

# A RANSOM NOTE

Historical Society of the Town of Clarence

Spring 2026

## *Board of Trustees*

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Clarence Town Board Liaison

Joe McGreevy, Town Historian

Board Meetings are held the 1st  
Thursday of each month.

Meetings begin at 6:30 pm at the  
Clarence History Museum.

## **President's Comments**

As we look forward to 2026, we will be celebrating our Country's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We will be holding special events throughout the year. Please stay tuned for more information and watch our website. Our programs for this year are all lined up and will be very interesting. We will be opening the Museum starting the first Saturday in March from 10:00am to Noon, and the second and fourth Sundays from 1:00pm to 3:00pm. We want to thank-you for your support and hope to see you at the Museum and/or at our Programs. Please check out our displays or come and find your family's history through our research materials and family binders!

## *A Ransom Note*

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## **May Program**

Please join us Tuesday May 12th at 7pm with  
Joe McGreevy presenting

**"Clarence Pioneers of the Revolution"**

Located in the Clarence Town Park

Clubhouse—10405 Main Street

Doors open at 6:30pm

All programs are free and open to the public

# American Flag with 40 Stars

Circa 1890

*Every Winter while we are closed, we always take time to think about our seasonal displays. With America 250 happening this year, what better than to showcase a piece of Clarence history with Jacob Humbert's 40 Star Flag!*

*We came across an article from WWII Veteran Betty Smolka, Susan Fiegel Wolf Great Granddaughter of Jacob Humbert , and her daughter Becky Smith Webber. We hope you enjoy!*

## *The Story of a Patriot*

This is a story of an American Patriot, in ways similar to many of his generation, yet also unique unto itself. In the early part of the 1800's, the Town of Clarence covered a large area. Its boundaries contained the present towns of Amherst, Newstead, Lancaster, and even the small hamlet call Belle Fleuve, so named by the Native Americans who lived there, but more familiar to us as Buffalo. Clarence was legally, designated as a town in 1808, and a few months afterwards, its boundaries were changed to those we recognize today.

We are all very much aware of the countless hardships facing settlers in every area in the 1800's. One such family, that of Sebastian Humbert from France, arrived in the Town of Amherst in 1832. The family settled and began farming in the North Forest, Getzville area. It was here that his son, Jacob F Humbert, was born in 1845. He was raised and educated for a few years in a Getzville School and then worked full time on his father's farm.

In 1863, while the Civil War was in progress, young Jacon turned 18 years of age. In August of that year, he traveled to market in Buffalo with his Mother. He slipped away from her long enough to enlist in the Army. Since he was only 18 and parental consent was required of all the volunteers under 20, he slightly exaggerated his age. He joined the 100th New York Volunteer Company , and from November of that year until Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse, April 8th, 1865, he was almost constantly in combat in Virginia.

He was wounded once, receiving a bullet in his foot at the Battle of Drury's Bluff. He doctored the wound himself, and returned to the front lines.

He received his discharge from the Army in September, 1865, and was home 15 days later. He was engaged in farming for the next 9 years. He then opened a general store in the center of the village of Clarence until it burned in 1899. This was in the area of the present Clarence Bowling Academy. Next, he started a prosperous basket factory and cooperage shop on Bodine Road at what is now Bickert Terrace. He was active in the life of Clarence. He served as Supervisor of Clarence for two terms, as a delegate to county, congressional, and state conventions for than 20 years.

He was also postmaster under President Harrison, a member of the board of excise, a stock-broker in the Clarence Gas Company, and a board member as well as a founder of the Wallace Ranson Post No 432 Grand Army of the Republic, and was the last living member of this Clarence Post.

Jacob Humbert owned this 40 Star Flag. It is truly unique, but its origin is unclear. President Monroe signed a bill in 1818 that provided for the release of an official U.S. Flag on the 4th of July following each State's admission to the Union. A 38 Star Flag was produced in the Summer of 1877 following the admission of Colorado in 1876, as the 38th State. In 1889, a 43 Star official Flag was produced to commemorate the admission of South and North Dakota, Montana, Washington, and Idaho. As this Humbert Flag has 40 Stars, we conclude that this is a Regional and not an Official Flag.

Could this 40 Star Flag have been made to celebrate the admission of South Dakota (39) and North Dakota (40) to the United States? If so, it would have been valid only until Montana's admission 6 days later. On the other hand, the maker of this Flag may have been miscalculated by gambling, as many then believed, that the Dakota territory would be admitted as one State, the 39th State. If that is the case, then the flag may commemorate Montana's admission on November 8th, 1889. Both Scenarios are plausible, and both equally interesting.

Jacob was a true patriot. Each year, on Memorial Day, his Flag was stretched across Main Street from the old Humbert Store at Main and Ransom to the opposite corner. Just envision, however, Clarence was a small Village at that time. Streets were much narrower than today, and this flag, 17 feet by 10 feet, was an impressive symbol of Patriotism. He was considered an icon by all of the children of the Village, and all of us respected his age and his life. Grandpa Humbert died in 1939 and was laid to rest in the Glezen Fillmore Cemetery, to the sweet, mournful sounds of Taps and volley of rifles to do him honor.

*We are so honored to retell this story about Jacob Humbert and his 40 Star Flag by these wonderful women of Clarence!*

*Please come into the Museum to see the Flag on display!*



# The Settlers of Clarence

By: John O'Hare

The first settlement in Clarence territory was by Asa Ransom in 1799 at what is now known as the Clarence Hollow; it was the first permanent settlement in Erie County. Aside from the Ransom family there were no other known settlers to arrive until 1801.

Asa Ransom kept a tavern to provide food and lodging for the early travelers, and Joseph Ellicott first opened the land office for the Holland Land Company there. Other pioneer families soon followed and began to settle here. In 1807, Asa Harris settled west of the Hollow on a slight hill that bears his name. The first town meeting was held in April of 1808, and Clarence was established as a town. The meeting was held at Elias Ransom's Tavern, in what is now Amherst, and Jonas Williams was elected as the first supervisor of the town.

Around 1810 the first pioneers began to settle north of the escarpment along the Buffalo Road where these pioneers found an attractive region for their new homes. The land was very productive, and the forest was broken by small prairies. These were ready to plow and offered the settlers excellent returns.

Most of the earliest pioneer families that settled north of the escarpment in what would become Clarence Center were of German nationality. By 1840 all the territory in Section 12 would be taken up, settled and improved to become one of the most prosperous farmlands in the county. Raising grain and general farming were the primary pursuits, but later dairying would become the principal farm industry.

Section 13, north of County Road, would take longer to fully settle. The names of some of these settlers include Anthony Rhodes, the Rev. John Lapp, Simeon Fillmore, the Rev. Glezen Fillmore, Samuel Beeman, Orange Mansfield, Cornelius Bodine, Matthias and David Van Tine, Robert McKellip, Abraham Carmer, Abraham and David Martin, and John Eshelman.

Other early residents include John C. Root, who came with his father Jacob in 1810; the Rev. John Strickler, 1816; William Leopard, 1815; Daniel and the Rev. Peter Rhodes, 1825; G. G. Hunt, 1825; Jonas Hershey; Nathaniel Gallup, with his family from Vermont in 1820; Francis Carr in 1810; Almon Eldred in 1821, Peter Lehman in 1828; Philip Schrader in 1833; and William Henry Lusk in 1835. Another early resident was John Blocher, who was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in 1798. He married Martha Frick, and they came to Clarence in 1826. They had 12 children. Among them were the three oldest boys, Daniel, Henry and John.

Daniel Blocher came to Erie County with his parents when he was 8 years old. In 1845 he married Elizabeth Metz, and they had six children. He ran a mill from 1857 until 1872 that was located on Goodrich Road, then called Mill Street. The Blochers were a well-to-do and prominent family, known to be thrifty and conservative. Over the years Daniel held many positions of authority, including tax collector, justice of the peace, poor-master, constable, and president of the cemetery association. The Daniel Blocher home is located just south of Clarence Center Road on Goodrich Road.

Henry Blocher married Catherine Leopard, who was the daughter of Jacob Leopard and Mary Croop. The couple had four children and remained in Clarence Center.

John Blocher was born in 1825 in Scipio, New York. He married Elizabeth Neff, and they had one son, Nelson. Nelson fell in love with the family's maid, which was totally unacceptable to the family. He was sent to Europe, and she was fired by the family to put an end to the romance. When Nelson returned, he searched for two years to find his love, but he died, unfulfilled. John immortalized his heartbroken son with the most visual mausoleum in Forest Lawn Cemetery.

William Penn had made several trips to Switzerland to get Mennonites to settle in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Like so many early Clarence families, the Metz family may have been influenced by Penn and traces its roots to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Christian Metz (1792-1858) left Lancaster and came to Clarence with his wife and family in 1820. They settled in Clarence Center and raised a family of 11 boys and four girls, including Elizabeth. Her brother, Andrew, built a store on the southwest of the four corners in 1849 and kept a store there for over 40 years. The building today is home to the Clarence Center Preschool.

## Membership Corner

*You can renew your membership in person or by mail!  
Simply download the application from our website and  
send it in!*

*We have different tiers to choose from:*

*Student Under 18—\$5*

*Individual—\$15*

*Couples—\$25*

*Family—\$30*

*Business—\$50*

*Individual Life Member—\$150*

*Membership renewal forms will be mailed in January  
each year!*

**We**   
**our**  
**MEMBERS!**

# Wordsearch

**DIRECTIONS:**  
Find and circle the  
vocabulary words  
in the grid. Look  
for them in all  
directions including  
backwards and  
diagonally.

## Declaration of Independence

1776  
COLONIES  
DELEGATES  
FREEDOM  
GRIEVANCES  
INALIENABLE  
INDEPENDENCE  
JOHN ADAMS  
JOHN HANCOCK  
LIBERTY

W	M	K	E	W	I	E	C	N	E	D	N	E	P	E	D	N	I	H
I	J	O	H	N	A	D	A	M	S	I	Q	P	F	K	6	Y	W	P
N	D	E	A	F	C	A	Q	W	R	C	H	J	W	Y	A	7	A	J
A	T	E	R	S	O	V	E	R	E	I	G	N	T	Y	H	T	7	Q
L	T	N	E	D	I	V	E	F	L	E	S	A	W	O	R	O	T	1
I	I	X	R	O	T	A	X	A	T	I	O	N	F	I	M	N	N	A
E	U	V	H	P	L	P	D	Z	N	Y	T	X	O	V	K	Y	E	P
N	T	O	K	U	E	E	O	D	O	D	R	T	L	Z	D	K	M	B
A	M	I	M	U	L	I	C	Q	I	D	S	A	W	A	Q	C	H	X
B	T	U	U	P	F	X	R	Q	T	S	E	I	N	O	L	O	C	J
L	O	E	H	S	Z	U	D	W	U	P	Y	C	C	N	M	C	R	R
E	R	I	N	M	R	V	K	T	L	I	I	L	D	G	Y	N	A	E
Y	A	C	Z	O	K	U	Q	Q	O	N	L	V	G	M	T	A	P	D
N	L	U	W	D	Z	R	P	V	V	O	T	L	J	E	C	H	B	C
N	G	R	I	E	V	A	N	C	E	S	J	L	P	B	W	N	M	O
M	L	I	B	E	R	T	Y	Q	R	A	K	C	W	E	N	H	Q	A
G	X	X	Q	R	K	W	S	N	X	E	P	T	B	L	N	O	Z	T
X	Y	K	M	F	Q	L	R	S	Q	R	A	J	Q	N	J	J	B	S
G	D	E	L	E	G	A	T	E	S	T	O	W	U	S	Y	K	L	V

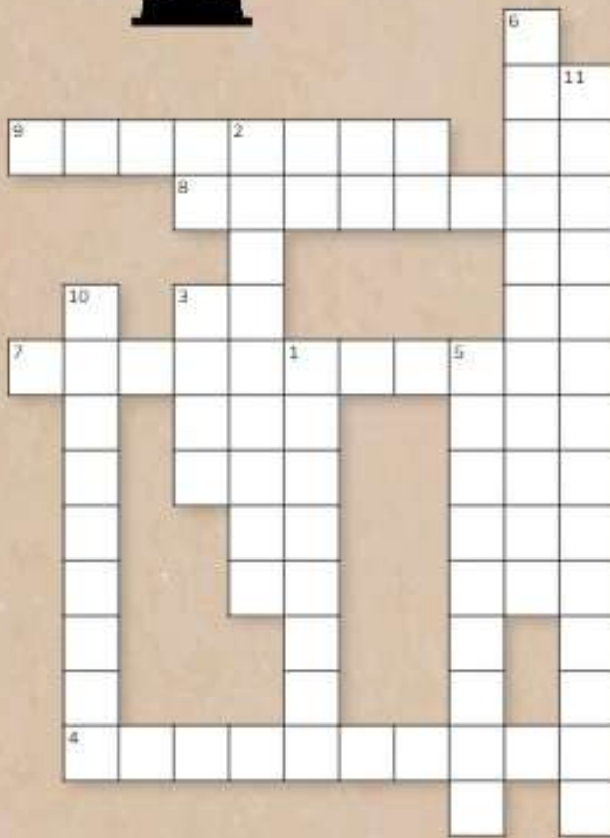


PARCHMENT	REVOLUTION
PATRIOTS	SELF-EVIDENT
PHILADELPHIA	SOVEREIGNTY
PURSUIT	TAXATION
QUILL PEN	TREASON
REDCOATS	TYRANNY

# Crossword



## PAST PUZZLE



### ACROSS →

- 4. Inventor of the printing press
- 7. French leader
- 8. Explorer who circumnavigated the globe
- 9. Discovered the New World

### DOWN ↓

- 1. Genius scientist
- 2. Ship that brought Pilgrims to America
- 3. Ancient city in Italy
- 5. Famous Egyptian queen
- 6. King of ancient Egypt
- 10. Crossed
- 11. City that was once the capital of the Byzantine Empire

72 YEARS • 1954 - 2026



## HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE TOWN OF CLARENCE

***Founded in 1954***

*10465 Main Street*

*PO Box 86*

*Clarence, NY 14031*

*Phone: 716-759-8575*

*Email: [museum@clarencehistory.org](mailto:museum@clarencehistory.org)*

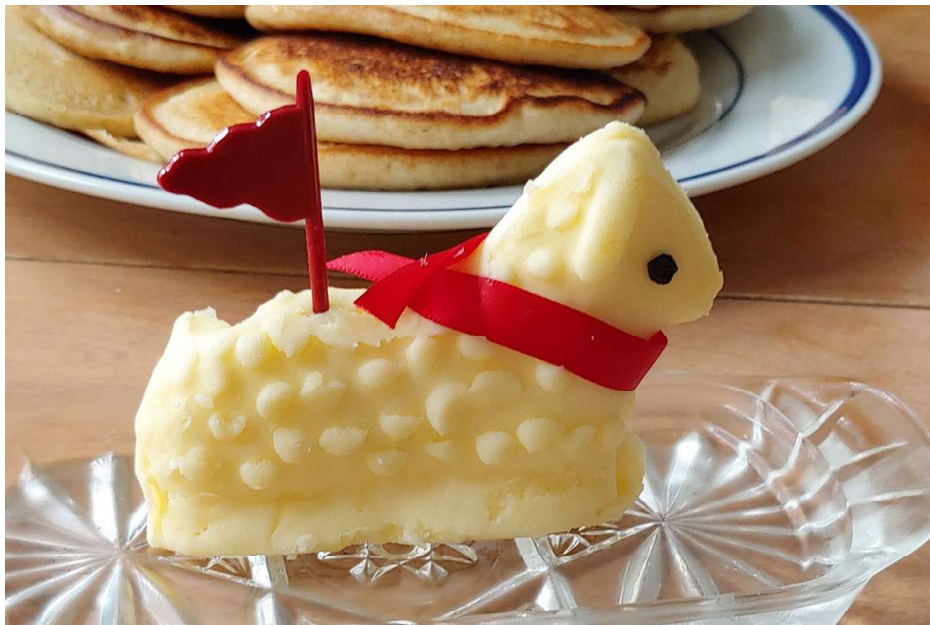
*Facebook: [Historical Society of the Town of Clarence](#)*

*Instagram: [clarencehistorymuseum](#)*

### **“To collect, preserve, and share the history and heritage of the Town of Clarence”**

The Historical Society of the Town of Clarence Inc is formed for the following purposes:

- To identify, preserve, and display materials of historical significance of Clarence
- To encourage historical research, analysis, and study for the publication of historical papers, articles
- To educate the community through lectures, tours, online resources, school field trips and research opportunities



The Historical Society of the Town of Clarence deeply appreciates the support of the County of Erie, the Town of Clarence, our members and the community as a whole.

