

# Catchmark

Newsletter of the Clare County Historical Society

Marty Johnson, Editor



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Sharing Our Past With the Present.

Spring 2020

## Happy 50th. To Us!

**Y**ou may notice the 50 in our masthead. That's because this year, we celebrate our golden anniversary. We first opened our doors to the Dover Schoolhouse -our original building- in 1970, with a mission to preserve and share the history of Clare County.

We owe a lot to those whose visions made our museum complex possible. We owe even more to those who have supported us over the decades.

We will have more information on events and activities in our next issue. Stay tuned!

**Also, please renew your membership for 2020! See form on back page.**

## Clare County Historical Society

**T**he 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 a Blacksmith Shop. We also have photos, books, old newspapers and documents. Access to these is by appointment. Learn more at [clarecountyhistory.org](http://clarecountyhistory.org) or visit us on Facebook.



**L**ong-time member Jim Crawford was honored at last fall's Old Fashion Day for his many, and ongoing, contributions to the Clare County Historical Society.

Jim, a retired teacher, has served in a number of leadership positions, including as Society president. He's probably the only person in the last 90 years to have slept in the Ott Cabin. (Have him tell you about it!) Additional photos of Old Fashion Day can be found on the back page.

## Please Attend CCHS Planning Meeting

**E**ach year, the Clare County Historical Society hosts a planning meeting before opening its doors for a new season. This year's meeting is Saturday, March 21 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the lower level of the Pere Marquette Library in Clare. Everyone, member or not is welcome to attend.

While the meeting's primary purpose is to make short-, and long-term plans, it's also a change to get together after a long winter; talk about the past and the future in an informal and relaxing atmosphere; and a great place or everyone to ask questions and present ideas. This year, there's an added goal: to determine the Society's future direction.

"We've been around for 50

years but we're concerned we may not be around for 50 more—or even five more—unless we get more people interested in providing direction, giving input and volunteering," according to CCHS Member Marty Johnson, who is helping plan the meeting.

He adds that there is a wealth of museums in the county. In addition to the Society's Museum Complex, there is a museum in Farwell, one in Clare in the Railroad Depot, and there will be another in Harrison once the District Library is renovated.

"CCHS has a great collection and a great past. We also have committed volunteers and a supportive community. We need to figure out how best to use all of them and prepare for the future," Marty said.

# Our 2019 Old Fashion Day Special Speaker

By Andy Coulson

This year's guest speaker at Old Fashion Day was Mandy Kramer, a Central Michigan University student working on her doctorate degree in archeology. Over the past few years she, has been conducting research at two Clare County cemeteries in an attempt to locate missing gravesites and her talk focused on her project and what she had discovered. The two cemeteries are the Garrity, located in Hamilton Township and the Poor Farm in Harrison.

Mandy used two different tools in scanning the ground; Ground Penetrating Radar and Magnetic Susceptibility Meter both search for differences in soil conditions that can indicate where coffins might have been.

The Garrity cemetery is a family cemetery. Word of mouth passed down over generations has told of members buried there with no markers to

identify the exact burial location. She was able to accurately identify a few areas of this cemetery that show where both caskets (concrete vaults were not used during these times) and markers that have been covered by soil over the years. These buried markers and grave sites are exactly what were hoped to have been found by this project. We hope to place markers at the site of those unmarked and forgotten graves.

Mandy reported that she did not have any luck at the Poor Farm Cemetery. Currently, that cemetery on County Farm Road, does not contain any grave markers.

Records tell of approximately 60 people being buried there on the Poor Farm. Traditional headstones would not have been used due to cost, perhaps wooden or concrete markers with numbers instead of names.

Mandy's conclusion at this site is

that there are no graves in at least the top 6-7 feet of soil. It is possible that the cemetery was built up at some point and that the original surface is at least seven feet down, perhaps more. In

order to determine if there is in fact a cemetery at this site with bodies, one would have to remove the top soil and perform the test over again on the new surface, a task that is impractical.

We at the Clare County Historical Society are very grateful to Mandy for her efforts. We are glad she could share her findings with us and thank her for joining us in celebrating our annual Old Fashion Day.

## Can You Help Solve a Poor Farm Cemetery Mystery?



So is the Poor Farm Cemetery on Old County Farm Road exactly where we think it is, or is it part of the gravel pit that once operated there. And if the cemetery really IS at the current site, was dirt trucked in at some point raise the surface of the cemetery above the grade of the road.

Perhaps you, a family member or a friend knows or has heard stories. If so, please share them with us! We believe these people, like those in the Garrity, deserve to have their final resting place marked. Help us to do that. Call Marty at 734-755-2638 or email [museum@clarecountyhistory.org](mailto:museum@clarecountyhistory.org).



*Mandy Kramer (at right) and her team checking for lost gravesites at the Garrity Cemetery during field work in 2018. Mandy reported her findings during her talk on Old Fashion Day.*

# Clare County Roads—Part II

By Andy Coulson

Roads played an important role in the development of Clare County communities and its economic and social development—bringing people to the land and bringing products to market. In the Summer 2019, issue of this newsletter we looked at some of Clare County’s early roads. Here we look at more early roads and James Hill, an obstacle to building one of them.

The county’s largest city was founded in 1871 with the coming of the railroad. Harrison, the county seat, was not founded until 1879. However, with that founding a way was needed to connect the two communities.

A direct north-south route was



not a good option. There was a formidable obstacle in the way: James Hill, a remnant of an ice-age glacier. Although still formidable, the hill was once even higher and steeper than it is now. Even the railroad between Clare and Harrison avoided the hill by heading west and north out of Clare before heading back east into Harrison. There

was a road of sorts that climbed the hill, but maintaining that road and keeping it rut free in the days before pavement was impractical. (In addition, when cars became popular, their engines relied on gravity fed gas tanks and many could not make the steep climb without being starved for fuel.)

A practical solution was created, a route to the east that bypassed James Hill. Not only did this route avoid a steep climb, but it connected a number of settlements on the east side of the county, such as Dover and Cornwell. Eventually, this route became part of a large state road called M-14. More on that route in the next issue.

## 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 2019.

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address 2: 9      State: \_\_\_\_\_      Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

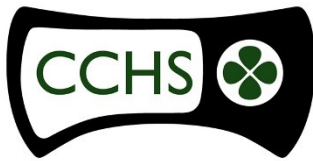
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Total enclosed\***

**New**       **Renewal**

**Qualify for a Free Membership**

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

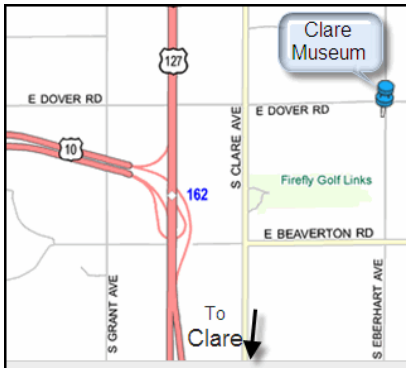
\* Donations in excess of \$10 are greatly appreciated and will be used to improve our museum complex and promote local history. The CCHS is a 501(c)3 organization and your donation may be tax deductible.



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](mailto:museum@clarecountyhistory.org)

## Historical Society Hosted Two Major Events in 2019

Every year, CCHS hosts Old Fashion Day, it's annual event and fundraiser in September that shows off our county's history. Last year, thanks to Major Day Entertainment, a local event organization, we also celebrated "Spikehorn Day," in August to highlight Clare County's most renowned John Spikehorn Meyers, the bear man.

Both events brought many visitors and Spikehorn Day brought in a number who had never been to our museum Complex before. We thank all those made it happen and all who attended. Here are a few photos from both events.



Spikehorn Day

Old Fashion Day