



# Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society

Volume 12, Number 1

*History, we're still making it!*

Winter 2013

## Clare Museum Complex Quiet (For Now)

The Clare County Historical Museum complex, including the museum, Dover School and Ott Cabin sits under a blanket of snow. Quiet now, but that will change come in the spring. Planned events include

- **Rail Road Bed Trail Display Dedication**  
New. Sometime in May at Mid Michigan Community College.
- **Museum Opens for Season**  
Sat. May 11: 1 - 4 p.m.
- **Dedication of Tom Sellers Picnic Shelter**  
New. Museum Grounds. Date to be announced,



- **Log Cabin Day**  
Sun., June 30, .
- **Clare County History and Military Displays**  
Held in conjunction with the Clare County Fair in August.

Sept.—Oct. New driving tour developed in conjunction with the Farwell Historical Museum.

- **Old Fashion Fun Day**  
Sat. Sept. 23
- **Fall Color and County History Tour**  
New.

### 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:*

*We will be open Saturdays starting May 11, 1-4 p.m.*

## Help Support, Promote Local History

**E**ach year, we asks those with an interest in local history for a minimum donation of \$10 per family to help support the museum complex, host and promote events and activities, print this newsletter (now three issues per year) and host our website.

We have some new things planned for 2013, but need your financial support to promote and carry them out. Please complete and mail the form found on page 4 along with your check made out to the Clare County Historical Society.

And while you are making your do-

nation, please give some thought about donating some of your time. We could ALWAYS use more volunteers (and fresh ideas) Thank you very much.

### 2012-13 CCHS Officers and Board

- **Joe Bradley**, President
- **Dick Vershave**, V.P.
- **Debbie Carbeno**, Secretary
- **Jon Ringelberg**, Treasurer
- **Dennis Carbeno**, Trustee
- **Carron Nevill**, Trustee
- **Lee Wixom**, Trustee

# Local History Updates

## Damp Weather Mars Otherwise Fun 'Old Fashion Day'



Our annual Old Fashion Fun Day on

Sat. Sept. 29, brought a little off-and-on rain but those in attendance still enjoyed watching blacksmiths in



action, taking a hayride, listening to a talk on local history by George Dunham, petting donkeys and enjoying

good food (including S'mores) and conversation. Thanks to all the volunteers who took part.

## CCHS Hosts War of 1812 Talk to Students

Michigan was a significant battleground during the War of 1812. At least seven land battles and four naval or amphibious actions were fought within our boundaries. These include the capture of Fort Mackinac by British and Indian forces. Peace that came two years later opened the way for the surveying of the southern part of Michigan's lower peninsula, setting the stage for a rush of settlement by Anglo-Americans.

Yet, few people know of that war and its impact, and so in honor of the 200th anniversary of

the start of the conflict, Joe Bradley, George Dunham Dick Vershave and from CCHS, took part in three events including the Veterans' Day at the Clare County Courthouse, at which CCHS and the American Legion honored local veterans of World War II with plaques.

CCHS also gave War of 1812 talks to middle and high school students during an assembly at the Harrison high school and a talk to Jason Cook's 4th grade class. The three marched with flags from that era and gave a short presentation on the significance of the conflict.

## New Railroad Trail Display Planned

Mid-Michigan Community College's Harrison campus has walking trails, part of which follow old railroad beds. But few know that fact—or how railroads fit in with Clare's history. However, a new display case at the south end of the campus will help tell that story. The display is a joint effort of your historical society, MMCC and Friends of Clare County Parks & Recreation. The display to be dedicated this spring

## Clare Arts Council Funds Cleaning of Statue

The "Pioneer Mother" statue on the grounds of the Clare Middle School was cleaned this fall thanks to funding from the Clare County Arts Council. A sealer will be put on the statue in the spring. The statue was created by Russian sculptor Samuel Cashwan as part of the Federal Arts Projects and



installed in March of 1937. Cashwan submitted sketches that were approved by students at what was then the high school.

## Clare Arts Council and CCHS Host Art Tour



This past September, the Clare Arts Council hosted a fundraiser and depression art tour in Clare assisted by

CCHS volunteers.

Participants heard an address by former Clare Schools Superintendent Tom Moline concerning the four murals in the Clare Middle School painted by Michigan artist Gerald Mast and installed in 1938. After the talk and lunch, participants toured the art in the Doherty Hotel, Clare post office and Clare Congregational church.

## CCHS Receives Forrest Meek Collection

CCHS is indebted to the Forrest Meek estate for its donation of , historical materials to the CCHS. These include the noted Clare County historian's photographs, articles and research notes.

CCHS member Carron Nevill was the primary facilitator in arranging this gift.

Andy Coulson and Jon H. Ringelberg worked to organize and catalog the materials, which will be made available to researchers. Meek passed away last year.

## Clare's 'Tunnel in the Forest' is No More

*Reflections by Jon H. Ringelberg*

**M**y home town of Grand Haven, Michigan, on the Grand River and Lake Michigan, and was settled early on in Michigan history. It is a coastal town because early travel was primarily by water. Lake Michigan connected towns along the coast, while the Grand River made it possible to move people and goods between Grand Haven to interior towns like Grand Rapids and Lansing.

Clare County's experience was a bit different. It was the coming of the railroad after the Civil War that opened up this county to trade centers to the south, east and west. The railroads brought in workers (mainly lumberjacks) and shipped out cut trees to build booming Midwest cities (especially Chicago that needed rebuilding after the massive 1871 fire).

And the world the first travelers to Clare county encountered is

one foreign to us and one that is even hard to imagine. One traveler likened the ride to Clare from Midland to riding through a continual tunnel through the forest. There were no roads, villages or farms to break up the never-ending green tunnel the train traveled through, save maybe a swamp or lake.

However, the coming of the railroad and the desire for the huge trees that grew in the county (primarily pine and hemlock) also meant saloons, sawmills, housing, and schools were needed to supply workers and their families, so as the trees came down, towns sprang up and that meant additional railroads were needed to connect them. Railroads to Cadillac and beyond. Others to Harrison, Dodge and Meredith, and towns long forgotten.

In addition to these regular lines, narrow gauge, and tramway railroads criss-crossed the county. There were some 47 different railroads and hundreds of miles of

rail beds in Clare County, which may be a Michigan record!

And once the lumber played out, loggers left and farmers and business moved in, changing the landscape even more.

As the number of motor vehicles increased, roads and highways were developed and railroads became less important for transporting goods and people. Prior to the 1930's trucks received goods at a railroad station and made day deliveries in the immediate locale. In the mid-30s over-the-road (OTR) trucking came into being—meaning that the truck and driver stayed overnight away from the immediate locale. In 1934, at about age 18, my father was one of the first OTR truck drivers and saw the evolution from narrow two-lane highways to freeways.

From water to railroads to vehicle highways, and even to travel by air, Clare County became open to the world and is no longer a "tunnel in the forest."

## Booklet Gives Look at Early Court Cases

**C**lare County Historical Society board member Jon H. Ringelberg has been synthesizing old Clare County Circuit Court legal cases to provide insight to the life and times of early Clare County. Jon's write-ups appear regularly in the *Clare County Cleaver*.

Now anyone with an interest in local history or the law can purchase a 70 page booklet, which covers cases from 1871-

1875. The booklet is available for \$10, and Jon is donating the entire proceeds of a sale (including printing costs to the CCHS).

The booklet is available at Cops and Doughnuts in Clare or by contacting Jon via [jbringelberg@hotmail.com](mailto:jbringelberg@hotmail.com). Please note a \$3 charge to cover the cost of postage applies to mail orders.

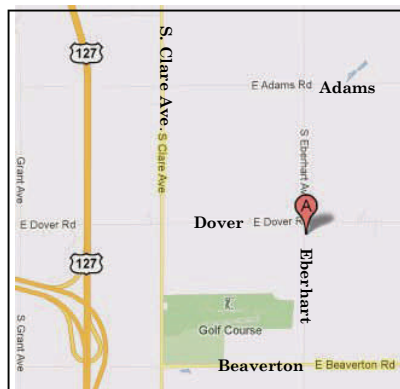
"The cases are each unique and provide a glimpse into the

people and problems of Clare County's early history when logging was the major industry," Jon said. "Yet, despite the fact the cases are more than 140 years old, many of the reasons people went to court are similar to what we see today."

Ringelberg is now working on the next five-year period of early Clare County legal cases, and should have those available by the first part of April.

# 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)

## Join/Renew the Clare County Historical Society

Membership 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 publish our newsletters, host events and promote Clare County history within our county and

around the region, tell its stories and protect its artifacts.

Join (or renew) with us.

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

New

Renewal

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

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

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

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

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

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

*\* 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 Joe Bradley, President  
5239 Apache Trl  
Harrison, Michigan 48625