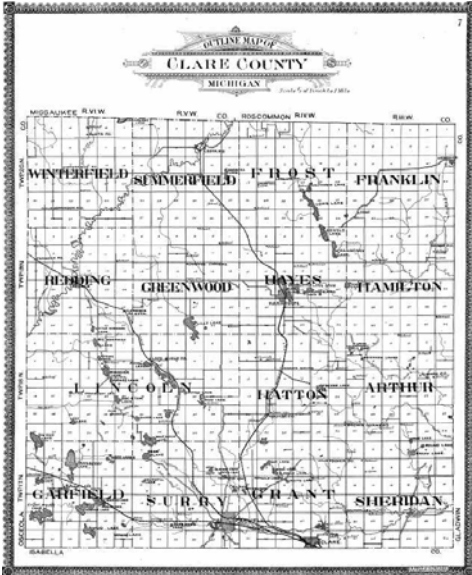
We have more planned for 2014 including updated signage, installation of an historic marker,

improved displays and more.

But we can't do it without your continuing support. Annual dues are **\$10/year** per family. If you are a member, please send in your renewal contribution. If you are not a member, please join with us. See application on page 6. Let's continue the journey together.

**New this year: Those 80 years and over receive a FREE membership.** Send no money; just check the box on the application.

# Where'd They Get Those Township Names?



by Andy Coulson

One of the most intriguing aspects of history is the process in which events happen, but with time become lost, forgotten, or facts give way to myth.

The role of the historian is to make sure that well-documented events stay remembered, to correct misinformation, and (and this is the fun part) rediscover that which was lost or forgotten. Such is the case with the naming of Clare county townships. Ever wonder how they got their name? So did we, and we now have some of the answers—but not all. Perhaps YOU do!

## *Townships we know...*

**Arthur:** Named after United States president Chester Arthur, who was in term when Arthur township was organized.

**Franklin:** According to local historian Forrest Meek, it was named after Franklin P. Sears, a prominent lumberman who

owned property in the county.

**Frost:** Named after George Frost, another prominent lumberman and a contemporary of Franklin's. There was even an early settlement on the Meredith grade in Franklin township named after this man.

**Garfield:** Probably named after president James Garfield.

**Grant:** Named after the United States President Ulysses Grant, who was in term when Grant township was organized.

**Hamilton:** Named after a lumberman and owner of the Hamilton & McClure lumbering firm.

**Hatton:** Named after Frank Hatton, the Postmaster General when Hatton township was organized and appointed the position under another Clare county township (located immediately to the east) namesake, president Arthur.

**Hayes:** Named after President Rutherford Hayes who began his term of office only a few months before the township was organized.

**Lincoln:** Probably named after United States president Abraham Lincoln. This would also fit in with other Clare county townships that were named after presidents and Civil War heroes.

**Sheridan:** Named after Civil War General Phillip Sheridan. Sheridan and Grant worked closely together in the Civil War, and it is fitting that their namesake townships sit side by side on the map

with Sheridan at Grant's right.

**Surrey:** Named by Martha Hitchcock one of the first settlers of Clare county who lived in Farwell. Surrey is a county in the southeast England.

**Summerfield and Winterfield:** Both were named by Martha Hitchcock. Winterfield originally encompassed the county's entire share of the Muskegon River. Summerfield was named as a companion township two years later.

*Townships we don't have and answer for as of (yet), but can speculate...*

**Freeman:** The last of the Clare county townships to be named, and until 1908 was the western half of Lincoln township.

Perhaps, it was named because like the slaves Lincoln made free men, the new township was now free of Lincoln's control!

**Greenwood:** This township was named soon after Summerfield and Winterfield, both to its north. It appears that at the time these townships were named, they were given generic names. Perhaps the name has to do with the abundance of good timber and near to the Muskegon River.

**Redding:** This author has not ever seen any mention of how this township was named, but it may have been named for someone whose name is (so far anyway) lost to history.

# Preparing for the Future by Looking at our Past

**A**re you interested in Clare County's history? Probably, or you wouldn't be reading this. But what if you don't (gasp!) like history, why should you care about our county's past?

## Here are a few reasons:

- ◆ Introduced the benefits of a logging railroad to a national audience and changed the face of logging forever.
- ◆ Has more railroad grades than other Michigan county.
- ◆ Has one of the few turreted train depots in the country.
- ◆ Was the summer home to Harry Bennett, Henry Ford's enforcer. (Henry visited here too, by the way).
- ◆ Was a place of rest for mem-



ber's of Detroit's notorious Purple Gang.

- ◆ Has a Depression-Era art collection that is nearly unsurpassed.
- ◆ Was the location of one of the most famous Michigan murders of the 1930s.
- ◆ Was home to Spikehorn, one of the state's earliest tourist attractions

## Any others?

- ◆ How about because history brings in tourists and tourism dollars.
- ◆ History can spark an interest in our children to get out of the house and explore on foot or to delve into old records to find answers to the many questions that remain unanswered.
- ◆ Because knowing about our past can make us better appreciate our present and inspire us to improve our future.

Summer 2014 is a good time to take an interest in the past. Our museum complex is **open every Saturday from 1 - 4 p.m.** thru the end of September. Stop by.

## Hotel Doherty Turns 90

**W**hen the Hotel Doherty opened in April 1924, The Clare Sentinel declared, "*The equipment throughout the structure are the latest and the best. The lighting fixtures are exceptionally fine. There are 60 guests rooms, each containing hot and cold running water, and several suites.*"

The dining room might get extra attention this year, given the publication of "Mystery Man," by Robert Knapp that details the Isaiah Leebobe murder that took place in the hotel on May 14, 1938. The murderer, Jack Livingston, was found guilty, but was released only a few months later. The hotel dining room is also home to a great mural that depicts



leprechauns making beer. It was done by an unknown artist during the Depression.

He painted the approximately 70-foot long mural in return for room and board at the hotel.

So, stop by and hoist a glass to leprechauns and to the Doherty. Both are part of our county's history.

## History Display At Cops

**V**isitors to Cops and Doughnuts in Clare will get more than just calories and caffeine this summer: They will get versed in

Clare County history, thanks to an old display case rehabbed by Jon Ringelberg and Lee Wixom that is now used to display several police and jail records from our archives. Stop and see it. No calories in just looking!





## Take a Local History Tour

One of our members has what may be the remains of an old logging camp on his property four miles southeast of Harrison. Items include three large earthen foundations, a skidding road, a garden and numerous pits that might have been used for storage. Exactly what the site was remains unknown.

On Saturday, May 17 at 10 a.m., he's inviting members of the CCHS to take a tour of the site to learn a bit about interpreting historical sites. Perhaps together

we can puzzle it out.

Afterward, if time permits (and people are interested), we may take a short drive down Mostetler Road to have a look at an old logging grade or perhaps part of the Hatton-Dodge grade.

The tour is free but open only to CCHS members and their families. Number of participants is limited and reservations are required (it's the only way to obtain the address). Email [museum@clarecountyhistory.org](mailto:museum@clarecountyhistory.org) or call Marty at (734) 755-2638.

## Farwell Museum Opening

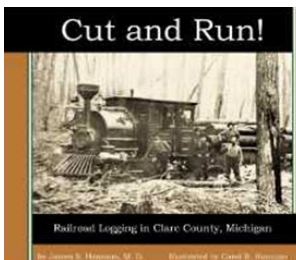
Farwell is one of the oldest towns in the county—and one with a fascinating history.

Take some time this summer to learn about the town and its history with a visit to the Farwell Museum housed in an 1883 building at 221 West Main Street.

The museum is open Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 1:30 - 5:30 p.m. and Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m., May thru Sept.

## Books on Clare History

Three new books on Clare County have—or soon will—be available. All three make—or will make—a great addition to any local history buff's bookcase. They also have the potential to introduce a whole new audience to our county's wonderful history.



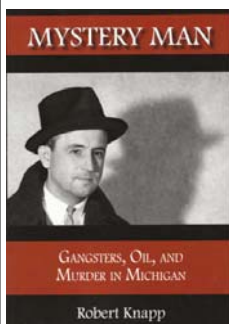
The first book is entitled *Cut and Run!* by Dr. James Hannum.

The book covers the period of intense railroad logging in Clare County. Numerous historical maps are reproduced and original maps created. Included are period photographs and current pictures from the same locations.

The book is available from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and the Harrison District Library.

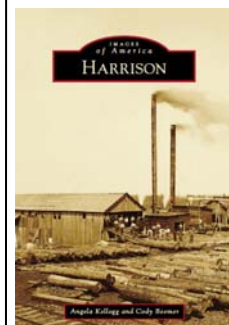
While the first book deals with the logging industry, an industry that made some men rich, a second deals with Clare's oil industry, that brought a new breed of entrepreneur to Clare County, and also brought men looking to launder ill-begotten funds and make their fortune.

*Mystery Man, Gangsters, Oil, and Murder in Michigan*, by Robert Knapp tells the story of Clare's crime of the century that took place at the Doherty Hotel on May 14, 1938 when Jack Livingston shot Isaiah Leebove. But



that murder was only the final chapter in a tale of ambitious men, Purple Gangsters, and oil speculators, all of whom come alive in this lively history that ends in murder.

The book is available at [CliophilePress.com](http://CliophilePress.com) or [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

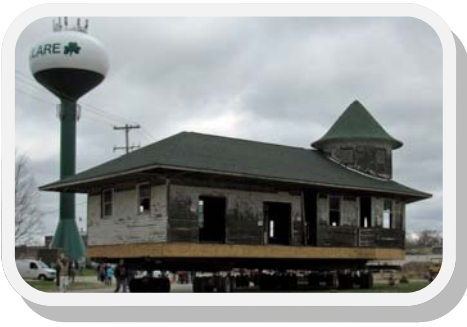


The history of the town of Harrison is told in a new book due out in late May. It is entitled *Images of America, Harrison* by Angela Kellogg and Cody

Beemer, and relates the history of a once-wilderness town, which gained a reputation as one of the roughest in Michigan. But civilization eventually came to Harrison and farmers and families replaced loggers. Soon tourists joined them, drawn by the area's lakes and woods.

The book will be available at the Harrison Library (Kellogg is the librarian there) and on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com). There will also be a book launch/presentation on May 28 at 6:30 p.m. at the library.

## Depot Makes its Move



The 37-ton, 1800 square foot Clare Railroad Depot moved to its new permanent location across from the Clare Castle Senior Center on April 22. Photos and videos from the move can be seen on the Clare County Restoration Facebook page.

Now the real work begins. Money must be raised for the restoration, some \$500,000—more than twice as much as was required to move the building.

And the final result? A Clare County showplace with rooms for the local Chamber of Commerce, space for groups to meet; a rail-

road museum; a welcome station for riders on the Pere Marquette Rail Trail; a tourist attraction; a working railroad depot for excursions; and more.

A railroad depot has been part of Clare since the town came into existence in the 1870s and we salute those who had the vision to save the depot and the energy and stamina to get this far.

Learn how you can help finish the project at [claredepot.com](http://claredepot.com). And if you have any photos or items that might be nice to display at the depot museum, please contact Diane Lyon at Clare City Hall at (989) 386-7541, ext. 106.



## Grave Clean Up

The gravestones of two WWI soldiers are found in the Garrity Cemetery in northeast Hamilton Township off Fir Road south of Stockwell. One of the soldiers died at Fort Wayne in Detroit. The other died in Chicago. Both were really kids who enlisted to serve our country. One had not even graduated from high school. Both died not long after enlisting. Neither lived long enough to see combat.

To honor these men and others who lie in the small cemetery, volunteers from CCHS will be conducting a clean up on Saturday, May 24 (Memorial Day weekend) at 10 a.m. Plans call for cutting some invasive shrubs and small trees, and perhaps sprucing up the markers with new flags. The entire project shouldn't take long and help is welcomed. Contact us at: [museum@clarecountyhistory.org](mailto:museum@clarecountyhistory.org) with questions.

## CCHS Fundraisers Underway

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—1885.

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](mailto:jbringelberg@hotmail.com).



Our group continues to sell commemorative bricks. 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.

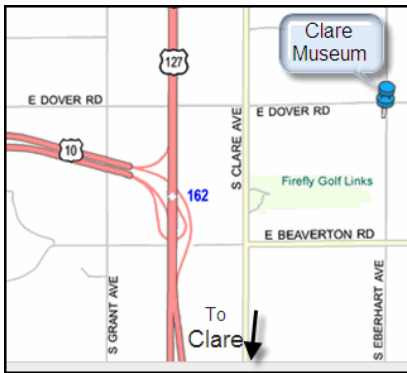
The bricks are a great way to memorialize a loved one or show support for Clare's history. Donors may, if they prefer, choose which of the three locations they'd like to have their brick installed.

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@clarecountyhistory.org](mailto:museum@clarecountyhistory.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](mailto:museum@clarecountyhistory.org)  
'What Stands There Now' answer: Harrison Library

## Join/Renew the Clare County Historical Society

**M**embership 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

**New**       **Renewal**

**Check if 80 years or older. No dues required. Your CCHS membership is free!**

*\* 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