

The Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society

Sharing Our Past With the Present.

Volume 17 Number 2

Spring/Summer 2017

Museum Now Open for 2017!

The Clare County Historical Complex at the corner of Dover and Eberhart Roads, north of Clare, is now open for the 2107 season. Come on out and tour our museum, schoolhouse, log cabin and view our working blacksmith shop. There is no admission charge and donations are gratefully accepted.

The complex is open every Saturday from 1—4 p.m. until Sept. 30, which is our annual Old Fashion Day celebration.



Clare County Historical Society

Our mission 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, historic Dover one-room schoolhouse, the Ott Family Log Cabin and a blacksmith's shop.

We are open Saturdays May through Sept. from 1 – 4 p.m. Along with exhibits, there are also old photos, books, newspapers and documents. Access is by appointment. Learn more at clarecountyhistory.org or visit us on Facebook.

New Roof for Dover School

Thanks to a \$5,000 grant from the Clare County Community Foundation, the historic Dover School will get a new all-metal roof that will help ensure it remains a resource for many years.

The building currently has two layers of asphalt shingles that desperate need replacing. In addition, the bell tower and a number of boards on the roof also need to be replaced.

“While the grant and money in our treasury will go a long way to completing the project,

we still hope the community, especially former Dover students, step forward with donations that will allow us to do a top-notch job and also complete a few other needed school related projects,” according to Joe Bradley, CCHS president.

Bradley also thanked member Angela Kellogg for her efforts in filling out the grant application.

More information on the project timeline and how you can help will be posted when available.

Visit a Working Dig



Two years ago, Central Michigan University archaeologist Sarah Surface-Evans brought her

students out to the site of a 1870s logging camp to conduct some initial excavations. During two weeks in May and June of this year, Dr. Surface-Evans will return with a new class to continue the dig, and the public is invited to watch students in action and learn more about the camp on Thursday, June 8. Times have yet to be determined.

This time around, the dig will focus more on areas that once held structures or were used for storage and that can help tell the story of the men who worked there and how they lived. The dig may also help determine whether anyone lived at the site before or after the logging camp was abandoned.

While this is a working classroom for the CMU students who will be here for the two weeks, having a day dedicated to the public is also a great way to educate the community about history and about the field of archeology.

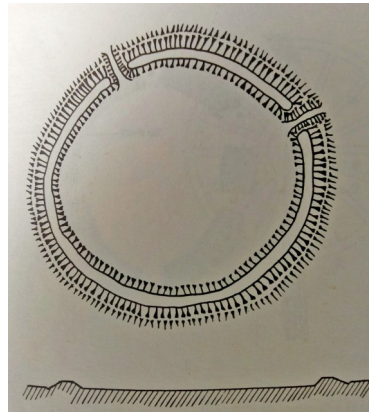
Please check the Clare County Cleaver and Clare County Review for times and the address, or go online to the CCHS Facebook page or website. Information will also be available at the Clare County Historical Museum on Saturdays from 1-4 p.m.

CCHS Elections are June 6

Annual elections for Clare County Historical Society officers and board members will be on Tuesday, June 6 at 7 p.m. on the museum grounds.

Even if you are not interested in a position, we hope you will come out and volunteer and attend our monthly meetings that are held the first Tuesday of the month. We are always on the lookout for docents to work one Saturday a month. Please plan to attend.

Visit the Missauskee Mounds



Join us as we carpool to the Missaukee Mounds in Missaukee County. The trip is planned for Saturday, June 24. We will meet at the RESD parking lot at the south entrance to Mid Michigan Community College at 9 a.m. and

will be back in the early afternoon. It takes about 45 minutes to get there and then participants will need to walk about a 1/2 mile on a level two-track trail in order to get to the mound. A visit to just one mound is planned, although we may visit a second depending on conditions.

“Although there is a lot of wonderful history in Clare county, we have nothing like the earthworks they have in our neighbor to the north. We thought it might be fun to go for a visit,” said Marty Johnson, who will be leading the event.

The largest of the mounds to be visited is 177 feet across and stands nearly 5 feet tall. “It would have been taller centuries ago when it was built—all by hand—but it’s still quite impressive today.”

After the tour, there will be a stop at the general store in “beautiful downtown Falmouth.”

There is no cost and reservations are not required. However, in order to know how many to expect, please email the Historical Society at museum@clarecountyhistory.org or contact Marty at 734-755-2638.

Visit the Farwell Museum

Clare County is lucky to have two museums. Along with the Clare County Historical Museum complex, there is the Farwell Museum that concentrates on that town founded in 1870.

The museum is located at 221 West Main St. in the former site of Ladies Library Association built in 1882 and is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 1:30 - 5:30 p.m. and now Saturdays through September from noon until 4 p.m.

Interpretative Signage Installed on Coal Tower

It's stood overlooking the community of Lake Station since the late 1920s, but since the disappearance of coal locomotives, few visitors (or even some residents), know what the concrete structure is along the Pere Marquette State Rail Trail and there has never been signage to tell them—until now.

Thanks to CCHS, Friends of Clare County Parks & Recreation, Michigan DNR, Garfield Township and the Farwell Historical Society, new interpretive signage has just been installed in a study metal frame created for us by Gateway Manufacturing.

The sign that measures 21x31 inches, tells the history of the tower that once held coal to feed the hungry Pere Marquette trains that passed this way. It also includes an illustration that shows how the tower may have operated and contains a story of how two high school math classes from Farwell under teacher Ben Bryant, determined its height as a class assignment.

The tower is only one of 15 in the state and only one of two that is accessible to the public. It's an icon for the county as well as a treasure. We're proud to have played a part in finally telling its story.



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 run our museum complex; publish

our newsletter; host a website; run events; promote Clare County history and tell its stories; and protect and display its artifacts.

Please join (or renew) with us.

If you are a paid member or 80 years of age or over, your newsletter contains a membership sticker.

See story on page 4.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Address 2: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

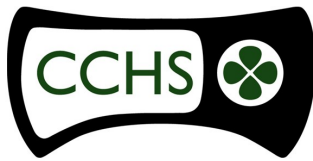
\$ _____ Total enclosed*

☐ **New** ☐ **Renewal**

☐ **Check if 80 years or older. No dues required. Your CCHS membership is free but you must register!**

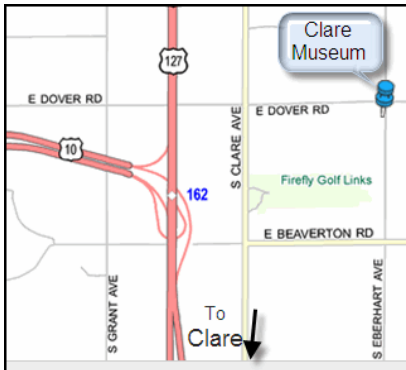
Donations in excess of \$10 are greatly appreciated and will be used to improve our museum complex and promote local history.

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



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 Rd., five miles
north of Clare.

Like us on Facebook!



Questions, comments? Email
museum@clarecountyhistory.org

Newsletter Insert & Bumper Sticker

If you are a paying member of the Clare County Historical Society, you will find a membership sticker in your newsletter. It's our thank you for your support of our organization—make that your organization. We hope you will place it on your car, buggy, bike or backpack to show you support history in Clare County.

The bumper stickers that appear in the adjacent photo are being sold at the



museum for \$4.00 to raise money for the roof for the Dover

inside and we will send a sticker to you in return.

school and for other needed projects.

Thanks to Herb Bowers for providing us with the concept and for creating them for us to provide to members and to sell to the public.

By the way, if you haven't yet sent in your membership application or dues, please use the form

CSI in Clare County in 1903 (Honest)

Our treasurer and retired judge, Jon H. Ringelberg has been summarizing court cases in Clare County going back to the 1870s.

Although one might think rural investigations were limited or those conducting them had little in the way of education, one would be wrong, at least in the case Jon found that is presented below.

This case from 1903 shows that the current investigation techniques shown on television shows like CSI weren't much ahead of what was happening in central Michigan more than a century ago.

The Case of the Storekeeper's Red Stomach

On March 31, 1903, Dr. Varnum H. Worden and storekeeper Silas Burr were traveling along a lonely stretch of road from Lake George to Harrison to check land title. Somewhere along the route, Silas collapsed and died.

Although Silas was only 39, nothing about the death appeared suspicious—at least initially. According to Dr. Worden, Silas had just finished his lunch and taken some type of capsule. He then handed the reins to the doctor, saying “I can’t drive any more, take me home.” He then leaned heavily against the doctor and died.

Mr. Burr’s body was interred at the family farm in Vassar. However, Mrs. Burr was not satisfied with the cause of death. As she was later to tell the court, she had not want Silas to go to Harrison with Dr. Worden. “I had heard it stated that Dr. Worden was a good Doctor but a bad man.”

Sadie pushed for an autopsy and soon after the body was exhumed and the organs removed. Dr. Earnest Dean Reed, a physician and chemist, examined the stomach and found a spot about two inches by 1/2 inch that was an unusual

red color. Curious, he then analyzed the stomach’s contents and found traces of potassium cyanide, a poison that could kill within minutes.

The determination: Silas Burr was murdered. But who killed him and why?

Dr. Worden as it turned out. During an intense investigation by the sheriff and others, it came to light that the doctor had earlier filled two mysterious capsules with some substance. He gave one to his wife to give to Mrs. Burr with instructions that she should tell Silas to take it during the trip to help warm him should he get cold, something he did immediately after lunch.

When interviewed by the police, Mrs. Worden initially said the capsules were from Mrs. Burr not her husband. But she soon recanted that statement, saying the capsule had indeed had come from him and that he had instructed her to say they were Mrs. Burr’s. However, Mrs. Worden also she said that she did not know what the capsule contained and that she and her husband never discussed Silas Burr’s cause of death.

The investigation also revealed that Silas was going to

sell the store to the Wordens, and they might have even paid for it, but did not have a receipt. Other testimony backed up the theory that Silas was killed so Worden could get the keys to the store.

In the end, the jury found defendant Dr. Varnum H. Worden “guilty of murder in first degree,” and on Oct. 3, 1903, he was imprisoned in the State Prison at Marquette, in solitary confinement at hard labor, for life.

That was not the only court case or prison terms involving Worden. In Huron County in 1893, a jury found Dr. Worden guilty of Polygamy and he was sentenced to Jackson State Prison at hard labor, for the period of five years.

As Mrs. Burr had suspected and as the crime investigation showed, Dr. Worden was indeed, “a bad man,” but just like on TV, justice prevailed.



The Clare County Historical Society is offering engraved bricks to honor or memorialize a family member or friend. Bricks measure 4 by 8 inches and can have up to three lines of text with up to 12 characters (including spaces) in each line. Cost of each brick is \$25.00 with proceeds benefiting the

You can specify whether you wish the brick to be on the sidewalk leading to the Ott Family Cabin, Dover Schoolhouse or the museum.

3062 E Colonville Rd
Clare, Michigan 48617-9448

Sorry: No company logos or specialized symbols.

Note: Bricks are ordered in batches of 12. That means there can be a significant delay in getting bricks ordered and installed. Your patience is appreciated.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

BRICK 1: ☐ Ott Family Cabin ☐ Dover Schoolhouse ☐ Museum ☐ No Preference

[illegible]

BRICK 2: ☐ Ott Family Cabin ☐ Dover Schoolhouse ☐ Museum ☐ No Preference

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