

The Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society

Volume 14 Number 1

Sharing Our Past With the Present.

Winter 2015

Help Make History in 2015

Your membership dues are due for 2015. Each year we ask \$10 to support our organization, our museum complex, our outreach programs, and communications (like our Website and Facebook pages.)

If you are 80 years or more, your membership is **FREE!** We figure you've earned it by helping to make our local history. However, we do ask that everyone fill out the form found in this newsletter so we can keep our records up to date.

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 the Dover one-room schoolhouse, Ott Family Log Cabin and a Museum.

The complex is open Saturdays from 1 –4 p.m. mid-May through September. 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.

One Great Year is Behind Us — Another Lies Ahead



We added to our museum complex last year with a new blacksmith shop. We also did some painting and installed a new block quilt that is part of the county's new block quilt tour. (Those items were mentioned in our last issue.)

Since then we've held another successful Old Fashion Day (thanks to all the volunteers who staffed exhibits, to the Sunshine String Band, and especially to those who attended.) CCHS President Joe Bradley installed a number of our memorial bricks. We invite you to honor or memorialize someone with one. In addition, a jail door that was built to help bring attention to our museum complex is now at Cops and Doughnuts. We look for even more in 2015. Come see us. We reopen in May.

Planning Meeting

All members are invited to join us on Saturday, March 28 at 10:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. at the Pere Marquette Library in Clare for our first meeting of the new year.

Can't come at 10:30? Then come when you can.

Discussion topics at the meeting will include:

- ♦ General meeting
- ♦ Board meeting
- ♦ 2015 planning
- ♦ Long-term strategy
- ♦ Lunch (maybe)
- ♦ History discussion

♦ Just plain fun.

We've not done a meeting of this type before where we look waaaaaay ahead and dream and scheme about what we want to see our group look like in five years; what changes we should make to our museum and grounds; and how we can work with other groups in the county to increase interest in history and tourism.

So bring your ideas and spend some time thinking about our past as we plan far into our future.

Depot Update

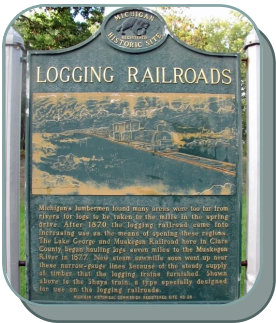
Although work on the depot is at a standstill, planning for the depot continues with the Depot Steering Committee (the volunteer leaders) meet monthly.

Thanks to the continuing generosity of donors and a number of substantial grants, there is now funding available to begin work in the spring. That includes pouring a basement foundation, putting on siding and installing the elevator shaft.

More information and photos—past and present—can be found on the Depots' Facebook page and at claredepot.com.

Old Roadside Park Gets New Lease on Life

Anyone driving Old-27 has passed the roadside park with the small stream passing through it, a hand driven water pump and a Michigan Historic Marker that was



installed in 1957 (it was the 28th; there are now more than 1,700!).

It's not unusual during the summer to find people parked in the lot enjoying the park.

But that experience nearly came to an end. Due to budget cuts, the County Road Commission was going to close the

park. Hoping to avoid that loss to the community, they turned to us and a partnership developed that allows the park to remain open for well into the future.

Last fall, CCHS signed an agreement with the county in which CCHS would lease the park. Cops and Doughnuts stepped up and volunteered to take care of the expense of cutting the lawn and maintaining the grounds. Elm Creek Landscaping of Farwell then agreed to do the work at a discounted rate.

This is another example of private-public partnerships that find businesses and organizations taking on responsibilities once handled by public entities like cities, counties and townships.

Keeping this roadside park (and others) in good shape, however, is not limited to just the partners named here. We all can play a role.

For example, if you see litter, stop and pick it up; if you see someone vandalizing the site, call the police; if you and your family or group want to plant some flowers or take responsibility for a flower garden or two, we will provide information on who to contact to make that happen—although it will be a while before we start thinking flowers or gardens!



Clare County's Roaming Town

By Andy Coulson

In the early 1880's, an eastern branch of the Saginaw and Clare County Railroad was built, originating in Hatton and dissecting section 19 of Hamilton Township from the southwest to the northeast.

The town of Dodge sprang up on a lake in this location in April 1889. The village of Dodge received its name from a foreman, W.H. Dodge, of the Lansing Lumber Company. That company held large amounts of pine lands in the area and used a local lake as storage for the cut timber until it could be processed in its saw mills and shipped by rail across the Midwest. The population of Dodge eventually reached at least 450, before a huge fire in March 1894 destroyed the mill and much of the town.

Without the mill there were few jobs so most people up and left, the trains stopped and the town...well, according to old maps, the town also up and left.

Starting around 1901, maps show the town of Dodge shifting location. It remains in Hamilton township, however it hovers between sections 10 and 12 in the northeastern corner of the township. As to why this change happened, it has escaped notice of this author.

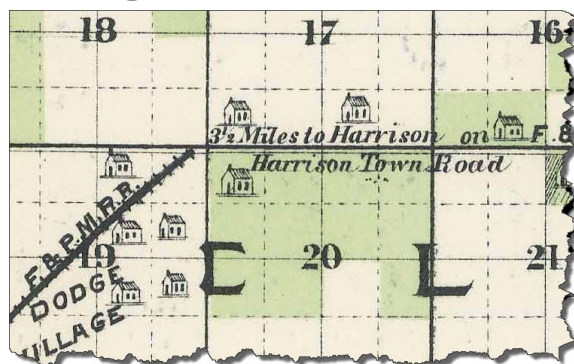
By the time of the 1906 Clare County Atlas was published, which contains the first formal plat maps of Clare county, Dodge was deeply rooted in section 12, with a post office,

school and cemetery. But in the 1916 plat map Dodge was not notated. The school remained, hinting at a lingering population. Dodge remained on Michigan state maps in this location until roughly 1930, which is also about the time the lake we now call Dodge first appears on maps.

An old Clare County tour that was created before the start of World War II says about the area: "the winding trail comes out into a clearing that once was the site of Dodge, a small lumbering town on the north shore of Dodge Lake...There is a splendid promontory here where one may park and rest for a few moments in the cooling breezes while admiring the rippling water of Dodge Lake."

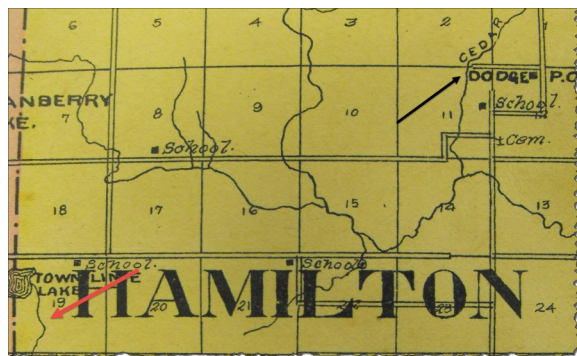
The town of Dodge began to revive in the 1950s and 60s when the area around Townline Lake and Dodge Lake was subdivided for land development, headed by a realtor by the name of Lee Swallow. As the subdivisions of Swallow grew, the area began going by the name Dodge City, a good example of history repeating itself.

Why did Dodge move from section 19 to section 12 (a distance of some 6 1/2 miles)? I don't believe one can argue that it did not move, for there are plenty of maps indicating the move. A better question is why



Above map (circa 1890) shows the traditional and current location of Dodge (and yes, there was a railroad that ran there at one time) in Section 19.

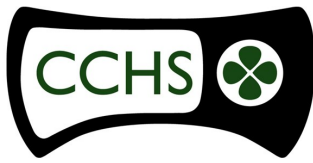
Map below (circa 1906) shows Dodge far to the northwest in Section 12. (Thicker of the two arrows shows current location.)



hasn't the move been documented? Apparently the reason isn't significant enough to warrant an explanation in any history that this author has seen. One reason that may explain the move was section 12 was simply where the Lansing Lumber Company owned more timber.

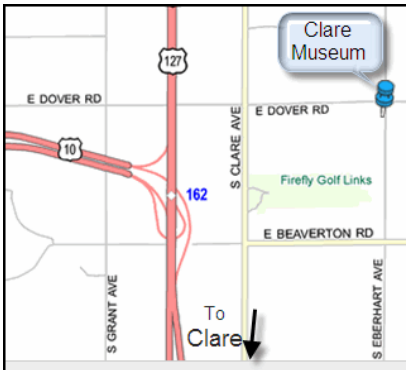
History poses many questions and these questions are part of what makes researching so interesting. Will we ever know the exact circumstances that led to Dodge's initial move?

History only knows...unless you do!



CLARE COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

c/o Jon H. Ringelberg, Treasurer
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Our museum complex is at 3050
Eberhart Rd. at Dover, five miles north
of Clare.

Like us on Facebook!



Questions, comments? Email
museum@clarecountyhistory.org

An Eraser (Among Other Things)

By Jon L. Ringelberg

In synthesizing the early Clare County legal cases what appeared to be a letter opener fell out of the 1886 case file jacket of *People v Baxter*.

At first it was thought that this might be a murder weapon, however, the case involved false pretenses. Upon research, the item turned out to be a quill sharpener knife and ink eraser manufactured by "J. Rodgers & Sons 6 Norfolk St Sheffield" with a manufacturer's mark of

"*+" (star and cross mark).

Clearly it dates from at least sometime prior to November, 1886, and most likely belonged to Clare County Clerk W.E. Aldrich being misplaced into the case file and 'lost' for 128 years. Since learning of the "ink eraser" this writer now can see and recognize in various legal documents where the paper has been literally scrapped to erase ink. Historical discoveries are really pretty neat!

On E-bay, prices for these items average \$40.

Note: The synopsis of old Clare



Quill sharpener/ink eraser similar to the one the author found.

County legal cases appears weekly in the *Clare County Cleaver*. They are also available for purchase from the author.