Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society

Angela Kellogg-Henry, Editor

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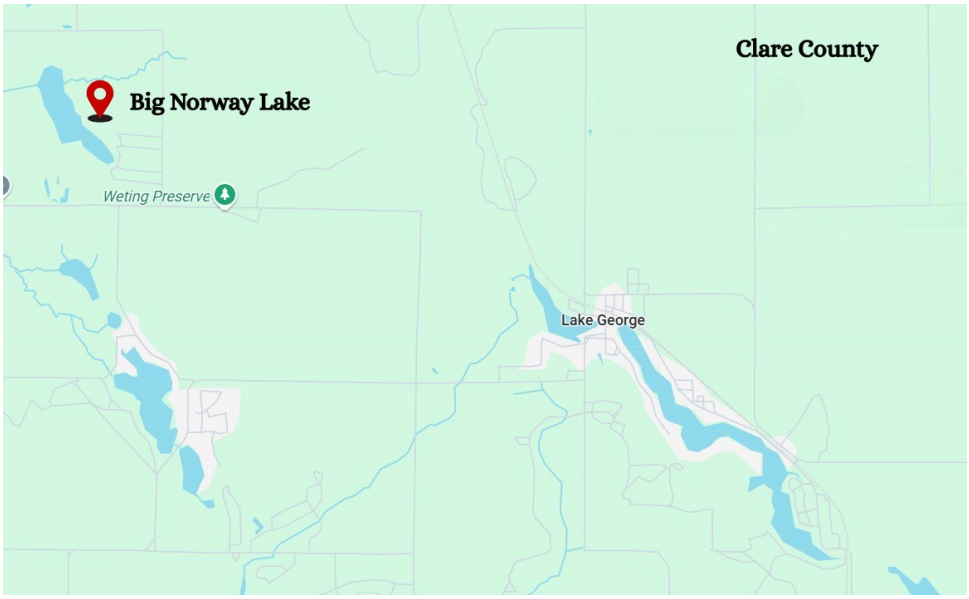
1880's Lumber Era Hemlock Surfaces in Big Norway Lake

A few weeks ago, the CCHS was contacted by a property owner on the southeast side of Big Norway Lake in Redding township. A 14-foot hemlock log had recently surfaced and the water's edge owner was able to get it ashore. CCHS members were able to identify it as having ownership affiliation with none other than W. S. Gerrish. The log mark, seen below with the "cut" log image, was registered by Gerrish in Clare County in 1881, and an assignment gave Carlton J. Hamilton of Muskegon gave permission to orchestrate the movement of the log from Clare County to the Muskegon sawmills. The law firm of Norris & Uhle of Grand Rapids, in managing the estate of George B. Warren, built the Gerrish owned narrow gauge logging railroad that ran from the west side of Big Norway to the Muskegon River, a distance of about 2 ½ miles. It was common practice to stage logs awaiting to be loaded on train cars in lakes. This would protect the logs from fire and insect damage until they could be shipped. Of course, a certain number of these logs would for become water logged and sink before they could be sawn or shipped. Practically every large lake in the county was used for this purpose and it is believed that many of the lakes still have these "dead heads" at the lake bottoms.

This particular log had the log mark stamped multiple times on each end of the log. One end of the log was kindly donated to the CCHS, to be banned and put on display at the museum this summer. Big thanks from the Clare County Historical Society to the property owners for contacting us and donating the log end with the



Log Marks Explained

Log marks were used to identify the owner of logs, especially when they were floated down rivers in large quantities. In the 1800s and early 1900s, log marks were essential for the massive timber industry in areas like Michigan, where billions of board feet of timber were harvested and floated down rivers to mills.

Early Settlements Part 6

By ANDREW COULSON

1884 – Meredith. Meredith, to say the least, is certainly an anomaly in the history of Clare county. Many stories came out of this short lived town, and one could probably spend a lifetime compiling information on this place that really only existed for ten years. Even the downfall of Meredith can be traced to multiple factors, but the biggest thing working against it was the remoteness of the village. The only real access to the area was by railroad, which was pulled in 1893. The people remaining at this point were given a few weeks warning that the tracks were going to be removed in order to get themselves and their goods out by rail. Otherwise, they'd have to hoof it out on the grade. You can still travel by auto on the Meredith grade between Arnold Lake road and Meredith. It is said that buildings still existed into the 1920's, but most or all of them were scavenged during The Great Depression. Nothing but a clearing now exists of this town that had a height of population in 1887 of about 500 hardy people.

1884 - Arnold (Lake). The history of this settlement is not very well documented, though it curiously shows on state maps from 1884 to 1913. The fact that it first appears during the construction of the Meredith branch of the Saginaw & Clare County Railroad tells us that the origins were closely tied with the lumber industry. The location of this place was directly between and north of Arnold and Cranberry lakes. This place probably never grew larger than being a logging hub and large camp, and the reason it appeared on the later maps was that the area was used for resort type camping trips.

This photo is believed to be the Meredith fire department. There are many things to note in this photo, attesting to the size of Meredith at the time, probably circa-1886 when they received new uniforms; There are 22 individuals, all of them well dressed and 5 of them in uniform. There are 4 children in the photo. The rear of the building, in the upper-right of the photo can be seen a fire watch tower. There are accounts of local fires during this time period in which gave the fire department not only credence, but also a run for their money!

1885 – Atwoods (Siding). The Atwood name goes back further in the area than the 1885 date suggests, and may have been the original name for the Hatton village site as well. The Atwood as it appears on state maps was located just north of the intersection of the Adams Road and the Harrison branch of the Pere Marquette. A 1879 article states that Atwood's Siding may habe been the location of the first mill on the Harrison branch. Atwood's Siding was still making it into the newspapers into the 1920's. It was never a town, but a community that used the siding as a central location.

1885 – Bungo. The exact location is unknown, though most certainly found near the southern shore of Bungo Lake. The Gerrish railroad ran alongside the eastern shore of Bungo Lake, and Bungo as a settlement probably served as the southern terminus of this line for a short period of time.

1885 – Levington Siding. This place is a poorly documented location and was solely a siding used for lumbering activities. It shows on state maps from 1885 to 1913, but never on a county map. It is located on the Meredith grade, about halfway between Arnold Lake Road and Frost Lake. The best guess at the location is on the east side of the grade, north of Pine Road where Meredith grade begins a gradual curve to the east north of Pine Road. While the siding was most likely on the east side, the bulk of the area may have been on the west side at this location. Also of note, indicating an area of higher population, it was about a quarter mile south of this location that the original school for the area, the precursor of the Sharp school was located.

Not Forgotten: 17 Men to be Added to WWII Wall of Tears for Clare County

By ANGELA KELLOGG-HENRY
Cleaver Managing Editor
Reprinted from the Clare County Cleaver

Additional names of those who made the ultimate sacrifice will soon be added to the WWII section of the Wall of Tears at the Veterans Freedom Park in Harrison. In the course of planning the Veterans Freedom Park and attending to the myriads of details such an endeavor entails 17 names were not included.

During the planning of the park military records were used to determine who should be listed on the Wall of Tears, the criteria being those who lost their lives in active service in a war or conflict. An example of how the names were missed makes one realize how easy it is to misconstrue historical records. For example, if a Clare County resident left the county to seek employment in Detroit and then enlisted into the military while living in Detroit, his paperwork would list his residence as Detroit and that would follow throughout his records. Are they from Detroit or Clare County? Where should their name on a memorial be honored? One can see how only using military records for determining where someone is "from" can be confusing.

Jon Ringelberg and the late Robert Knapp, members of the Clare County Historical Society first noticed several obvious names were missing, Pettit and Kapplinger. The VFW Post in Clare is officially named Pettit Kapplinger VFW Post 5738 for two Clare men who lost their lives in WWII, Robert Lee Pettit and Jarvis Kapplinger. This sparked Ringelberg's curiosity, and together with Knapp they began to research "those who gave all" in Clare County.

It also happened in reverse. Several names on the wall were men who lived in Clare County only briefly or had a relative living here and listed their address as Clare County. Those names are on the wall and those men do not necessarily have deep ties to Clare County. Those names will remain on the wall. First and foremost, the park was built to "'Remember, Honor and Reflect' on the great sacrifice that our past and current service men and woman have made." Therefore, no names will be removed.

In all the pair found 17 additional Clare County men who died in service in WWII. After taking this information to the Veterans Freedom Park committee after several years a plan was put together to engrave the names. First, several genealogists, Dennis Guerriero and I, looked over the names and records to verify Ringelberg and Knapp's findings and further recommend to the park committee that they be engraved. Satisfied that the names now represented as historically correct a record as could be found, Stacy Stocking of Clark Stocking Funeral Home was contacted to assist with arrangements to engrave the additional names.

Funds were donated by Ringelberg, the Clare County Democratic Party and the Clare VFW Post 5738 to pay for the additional engraving. The engraving is scheduled for Wednesday, July 23.

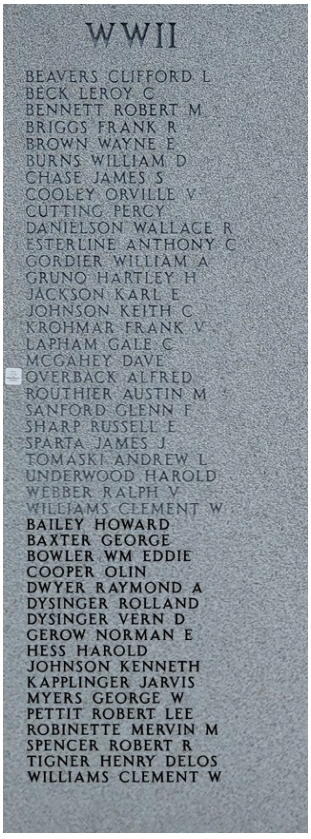
Renee Haley gave a statement on behalf of the Veterans Freedom Park committee.

"The Veterans Freedom Park Committee would like to thank the Historical Society for their partnership and research in helping us get this right. It is our continued mission to never leave a soldier behind, we will continue to honor, remember and reflect on all of those who have served this great nation." Said Haley.

Haley also stated a bell remembrance ceremony is planned for the fall, possibly on Veterans Day to honor those additional servicemen lost in WWII. The public and family members of the fallen soldiers will be invited to attend.

The Veterans Freedom Park is located at 200 W. Main Street in Harrison. The park is shaped like an octagon with memorials added over the years with fundraising efforts to honor all those who served in WWI/WWII, the Korean Conflict, Vietnam, the Gulf War, and Iraq/Afghanistan. The Wall of Tears is in the center lists those who were killed in an active war or conflict from four counties: Clare, Gladwin, Isabella and Midland. The welcome center at the park holds military artifacts and information about local veterans.

Monument with new names



Mann's Siding Depot Location

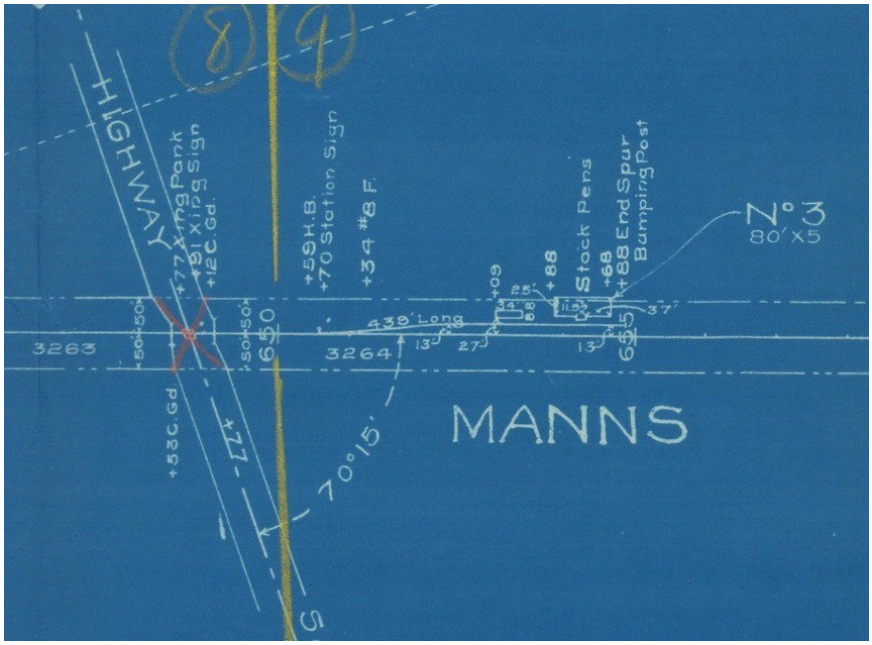
A little help from the National Archives

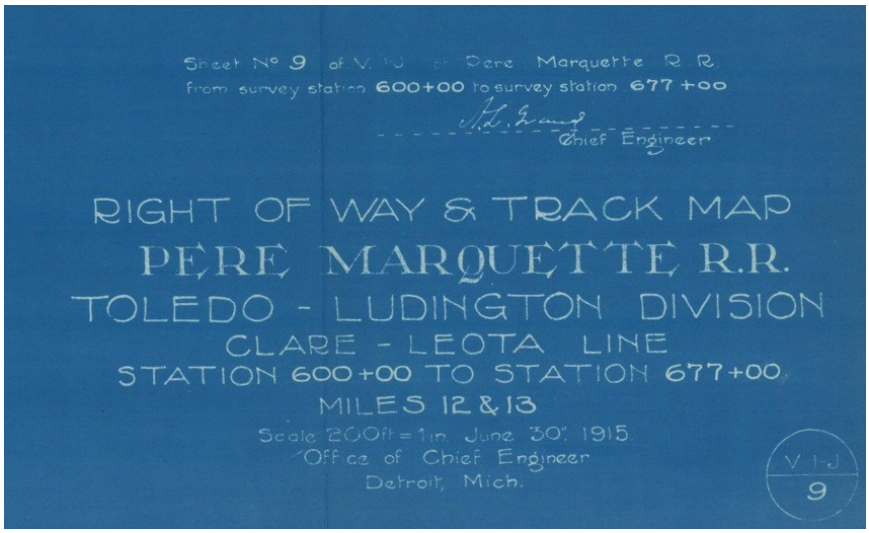
By ANDREW COULSON

There are a few very importing things to take into consideration when researching history. The first, if you're interviewing in person, shut up and listen. The second, and just importantly, ask the right question. Of course, this can be tricky, but can be honed with practice. There is certainly an element of luck involved. It is possible to ask a question to an individual, and the little bit of pertinent information can be skated around and never come to light, but if you ask the question a little differently, then that little piece of information will come forward and possibly make a world of difference.

This was certainly the case recently during an email conversation with Dr. James Hannum, author of "Cut and Run". The Dr. and myself have emailed each other, probably 100's of times, and I believe he was aware of my interest in the Mannsiding area. This spring I thought I'd ask him if he could help me narrow down the possible location of the "Mann's Siding" (how the name appeared in newspapers) depot. The depot at Mann's is specifically mentioned in newspapers approximately four times. After a few emails back and forth on the subject, he informed me that if I really wanted to know the location of the depot, I'd have to find what is referred to as a "valuation map." This is a map, or more accurately, a blueprint, of the railroads and all the corresponding structures and property, all the way down to signages involved with the tracks. He then continued to inform me that the only existing valuation maps he was aware of were housed at the National Archives in Washington D.C.

Fearing a trip to D.C. was imminent, I first thought it a good idea to get help from a local librarian and friend, Angela Kellogg-Henry. She was able to email the request and get help from the archives to scan and send back images of the requested maps. Of course, the waiting period seemed like ages, but more sooner than later, the images arrived. Those of you that have done any amount of researching, no that more often than not, when you find something like this that you've never seen before, the result leads to more questions than answers. And this was the case of the Mann's Siding valuation map.





The 1906 Clare County Atlas shows the siding at Mann's as being about a quarter mile, on the east side of intersection of the Clare/Harrison railroad and Mannsiding Road. This siding left the main line and entered it again. The 1915 valuation map shows the "spur" being under a 1/10 mile in length and on the west side of the main line, dead ending at the stock pens. The stock pens are labeled as being 25 x 37 feet. The kicker of this finding is that there is no depot labeled. However, out of the four times that the depot is mentioned in the newspapers, the last mention is in 1917, which mentions it as being in a very unsanitary condition. The valuation map shows a structure immediately south of the stock pens, and being 34 x 8.8 feet. While this is not labeled as being a depot, there is a mention of a "station sign" just at the start of the siding. There are no known photos of this depot, so there is a distinct possibility that this is as close as we're going to get to knowing the location of the elusive structure.

New Shed on Museum Grounds

In the winter of 2023-2024 saw our storage shed's roof collapse, rendering the entire building unusable. During the spring of 2024, the shed was demolished and taken to the scrap yard. We were without a storage shed for all of 2024. During the monthly meetings that year, building a more permanent shed was discussed.

The historical society's initial 2025 meeting held in April saw a motion approved to construct a stick built shed, complete with poured concrete floor. Around the beginning of May, the project was started and by the end of May it was completed. The dimensions are 16' x 10', with a cost of about $3,800. We are excited to have this storage shed now available and it is already in use. A big thank you to all who helped in its construction!

Join or Renew Your Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

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

EMAIL ADDRESS:_____

☐ **New** ☐ **Renewal**

☐ **I am 80 or older, live in Clare County and qualify for a free membership.**

☐ **Yes, email me the newsletter**

$_____ 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.

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
CCHS
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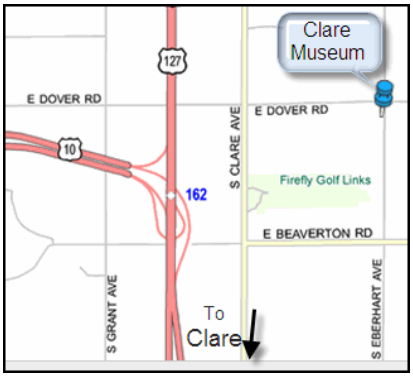

Our museum complex is at 7050 Eberhart Rd. at Dover, five miles north of Clare. It is open the first Sat. in May to the last Sat. in Sept. from 1-4 p.m.

Like us on Facebook @clarecountyhistory.org

Questions, comments? Email *museum@clarecountyhistory.org*

Upcoming Events

Learn about Clare County and Michigan Log Marks with Jon Ringelberg

6:30 p.m, Thursday, September 11
FREE TO ATTEND
Mid Michigan College
Harrison Campus | Esther C. Conference Room
Discover the world of log marks with Jon Ringelberg, member of Clare County Historical Society and known as the 'Log Mark Guy'. Jon served as a District Court Judge in Clare and Gladwin Counties from 1969 to 1985, has taken 18 backcountry trips to Isle Royale National Park, been a member of Clare County Historical Society for 12 years, and is now researching and cataloging log marks from every county in the state.
Log marks, similar to cattle brands, established the ownership of timber during the logging era and date back to the 1860s, with the earliest surviving log mark registration for Clare County dating back to 1878.
Explore the rich history of logging, local lumber history, and log marks during this lively discussion with Jon Ringelberg—a true local with a love of the area!
Questions? Contact Corey Goethe, Director of Library & Learning Services, at cgoethe@midmich.edu or call (989) 386-6622 x288

Old Fashion Day 2025

Enjoy Old Fashion Day at the Clare County Museum complex on Saturday, September 27. Enjoy the museum grounds, tractor rides, food, music and much more! This is the last day the park is open for the 2025 season.

Road Side Park on Old 27

Thank you Cops and Doughnuts and Elm Creek!

Thank you to Cops and Doughnuts for continuing to support the upkeep of the roadside park on Old 27. between Harrison and Clare.

The park is leased by the Clare County Historical Society and maintained by Cops and Doughnuts and Elm Creek Lawn and Landscaping, LLC.