

CHRONOLOGY OF GORDON HALL

1824 – Samuel William Dexter arrived in Michigan and established a settlement in Washtenaw County, which he named “Dexter” in honor of his father. He also founded the village of Byron in Shiawassee County. During 1824, Judge Dexter rode over 2,000 miles on horseback throughout eastern Michigan, with noted surveyor Orange Risdon.

1826 – Samuel Dexter was appointed the first Chief Justice of Washtenaw County by Territorial Governor Lewis Case. Thereafter, he was always referred to as Judge Dexter.

1827 – Dexter established the first postoffice in Dexter in one room of his home on the river.

1828 – Judge Dexter married 16 year old Millicent Bond from Mass. They would have a long life together and would have eight children.

1829 – The first newspaper published in Washtenaw County “Western Emigrant” was established in Ann Arbor and purchased by Judge Dexter and John Allen of Ann Arbor.

1830 – Judge Dexter platted Dexter Village. - He later platted Ionia and Saginaw, donating the land for Saginaw’s courthouse.

1837 – Judge Dexter deeded to the state of Michigan land 100 feet in width for the site of the railroad through his village.

1840 – Judge Dexter appointed to 4-year term as a regent of University of Michigan but resigned after one year.

1841 (July 4) – Railroad came to Dexter.

1841-1843 – Judge Dexter built his home west of the Village on an estate of 1700 acres on a rise of ground where a beautiful view of Dexter is seen. The home was named Gordon Hall in honor of his mother Catherine Gordon Dexter.

Calvin Filmore, a carpenter and contractor brother of President Millard Filmore, was one of the designers of Gordon Hall.

1863 – Judge Dexter died and Mrs. Dexter continued living in Gordon Hall until her death in 1899, after which it was sold and rented for a number of years.

1934 – U.S. Department of Interior reports Gordon Hall as one of the oldest and most historic buildings in the state. Drawings and photographs of the home were deposited in the Library of Congress.

1938 – Katherine Dexter McCormick (granddaughter of Judge Dexter) repurchased Gordon Hall for the purpose of restoring it to its original beauty and hired Emil Lorch, professor emeritus of College of Engineering of University of Michigan to take charge of restorations. See more about Katherine Dexter McCormick on page 12 of the Historic District Study Committee Final Report.

1940 to 1950 – Gordon Hall underwent repairs and was prepared for occupancy. It was Katherine Dexter McCormick's wish to restore Gordon Hall and donate it for use by groups in Dexter such as the Women's Study Club.

1950 – Gordon Hall was given to the University of Michigan by Katherine McCormick.

Early 1951 – Despite the pleas of many noted preservationists from across the country, the home was divided into four large apartments and rented to university faculty and staff. Forty acres of the 70 acre site was leased for farming.

1958 – Gordon Hall was placed on the state Register of Historic Places.

1972 – Gordon Hall was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

2000 Nov – University of Michigan plans to sell Gordon Hall. They will pursue designation with local historic district commission before selling property.

2001 Jan – Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution authorizing the Historic District Study Committee to study the Gordon Hall property.

2001 Feb – Preliminary report issued by Study Committee.

2001 Mar – Washtenaw County Historic District Commission reviewed and recommended conditional approval of proposal to create historic district for Gordon Hall.

2001 Apr – Public Hearing was held at Webster Township to discuss the proposal. Residents attending were very vocal about having all the land included in the Historic District. They also questioned why the University would not want to donate the property back to the community.

2001 Sep – Gordon Hall final report issued with recommendations that the Board of Commissioners adopt an ordinance designating Gordon Hall as a Washtenaw County Historic District. Two options were included with the recommendations: One included 20 acres in the Historic District, the other included all the acreage.

2001 Oct – Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners adopts an ordinance designating Gordon Hall as a Washtenaw County Historic District with 67.68 acres as the boundary for the Gordon Hall District.

2005 Mar – The University of Michigan decided to put the Gordon Hall property up for bids, suggesting it was worth two million dollars.

With help from Webster and Scio Townships, the Village of Dexter, Chelsea Retirement Community, and several individual donations, the Dexter Area Historical Society was able to bid 1.5 million dollars by the November 15 deadline.

2005 Nov – The 1.5 million dollar bid was accepted by the University of Michigan on November 21, 2005. This was a landmark victory for the people of Dexter.

2006 Mar 15 – Dexter Area Historical Society and Museum assumed ownership.