



Dexter Area Historical Society

1824 - 2024 Dexter's Bicentennial

President's Letter from Caryl Burke:

Winter is here, the Museum is closed, and Gordon Hall is cold and dark. Maybe it looks like we at DAHS are resting, but nothing could be further from the truth! Now is when we are all busy with planning and creating our programs and activities for the new year. Along that line, we are considering beginning a speaker series at the Museum. If you have an idea for a speaker or would like to help organize, send me a note at dextermichhistory@gmail.com and we can talk about it.

2024 DAHS Events:

- April 13 - Gordon Hall Raffle ticket sales begin
- May 3 - Dexter Area Museum opens
- May 5 - DAHS Annual Meeting
- May ? - DuMouchelle's Antique Appraisal Clinic
- May 19 - Cemetery Tour - Dexter Family members
- May 27 - Memorial Day Parade
- June ?? - Museum Garage Sale
- June 20 - 23 - Dexter's Bicentennial Celebration
 - June 21 - Museum Open House & Time Capsule
 - June 22 - Gordon Hall Rocks! & Gordon Hall Tea
- August 9 & 10 - Dexter Daze
- August 10 - Gordon Hall Raffle Drawing
- September 7 & 8 - Gordon Hall Days
- November 1 - Gordon Hall Challenge Grant begins
- November 22 - Museum closed for the season
- December 6 - Christmas at the Mansion Gala
- December 7 - Guild Holiday Bazaar at the Museum
- December 7 - Christmas at the Mansion
- December 8 - Christmas Tea at Gordon Hall
- December ?, ?, ? Mansion - additional showings
- December 14 - 2nd Chance Holiday Bazaar

Dexter's Bicentennial

In association with the Dexter Bicentennial Committee, we are organizing some special events in May and June. We will keep everyone updated with times and details as we get closer to all the Bicentennial events.

As you may have already heard, we have news on the 1974-2024 Time Capsule. After a search of our records and preliminary investigations proved fruitless, articles appeared in the Sun Times News that resulted in additional information coming forward. As a result, the time capsule has been found. Pictures from citizens who read the articles plus the use of a ground penetrating radar machine has determined its exact location.



The big questions now are:

What is in the time capsule?

What will you want to put in the 2024-2074 time capsule?

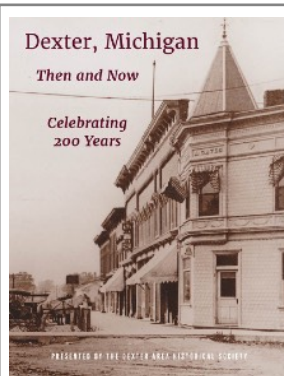
2023 Gordon Hall Challenge Grant a Success!

DAHS set a goal to raise \$50,000 this year for the Holiday Campaign in support of Gordon Hall. We were very fortunate very early with a pledge to match up to \$15,000 in donations, so we were off to a good start. Since that time, the lovers of history in this area have dug into their pockets to prove how much they

GOAL! - \$50,875	\$50,000
1/18/24 - \$45,555	
1/10/24 - \$42,940	\$45,000
12/20/23 - \$40,240	
	\$40,000
12/8/23 - \$35,900	
	\$35,000
	\$30,000
11/29/23 - \$27,825	
	\$25,000
11/17/23 - \$21,500	
	\$20,000

support our goal to restore Gordon Hall. As of January 31, 2024, we raised a total of \$50,875!

To those of you who have donated to restore Gordon Hall, we can't thank you enough! To that amazing group that has donated faithfully over the years, you are an inspiration! This is a huge job and it will take each and every one of us to complete it successfully. THANK YOU for your faith in us.



"Dexter, Michigan Then and Now Celebrating 200 Years" highlights 200 years of Dexter's history. The book, which sells for \$30, is available at the Dexter Area Museum and other places in Dexter and will also be on sale during DAHS special events. For more information, check

our website DexterHistory.org.

Christmas At The Mansion

Christmas at Gordon Hall with its beautiful decorations and the many events that were held throughout December was both successful and enjoyable for all to celebrate the holidays. Our holiday month began with a wonderful Friday night gala, chaired by Jan Lyons and Ina Germain. A number of our wonderful supporters helped to make this a great start to the Christmas season.



The next day Santa Claus came for a visit and children made gingerbread houses to take home. Many pictures were taken and we have been told that many of these pictures were sent out as Christmas cards.

To complete the weekend a tea was held on Sunday with two seatings at almost a full capacity. A highlight of the event was that Gordon Hall women from the past "visited" in dresses designed by Helen Welford along with a brief history of their life.



Continuing with the holiday spirit, three nighttime open houses were held later in the month. Attendance was fantastic. Many of those who attended were excited that these additional open houses were held since they were unable to attend during the first week.

In all, a little over 1,000 people visited Gordon Hall over the holiday season! Again, we are so appreciative of everyone's contributions whether it be by volunteering, attending the events, and/or sending donations.

Thank you!!

Heritage Guild Holiday Bazaar

The Dexter Heritage Guild's Holiday Bazaar was well attended. The Guild would like to thank the Historical Society and members and friends of the Museum for their continued support in purchasing bazaar items and donating craft supplies throughout the year. The Guild especially appreciates all who baked, canned and donated towards the bake sale! All of these efforts help with the success of the Holiday Bazaar!



The Guild has started to brainstorm for this year's projects. If you have any craft supplies you don't need (fabric, stuffing, cotton yarn, etc.), we would appreciate receiving them. We are planning to make holiday decorations using costume jewelry. Time to give your old and unused jewelry a new life.



Our sincere thanks to everyone who helped with the bazaar! Wishing you a wonderful New Year and look forward to seeing you during this 50th anniversary of the Dexter Heritage Guild!

Gordon Hall Update

Much restoration work at Gordon Hall has already been completed, both inside and outside. Our current restoration project falls in that latter category. When U-M completed the conversion of Gordon Hall into 4 apartments in 1950, electricity was supplied to the house by 5 separate service lines; one for each apartment and one for the whole house. In late 2023, DAHS began a project to remove those lines and upgrade to a single 800-amp service. This will provide sufficient capacity to power a modern efficient heating and cooling system and a lift to provide access to the second floor for all. The work is being done in partnership with local companies Phoenix Contractors Inc, AF Smith Electric Inc, and Hopkins Burns Design Studio, and will be complete in late 2024. It has been funded partly by generous contributions from the Dexter community (in particular from the 2022 Holiday Campaign in Support of Gordon Hall). We have also been very fortunate to receive grant funding from the Michigan Arts and Culture Council (MACC). MACC funding makes a significant impact in Washtenaw County's arts and culture world every year, and we are grateful and proud to highlight their contribution to the restoration of Gordon Hall. Thanks to our local contributors and to the State of Michigan for helping us get this important improvement completed!



Nick Marsh has shared with us his newest book, *The Railroad King - James Frederick Joy*. The book is available for purchase by sending a check for \$40 postpaid (\$35/\$5) to Nicholas Marsh, 7062 Gregory Creek Lane, West Chester, OH 45069. For further information on Marsh and his book, click on the Sun Times News website (<https://thesuntimesnews.com>) and type "James Joy" into the search bar, or click on the link below: <https://thesuntimesnews.com/g/dexter-mi/n/208960/then-now-unraveling-intriguing-naming-dexters-joy-road>

We will be celebrating our 200 years of Dexter with some facts that we have found, but not shared in previous writings, including the Bicentennial Book, *Dexter Then and Now, Celebrating 200 years*. In doing so, we will skip over those facts previously presented, with only slight mention of them when needed for continuity. We have divided the 200 years into 50 year blocks.

1824 to 1874 – The Beginning

Samuel William Dexter first purchased land in Washtenaw County in 1824 and proceeded to arrange for the building of a dam and a saw mill. The names of the workers or how they got here are not known, but we are told that Vrelon Bates was the first sawyer in the saw mill. The addition of a grist mill really put Dexter on the map as farmers from as far away as Mason brought their grain to be ground into flour.



Judge Dexter, as he soon became known, went back to New York to purchase more land back in the Michigan Territory and check on his young son and in 1825, the Erie Canal opened, providing a faster route to the western areas. He returned with his son and a new wife, and merchants, doctors, blacksmiths, carpenters, farmers, etc. he had encouraged to settle in the area.

As the Editor of the *Michigan Emigrant Newspaper*, Judge Dexter continued to spread the word of this area and many more settlers came. He also used the newspaper to share his views on Temperance, Freemasonry, Abolition and the Transcontinental Railroad. An article in the *Detroit Free Press* on December 30, 1835, reported a meeting in Ypsilanti where the “Honorable Samuel W. Dexter requested that the route of the Detroit and St. Joseph Rail Road pass through the village of Dexter”. Thus, on July 4th 1841, there was a celebration as the first train came to Dexter. Because of the noise and destruction of family property, Judge Dexter decided to have a new home built on a portion of his Webster Township acreage. Gordon Hall, named after his mother’s family, was completed in 1843 and the family moved in in 1844.

The “Panic of 1837” was a financial crisis in the United States that began a major depression which lasted until the mid-1840s. The effect was felt in this area as the “land speculators” that had prospered in the years prior, were hit hard by the general drop in land prices, and they did not have the money on hand to pay their debts when called upon. We do have some letters from local farmers to their “kin” back East asking for loans as they had purchased their land and now didn’t have money for seed or other necessities, and they were unable to get loans. During this time period, the work had continued on the railroad, and on July 4, 1841 the De Witt-Clinton train came to Dexter. The train brought many changes to Dexter as more people and goods came into town. At the same time, exports of mill products, flour, wool, baskets, as well as agricultural items were sent around the country and eventually to the world.



The De Witt-Clinton Train in 1941.

In 1844, the invention of the telegraph by Samuel F. Morse allowed for rapid spread of news throughout the United States. Eventually as we moved into steam power, the US economy would recover and prosper, particularly with the discovery of gold in California in the late 1840s.

Many Dexter area pioneers went to seek their fortune in California: some taking the overland route and some the water route. One of those was a local merchant, John Croakin, an Irish immigrant, who met a business man, Phillip Armour, in California. They soon decided that trading supplies was more profitable than searching for gold. Patrick Fleming went to the fields and upon his return, he purchased 200 acres in Dexter Township and using stones from his land, he erected a large house at the corner of Wylie Rd and Dexter-Pinckney Road that stands there today.

In 1850, President Zachary Taylor died and Vice President Millard Fillmore became the 13th President of the United States. Fillmore was the brother of Calvin Fillmore, one of the builders of Gordon Hall. In September of 1850, Fillmore signed the Fugitive Slave Act passed as part of the Compromise of 1850. This didn't slow the work of local Underground Railroad Conductors like Theodore Foster, Samuel Dexter and many others who continued to aid the fleeing slaves.

The Panic of 1857 was another financial crisis which spread rapidly throughout the United States because of the telegraph! The New York branch of the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Co., failed in August of 1857. Soon, all across the nation, banks began to collapse due to the embezzlement of OLITC. The ensuing financial panic led to an economic depression that lasted until the onset of the American Civil War in 1861.

When President Lincoln issued a call for troops, the local military group, known as the Dexter Union Guard, became Company K of the Michigan 4th Regiment Infantry. Alexander D. Crane served as the first captain of Company K with Harrison H. Jeffords serving as the first lieutenant. The troops were soon serving along with other regiments at various battles, and it was in early July of 1863 at the Battle of the Wheatfield at Gettysburg that by then Col. Harrison H. Jeffords was killed. He was sent back to Dexter on the trains and was buried in the Dexter Cemetery, now called Forest Lawn Cemetery.



As noted before, Judge. Dexter was an avid abolitionist, and was very concerned about the war. Although he was ill, he had been kept informed of the progress of the war by his family until he died in 1863. He was buried in the private family cemetery at Gordon Hall.

Before the Civil War, the United States used gold and silver coins as its official currency. But in 1862, to help stabilize the country, Greenbacks became the first national currency of the United States. The notes, named for their distinctive color, were not redeemable for gold or silver but were lawful money backed by the credit of the federal government. Massive debt came during the war and put inflationary pressure on greenbacks, so the US federal government stopped printing them in late 1865 and by 1879 greenbacks were completely out of circulation.



The Reconstruction Era actually began with the *Emancipation Proclamation* by President Lincoln on January 1, 1863 at Gettysburg. The US congress worked and came up with three amendments to the Constitution to grant equal rights to the newly freed slaves.

The returning soldiers formed chapters of The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and the Dexter Post was called the *Harrison H. Jeffords Post*.

In the early 1830s, Judge Dexter envisioned a railway crossing the country, and in 1869, the Transcontinental Railway opened, becoming the first continuous railway across the US.

In October of 1871, there were a series of fires caused by a long period of hot, dry, windy conditions. The largest was in Chicago, but at the same time a fire swept through the Thumb area of Michigan and parts of the Upper Peninsula.

The Panic of 1873 helped bring the Reconstruction Era to an end. Although originally starting in Europe, it led to the stock market crash and to the failures of many railroads and other businesses. More will be said on this "Great Depression" in the 1874-1924 article as part of the May Newsletter.

Business Members

The Dexter Area Historical Society began a campaign to bring local Dexter businesses into the membership of the Society. Businesses are offered a lifetime, non-voting membership in the society and in return they will receive the newsletter, a membership emblem and recognition in the newsletter of those who have joined. We welcome our newest member, **Mike Fitzpatrick of Edward Jones on Main Street**. If you are interested in joining us, please contact us at DexterMichHistory@gmail.com. We are happy to have the following as DAHS Businesses:

Beacon Dental - Dr. David Traynor
Chelsea Dexter Dental Group
Cindy Strang Insurance Agency
CMR Mechanical LLC
Dexter Family Dentistry - Brent Kolb
Dexter Oral Surgery and Implant Center
Dexter Riverside Cellar
Mike Fitzpatrick of Edward Jones
Finn's JM&J Insurance Agency
Hackney Hardware

Hosmer-Muehlig Funeral Chapel
Huron Counseling Services
Main Street Optometry-Vision
Reed Barbering - Robin's
Spring Valley Trout Farm
St. Andrew's UCC Church
Village Animal Clinic of Dexter
Wallace & Wallace Properties
Whitetail Farm - Mary Baude

Membership Form

On the next page is our Membership Form! Please print it out and use it to join or renew your Membership in the Dexter Area Historical Society! We always need volunteers of all ages and diverse skill sets, but one of the areas missing from the form is a place for you to indicate how you would like to volunteer to help us. Please let us know what you love to do by putting a note somewhere on the page!

Membership fees are due January 1st each year. We have indicated in the note in your email or on your letter the status of your account according to our records. Please use the form on the next page to renew or begin a new membership. Mail the form and your check made out to DAHS to Dexter Area Historical Society, 3443 Inverness, Dexter, MI 48130.

Thank you.

DEXTER AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OFFICERS:

President:
Caryl Burke
Vice-President:
Beverly Hill
Secretary:
Ina Germain
Treasurer
Jan Weaver

DIRECTORS:

Sue Behnke
Carol Jones
Shawn Pierrel
Ceci Riecker
Nancy Van Blaricum
Gary Vander Haagan
Sharon Wheeler

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NEWSLETTER - Nancy J. Van Blaricum DexMuseum@aol.com
WEBMASTER - Jan Weaver weaver9113@gmail.com
GORDON HALLSPECIAL EVENTS - Bene Fusilier: 734-426-8972
HERITAGE GUILD - Pat Pudduck. PatPudduck@gmail.com
MUSEUM DIRECTOR - Nina Rackham: NDRackham@aol.com
GORDON HALL DIRECTOR - Bev Hill: BeverlyHill6@gmail.com

FACILITIES:

DEXTER AREA MUSEUM - 3443 Inverness, Dexter, MI 48130
GORDON HALL - 8311 Island Lake Rd., Dexter, MI 48130

PHONE - 734-426-2519 WEBSITE: DexterHistory.org EMAIL: DexterMichHistory@gmail.com

Museum Hours: Friday and Saturday, 1 to 3 PM, May through November



Membership Form

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

(home)

(cell)

Email: _____

Membership Type* New member Renewal

\$_____ Individual \$15 yearly

\$_____ Family \$25 yearly

\$_____ Student \$2 yearly

\$_____ Business \$50

\$_____ Life \$200

\$_____ Extra gift for Museum

\$_____ Extra gift for Gordon Hall

\$_____ **TOTAL**

-----Make checks payable to: **Dexter Area Historical Society (DAHS)**-----

Mail to:

Dexter Area Historical Society
3443 Inverness Street
Dexter, MI 48130

Contact:

Phone: 734.426.2519
Email: DexterMichHistory@gmail.com
Website: DexterHistory.org
Find us on Facebook@dexterhistory
Dexter Area Historical Society

*All memberships except Life and Business are renewed each January.