



Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society
Marty Johnson, Editor

Volume 18 Number 2

Sharing Our Past With the Present.

Spring 2018

Thanks for Renewing

In our last newsletter, we asked you to mail in your \$10 membership renewal dues—and you responded (even many of you who are 80 years and above, and who qualify for free memberships). We really appreciate it! We also want to thank those of you who sent in more than the amount we ask.

Now our museum complex is about to open and we hope you'll stop by once or many times this season and see what your support makes possible.

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.



A look at exhibits and activities during 2017

Our Museum Complex Opens May 5

It never gets old—opening our museum complex for the year. It's great to open the doors and windows, air the exhibits, sweep out the cobwebs and welcome the guests.

Saturday, May 5 at 1 p.m. is our official opening for the 2018 and we hope winter will be long over by then. We will be open from 1–4 p.m. every Saturday until the end of September when we celebrate with our annual Old Fashion Day. (That date is Saturday, Sept. 29, so please mark your calendar.)

We don't have any major projects planned for this year (last year we reroofed the schoolhouse). However, we do plan to do a few smaller projects.

They include installing an old phone booth in the museum; adding displays about the oil industry in the County and about the Leebove murder at the Doherty Hotel; and installing a handicap ramp at the Ott Family cabin,

So c'mon by to tour our complex and visit our blacksmiths. You are also welcome to just set a spell on our porch and talk local history (or anything else non-controversial you have in mind) or swap stories. We also invite you to bring along your questions about local history or a photo or item you'd like identified. We may not have the answers, but may be able to put you on to someone who does.

Harrison, Hinkleville and the Junction

By Andy Coulson

Ever heard of Hinkleville or Harrison Junction? Ever been there? A dozen or more decades ago, you would have, especially if you needed to head into the central or northern part of the county to log timber or get to the new town of Harrison. Nearly everyone went through there. And then they didn't. Here's an edited report by CCHS member Andy Coulson who lived near the site as a child. An unedited version of this article can be found on our clarecountyhistory.org website.

By 1870, the Pere Marquette railroad had completed built its tracks from Saginaw through southern Clare County reaching toward Ludington. However, reaching the valuable timber in the northern sections of the county was hard given there were few rivers and few roads.

Hinkleville, also called the Hinkle Settlement was one of the first areas to be settled in the county. On an 1873 map, the town is shown as Hinkle's Mill Station alongside the Pere Marquette Railroad and near a rather large lumber mill called Hinkle's Mill. Along with the mill, Hinkleville had a store, blacksmith shop, boarding houses, and a school.

In order to reach timber to the north, a four-mile spur was built toward Hatton. These tracks bisected various lumber camps. When the county seat of Harrison was founded in 1879, a way was needed for people and

HINKLEVILLE TIME LINE

- ◇ 1870-Pere Marquette RR comes through Clare County.
- ◇ Circa 1871-Hinkleville established.
- ◇ 1874-RR spur heads north toward Lake George.
- ◇ 1879-Harrison Junction established
- ◇ 1880-81-Hinkleville mill closes. Earlier RR spur abandoned.
- ◇ 1887-Ann Arbor RR comes through Clare County.
- ◇ 1887-Harrison track rerouted. Harrison Junction abandoned.

goods to reach the new town. Because of hills north of Clare (like James Hill), it was not practical for tracks to be built going straight north out of Clare. Therefore, a junction off the Pere Marquette was built near Hinkleville, the first practical spot for a trail to head north. This Harrison Junction had a station and restaurant but its exact location is unknown. It is thought to be within a quarter mile of Hinkleville or it might have been in Hinkleville, we don't really know.

We do know that for two set of tracks—one serving logging camps to the north and one carrying passenger and freight traffic to and from Harrison—existed simultaneously but for no more than 18 months. By then most of the timber near Hinkleville was gone as were the camps to the north. In 1880, news articles stated that the mill closed.

When the Ann Arbor Railroad came through Clare and Farwell in 1887 on the north side of the

Pere Marquette tracks, a much bigger issue arose. The Ann Arbors tracks heading west would have to cross the Harrison branch heading north from the Junction causing a dangerous situation. To remedy this, the Harrison branch was rebuilt, starting at the Union Depot in Clare near the Ann Arbor railroad's tracks. The two railroads paralleled each other for the few miles heading west until the Harrison branch curved north west of Hinkleville.

This new branch starting in Clare put an end to what was called the Harrison Junction. However, it did not put an end to Hinkleville. The town itself lasted into the early 20th century serving farmers, while school lasted into the 1950's.

So, were Hinkleville and Harrison Junction the same place? If you are the kind of person that doesn't let a distance of a quarter mile worry you, then answer is "yes," they were the same place for the 18 months or more the two locations coexisted. The answer, in this author's opinion, is that the two were indirectly related to each other, but not the same place.



Walking portions of the former Harrison railroad grade can still be done.

Got a Spare \$3.75 Million?

Harry Bennett was one of industrialist Henry Ford's most trusted aides. In fact, he came close to becoming the company's president when Ford's son Edsel died.

Like Ford, Bennett owned property in Clare County. Where Ford owned in Greenwood Township, Bennett owned in Freeman Township, and in 1930 he built a 3,200 square foot house, although fortress might be a better term. The building is of concrete construction made to resemble logs. At one time it had a moat, secret escape staircase and tunnel and even a reported mounting for a machine gun on the roof. The

reason for the precautions is Bennett feared for his life, not only because he was one of Ford's most ruthless and hated employees, but because he kept company with gangsters and entertained them at his Clare property.

Eventually, the property was purchased by the Boy Scouts who used it from 1964 to 2012 as the Lost Lake Scout Reservation. For the last year or so, the property has been on the market at the asking price of \$3.75 million. For that price, you get 2,300 acres of recreational land; two

lakes, streams, wooded land, plus wetlands; and numerous structures built by the Scouts.

It would be wonderful to save this large piece of property for the public. It would also be great to save the historic Bennett Lodge and Clare County's connection to Henry Ford and gangsters. Be warned, the lodge needs a lot of work. Anyone?



Join or Renew Your Membership

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 2017.

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

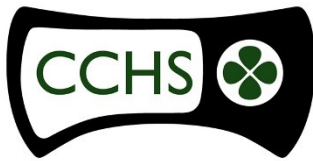
Address 2: _____ Email (optional) _____

City/Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

\$ _____ Total enclosed*

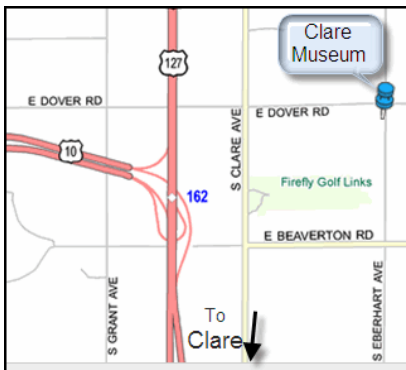
Make checks payable to: Clare County Historical Society and mail them to
CCHS, c/o Jon H. Ringelberg, Treasurer
3062 E Colonville Rd
Clare, Michigan 48617-9448

** 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
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 is open the first Sat. in May to the last Sat. in Sept. from 1-4 p.m.

Like us on Facebook!



Questions, comments? Email museum@clarecountyhistory.org

Clare Railroad Depot Nears Completion



Thanks to grants from Consumers Energy Foundation for \$25,000 and the Clare County Community Founda-

tion of \$5,000, and continuing donations from the individuals and businesses, the Clare Railroad Depot has enough money to complete work and apply for a certificate of occupancy so both the Chamber of Commerce and the Clare County Arts Council can move in and the building can be open to the public.

The historic depot originally opened February 1896, and operated until the mid-1950s. Along with housing the chamber and arts council, the depot will also have meeting rooms and a small museum. A grand opening is planned for early summer

Beaverton WWI Monument Needs \$\$\$



Funds are being raised to repair the WWI monument called "The Survivor" in Beaverton. Made of cement and erected in 1925, the monument was designed and hand-carved by German sculptor Helmuth Von Zengen who reportedly dated area resident Alva McKimmy .

Ken Hibl, the City of Clare's City Manager is one of 11 members on The World War I Centennial Commission created within the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs by Gov. Rick Snyder. Her brought the monument to the attention of Clare County Commissioners at a meeting in April.

An estimated 135,000 Michiganders served in WW I and about 5,000 were killed. To make donations to preserve the WW I statue contact Ed Rachwitz at appleed@hotmail.com and put WW I Memorial in the subject line.