



The Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society

Marty Johnson, Editor

Volume 17 Number 1

Sharing Our Past With the Present.

Winter 2017

Meet to Plan

Our annual CCHS planning meeting will be Saturday, March 25, from 10:30 a.m.—1 p.m. in the lower level of the Pere Marquette Library in Clare. This meeting provides an opportunity for board members, volunteers and those with an interest in local history to get together and hash out ideas for 2017 and beyond.

All are invited and refreshments will be served.

We also appreciate the Clare library for again allowing us to use their facility.

Clare County Historical Society

The mission of the CCHS is to preserve, advance, and disseminate the history of Clare County.

The Society oversees a complex located at the corner of Dover and Eberhart Roads northeast of Clare, which includes a Museum, the Dover one-room schoolhouse, Ott Family Log Cabin, and Blacksmith Shop. The complex is open Saturdays from 1—4 p.m. May thru Sept.

We also have photos, books, old newspapers and documents in our archives. Access to these is by appointment. Learn more at clarecountyhistory.org or visit us on Facebook.

Doors Open Saturday, May 6



The doors are not open. Not yet, anyway, but they will be as of the first Saturday in May, through the last Saturday in September, from 1—4 p.m.

Once again, we have great things planned, including some changes to our museum.

First off, we hope to move the Spikehorn exhibit out of the back corner of the back room to the front where people can better see it. Spikehorn remains one of our most popular displays and deserves to be in a place of prominence.

Moving it will also allow more room for our Children's Display that was rolled out last year. This display encourages kids of

all ages to use items they may not be familiar with or seen before. These include such items as a typewriter, record player, rotary phone and more. This year, we plan to add even more items (like an 8-track player and an old picture frame for use in taking "selfies").

We also want to add a few new exhibits that will highlight gangsters in the county; interesting Clare businesses; and the oil industry that began in the 1930s and is still going on today.

These changes will continue to be a "work in progress," this year, so stop by and see us a couple of times. Better yet, become part of the process! We always need volunteers.

Fake News And a Puzzle Too

Mention is often made of Michigan being avoided by settlers following the end of the War of 1812.



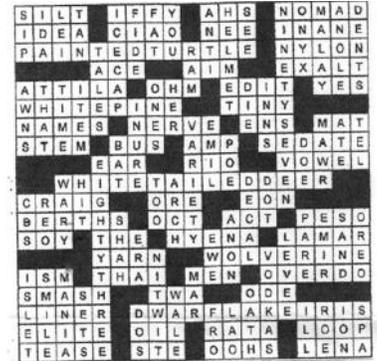
The reason? Bad press, perhaps an early example of fake news. For example, some maps overprinted the lower peninsula with the term “Interminable Swamp,” while other early survey reports and

news stories stated that the Michigan Territory was “inhabited by hostile Indians, covered with ‘miasmatic marshes and bogs’ and infested with mosquitoes.”

Although the last point may have been true (and perhaps still is), courageous pioneers settled here following the opening of the Erie Canal, and within 25-years, Michigan was a state.

Speaking of our state, CCHS member Gene Bodnar, has created a crossword puzzle dealing with state facts. Although it’s too large to include in this

newsletter, we have placed it on our website as a printable file. Just go to clarecountyhistory.org and click “Crossword Puzzle.” If popular, Gene has volunteered to create a Clare County specific puzzle in the future.



Bees and Socials

Jon H. Ringelberg has gathered mentions of Bees and Socials from 1870 to 1900 from issues of early Clare County newspapers, particularly from gossip columns. The number he has identified—more than 60—illustrates how Clare County residents teamed up for fun, to raise money, to help a neighbor or to make work a social event during a time when everything from sewing aprons to making pies was all done by hand. Having friends along, then, as now, could turn any event into a party and make what could be mind-numbing work go faster.

Jon found that certain types of activities were popular, for example, box socials, dance socials and logging bees.

What took place at some of these activities isn’t always clear.

We know a logging bee would have been for men to help a neighbor dispose of trees he cut down on his property; then afterward, the men would relax and drink the man’s alcohol.

However, others are a mystery. Jon is puzzled as to what a “Cap Social” might be. While those reading the newspapers and attending would have known, we would like to know, so if you have an answer, tell us!

Here’s a partial listing:

Apron Social
Barn Bee
Birthday Social
Book Social
Box social
Cap Social
Clothes Pin Social
Egg Social
Fish-Pound Social
Hot Biscuit and Honey Social

India Famine Social

Logging Bee

Mistletoe Social

Neck-Tie Social

Nose Fad Social

Pie Social

Piling Stump Bee

Quilting Bee

Shower Social

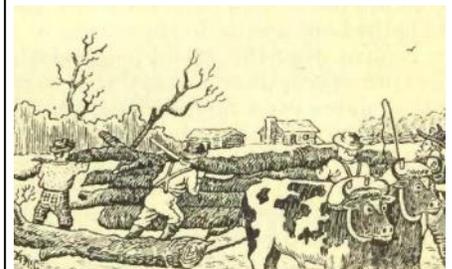
Ten-Cent Social

Warm Maple Sugar and Pan

Cake Social with Bill 5c

Ye Old Time Social

Some sound like fun even now, although maybe not a logging bee (below)!



Clare County Towns and the Railroad



By *Andy Coulson*

Most of the settlements and communities that developed in early Clare county history had one and sometimes two railroads servicing them. Railroads were important before the days of the automobiles and trucks to get goods to and from market. Just as with the present, where communities served by major highways and interchanges tend to prosper, communities a century ago generally needed a railroad to do the same.

The two major rail lines serving Clare County were the Pere Marquette (P.M.) and the Ann Arbor (A.A.). The City of Clare was the crossroads of these two railroads with tracks crossing each other at the Clare Union Depot, the P.M. from east and the A.A. from the south. Farwell was also serviced by both railroads, with the Pere Marquette running to and from Clare, and the Ann Arbor heading to the north, before it curved northwest to intersect with the village of Lake George. Harrison had a branch of the Pere Marquette.

However, some settlements were able to sustain themselves without access to a railroad and most townships can

boast of at least one of these communities. What allowed them to thrive, at least for a while, is that they were near a town with a railroad and had a good road that could be traveled by a horse-drawn wagon.

Below is a short list of some of the other settlements that came and went without ever seeing any passenger railroad service in Clare County.

- ◆ Grant Township The largest and longest lasting, would probably be the community of Dover, which was also the first settlement in the county. Dover was a farming community before the first railroad came to Clare in 1876. The town had a school, churches, sawmills, and a couple of general stores. Dover even sent one of its citizens to the county seat, when local businessman Lyman Leach was elected sheriff in 1897.
- ◆ Winterfield Township had a settlement by the same name, Winterfield, and also Grandon.
- ◆ Summerfield Township had an early settlement by the name of Summerfield and



also Jonesville.

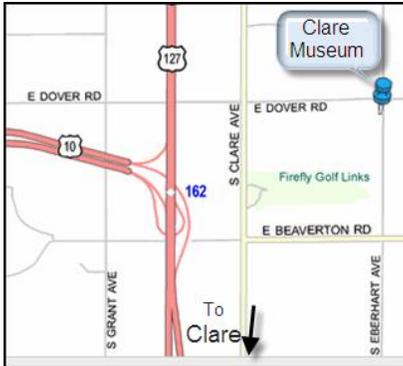
- ◆ Frost Township had Long Lake.
- ◆ Greenwood Township had a little known place by the name of Mark.
- ◆ Hatton and Arthur Townships had the area around the Cornwell farm that included the Ott settlement to the northwest and the Nestor community to the east. Also worth mentioning in southern Arthur township was the community that built itself around the Brand farm, which became known as Austin for a short time and was big enough to have two schools.
- ◆ Garfield Township had a rather large community grow up around Eight Point Lake, a distance of little more than three miles to the Pere Marquette stop in Lake Station.
- ◆ Sheridan Township, was another big farming township with a community of Colonville, and the areas around what was known as Elm Grove and the Wild Cat school. Each of these areas had their own school and church, with Colonville having a general store and post office.





CLARE COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

c/o Jon H. Ringelberg, Treasurer
3062 E Colonville Rd
Clare, Michigan 48617-9448



Our museum complex is at 7050
Eberhart Rd. at Dover, five miles north
of Clare. It opens the first Sat. in May.

Like us on Facebook!



Questions, comments? Email
museum@clarecountyhistory.org

Field Trip

This spring, CCHS member Marty Johnson will lead a 1/2 day trip via carpool to visit one or two of the Missaukee Mounds to our north. We may even throw in a stop of Ebels General Store in “beautiful downtown Falmouth” afterward.

The date for this field trip has not yet been set but will probably be Saturday, May 20, before the vegetation gets too high and mosquitoes too thick. Look for details in the next issue.

For those who may not be familiar with them, the mounds are really earthworks. The largest is about 150 feet in diameter and five feet high. They were built by Woodland Indians approximately 500 years ago for a purpose yet unknown.

Again Asking...

In past issues, we’ve put out requests for information pertaining to our history hoping someone out there has an answer, but to no avail. Since some time has passed, we are posting them again.

So, take another look and ask around. It may not be a “cold case” like you see on TV, but you

may solve a mystery more than a century old.

One last thing, if you ever run across old Clare newspapers, especially a *Clare County Cleaver* printed before 1935, please save it for us to scan. The newspaper building burned that year and its archives dating back to 1881 burned with it. You might have the sole surviving copy!

*Our county has 16 townships and we know how all but **Greenwood** and **Redding** were named.*

We can speculate but that doesn’t always give the right answer and there is enough misinformation in the county already (especially when it comes to gangsters) and we sure don’t want to add to it.

We are still looking for photos or drawings of the following:

- ◆ Farwell courthouse
- ◆ Jim Carr’s Harrison and Meredith saloons/stockades
- ◆ Towns of Hatton, Jonesville and Meredith
- ◆ The first Farwell school

Sparrows, a Bounty and Fraud

There used to be a bounty of 2 cents in Isabella and Gratiot Counties for killing English Sparrows. To get paid, hunters simply had to present a form certified by the township clerk to the county. Things went smoothly (except for the birds), until *The Isabella Courier* newspaper reported that the bounty paid to certain Shephard area residents suddenly skyrocketed making the paper ask half in jest whether a “Gatling gun” was being used.

An investigation ensued and feathers flew. It turned out that in one year, one Louis Gorsline of Shephard had received \$5,706 at 2 cents a bird.

As the paper reported, “Figuring this out on the basis of ten hours a day, Mr. Gorsline would have to kill something over 88 sparrows an hour, 300 days in the year” to kill the required 285,000 sparrows.

It’s not only a lot of dead birds, it’s a lot of money, even back then. The \$5,706 in 1899 is the equivalent of \$157,000 today.

The facts were turned over to the prosecutor who charged Gorsline and a few others with bribing two township clerks.

The wheels of justice ground slowly even back then. When two juries couldn’t reach verdicts, the case was moved to

Clare County in 1903, which is where our Jon H. Ringelberg rediscovered it.



But, Gorsline died in June of that year and so all charges against him were dropped, and the cases against all the others were dismissed.

As the paper editorialized, “Money within such easy reach is a wonderfully tempting incentive to dishonesty.”

Some things never change.

It’s Time to Renew Your Membership (or Join!)

Please check the membership label to see if it’s time for you to renew your Clare County Historical Society membership. **Most memberships expired at the end of December 2016.**

Membership is only \$10 per calendar year—unless you are 80 or older in which case your membership is free! (but we still ask you mail in the form so we have a record of your interest).

Your support makes it possible for us to run our museum

complex, publish our newsletters, host our website, run events and promote Clare County history, tell its stories and protect its artifacts.

If you are not a member, we’d love to have you join us.

Name: _____

New Renewal

Address: _____

Qualify for a Free Membership

Address 2: _____ Email (optional) _____

City/Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

\$ _____ Total enclosed*

Make checks payable to: Clare County Historical Society and mail them to
 CCHS, c/o Jon H. Ringelberg, Treasurer
 3062 E Colonville Rd
 Clare, Michigan 48617-9448

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

Clare County & World War I

This year marks the 100th anniversary of America's entry into World War I, a decision that would result in 116,516 lives lost and 204,002 men and women wounded. Death was not only combat related but was also the result of a flu pandemic that circled the world and killed more men than did the Germans. In addition, antibiotics had not yet been discovered, which meant men sometimes died from infection

or were forced to undergo amputations to stop its spread. Clare County did not escape the war. It is estimated that more than 660 men from Clare County took part. Some returned in pine boxes dying in battle, from accidents or from disease.

We plan to remember the men and women of our country that served in The Great War in a number of ways this year, including contributing to a display

being created by CCHS President Joe Bradley, which will be on display at the Pere Marquette Library in and Jays Sporting Goods, both in Clare, the Clare County Veteran's Park and Clare County Fairgrounds, both in Harrison.



A WWI Horse Story

Editor's note: This handwritten article was found in the files of Clare County Historian Forrest Meek. The story appears to have been told to him by Bernard Fitzpatrick, a Clare County farmer who served in France during World War I. Fitzpatrick, like many Michigan soldiers received his training at Camp Custer, a large camp located near Battle Creek.

The Army wanted only good healthy young horses. Horse traders went through the farm areas to buy horses for the Army. The cheaper the horse trader could buy the horse, the more money could be made on the deal. A young horse that was a balker, kicker, biter, runaway—you name it—the Army got them.

Most of the young men at that time grew up on a farm with horses. Out of the large number of young men at Camp Custer, there were a few men who

had a knack for working with a bad horse. They knew what the bad horse was going to do before [it] did it, and were referred to as the kind of a guy that could think like a horse. One of those men went by the name of Isey.

One day, Isey came in the horse barn and all of the horses were out of the barn except two pair. He asked, "Why are these horses in the barn?" and was told one pair [were] runaways, the other pair [were] kickers. Isey said harness the runaways and hitch them to the wagon.

The Army wagon that the runaway team was hitched to was a large, heavy wagon for a four-horse team. Isey said harness the kickers and have them ready to do. The pair of runaways took off running around in a circle in about eight inches of mud. When the horses began to tire out, Isey yelled, "Stop

them!" The next time around, a man grabbed the bridle of each horse, stopping the team. Then Isey said [to] hitch the kickers on as the lead team to make the four-horse hitch. Isey knew what was going to happen. The runaways got rested while the kickers were being hitched on as the lead team. When the men let go of the runaways, they wanted to take off running again, moving ahead and bumping the read of the kickers. The kickers started kicking the runaways in the head. Hitched to the wagon, the runaways could not get away from the kickers in front of them.

When Isey got done with the horses that day, there was no better four-horse hitch in Camp (as long as you used these two teams in the same four-horse hitch with the kickers as the lead hitch.) The runaways were very careful not to bump the kickers in front of them.