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CLARE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society

Angela Kellogg-Henry, Editor

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Ringelberg's 'Recollections' Reveal Humor, Humanity

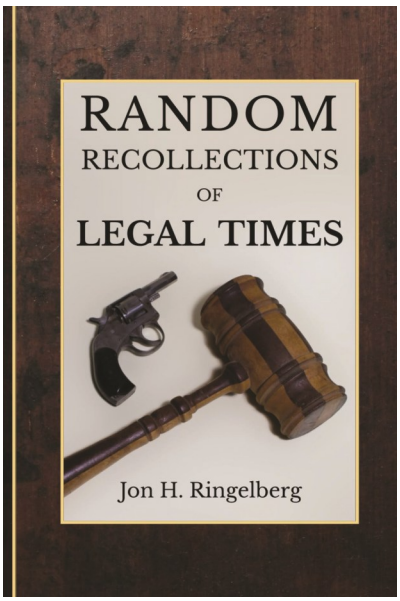
By **ANGELA KELLOGG-HENRY**
Reprinted from the Clare County Cleaver

Jon Ringelberg's new book is a bit different than his half dozen or so other historical works about Clare County. This book is more personal, pulling from his own experiences as a legal research attorney, district judge, general practice & defense attorney, Social Security judge, business law instructor, mediation panelist, and DoD hearing officer. Most of his career was spent in Clare County where he was also public guardian.

Ringelberg was and will remain Michigan's youngest elected District Court Judge. He was elected in 1968 at age 26 and later the law changed to become a judge in Michigan, one must have been admitted to the practice of law for at least five years. He served as District Court Judge from 1969 to 1985. During that time, he presided over small and large cases, gaining a unique and intimate knowledge of the people of Clare County.

Readers may recall the many years that the Cleaver ran Jon Ringelberg's historic legal cases on this page. He synopsized thousands of legal cases from 1871 through 1950 which are historical and genealogical treasures. Copies of his legal cases are held locally and at the Library of Michigan. While his new book is not a synopsis of the actual cases he presided over it's an honest and often funny view from the bench.

Ringelberg describes his new book as a look into the "often bizarre, sometimes hilarious, sometimes painful, and unpredictable world of small-town law." Rough drafts of his "Recollections" have been in the works for years. Ringelberg was interviewed in 2012 in the Cleaver and spoke of his admiration and respect for the late Honorable Donald F. Holbrook. His new book has a few stories from his early years working for Holbrook.



"He was true to his beliefs and not afraid to take a controversial stand." Said Ringelberg.

Those same attributes apply to Ringelberg, as I'm sure anyone who knows him will agree. Ringelberg maintains his license to practice law, and he approaches his work in the historical society and to his writing projects with the same distinct analytical framework as his past legal work.

Jon Ringelberg reads a story from his new book to fellow members of the Clare County Historical Society at their final meeting of 2025 on October 8. (Photo by Angela Kellogg-Henry)

While he wasn't interested in writing an entire book on some historical subjects like the infamous Jim Carr and Maggie Duncan story. He still published a few copies of what he calls a "Historical Compendium". Basically, research material that Ringelberg in true lawyer fashion separates into two sections; primary documents and facts and all the stories and lore that came later.

While Ringelberg is a self-proclaimed curmudgeon (he even has a shirt) claiming he'll retire and has stepped down from some of his official duties at the Clare County Historical

Society he keeps finding projects. Or they keep finding him. Next up is his 5-volume set of books about Michigan log marks.

Ringelberg is a 40-year member of the Clare County Historical Society and has lived in Clare County since 1967 with his wife and family. Ringelberg's love of local history and his research have produced 6 books, numerous compilations, and the synopsis of over 4,500 Clare County Circuit Court legal cases from 1871 through 1950.

Early Settlements Part 7

By ANDREW COULSON

1885 Mann's, Mann's Siding – Like many other settlements in Clare county, Mann's Siding began as a lumber camp. It eventually grew to something much bigger, but never reached the status of town. The first known reference of Mann's was in December 1880, when it was referred to as a camp along the new Clare to Harrison railroad. Who the "Mann" was that gave his namesake to the camp is still unknown. The "Main Street" of Mann's was Arthur road, between Harrison Avenue and Bass Lake Avenue. There was a little documented church on the northwest corner of Harrison Ave/Arthur and the Mann's school was located a half mile east of this intersection on the north side of Arthur. The community was about a mile radius from the school. Mann's also had a short lived depot, probably on the northwest intersection of the railroad and Mannsiding Road. Mann's may have become something a little bigger if it would have had a better road connection to either Clare or Harrison. Road access from the east was more or less non-existent, being hindered by what is now Snow Snake "mountain." Harrison Ave on the west side only went to Gladwin Road until it was extended north after 1900 and after that would have been a pretty rough five mile journey until after most of the population of the area had moved away.

1885 Moore's (Crossing) – This place has its origins around 1871 when Michigan approved the construction of the Clare and Gladwin State Road, later to become Kapplinger Drive. Though the official purpose of this road can be seen in the its original name, the unofficial reason of its construction was to give the people of the Dover area easier access to the then county seat of Farwell. Shortly after the rails were laid from Harrison Junction area between Clare and Farwell, Moore's Crossing, where the railroad crossed Kapplinger, became a place. A more detailed origin of this place can be found in Forest Meek's Michigan Timber Battleground, first paragraph of page 209.

1885 Rice's Siding – Very little is known about this place. It appears on state maps between 1885 and 1895. There may have been a siding on the east side of the Clare/Harrison railroad just north of Gladwin Road, where there is a long spur running to the west into Greenwood township. Curiously, out of the four maps that this author has seen that show the terminus of this spur, all but one of them has it terminating in central Greenwood township. The last, in 1895 has it clearly terminating at the settlement of Mark, in northeast Greenwood township. In 1906, the plat map has a C. Rice as owning forty acres at the former Mark settlement, perhaps providing the only clue as to the Rice's Siding namesake.

Garrity Cemetery Hamilton Township

By ANDREW COULSON

The Garrity cemetery is a small family cemetery in the northeast corner of Hamilton Township. The Clare County Historical Society has been providing maintenance on this cemetery for the past ten years or so. We became aware that there were no locals that were willing or capable of keeping it mowed and presentable. The cemetery is no longer active; the last burial took place about 100 years ago.

The first step was to cut down the saplings that had begun to grow and take over. Once this was done, mowing was much easier and provided a cleaner appearance. Next, on the agenda was to bring in a private contractor to clean the headstones. This was done in 2022. The larger headstones are made of a very attractive marble in the shape of large scrolls and look much nicer now that they have been cleaned.

Next came an Eagle Scout project that saw the addition of a staircase leading from the road up the steep embankment on the north side of the cemetery. It is said that there once was a staircase at this location but had long been removed. You can still see the gate that would have been at the top of the original staircase, and it was this reason that the north side of the cemetery saw the placement of the new staircase, though the south side is at a slightly lower elevation. The same Eagle Scout project also saw the cemetery's first signage, done by a local man from Long Lake. The green clovers represent the Garrity Irish heritage and the "scrolling" vines foreshadow the headstones directly behind the sign.

There is, of course, some historical reason as well for the CCHS becoming involved with the Garrity cemetery. Jim Carr, the notorious purveyor of flesh from Harrison, died in Meredith in early 1892 where he earlier had held as a secondary business location. Carr was so disliked by everyone that Meredith would not even allow him to be buried in their cemetery, so an alternate location had to be found. It is said that the "prayer" given to Carr at his burial went as such, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, if Meredith won't have him, Garrity must!" Whether or not this is true, we may never know. There is no headstone for Carr in any of the area's cemeteries.

Before and after views of headstones in the Garrity Cemetery after being cared for by Past Preservation of Midland, Michigan, a company that preserves and repair headstones.

(Photos from findagrave.com)

Annual Old-Fashioned Day Held September 27

Over 230 visitors enjoyed the beautiful fall weather touring the grounds and the various buildings at the Clare County Historical Society between Harrison and Clare. Those visitors were generous too, donating over $700 in voluntary entry fees and book sales.

In addition to touring the museum building history is hands-on at the Clare County Historical Society with two pioneer cabins to step inside and imagine life in the 1800s in early Clare County. The one-room Dover School lets you imagine children attending school and sitting at desks of all sizes, for all ages, without a computer or screen in sight. Nelda Murphy, a CCHS member and greeter at Old Fashion Day, attended the school and proudly chatted with attendees about her family roots in Clare County.

New for this year was the WKKM radio display taking over the back corner of the building that was formerly a storage space. A new shed added to the grounds this year enables outdoor storage and more room for the growing collection found, purchased or donated to the society and curated by CCHS members.

The featured speaker this year was Jon H. Ringelberg, a longtime CCHS member, talking about his latest project on log marks in Michigan. What started as a Clare County project branched out to most of Michigan, wherever logging took place. Ringelberg is compiling his findings from visits to dozens of county clerk offices, antique shops, and historical societies into a four-volume log mark search and activity tool. He plans a fifth volume to feature log ends and hammers shared with him or acquired by CCHS in the process of his research. When finished, it will be the largest effort to compile Michigan log marks in Michigan history.

The highlight for children at the event was toy tables spread out with all antique and vintage toys from hula hoops to stereo viewers. Kids could bang on the keys of several styles and ages of typewriters, handle "real" telephones, and see TVs and radios of all types and sizes.

The Sunshine String Band returned this year singing favorite songs everyone could sing along and enjoy.

The Clare Fire Department was also on hand for guests to tour two of its rigs. They showed up bright and early to display their trucks and life-saving equipment but mid-morning they were called to do just that to a car-buggy crash in Clare. They returned by mid-afternoon in time to enjoy homemade bean soup and cornbread made and served by CCHS members.

The sounds of antique steam engines and the tut-tut of antique tractors could also be heard. A tractor gave visitors a hayride through the countryside and around the (4-mile) block.

The annual Old Fashion Day serves was the last hurrah of the 2025 season. Open from 1-4 p.m. Saturdays May through September, the museum and grounds are now closed until May of 2026. Off-season appointments and tours are available by prearrangement. The historical society will hold their last meeting of 2025 at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 8 at the museum located at 7050 S. Eberhart Ave., Clare. Visit www.clarecountyhistory.org/ for more information about local veterans.

Jim Crawford and Nelda Murphy greet guests at the Clare County Historical Society's annual Old Fashion Day on Saturday, Sept. 27.

Kids and kids at heart enjoyed the various toys and other vintage items out for display and hands on learning,

Dennis Carbeno, past president of CCHS and resident blacksmith speaks with visitors.

Members of the Clare Fire Department. (Photos by Angela Kellogg-Henry)

Historic Baggage Tags Found

Baggage tag from Meredith purchased recently by the Harrison District Library.

By ANGELA KELLOGG-HENRY
Cleaver Managing Editor

In 2021, I wrote an article about a baggage tag from the Johnson House I purchased in an online auction. The brass tag dated from Harrison's earliest history, the building and operation of the Johnson House, now the Harrison District Library. The Johnson House of Harrison operated from May of 1880 through the 1890s when it was purchased by Daniel Lockwood and the name was changed to the Lockwood House.

That first baggage tag was found by a man named Mark and his father Archie. Their hobby throughout the 1970s and 80s was weekend warrior treasure hunters. Mark cherishes those days they got up at 5 a.m. to enjoy their hobby together. In retirement he is sorting through some of those treasures, researching history and thankfully with this item, selling them.

Earlier this spring I fielded a message from the Clare County Historical Society's Facebook page inquiring if we had any information about something a family had found while clearing trees near Hubbard Lake. Imagine my surprise when they sent a photo of a brass baggage tag from the Johnson House!

This tag was #6 and exactly the same as the one I had purchased in 2021. While coat checks and baggage tags aren't unusual, one that is over 145 years old and from a business in a rough and tumble logging town are very hard to come by. I never dreamed something like that would exist and now we have two!

Shantyboys, as lumberjacks were generally called before 1900 did make their way from camp to camp so it's not a complete surprise something like this could end up several hours away from Harrison in the middle of the woods. The family assured me they were going to metal detect the area and let us know if they find anything else.

The newest baggage tag found

Baggage tag #6 from the Johnson House, dug up in 2025 while planting trees in the Hubbard Lake area. It appeared to be attached to a feed bag frame.

comes from Meredith. A gentleman posted it on a local group asking if "Brown's Restaurant" was still in business with a photo of yet another 1880s brass baggage tag.

Immediately, he began to get inquires to purchase it. I'm grateful he allowed the Harrison District Library to purchase it so it can be shared with anyone who would like to view it.

Items from Meredith are hard to come by. A booming community north of Harrison from the mid-1880 to the mid-1890s it was a flash before it became a ghost town. There are not many tangible history items from Meredith.

Lake George School

In early 1913, Lake George was already well on its way to becoming a resort destination. A gentleman by the name of Steward Curtiss had platted what he had hoped would become a town of its own by the name of Fairview. In this respect, Lake George had just received a suburb. This "town" on the north east side of Lake George did in fact see some decent initial activity. It formally receiving the new Lake George school house in 1917. Just outside of its platted lots, it would also see a church and the township cemetery come into existence.

This building was used as a school until the early 1950's, though through much of its use it did not see the standard K-8 grades that most one room schools taught. For much of its time, the older students were bussed to the Farwell schools. In 1939 for example, it bussed part of its 6th grade, along with the 7th and 8th graders to Farwell. This was partly due to financial reasons and space constraints.

After this building was used as a school, it was used as a church and as the fellowship hall after a new church building was built, just to the east. Regular use of this building probably discontinued sometime in the late-1980's and it eventually became property of Lincoln township.

In its current state, the interior is in decent condition, though a large hole is apparent on the east side of the roof of the main structure. Sometime around 1930, Charlie Calkins painted twelve murals on the interior walls of the school building. Amazingly, and thankfully, these murals remain in excellent condition, though perhaps a little dirty and dingy. One of them is damaged, as a large crack runs down the west wall from ceiling to floor. Lincoln township recognizes the truly amazing piece of Clare county history they have in their possession and are taking steps toward preserving the structure and paintings therewithin. They have applied for a grant through the county as part of its "Blight Elimination Stabilization Project." The next step is to have the structure inspected for structural soundness and any asbestos that it may contain. After the initial formalities are complete, the roof will be replaced along with the windows and doors. Then the focus will turn to the interior restoration, including possibly getting the murals touched up.

Camp Rotary Celebrates 100 years

By ANDREW COULSON

Camp Rotary had its origins on the shore of Arnold Lake, northeast of Harrison. They soon outgrew this location, and were able to purchase the land surrounding Beebe Lake in 1925. W.C. Cornwell and his partners owned the property and were interested in developing the southern half of the lake into a luxury subdivision, while deeding the

northern half to Hatton township for a public park. It is believed that a fellow businessman from Saginaw, was the link that was able to make the purchase for the Boy Scouts of America.

Over the years, a few name changes have been attempted for both the lake within the camp and the camp itself. The name Beebe Lake first appears in the newspapers in 1893, but most likely held this name decades earlier. In 1926 there was an attempt to rename it Rotary Lake, and though it officially went by this name into the 1940's, everyone still knew it as Beebe and the Rotary name never stuck. In 1937, the whole name of the camp was changed to Keypayshowink, meaning "great camping ground." Other camps had been named Camp Rotary, so a more original name was desired, but Keypayshowink, for obvious reasons didn't fare well with the public.

Camp Rotary is a truly special place and has doubtlessly changed the lives of thousands of young ones. As it celebrates its 100 years at its current location, it continues to make plans for continuing well into the future. (Photos by Angela Kellogg-Henry)

Join or Renew Your Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

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

EMAIL ADDRESS:_____

Yes, email me the newsletter

☐ **New** ☐ **Renewal**

☐ **I am 80 or older, live in Clare County and qualify for a free membership. (Five years of paid membership required)**

☐

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

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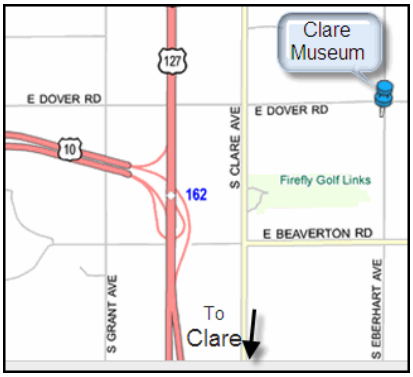


Our museum complex is at 7050 Eberhart Rd. at Dover, five miles north of Clare. It is open the first Sat. in May to the last Sat. in Sept. from 1-4 p.m.

More Old Fashion Day Photos

Dennis Guerriero, (left, President of CCHS demonstrates how to do the "walk to the dog" trick. Right, visitors chat with members of the Clare Fire Department.

Historical Notes

In 2025 the Clare County Historical Society had over 225 visitors to the museum. Old Fashion Day had over 230 visitors which gives us almost 500 visitors total for the year.

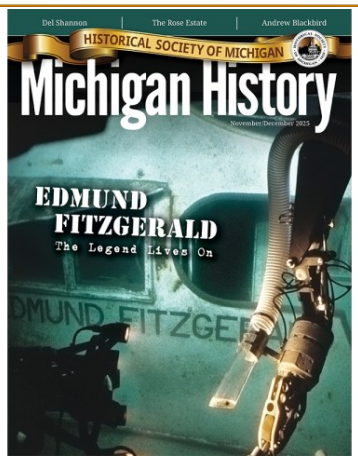
Many more contact us via email, social media, or call to inquire about their ancestors, artifacts, and other questions about Clare County. Our dedicated members answer questions and provide all the assistance we can all year round. The museum and grounds are closed for the season but send any inquiries to museum@clarecountyhistory.org

Members may have reported not receiving the Spring and Summer newsletter this year or received them badly damaged. We hope by putting them in envelopes and mailing them they will arrive safely to you. If you haven't received your newsletters please let us know.

All newsletters are archived on our website at www.clarecountyhistory.org/

Lots of information is also on our website and social media page so be sure to follow the Clare County Historical Society on Facebook.

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



Local Writer Featured in Michigan History Magazine

Local writer and Clare County Historical Society Member David Hutchinson has a feature article in the November/December 2025 issue of Michigan History magazine about the history of the Doherty Hotel. *Michigan History* magazine is published six times a year and offered either as an individual subscription or as part of an HSM membership.