



Dexter Area Historical Society

February 2016 Edition



President's Message

By: Bev Hill

Dear Historical Society Members:

Welcome to the New Year!

2015 was an exciting year and I am looking forward to 2016 with great anticipation. We ended 2015 with three highly successful days at Gordon Hall including Christmas at the Mansion, a fantastic Christmas Bazaar at the Museum, and a capital campaign that reached its goal.

2016 will get underway with the exterior renovation of Gordon Hall utilizing SHPO grant funds and the beginning of our capital fundraising campaign for the interior renovation utilizing Jeffris Foundation grant funds. Our Board has many other exciting ideas including a celebration of the 175th anniversary of the railroad coming through Dexter that coincides with the date that construction started on Gordon Hall.

As our Board meets and plans for these events, we would very much welcome your participation. You will find information on many of our events in this Newsletter. We need help with publicity for the many activities that occur during the year.

We are fortunate to have both Gordon Hall and the Museum and a very hardworking Board. We would love to have you join us, even if only for an hour, to be part of all of our new happenings in Dexter!

Please feel free to call or email me at any time. I would love to hear from you.

Bev Hill

President of the Dexter Area Historical Society

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734.426.4767

Communications Committee

We have formed a Committee to oversee our communications. The aim will be to pass all information involving events or activities through the committee which will then put the information out for members and the public through our Website, Facebook, Newsletter, newspapers, radio and any other means of letting everyone know what is going on with the Dexter Area Historical Society.

Presently the members of the committee include Nina Rackham (Chairperson), Rachel Szymanski (Web-Master), Alice Ehn (Newsletter), Sue Schotts, Sue Behnke, Bev Hill, and Nancy Van Blaricum. This newsletter is our first project and the new website will contain the same information, although it will be updated more often as will the Facebook page. If you have any information for the group, please contact any person above. The email addresses are below. Or send the information to DexMuseum@aol.com.

The Museum Gift Shop

First I would like to thank Barb Neff and my husband Dennis for helping the day of the 2015 Bazaar. We also opened the doors for four hours on December 19th, in an attempt to generate additional sales. \$136.00 worth of items were sold, realizing a combined sales total \$1001.00 for the gift shop. Thanks to everyone who helped to support the Museum by purchasing gift shop items.

Rhea Berry



ARTIFACTS RECENTLY DONATED

- 1800's Paragon Guillotine..... Daniel Teare
- Kiwanis items from 1937..... Joseph Medrano
- 1880's child's dress & 1940's nightgowns..... Margaret Steptoe
- 1940's toys gray hound bus, plastic Mickey mouse & "tea leaf" ironstone set..... Jeremy Heiken
- Dexter police uniform, hat pins, 1906 World Atlas & Great War in Gravure..... Steinaway
- Framed Civil War scene, Monument park framed picture of civil war soldier & military figurines Russ Brewster
- Antique toys, household, kitchenware & textiles..... Nancy Tandy
- Land grant issued to Samuel W. Dexter signed by President John Quincy Adams..... Julie Knight
- Walking spinning wheel & cards..... Suzanne Pohl
- 1960's vintage hats & gloves..... Bob Aiken
- Pin drawing of home at 3338 Central Street..... Jack & Virginia Grant

Gordon Hall Days

For the past five years we have celebrated the Sesqui-centennial of the Civil War with "Civil War Days" at Gordon Hall. We wish to thank the event Chairperson Donna Fisher, the Civil War re-enactors, the speakers, the musicians, and the many wonderful volunteers who have made Civil War Days so memorable. These events have begun what we hope will be a new tradition for the Dexter area that we will now call "Gordon Hall Days".

Each year we plan to choose a new topic for our event which will support the renovation of Gordon Hall and also help us learn more about the Dexter Area. For 2016, we discovered that it is the 175th year since the Railroad came to Dexter in 1841. Judge Dexter was very interested in the Railroad which he had seen during his travels in Europe. In the February 8, 1832 edition of The Emigrant, an early newspaper which Judge Dexter edited, he wrote an article expressing an interest in the transcontinental railroad. To facilitate the railroad coming through the Village, he donated land to the railroad company. However, some of that land included his orchard, and we believe that is one of the reasons that Gordon Hall was built, beginning in 1841.

The 175th Railroad events will be presented by the Dexter Area Historical Society in collaboration with the Huron Valley Model Railway Society and the Ann Arbor Railroad Club. The events will be held at Gordon Hall on June 10, 11 and 12th. We will have many different activities for those who attend. The HVMRS & the AARC will be bringing their displays from the Depot to Gordon Hall and they will be set up in the second floor apartments. The first floor North apartment will house a display of the History of the Railroad. We are hoping that at least one of the Club's model trains might be part of the display in the North side apartment on the first floor so those who can't navigate the stairs might be able to see a sample of the train setups. Richard Ashley is in charge of this room with the help of his Grandson Nathan who has just finished a school project on "The Coming of the Railroad to Dexter". The trains were an integral part of travel during the war years, as they were used not only as transportation, and during the Civil Wars they were also used in battles. We hope to provide information on how the train has been a major part of the Dexter area through the years.

Horse Shoe Club

Again this year, the popular Dexter Horse Shoe Club will give lessons to acquaint people with the sport of pitching horseshoes.

The game seemed to have been a favorite among soldiers in most wars. Returning home, these soldiers interested their home folks more than ever in the game, and horseshoe pitching courts were laid out in hundreds of cities, villages, and farming communities. The impetus for the NHPA (National Horseshoe Pitchers Association) as we know it today grew out of the throwing of mule shoes in the Union Camps during the Civil War. Courts sprang up in the backyards of Union states. Rules differences arose regionally

Come enjoy the afternoon at the Gordon Hall Days event and Mark Amsdill and his club members will show you how to play horseshoes, or if you already play, enjoy a competitive game of pitching.

In the South apartment of Gordon Hall, we will have a display showing the celebration in 1941 of the "Centennial of the Railroad". This was an elaborate event with pageants, parades, dignitaries, speakers, and a very special Open House at Gordon Hall that had just been renovated! We are fortunate to have many items from Flora Bostwick Smith showing this grand event in 1941, and items from other donors.

We will be having the large tent in the back of Gordon Hall again for special events. We hope to have a Tea honoring Katherine Dexter McCormick, the Granddaughter of Judge Dexter. She is the one who saved Gordon Hall in 1939 when she purchased it and hired Emil Lorch to renovate it. The Saturday night event this year will be a dance and we are working with some local dancers to decide on the era of the dance. There are other ideas for the tent area yet to be developed.

For the outside activities, we have invited the 4th Michigan re-enactors to return as the Railroad was an important part of the war. They have not yet responded, but we are hoping that they will be with us. Other outdoor activities are planned for the children, with some new ideas since we are no longer restricted to the 1860's but can venture out over a 175 year period. Also for the children, we have booked a train for rides on the property. We will be negotiating with different food vendors to determine what is best for us. We are planning on having the "Tally-Ho" carriage there as well as some other antique vehicles. More events include the Horseshoe group, musical entertainment including the Friday night 1st graders, the dulcimer group, the Base Ball game, and we are open to other suggestions.

This whole idea is dependent on many volunteers and the support of local businesses and interested people. We have formed committees that are listed below. In almost all cases, the head of the committee is a member of the DAHS Board and they welcome your willingness to help with this project. Please feel free to contact anyone on the list with your ideas. That is what will make this all work. We will try to keep you up-to-date by using Social Media or short Emails with requests for items or help to make this project a success. Thank you in advance for your help.

Nancy Van Blaricum, Chairperson, DexMuseum@aol.com

Gordon Hall Days Committee Chairs

Chairperson: Nancy J. Van Blaricum – DexMuseum@aol.com

Committee Heads:

Food – Bev Hill – beverlyhill6@gmail.com

Volunteers – Stephanie Bell – theladyinpurplesb@gmail.com

Tents and Supplies – Neil Adams – nadams@neiladams.com

Grounds – Jon Russell – jwruss@gmail.com

Parking/Collections – Neil Adams - nadams@neiladams.com

Publicity, Budget, Community Sponsors – Caryl Burke –

caryleburke@aol.com

Other Outdoor events Carol Jones – dextercofc@aol.com

& Caryl Burke – caryleburke@aol.com

Gordon Hall Displays and mini-tours - Nina Rackham –

ndrackham@aol.com

& Sue Behnke – behnkesue@gmail.com

Friday & Saturday Night Events – Ina Germain –

ina114@sbcglobal.net

Dexter Depot Display - Richard Ashley – rashley@provide.net

Fires and the Dexter Area Fire Department, Part 2

This article is a continuation of one found in the 2015 DAHS Fall Newsletter which detailed many early fires and the final formation of the Dexter Area Fire Department. We covered much of the history up to the building of the Fire Hall on the site of the Ford Mill which was purchased in 1954. The Village and the Township of Scio built a new hall in 1955 which is in use today.

Neil Adams shared information on a Fire Truck which he now owns, that was part of the Dexter Fire Department from 1928 to the late 1950's. The fire truck was purchased from Reo Michigan Sales, Inc. on July 2, 1928. This 1928 REO-Boyer is the second truck purchased by the Dexter Volunteer Fire Department and the first to have a pump. The truck was professionally restored in 1975, and Neil has owned it since 1987. The attached picture is the truck which you may have seen in some local parades.



The Dexter Area Fire Department served the community well from 1925 until 1960 under Chief J. Art Lovell. In the early days there was no department as such—just Lovell and Jack McLeod, the assistant Chief, and the Volunteer fire fighters, bootless and coatless, who “just went to every fire.” There wasn’t even a telephone number to call for fires! While he was Chief, Lovell’s home phone, served for fire calls. Volunteer firemen learned of fires in different ways through the years. The first known signal for the volunteer firefighters was the bell in the steeple of the Methodist Church. Later on sirens were placed on the old pump station that was in what is now Monument Park and on the old water tower which was located in what is now Peace Park. In those days, most of



the Volunteers lived and worked in the Dexter area. Next came a short wave radio installed in the Fire trucks and the Fire Hall. The Department has kept up with technology and communications today allow for a much faster response time.

Keith Hoatlin replaced J. Art Lovell in 1960. He had been a Volunteer with the Fire Department since 1937, but on the first page of the Dexter Leader on January 16, 1964, is a resignation letter from Fire Chief Hoatlin. In his letter of resignation, he pointed out some problems with the department. Alfred Lavalli, was then appointed Chief and in the same article, he called for “the reorganization of the Department and the co-operation of all of the men to do the work together.” It would appear that the Village came around and made the improvements suggested by Lavalli as Hoatlin reassumed the position as Chief in 1967. He remained there until his retirement in November of 1979. I’m not sure who served from 1979 to 1986, but Fred Schmid was appointed in 1986. Schmid had started working with the Ann Arbor Fire Department in 1950 and worked his way up to Chief in 1974. He retired from Ann Arbor in 1982, and became the DAFD Chief in 1983, retiring in 1999 when Loren Yates began his service as Chief. Yates retired in June of 2015 and Co-Chiefs Robert Wagner and John Zahn served until they were replaced by Robert Smith who took over on October 19, 2015.

Over the years as needs have changed, the duties of the Volunteers and full time staff have changed, which necessitated the purchase of new vehicles. By 1955 the Dexter Fire Depart-

ment began running medical emergencies and a Suburban Carry All was purchased to carry life saving equipment. The firemen were taught CPR and began responding to car accidents. By 1974 they had a set of Jaws of Life which were soon put to use. By 1968 the Carry All was replaced with a “bread truck” style truck that could carry more equipment. Through the years there have been many improvements to the life saving devices.

Fire fighting vehicles have been updated and purchased over the years. In 1975 a study was made that determined that the lime-green color was the most visible for fire engines and other equipment, so that most of the present vehicles are that color. Presently there are 3 stations, Number 1 is in downtown Dexter, Number 2 is in Dexter Township on North Territorial, and Number 3 is in Webster Township. A sub-station in Scio Township was built on Zeeb Road in 1986, but in 1988 they split with the DAFD and became a separate entity. In 2012, the department had 3 stations, 9 trucks, 1 full-time Chief, 7 full-time firefighters and 20 part-time Firefighters. The DAFD continues to grow and improve. In the early 1990’s, they successfully fought the “Dexter Daze” fire that gutted three buildings on Main Street. The 2012 EF-3 Tornado in 2012 was a new and different situation for the Dexter Firefighters. The firefighters continue to serve the community in many different ways, only a portion of which is actually fighting fires.

This article was put together by Nancy Van Blaricum using information from the Dexter Area Museum as well as Newspaper articles from the Dexter Leader and The Sun Times News.

Thank you from the Dexter Heritage Guild



This year's bazaar and bake sale was one for the record books! Over \$4,000 was added to the Historical Society treasury. Thanks to the efforts of the Guild, members of the Historical

Society and friends of the Museum and Gordon Hall.

Not only was the event a successful fundraiser, it was a delight to behold! The Guild appreciated the compliments on the beauty of the presentation and the quality of the merchandise. Bake sale customers enjoyed the wide selection of



canned jams, gluten-free offerings and doggie treats as well as the usual cookies, candies, and breads.



We thank all of you who contributed, who lent a hand setting up and selling and who shopped with us. We appreciate

all the support!

The Dexter Heritage Guild Report

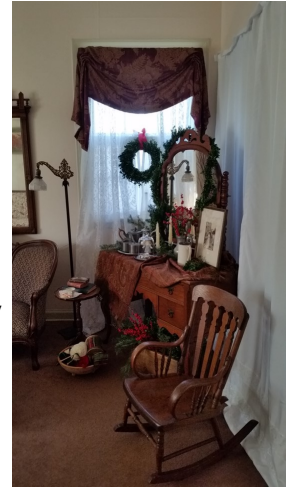
The Dexter Heritage Guild was organized to support the work of the Dexter Area Historical Society and Museum. We meet the 3rd and 4th Wednesdays of the month to craft items for the Annual Holiday Bazaar. Many talents are represented in the group, but a willingness to try new things in a fun atmosphere is characteristic of our members! For more information, call Cindy Henes at 734-426-0973.

The Guild sponsors the Antique Appraisal Day held at the Museum. This is a wonderful time to find out if your treasure is of some value. The DuMouchelles Art Gallery from Detroit will send three of their appraisers, each with their own area of expertise, to give verbal appraisals. Plans are for this event to be held in early May. Once a date is established, we will start to accept appointments. There is only one appraiser who will look at art work and his time fills quickly. Be sure to check the Dexter Historical Society's website (DexterHistory.org) for the date.

CHRISTMAS AT THE MANSION 2015

Christmas at the Mansion was, once again, a successful event for the Dexter Historical Society. Over \$7200 was raised during the weekend events and many Dexter residents and families had an opportunity to enjoy Gordon Hall beautifully decorated for the Holidays by local merchants and Historical Society supporters. The Bob & Jan Lyons Foundation and the Cedars of Dexter were very generous financial sponsors of the weekend. This year's theme was Antique and Vintage Toys. Toys were on display throughout Gordon Hall with artifacts from the museum as well as contributions from Dexter Area Historical Society members and many antique and vintage toy collectors.

Dee Dee Willis of Hearts and Flowers, Sarah Clark Birkhill and Cindy Clark Hoffman of the Clark



family and Mandy Pomo of Boxwood Cottage & Home each decorated a room creatively. Devoted members of the Historical Society also contributed many hours to complete additional rooms and the porch to ensure the success of the weekend.

An hors d'oeuvres and spirits party was held on Friday night with music provided by flautist Cheryl Vanderhoof, spirits served by Sarah Burke and food serving assistance from Girl Scout troops #41170 and #40443.



On Saturday, a family event with Christmas crafts, Santa Claus and Gordon Hall tours was featured. A Sunday tea with savories and sweets was held to round out a lovely weekend with music provided by violinist Wesley Fritzemeyer.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to make this a very successful and enjoyable weekend to begin the Christmas holidays.

Raffle Volunteers Needed:

We are in need of volunteers to help sell tickets for our annual \$10,000 summer raffle to benefit Gordon Hall. We could use your assistance with selling to the community at large but even just selling to your friends and relatives would be a big help. Plus, if you are interested, you could even join us at the Ann Arbor Art Fair.

We only sell 4,000 tickets so buyers have better odds of winning than they would if they bought a power ball ticket!

We could really use your help! So please join our team and help support Gordon Hall!

Contact Caryl Burke (426-5232) or Bev Hill (426-4767) for volunteering or for more information.

Gordon Hall Exterior Renovation to Begin this Spring

Last May, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, through the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), awarded DAHS a grant from the Michigan Heritage Restoration Program to renovate the exterior of Gordon Hall. Six other projects around the state were also awarded grants through this program. http://www.michigan.gov/mshda/0,4641,7-141-54317_19320_69771-353535--,00.html

These were matching grants, with our total proposed budget of \$125,000 to be split between SHPO (60% or \$75,000) and DAHS (40% or \$50,000). The scope of the project, as described in the grant application, involved 2 big deliverables

- Removal of the aluminum siding on Gordon Hall and repair/painting of the wood clapboard underneath; and
- Removal of the 1950s sundeck on the west side of Gordon Hall, and restoration of the original porch.

The application also called for completion of several much smaller projects, such as installation of gutters and downspouts, repair of the foundation, repair and painting of the north, south, and east porches, replacement of the current plastic shutters with period-appropriate shutters, and other projects. DAHS appointed a team to administer the project; the Gordon Hall Rehab Committee including Neil Adams, Caryl Burke, Bev Hill, Chet Hill, and Jon Russell.

The Rehab Committee issued a request for proposal to invite bids from qualified historic architecture firms who would create specifications for the project, engage the construction contractor, and oversee the work. Hopkins Burns Design Studio (HB) won the contract. We are happy to be working again with this firm, as

their qualifications are excellent, they are very local, they are well known and respected by the folks at SHPO, and they know our project, having developed our Rehabilitation Master Plan back in 2011.

After the contract with SHPO was signed in late September, Greg Jones and Tamara Burns at HB worked with the Rehab Committee to develop detailed specifications for the project and a more detailed budget, which we thought was more realistic. Right after Christmas, the project went out for bids from contractors, and in January 2 bids were received. Both bids were from qualified and respected area contractors, but they were very high; \$300-400,000. Meanwhile, SHPO announced that they have some additional funds to add to the project that, with our matching 40%, could increase our total budget to around \$165,000. The Rehab Committee is currently working with SHPO, HB, and the low bidder to negotiate a revised scope and price that will get a sensible chunk of work done for \$125-165,000. Within the next couple of weeks, we expect to have a final decision about exactly how much can be completed, but it is realistically anticipated that the siding work is the only one of the 2 big deliverables

that we'll be able to manage on this grant. Other smaller deliverables will be worked in as possible.

Look for work to begin on the exterior of Gordon Hall in March or April. I think that taking off that siding will be like opening a present. It will be our first good look at what is under there and how it has fared since it was covered up in the 1970s. (By the way, all indications so far are that the wood siding is in pretty good shape!) It will be our first concrete step toward putting this wonderful house back to the way it was when Judge Dexter lived there in the 1860s, and our first opportunity to show the community in a physical way what we are doing with all their support. This work will be complete by the end of June. Then we can start thinking about other next steps – restoration of the west porch, restoration of the windows, addition of shutters - there is a long list.

Many thanks to the Gordon Hall Rehab Committee and the DAHS Board who have supported this work so far, and to Hopkins Burns who have been great partners. If you have questions or would like to contribute, feel free to contact Caryl Burke at 734-426-2321.

Volunteers Needed:

Mini tours Available:

Are you interesting in doing some character acting at the Gordon Hall Days event June 10-12, 2016? We are looking for people to do portrayal of the Dexter family members.

If, interested, you would be given some historical facts about the family character, and the rest is up to you. Please contact the Dexter Area Museum at 734-426-2519 and leave a message.

