

# *The Charlotte L. Evarts Memorial Archives, Inc.*

## Down on the Farm

Many townspeople know of the Rettich Preserve, arguably one of the most beautiful and accessible properties owned by the Madison Land Conservation Trust.

The land was donated to MLCT in 2014 by the late Fred and Rosa Rettich of River Road. Fred's father, Frank, and mother, Anna, began farming the land in 1906 after emigrating from Germany, then later continued by Fred and Rosa. The hard-working Rettich family operated the farm on River Road for over 100 years selling fruits, vegetables, flowers, eggs, etc.



Rettich Homestead at 274 River Road Circa 1908.



Frank Rettich and sons picking up hay, the Hammonasset River it to the right, and the barn at the far left still stands today. It appears that Fred (Fritz) Rettich is sitting atop the load of hay.

Documents include land deeds, farm ledgers, letters, passports and a notebook recording names of attendees at dances held in the late 1940s and early 50s at the old Dutch Hall on Horsepond Road, which now houses a day care.

All of this information adds greatly to the significance of the Rettich Preserve and attaches faces and names to the donated farm property for future generations. The Rettich family is one of many German immigrant families who settled and farmed in Madison. The CLEMA Board sincerely thanks Mrs. Derblom for bringing this collection to us for preservation.

This past Summer Rosa Rettich's Sister, Maria Derblom, contacted CLEMA President Robert Gerard to donate a large collection of Rettich family photos and documents that relate to the history of the people who lived off this land. The photos are a look into the past and include family portraits, images of raising chickens and gardens on the farm, to harvesting hay with pitch-forks and hunting, as well as the homestead. This collection is a true time-capsule.



Fred Rettich & Rosa Buehler's wedding day in 1967.



Charlotte pictured sitting front center, Mary to the right also sitting, and Sidney on the far right with various family members. (circa 1968)

## A Family Tradition

On February 11, 2018 CLEMA partnered with the Madison Historical Society on the second event of their Lee Lecture Series entitled "Stories & Lives of Madison Women & Girls."

The presentation featured CLEMA past president Pam Evarts Landon along with Warner Lord, former Town Historian, and Henry Griggs III, the current Town Historian presenting the stories of Mary Scranton Evarts, our first Town Librarian, and Charlotte L. Evarts, the First Town Historian.

Pam relayed many anecdotal family stories supplemented by images from our collection, as well as never-before-seen Evarts

family photos that gave insight into the lives of these two important Women in Madison's History. Warner provided details and history on how the Charlotte L. Evarts Memorial Archives was created.

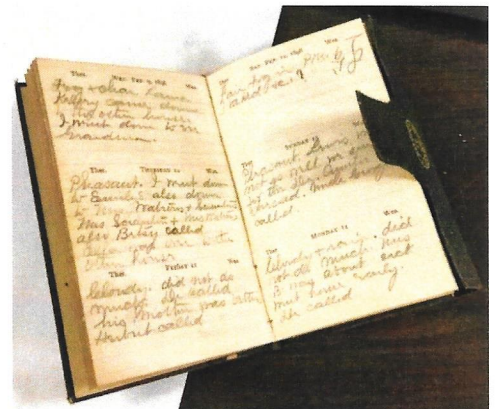
## Crampton/Howell Diary Acquisition

In February CLEMA acquired 70 Diaries pertaining to Madison, specifically of Myra Crampton (former Madison Town Clerk) and Ida Johnson Howell (Myra's Mother). The collection also includes twelve of Lewis Howell's (Myra's Father) farm ledgers from 1919 through 1923 and some of his diaries also.

Some entries of interest in Lewis' diary from 1867 include:

- January 1, "Attended funeral of E.C. Scranton, snowing"
- April 20, "Planted potatoes for John Bassett \$1.25"
- June 10, "Hoed for John Bassett, 6-1/2 hours \$1.00"

Weather conditions were also written each day. It was vital to farmers in that era to keep track of precipitation.



This family collection has filled three large archival storage boxes and span the years 1867 thru 1965! The acquisition directly benefits our mission here at the Archives, to preserve the few remaining items of that bygone era. Charlotte Neely, one of our dedicated volunteers is reading and transcribing the entire collection for our database.

## What's in Your Attic?

Do you have old photos, documents or diaries relating to Madison's History lurking in your closet or attic? Hidden treasures! Don't just throw them away. Consider gifting these items to a timeless new home in the security of the vault at the Archives. We will catalog and preserve these types of items to keep them safe and easily accessible to researchers. Give us a call or drop us an email – we'd be more than happy to talk to you!

## Getting Technical!

We are happy to report that CLEMA has received a grant from the *Erwin C. Bauer Charitable Trust*.

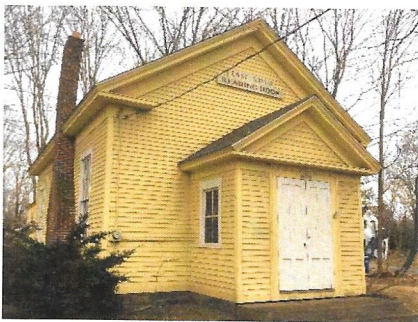
This particular technology project updated some vastly outdated camera equipment and supplemented us with digital items that were non-existent in our organization.

We now have access to a quality digital camera and tripod to record events, places, and people of Madison, as well as a digital voice recorder. These items, along with a 5 terra-byte external storage device, are welcome additions to preserving history in this digital age.

CLEMA extends a sincere thank you to the Bauer Trust as they have supported us on many projects in the past.



## *East River Reading Room Donations*



Over the last year and a half Madison's first Library, the East River Reading Room, disbanded and the remaining Board members sold the building.

Prior to the sale, representative of the E.C. Scranton Library, Madison Historical Society, and CLEMA volunteers had the chance to visit the Library to collect artifacts and photo-document the building and its contents. Three boxes of documents were collected relating to the establishment and history of the Library and Sunshine Society. Some

of those items are the ORIGINAL 1876 ERRR organization document, a framed ode to the members of "Keyarts Kalambers" hiking group, several very beautifully printed tickets to the ERRR "Grand Concerts," as well as the two original rubber stamps for imprinting the inside cover of the library books!

CLEMA Board member Don Liepelt invited ERRR Board representative Roger LeMontangue to tour our vault, offices, and exhibits throughout Memorial Hall.

In addition to the many historical items donated to CLEMA, the ERRR Board represented by Mr. Roger LeMontangue also made a generous donation to our organization in June 2018.

Pictured from left to right, Fred Murphy, George Noewatne, Nancy Bastian, David Longobucco, Roger LeMontangue, Robert Gerard, Don Liepelt, Bob Genesisius, Carol Blackwood, Marcia Sokolnicki



## CLEMA latest team effort with the Madison Historical Society

This past Spring the Madison Historical Society (MHS) asked for help with Land Record research work on their ongoing project of placing date/owner plaques on older homes in Madison.

CLEMA President Robert Gerard has volunteered to assist and has been combing through grantor/grantee indexes at the Town Clerk's Office to sort out ownership of the subject properties. Gerard has worked in the Land Surveying business for over 30 years, and is a licensed Land Surveyor with an extensive background in Land Record Research.

So far two projects have been completed, both running titles back to 1834. During the project multiple deeds and mortgages are read and reviewed to create a "Title Chain" of owners. Sketches are made of parent parcels and conveyances in or out of that chain are noted. The goal is to identify an owner and narrow down a time-frame for construction of a dwelling. The research is supplemented with information and data from CLEMA, such as old owner biographies, anecdotes, or obituaries as well as details from historical house databases. This information is then combined with a report from an Architectural Historian about the construction and features of the home to tie it to a specific era.

More properties are in the works and we look forward to continued collaboration with MHS on the plaque projects.

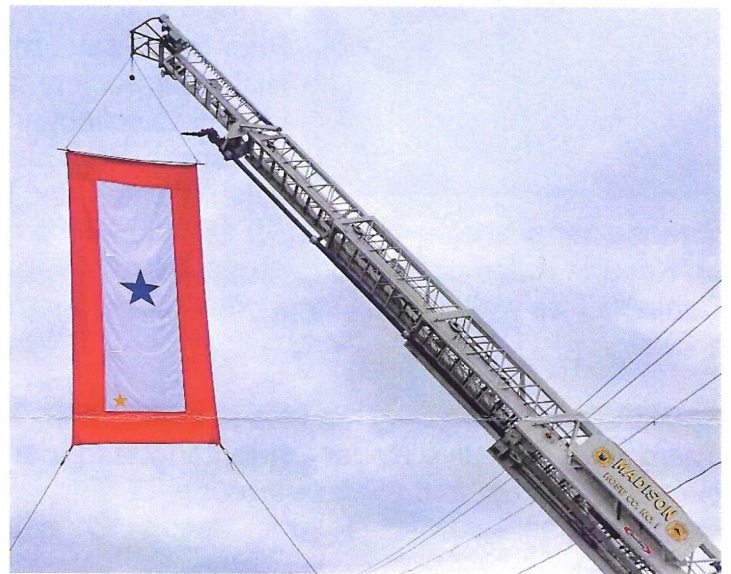
### *Flying High Over Madison*

CLEMA always tries to give back to the community in various ways. This past year our Archivist Nancy Bastian suggested adding a gold star to the Madison Service Flag in honor of Capt. Andrew Pedersen-Keel who was killed in Afghanistan, March 11, 2013.

The Blue Star Service Flag was a project spearheaded by Bob and Katy Russell back in 2009 to represent families who have loved ones serving our country in harm's way. (The original service flag from the first world war is displayed on the third floor of Memorial Hall.) Gold Stars are added to represent soldiers who have lost their life serving.

In May 2018 the Service flag was brought to Bettina Braisted (The Sailbag Lady) to add the Gold Star.

What has now become a Memorial Day Tradition, Madison Hose Company raises the flag with its aerial ladder truck over the parade route on Boston Post Road. This photo shows the flag with the gold star in the lower left corner.



*Established in 1995, the Charlotte L. Evarts Memorial Archives is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to collecting, preserving and making available for public use archival materials related to Madison, CT. Visit us at 8 Meetinghouse Lane, Madison, CT 06443, on the internet at [www.evartsarchives.org](http://www.evartsarchives.org), or on Facebook. CLEMA's hours are: Tuesdays 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. and Fridays 10 a.m.- 1 p.m. or by appointment by calling CLEMA at (203) 245-5667.*