

**The Scoop News**  
**1161 Hillview Dr.**  
**Hastings, MI 49058**



# **The Scoop** Southwest Michigan Seek and Search Club

**March 2025 - Edition**

**When:** The Third Tuesday of Each Month at 7 P.M.

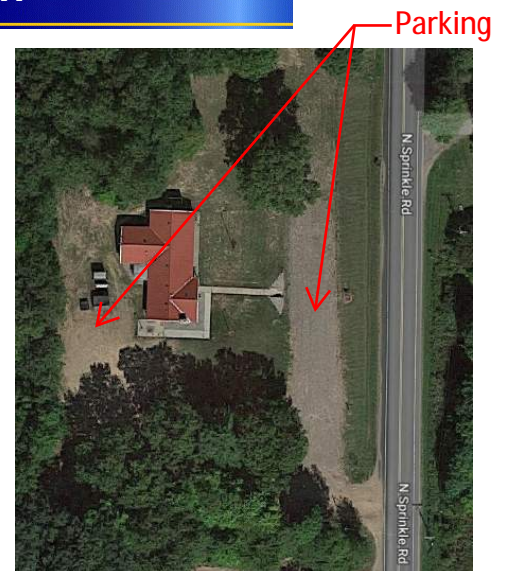
**Who:** Meetings are open to the public

**Where:** Kalamazoo Rod & Gun Club  
7533 North Sprinkle Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49004

**How:** From U.S. 131 come North to D Ave. take D Ave. East to North Sprinkle (road curves right and heads south), club is .25 miles on the right from int. of D. Ave. and Sprinkle.

Or

Take U.S. 131 South to D. Ave. exit, take D. Ave. East to N. Sprinkle (directions from here same as Northbound (above)).



# February 2025 - Finds of the Month/F.O.Y.

## WINNER...#1 Mike W.



JEWELRY

### Entries:

1. Last ring of 2024, Mike W.

## WINNER...#3 Dakota P.



COIN

### Entries:

1. 1973 Kennedy Half Dollar – Found December 31st., Mike W.
2. 2007 Thomas Jefferson (holed) Presidential Dollar Coin, John M.



MISCELLANEOUS

### Entries:

1. "Thanks For Your Service" enameled Military Challenge coin given to me by a father and son while I was eating lunch at a local restaurant, John M.
2. 1964-D Nickel with doubling on the "D" mint mark variety number FS 37.5 (cherry picker's guidebook), found coin roll hunting, Greg S.
3. Rare Five Dollar Star Note given as payment to me. (Star notes substituted for damaged notes at BEP., Mike W.
4. 2010 Lincoln Dollar coin found at Devos Parking Ramp Gate dispenser, Mike S.



MOST UNUSUAL

### Entries:

- 1.)Antique Suspender Buckle, Patent Date March 7, 1871m, Mike W.

## Find of the Year!!!

## WINNER...#5 Mike W.



### Entries:

1. 10K solid gold 1939 Lake Odessa High School glass ring, found fixed and to be returned in a few weeks to the family of the man who lost it, Brian T.
2. 14K solid gold ring with 5 diamonds found during water hunt, Keith P.
3. 1.3oz. Pure Copper Nugget found at area around Hancock, MI, Mike S.
4. 1917-S Type 1, Silver Standing Liberty Quarter, appraised at \$175.00, Mike W.

## FOB, BADGE, TOKEN

### Entries:

- No Entries This Month -

**\*Raffle Tickets must be purchased before the beginning of the meeting.**

**\*\*You don't have to be a member to purchase tickets for the Silver Dollar or the 50/50 raffles.**

## March Meeting

- Perfect Attendance Awards (silver) wasn't able to hand out last meeting.
- This month is our chili cook off. We need a few volunteers to bring a crock of chili. Prizes for 1st and 2nd place
- Feature Raffle will be **one Winner (2) Silver Eagles!!!**
- Next Month's feature raffle will be a metal detecting package.

## Finds of the Month

- In order to catch up since we had no Jan meeting. This month we will have two find of the month competitions:

First one will be your finds that were made between the Jan and Feb meetings. This includes the misc category.

Second one will be your finds that were made between the Feb and March meetings. (no misc category finds)

### FOM notes:

- All items must be found or acquired since the last meeting.
- Multiples must be found in the same hole.
- One entry per category per member.
- Must be a paid member to enter find of the month.
- Write your name on the back of the entry slip.
- Do not look at names on the back of find of the month slips.
- Check with the President or Vice President if you have any questions as to what category to put an item in.

## SWMSS CLUB MEMBER BENEFITS

1. Find of the Month Entries
2. Find of the Year Entry
3. Door Prizes
4. All Raffle's & the Feature Raffle
5. Newsletter, Mail and / or Email
6. Participate in Seeded Hunts
7. \* **Voting Rights**
8. \* **Fish Bowl Prize (drawing every meeting)**
9. Perfect Attendance (Jan. through Dec.) prize
10. To Sell or Trade at the "Buy, Sell & Trade Night".  
**Exception:** \*These items are not extended to associate members.

An "Associate" membership is extended to a paid member's spouse (*must be legally married*), their children and grandchildren. Anyone 18 years and older are considered an adult and will need to purchase their own membership.

A new member can enter their finds in the "Find of the Month" after 1 full month's membership.\*\*

A "new" member is someone that has never been a member before.

Renewal Memberships are due before the meeting starts to participate in the "Find of the Month".

Club Membership is \$25 for the calendar year (January Through December).

Members, Please, "Sign in" at every club meeting. The "Sign In Book" is used to keep record of perfect attendance for the year. The sign in book is on the table with the name tags.

Be sure to renew your membership before the meeting starts to get in on the drawings and raffles.

### **\*\*Please note:**

To be guaranteed a photo in the slide show for "Find of the Month", there is a **6:45** cut off time.

Please be mindful of this as Anne and Bradley our photographers most months have 60+ photos to take and incorporate into the slide show for judging. We need to maintain this cutoff if we are to finish in a timely manner and ensure everyone has a chance to compete.

**\*\*\* If any club members would like to be added to the SWMSS Club Facebook group, please contact Mike Walker or Brian Tobias**



# Treasures in Michigan!!! - The Bronson Michigan "Gold Farm"

## Part 2 - Jame Francis Ruggles

In the last article "The Bronson Michigan Gold Farm" I promised you a part 2 to the story. I name dropped a gentleman Mr. James Francis Ruggles. In part 2 I'm going to talk about a famous for his time icon from lower Michigan that I think has been lost to time. I consider myself at least a better than average Michigan Historian...and I'd never heard of him before researching for this story, shame on me.

James was born the only son to his father James Sr. and Mother Eliza. James moved from New York (Steubon County) to Bronson Michigan a small town south and west of Coldwater Michigan in 1837 (the year Michigan became a state). Eliza passed not too many years after James Francis was born and James Sr. married for a 3rd time. He'd setup his home to the west of the Bronson town center as a "Public House" or Inn. James Francis referred to it as a "Caravansary". It's proper name was the American Exchange Hotel. James was home schooled and did attend Eastman Business College for a few months but his own intelligence outpaced his instruction. He setup 6 rooms on the 2nd story of the American Exchange Hotel as a book store, but not just any bookstore, it was known as the "Odditorium". It was a site to behold and James worked from both coasts acquiring rare and out of print books to fill the Odditorium. James had even patented a system "Copyrighted System of Bibliopoling" to aid in finding and to organize rare and out of print books. It could be said JFR was Jeff Bezos before Amazon and Jeff Bezos was a thing (for those who've forgotten, Amazon started as an online bookstore).

He was a very peculiar fellow it is said and his Odditorium was a book store, curiosity museum, antique display and archaeological and biological exhibition housing everything from flint arrowheads to taxidermied animals.

In the 1898 book "Mr. Eagle's U.S.A.: As Seen in a Buggy Ride of 14 Miles from Illinois to Boston" James was described by the narrator: He wore a brown straw hat having a brim, perhaps, half an inch wide. He was smooth shaven, with the exception of a tiny bunch of carefully nurtured chin whiskers. His clothing was absolutely spotless, and seemed as if it were worn with constant brushing. His black string tie. . ends ... were brought across each other...His boots had split leather tops, and were polished in the economical, spit-but-once-in-the -box style. This man's general demeanor suggested a meek and humble follower of the cloth."

When asked by the same interviewer why he remained a bachelor wouldn't you like to "ensnare" one of the pretty ladies of Bronson for a wife, he had this to say:

"Not much!" he answered with venom, "I've worked like a slave to get this palace built, and if I got a wife, she'd be running the Odditorium herself and want to have me out there in the tornado cave, feeding me through a hole in the roof. No sir, I know when I'm well off. I want no female help about this institution!"

# Treasures in Michigan!!! - The Bronson Michigan "Gold Farm"

## Part 2 - Jame Francis Ruggles - Continued from page 4

A couple of things need to be mentioned here about James. No, he was not a man of the cloth, he was considered a "radical agnostic" of the day. He would not be considered an atheist by today's standards but considered himself a free thinker. One of his favorite sections of his bookstore was in fact the religion section, he is said to go on and on about the very first book of Mormon being one of the rarest and most expensive publications to procure at the time. It could cost upwards of \$25 at the time. That would be close to \$1,000 but I'm guessing it would be more valuable as a rarity today and way above inflation of the dollar. His claim of being able to find any book, "though others have failed".

While he wasn't fond of women he was of children often taking special interest in showing children the curiosities around the Odditorium, and one story has him showing a girl a random brick doorstep and calling it a "brick bat" after she'd asked to see one of his actual real bats..lol, real comedian he was.

He was a lifelong abstainer from alcohol and drugs of any kind due to getting sick off of hard cider as a child.

I've mentioned him being a free thinker, he considered himself an independent voting "mugwump" of the day which would be a libertarian for the most part in today's world.

He felt that humanity's only salvation is in education and moral suasion and he was an enthusiastic advocate of cheap literature for the masses.

In 1889 his Odditorium was completely damaged by a fire. He vowed to "Phoenixize" it and rebuild. He did just that, he immediately set out to canvas the U.S. for financing this endeavor and amassed over \$3,000 for the job. In November of 1889 he reopened this store which had been modified with things like white brick from Grand Rapids Michigan, ornate columns at the front entry and red sandstone gargoyles or "who is its" at the top of the roof. The store operated for another 20 years. He rebuilt his collection of oddities and treasures. James is said to have amassed a huge fortune being single and a very frugal person. He often referred to the new store as the "house that Jack built". He died on September 14th, 1911. There was a modest funeral at the store and the eulogy was to be given by a person "not a member of the clergy". Nobody to this day knows what happened to the books, the oddities, all the money that he owned. There is speculation that there may have been a forgotten general (auction) sale or that some merchants took over his stock of books for a time but nobody real knows to this day where all the priceless things he had went. The building was still there in 1987, now an office building with most of the grand architecture removed and replaced, except the gargoyles. I have not been able to verify if it is still there today. We know some of his "treasure" ended up on the farm from part 1 but it is speculated tens of thousands of dollars were never accounted for....to be continued.

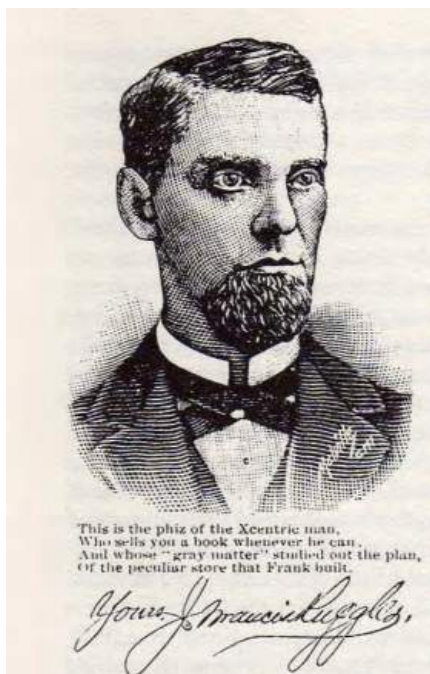
~ Brian T.



Look us up on the web  
[www.mytreasureclub.com](http://www.mytreasureclub.com)

# Treasures in Michigan!!! - The Bronson Michigan "Gold Farm"

## Part 2 - Jame Francis Ruggles - Continued from page 5



Complimentary.

SANCTUM OF J. FRANCIS RUGGLES, BIBLIPOLE,  
BRONSON, MICH., 1875-6.

Dear Sir:—

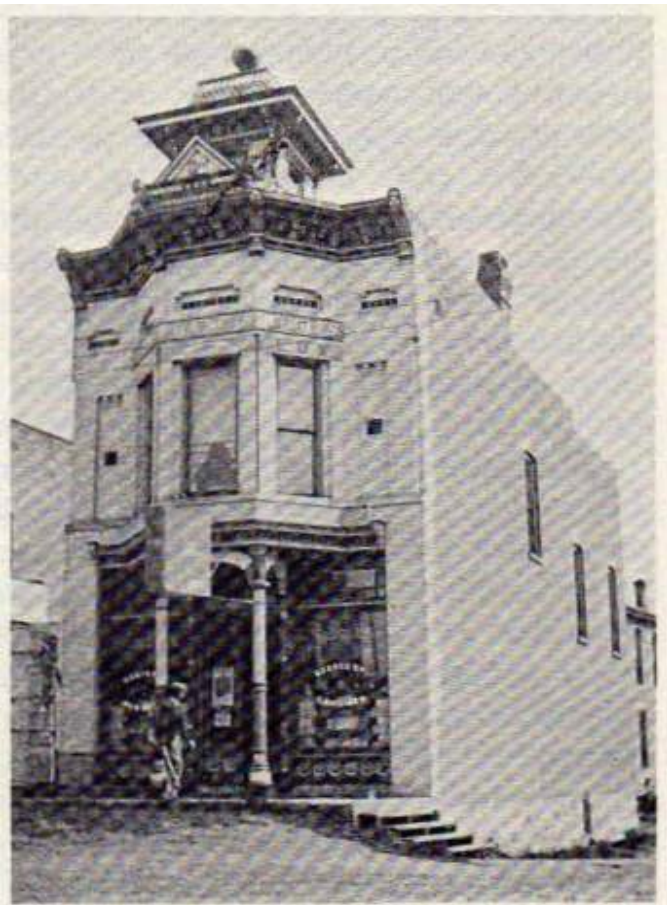
We take pleasure in handing you our Circulars and Catalogue, trusting you may find therein much to please and interest you.

We have representatives on both sides of the Atlantic, and able corps of assistants, exercise great care in doing up and forwarding packages, and can supply any legitimate publication, from a penny Tract to an Evangelical Bible, or Cast-Iron Dictionary! We shall be pleased to form your acquaintance, and enter your name as a regular customer.

Do not defer to be forgotten, but immediately write "please send me," etc.

Thine,  
J. FRANCIS RUGGLES.

Book or sales ticket from one of the books sold by J. Francis Ruggles.



Original "Odditorium" before the fire



New "Odditorium" after rebuilding