

Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society

Angela Kellogg, Editor

Volume 25 Number 1

Sharing Our Past With the Present.

Spring 2024

Volunteers are needed for Saturdays May-Sept.

Do you have a few free Saturdays this summer? Consider spending time greeting visitors at the museum complex of the CCHS.

If you cannot volunteer encourage residents and visitors to visit CCHS this summer!

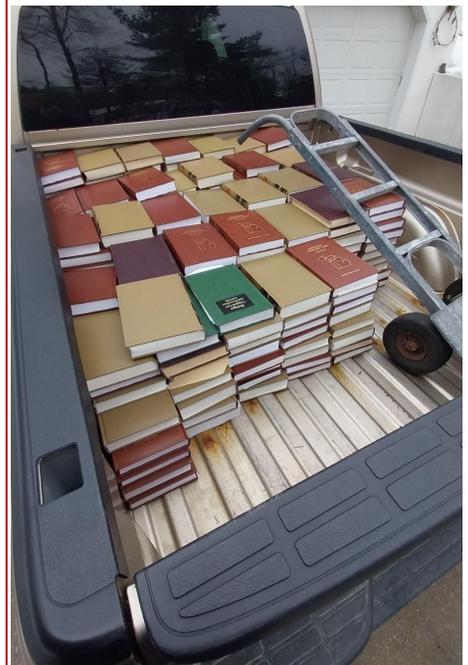


288 Law Books Donated to CCHS

The Clare county jail donated the entire contents of their law library to the Clare County Historical Society. The inmates now have access to an up-to-date law library in digital format, rendering the old books antiquated.

The ages of the donated books range from 1914 (31 volumes) to 1992. Many, or all, of these books had their origins next door to the jail in the courthouse law library. As the courthouse updated their collection, they would donate the older volumes to the jail. The bulk of the collection deals with Michigan laws, though there are a set of federal law books from the 1960's.

The total number of books donated to CCHS approximates 288 and were quite the chore to move in the winter weather!



Clare County Historical Society

Our mission is to preserve, advance, and share the history of Clare County, Michigan.

Our Society oversees a History Park at Dover and Eberhart Roads northeast of Clare that includes a Museum, the Dover one-room schoolhouse, Ott Family Cabin, and a Blacksmith Shop. We also have photos, books, newspapers and documents. CCHS board meetings are the 1st Tuesday of each month at our museum May—Sept at 7 p.m. All are invited. Learn more at clarecounthistory.org or visit us on Facebook.

Community Mourns Loss of Historian Robert Knapp

By ANGELA KELLOGG-HENRY
Reprinted from the *Clare County Cleaver*

With great sadness our historical community learned of the passing of Robert Knapp last week. In addition to his local historical contributions, Robert was a great friend.

Robert wasn't like the rest of us armchair historians in the Clare County Historical Society fueled by our passions, interests and whatever skill set our careers brought to the table as judge, writer, librarian, teacher, or history lover. Robert was a true scholar and historian. He attended Central Michigan University and then earned his Ph.D. in Ancient History at the University of Pennsylvania. Robert retired as a Professor in the Classics Department from the University of Berkely in 2006.

Robert lived full-time in Oakland California with his wife Carolyn, and they made frequent trips around the world and to Michigan. The historic family cabin of the Bell/Knapp family in Sheridan Township was their base here in Clare County.

"The Clare County Historical Society has lost a good friend, a valuable resource, a wonderful writer and a generous benefactor. Robert knew more about local history than anyone I've met--everything from lumberjacks to gangsters--and he was always willing to share his knowledge. His many financial contributions benefited not only our group, but the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan, local libraries, non-profit organizations and more. We will miss him, but we're blessed that he will live on in his books and his contributions that bettered our community." Said Marty Johnson of the Clare County Historical Society.

Jon Ringelberg, also of the Clare County Historical Society worked closely with Robert on many projects. Five or six CCHS friends in-

cluding myself, had an ongoing email group that was part historical research help and discussion and part good-natured historical fun.

"A tremendous loss. His inquisitive and inquiring mind matched his research abilities. He knew historical downtown Clare better than most anyone and was the 'go to' person as to its past buildings and their locations." said Ringelberg.

His local titles include *Clare 1865-1940* (2012), *Community of Learning History and Memories. The Laboratory School Central Michigan University 1895-1970* (2021), *Gangsters Up North: Mobsters, Mafia, and Racketeers in Michigan's Vacationlands* (2020), *Small-Town Citizen Minion of the Mob. Sam Garfield's Two Lives--Purple Gangsters, Meyer Lansky, and Life in Clare Michigan* (2018), *Mystery Man. Gangsters, Oil, and Murder in Michigan* (2014).

His academic titles are too numerous to mention here and include titles such as *The Dawn of Christianity. People and Gods in a Time of Magic and Miracles* (2017) and *Invisible Romans* (2013). His work has been translated into several languages for publication.

His greatest strength locally and in Michigan was examining what he called "the truths, myths, and downright fabrications" of his subjects like the gangster activity of the 1930s.

He wrote honestly and factually about Clare residents like Sam Garfield. Garfield and his wife Ruby were beloved citizens of Clare, but he was also closely affiliated with major gangsters such as members of the Purple Gang, Moe Dalitz' Cleveland Syndicate and, most of all, meg-mobster Meyer Lansky.

His Clare book in the Arcadia Images of American series inspired me to write the *Harrison* (2014) and *Farwell* (2016) titles for the same publisher.

Robert took a particular interest in Clare County newspapers. Newspapers are an excellent source of

information and a firsthand account of history. Robert established an endowment fund at the Clarke Historical Library at CMU to digitize Clare County newspapers and the county is nearing as complete as possible newspaper digitization due to his efforts.

The earlier mentioned Bell/Knapp cabin dates to 1888 and was built by Robert's great-grandfather. The cabin will soon be donated to the historical society and moved to the museum park complex at Dover and Eberhart Roads. Robert has left to the historical society a generous donation to move and care for the cabin. While he was raised in Mt. Pleasant, his roots were tied closely to his pioneer family in Clare County.

Writing about Robert's historical contributions, education, non-profit work, awards, and his accomplishments both locally, personally and in his field would be a book itself. In 2012, his alma mater, Central Michigan University named him the Distinguished Alumnus of the Year.

Clare County is forever indebted to Robert Knapp for his work in discovering and preserving local history.

For more information about Robert Knapp and his work visit his website at <http://cliophiles.com> or <https://cliophilepress.com>. Service and memorial information will be published as it becomes available.

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Robert Knapp

Knapp Image Collection to be available at CCHS Museum in 2024

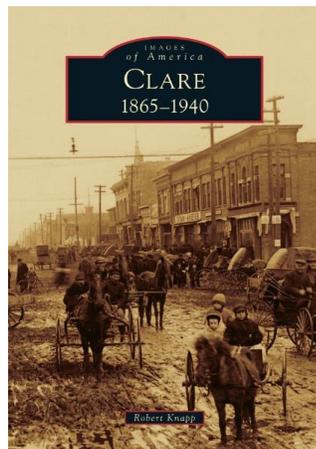
Last fall saw the passing away of one of Clare County Historical Society’s key members, Robert C. Knapp. Over his life time, and especially the last fifteen years, his passion became collecting historical photographs of Clare county and especially the Clare area along with his home township of Sheridan.

Mr. Knapp kindly donated the contents of his digital collection to the CCHS. Over this winter the images are being gone through and those images that members either have not seen before, or those that are of better quality than members have seen before are being printed and placed into a binder for the viewing public. The binder is planned to be on display during the museum’s 2024 season.

The printing is kindly being done by Mid Michigan College. Mid and CCHS have had a joint partnership since the college remodeled five years ago and took all their historical photographs down from

their halls and walls. Having no place to store these nicely framed images, CCHS offered a new home for the collection with the college still maintaining ownership.

The number of photographs being printed by the college will probably number over four hundred.



Clare 1865-1940 (2012) by Robert Knapp

Join or Renew Your Membership

Memberships for active for the calendar year. Please check your address sticker to see your “paid to” date.

Membership is only \$10 per calendar year—unless you are 80 or older in which case your

membership is free if you have been a member in good standing (dues paid) for the previous 5 years.

Your support makes it possible to run our museum complex; publish our newsletters; host our website; run events;

educate residents and visitors on our local history; promote tourism; protect artifacts; and more.

In any event **we hope you'll join with us--or renew!**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Address 2: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

\$ _____ **Total enclosed***

Donations in excess of \$10 are greatly appreciated and will be used to improve our museum park and promote local history. The CCHS is a 501(c)3 organization and your donation may be tax deductible.

New **Renewal**

I am 80 or older, live in Clare County and qualify (see above) for a free membership.

Yes, email me the newsletter

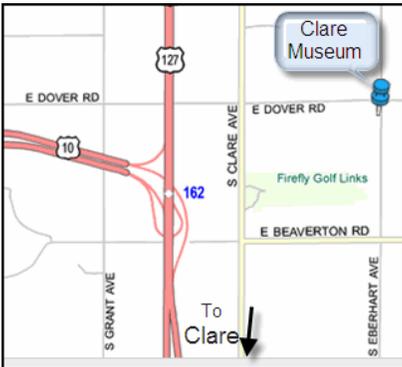
Make checks payable to: Clare County Historical Society and mail them to

**CCHS, c/o Andrew Coulson, Treasurer
P O Box 723
Harrison, Michigan 48625**

CLARE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



c/o CCHS, Andrew Coulson, Treasurer
P O Box 723
Harrison, Michigan 48625



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
[@clarecountyhistory.org](https://www.facebook.com/clarecountyhistory.org)

Questions, comments? Email
museum@clarecountyhistory.org

CCHS Announces Essay Contest

Open to Clare County students in Grades 9-12

The Clare County Historical Society is sponsoring an essay contest for all Clare County residents in grades 9-12, including homeschoolers. Students are asked to write a 400-500-word essay on a Clare County family who has contributed significantly to the county's history. Prizes of \$100, \$75, and \$50 will be awarded. Deadline for entries is noon on April 4.

Contact libertymurdoch@gmail.com for detailed information and rules about the contest, or with questions.

The Clare County Historical Society is dedicated to preserving, advancing and sharing the wonderful history of Clare County, Michigan. Sponsoring this contest is one way to get students interested in learning about that history and the families who helped make it a great place to live.



Receive the *Catchmark* Via Email

With a single stamp now at .68, CCHS would like to offer the newsletter via email in a pdf format. If you would like to receive your newsletter via email please send you email address along with your renewal and check the box in the form in this issue or email editor@clarecountycleaver.net your email address with a memo of CCHS.

