

IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • MAY 2002

Love Wedding Dresses?

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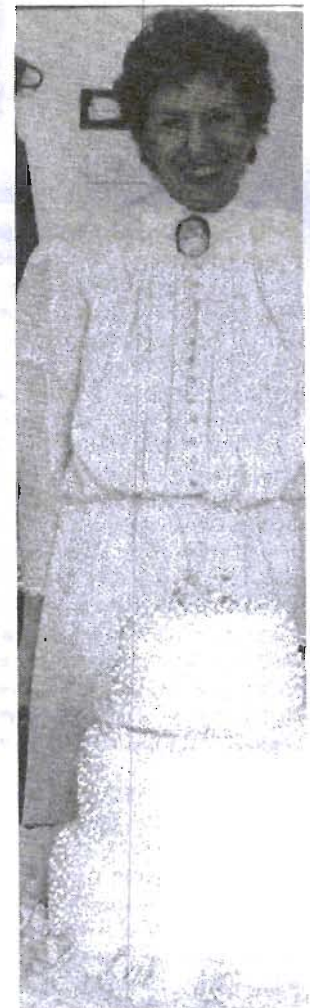
Photos by Susan Wineberg

Top Left: The Hiscock-Burnett wedding dress from 1883. Top Middle: Dama Godfrey Creal's wedding dress, 1925. Her home on Kingsley, where she was married, can be seen out the window! Top Right: Dorothy Kiefer Beckwith's wedding dress, 1930, handmade by her sister.

If you love wedding dresses, you'll love our current exhibit "Weddings of Yore." Featuring dresses from 1841-1945, it includes the wedding outfits of many famous Ann Arborites, including the **Hiscock families (1881 and 1883)**; **Parmelia and George Keal (1841)**; **Eunice and Fielding Yost (1906)**; **Helen Sunderland Safford**, descendant of Jabez Sunderland (1926); **Ella and Junius Beal (1889)**; **Dama and Cecil Creal (1925)**; **Mary and Martin Vogel (1885)**; and **Charlotte and George Sallade (1945)**. We were informed by Shirley Stevens, the Registrar of the **Sarah Caswell Angell** chapter of the **DAR** that many of the dresses belonged to past members of their chapter. This list included Dama Godfrey Creal, Anna Botsford Bach, Eunice Yost, and Ella Travis Beal.

Also included in the exhibit are typical wedding gifts, linens from a bride's trousseau, a charming book of advice from a mother to a daughter at her shower, going-away suits and wedding fans. **Susan Wineberg** loaned a small group of cake toppers from her vast private collection.

Our Open House on April 28th was well attended and **Jan Enns** baked a special cake for the occasion, while also appearing in Victorian dress. The cake was three tiers high, with strawberry mousse in the middle of each layer. Gorgeous and delicious! Special thanks to all who helped put this exhibit together including **Ralph Beebe**, **Dick Galant**, **Patty and Bob Creal** and, of course, **Pauline Walters** and our indomitable **Judy Chrisman**. With the wedding season just beginning, this is a great time to check out stylish dresses from the past. Perhaps you will be inspired! The exhibit is



Digital Photo by Cynthia Yao.
Jan Enns and the cake she made for our open house.

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BY RACHEL SZYMANSKI

Katharine Dexter McCormick Dexter Native Who Helped Change The World

*Despite having our meeting space changed at the last minute to the Mill Creek Middle School, we managed to lure 40 people on a blustery cold day to hear Rachel Szymanski, a Girl Scout from Troop 42, speak on Katharine Dexter McCormick. Rachel, who is 16, was introduced by her troop leader and mentor Carol Birk, as one of their most accomplished members. Rachel is in the National Honor Society, a singer with the Christian rock band "Crimson," active in the theater and a reliable student. They were inspired by an article by Ken Garber in the *Ann Arbor Observer* in 1996. Rachel's work on Katharine Dexter McCormick won her the Gold Award, the highest award given by the Girl Scouts.*



Photo by Karen O'Neal.

Rachel Szymanski with her project on Katharine Dexter McCormick.

"When most people think of a famous person from Dexter, they think of **Judge Samuel Dexter**, the founder of our village. He was the son of another Samuel Dexter, who served in the US House of Representatives from 1793-1795; in the US Senate from 1799-1800; wrote the eulogy for **George Washington**; served as Secretary of War 1800-1801; as Secretary of the Treasury from 1801-02 under President **John Adams**; and an unsuccessful candidate for governor of Massachusetts. The founder of Dexter, Michigan had a lot to live up to! He moved from New York to Michigan and established the town of Dexter in 1824. In 1825 he built a sawmill and in 1830 he platted the town. He was a Harvard graduate, a judge, a landowner, a temperance leader, an abolitionist, and a conductor on the **Underground Railroad**. However, many people **don't** know about his granddaughter and that **is** the subject of my talk today.

Women have often been left out of history because the things they did have not seemed important. This is changing more and more. Two famous women you may have heard of, **Carrie Chapman Catt** and **Margaret Sanger**, were women with whom our subject interacted. Catt was the President of the **National American Women's Suffrage Association**, and after the passage of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote in 1920, she co-founded the **League of Women Voters**, an organization still active today. Many

people consider her as important as **Susan B. Anthony**. Margaret Sanger was a leader in the birth control movement, a political radical and crazy lady who opened an illegal birth control clinic in 1916 (and was arrested for this) and later pushed hard for many types of contraceptive methods, one of which was the birth control pill. She founded the organization that is now known as **Planned Parenthood**.

These are two women who were recognized during their lifetimes for their contributions to history and much has been written about them. Our subject, **Katharine Dexter McCormick**, is less well known, but was someone who had a great influence on women through her support of women's organizations and research on the birth control pill.

Katharine was born at **Gordon Hall** in Dexter in 1875, while visiting her grandparents. Her father, **Wirt Dexter**, was an important figure in Chicago, where he was active with Marshall Field, George Pullman and others in the Chicago Relief and Aid Society, helping victims of the Chicago Fire of 1871. He was also an attorney and very well to do. [Ed's note: Wirt commissioned architect **Louis Sullivan** in 1887 to build a factory for the R. Deimel Company, a building known today as the Wirt Dexter Building and listed as an important world monument on the Great Buildings Collection website. Wirt was also a trustee of the Michigan Female College from 1855-57 and died in 1890 at his home on

Prairie Avenue, where the elite lived at the time.]

Katharine grew up in Chicago in the lap of luxury but when she was 14 her father died of a heart attack. Four years later, when she was 18, her brother Samuel Dexter died of meningitis. After that, her mother Josephine decided to move to Massachusetts—to an area where the family had originated from in the 1640s. It is speculated that these dual tragedies affecting the men in her life inspired her to go to college and study biology, medicine and surgery.

Katharine became the first woman to graduate from MIT in 1904 with a science degree in biology. As unusual as it is today for a woman to be interested in science and engineering (which I am), one can imagine how

extremely unusual it was for a woman at that time to pursue a career in these fields. Here you can see a photograph of Katharine in her biology lab, which, the article points out, portrays her with a big hat showing her other, more social, side.

Rather than pursue her medical degree, however, she opted to marry an old childhood friend, **Stanley R. McCormick**, in the family home in Switzerland in 1904. McCormick's father, **Cyrus McCormick**, had invented the mechanical reaper and was the founder of the International Harvester Company. McCormick at the time was one of the richest men in Chicago, and consequently this was seen as an ideal match.

Two years into their marriage, however, Stanley contracted schizophrenia. Two years after that, in 1908, Stanley was declared legally insane. Katharine's ideal marriage had become a nightmare. However, she refused to institutionalize Stanley, and he remained at their Santa Barbara, California estate—Riven Rock—until he died in 1947. Katharine always believed a cure could be found for his illness, but was sorely disappointed.

[Editor's Note: This tragic story was recently (1998) fictionalized by **T. Coraghessan Boyle** into a novel entitled **Riven Rock**. In it, Boyle sums up Katharine's life in this final paragraph: "Katharine inherited that money, all of it, and everything else too—the properties in Chicago that were minted of gold, the securities and

stocks, Stanley's eight grades of underwear and the house at Riven Rock with the bars on the windows and the eighty-seven acres with their views of the stunned and scoured islands. She sold the estate to pay the inheritance taxes and she took what was left to seed the causes and institutions she believed in—MIT, the League of Women Voters, The Santa Barbara Art Museum, and Dr. Gregory Pincus... who developed a little yellow progesterone-based pill that would free women forever from sexual constraint. All that was to the good, but she lost the court case, despite what the newspapers said and... she never did get the thing she wanted most—her husband—not until he was dead. And by then it was too late.”]

Eventually Katharine put her considerable energy into advancing causes that benefited women. It is important to note that, being so rich, she didn't have to work. She could have lived a life of leisure, but she chose not to. This, to me, is a key to her strength of character. In 1909, her first real cause was the Women's Suffrage Movement (Votes for Women) and she spoke at a demonstration in Massachusetts (she had a second home in Boston). A few years later she was made the Vice President of the National Woman Suffrage Association and worked with **Carrie Chapman Catt**. We have a picture of the two of them that shows Katharine more in the background. She liked to be a force in the background and didn't like being center-stage. She was very detail-oriented and liked that part of her mission, which is one reason she is less well known than the other more outgoing speakers.

After the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920 giving women the right to vote, she and Catt together founded the **League of Women Voters**. This organization is still active today. Even before this, in 1919, Katharine had been on **President Woodrow Wilson's** Women's Committee for National Defense. Seeing that votes for women were now a reality, Katharine became more involved with birth control crusader **Margaret Sanger**. Sanger was Katharine's opposite—a boisterous, radical woman and passionately committed to helping women with unwanted pregnancies. Katharine made her homes available to Sanger for birth control meetings and again was a major force behind the scenes. She also helped smuggle illegal diaphragms into the country from Europe!

Katharine was also funding major research on schizophrenia, still looking for a cure for her husband. After he died in 1947, she moved back to Boston for a while, but eventually wound up making Santa Barbara her permanent residence. She died there in 1967. In these twenty years, after settling her husband's affairs, she pursued her interest in the birth control movement and asked Sanger where she could best spend her remaining millions. Sanger was looking for a simple, cheap and safe contraceptive. In June of 1953, Sanger began dealing with Dr. **Greg Pincus**, a real visionary

in the field. He believed a female hormone called progesterone, which was discovered in the 1920s, would prevent conception if used in a certain way. It wasn't found in great amounts in human bodies, so he was stymied on how to find it. A colleague, **Russell Barker**, found a progesterone-like substance in yam root, and from that he was able to produce synthetic progesterone. At first it had to be injected, but eventually they discovered a way to take it orally, which made it a feasible method of delivery. Katharine personally financed Pincus' clinical trials (over Sanger's objections) to keep the project going, and eventually they were able to convince a respected Harvard gynecologist, **John Rock**, to oversee the trials. Katharine's efforts to be a true part of the effort, and not just a financial backer, again attest to her character. The trials were held from 1954-1958 in Puerto Rico and they proved the safety and effectiveness of the pill.

The drug company G.D. Searle applied to the FDA in 1959 for approval of its use as an oral contraceptive, after many companies thought it too controversial to do trials or get FDA approval. They reasoned that the profits to be made would far outweigh the political risks and they were proved right. Approval of the pill was obtained in 1960 and since then the birth control pill has revolutionized women's control of their bodies. Even if one is opposed to birth control, one must recognize this was a major force to be reckoned with in the late 20th century and changed the dynamic of male-female relations in several important ways. The pill has been the best-selling prescription drug in history—and I think it's pretty incredible that a woman born in Dexter, Michigan pushed for and supplied the almost \$2 million it took to get it to the market! Katharine was now 85 years old and was now slowing down a bit. In 1963, she gave MIT its very first female dormitory and named it Stanley McCormick Hall in honor of her husband. We have a picture of the dedication ceremony.

Closer to home, Katharine began another project in Dexter, Michigan. This was the repurchase of her family home, in 1938 for \$8,000 from a Mr. Krumrein (who had wanted \$10,000). **Gordon Hall**, built in 1844 by Judge Samuel Dexter, the founder of Dexter village, is considered by many architectural historians to be one of the finest homes in Michigan. Consisting of 22 rooms and named in honor of his mother Catherine Gordon Dexter, the house was described by UM Architecture Professor **Emil Lorch** as “the most impressive house of the 1840s in the entire Middle West.” The house had been sold in 1899 after Katharine's grandmother's death, and by the 1930s it was empty and deteriorating. Katharine hired Lorch to restore the home and have it be available for women's groups in Dexter. Between 1940 and 1950 she paid Lorch to prepare the home for occupancy.

However, in 1951 disaster struck. Without warning, the house was deeded to the

University of Michigan, which proceeded to gut the interior [three of the mantels are in the possession of the WCHS!] and create four apartments. One of them was immediately used by retiring UM President **Alexander Ruthven**. Lorch was furious, but could do nothing. How and why this happened is still a mystery.

In 2000, the University of Michigan declared it would sell the property to the highest bidder after having the house and a few acres designated and protected through local historic ordinances. In 2001, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners voted 15-1 to designate the house and the entire parcel, some 68 acres, to prevent development on this site. Currently the **Dexter Area Historical Society** is hoping the University will donate the house to them so they can restore the interior and move their museum into the space. (See page 8.)

Katharine died in 1967 at the age of 92. At the time of her death, her estate was worth \$11.5 million and she left sums of money to friends and employees of her estate, the Worcester Organization of Dr. Pincus, Planned Parenthood, and \$25.00 to the Washtenaw Historical Society, along with oil portraits of her parents [which can be seen at the Dexter Museum], portraits of **Samuel Dexter** and his wife and two bas reliefs, one of which is Stanley McCormick.

Katharine was inducted into the **National Women's Hall of Fame** in 1998 for her work on the pill which “contributed to population control, helped legitimize the study of human sexuality and significantly advanced women's health and independence.” When she graduated from MIT, 3% of the student body were women. Today, after her funding of a dorm for women, that number has risen to 40%. Katharine was inducted into the **Michigan Women's Hall of Fame** in 2000, which was brought about by Carol Birk who introduced me and **Ms. Douglas Salerno** who works with Carol. We have the plaque from that induction and are looking for a home for it! This is the end of the tale of this remarkable woman, born in Dexter, Michigan.”

In the question and answer period, questions were asked about whether Katharine left a diary or any papers. Rachel isn't sure but thinks something may have been given to MIT.

Business Support

This month's issue of *Impressions* is co-sponsored by

RUSSELL BIDLACK

BY PAT THOMPSON

Garden News

The museum gardens continue to evolve with interesting new displays. **Sue Kosky** will be developing the kitchen garden with heirloom varieties of beans on teepee poles, tomatoes, cabbage, squash and many herbs. To represent the extensive fruit culture in early southeastern Michigan, we have selected heirloom currants and gooseberries, underplanted with strawberries, for our fruit garden. We are grateful to **Mary Culver** for sharing her research in this area.

As part of our mission to preserve county botanical history, several contributions were welcomed. **Harriet Birch** donated an ostrich fern from her relatives' **Allmendinger** property. David F. Allmendinger was renown for his landscaping interests, creating what one newspaper described in 1905 as a "little Belle Isle park of his own." Sue Kosky contributed antique pink dianthus from the Leland cemetery. A spicily fragrant clove currant from **Scott Kunst's** 1880's residence is derived from the yellow-flowered ornamental currant species discovered by Lewis and Clark.

Our antique rose collection is now complete with the addition of several important varieties. The most exciting is **Ipsilanté** (1821), a large, quartered pink Gallica honoring the famous Greek general for whom the city of Ypsilanti was named in 1823. **Harison's Yellow** (1830) is a very early-blooming species hybrid and one of the few roses with a true American pedigree. Discovered on Manhattan Island, N.Y., it proved so tough and hardy that it has been said



GARDEN AND OUTING BONNETS

For a few days we offer Sun bonnets at prices that would not pay anyone to buy the cloth and make them.

Best Gingham Laundered Sunbonnets, in assorted colors for ladies from 25c to 50c.

Best Gingham Laundered Sunbonnets for children from 20 to 35c. We also have a handsome line of muslin bonnets with colored linings.

Mrs. MORTON,
129 E. Washington St.

Provided by Pat Thompson.

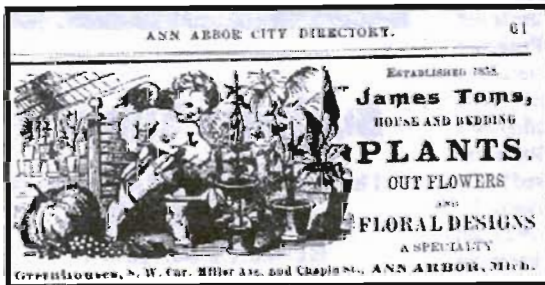
Garden and Outing Bonnets ad, *Ann Arbor Daily Argus*, 4/17/1900.

one can track the westward American migration by the homesteaders' plantings of cuttings of this rose. Other additions are **Mme. Isaac Pereire**, a raspberry pink Bourbon, and several rugosa roses.

Hosta fanciers may be interested in seeing the earliest named hosta – **Thomas Hogg** (1899) – contributed by **Patty Creal**. The gardens also feature four other interesting hosta varieties.

We hope to finish the stone wall this season, using the Michigan glacial fieldstones from Sue and Tom Kosky's Saline farm. Plant identification signage will also be completed, with the labels indicating botanical name, common or folk names, usage and an "N" in the lower right corner for plants native to Michigan.

Thanks to the many people who have contributed plants, time and funds. Volunteers are always welcome to join the Garden Committee.



James Tom's Greenhouse (Miller and Chapin, Ann Arbor) ad, 1890.

Your Museum

Our fancy new shelving has been installed! We have used the first installment of our Bach Bequest to finally get proper storage facilities for our collections. Thank you to **David Ferguson** for increasing the lighting, overseeing the installation of the tracks, the carpeting etc. We now have a state of the art system. **Judy Chrisman** is beaming with happiness and is bringing our textiles and pictures over from our other storage facility. We are on the road towards our goal of housing a good portion of our collections on site.

Sue Kosky is now running our museum shop (hooray!). Her goal is to get books to sell from all parts of the county, so she is busy visiting various museum shops. So far we are stocking books from the Ypsilanti Historical Museum, including **Down the Myrtle Path—A History of Town Hall School** by Hannah Geddes Wright; **The Story of Ypsilanti** by Harvey Colburn and the **Combined Washtenaw County Atlas of 1874, 1895 and 1915**.

Several changes have been made to the slate up for election at the May Annual Meeting. **Randy LaHote** will be a new board member as will **Sherri Peller**. **David Fitzpatrick** has agreed to serve on the Endowment Committee. **Ralph Beebe** has agreed to serve as Vice President. Thank you one and all.



Photo by Susan Wineberg
Judy Chrisman, Collections, and **Pauline Walters**, President, with our fancy new storage system.

BY TOM FREEMAN, CHAIR, DORIS ANNA BACH BEQUEST COMMITTEE

Bach Committee Recommends AXA

Last year, a committee was established to manage the receipt of the bequest from the **Doris Anna Bach Estate**. In March the Bequest Committee solicited proposals from eight firms. Each firm received a letter inviting them to submit a proposal. We listed eleven questions we wanted them to respond to. A copy of the Bequest Fund Guidelines, adopted by the Board of Directors on February 20, 2002, was also enclosed.

The Bequest committee reviewed the submissions and decided to interview three firms. The interviews were conducted at MoMS. Based upon these interviews, the Bequest Committee recommended to the WCHS Board to select AXA Advisors to provide Investment Management Services to us. AXA is a large, national investment firm with a local office. The factors leading to the Committee's recommendation were:

1. The proposed investment portfolio matches the Society's risk tolerance profile.
2. The associated fees are significantly lower than the other proposals received.
3. The proposed investment approach does not involve an aggressively managed portfolio that would require significant annual turnover of holdings.
4. If it were necessary to 'rebalance' the account holdings within the selected fund families, there would be no additional fee.
5. The projected income from the proposed portfolio will meet the funding amount identified by the Society.
6. AXA will provide monthly statements of performance.
7. The Society will have access to the cash portion of the account through a 'traditional' checking account that bears interest.
8. The Society will have electronic access to the account via secure password, in order to monitor status, performance, etc.

At their meeting of April 17, 2002, the WCHS Board of Directors accepted the recommendation of the Bequest Committee and officially selected **AXA Advisors** as the investment management firm for the Bach Bequest. The committee consisted of **Tom Freeman (Chair), Rosemarion Blake, Jay Snyder, Pauline Walters, Carol Birch and Patty Creal.**

Love Wedding Dresses?

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exhibit is up until June 30. Hours are Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday noon-4 or by appointment. Groups welcome! Call **734-662-9092**. We are handicap accessible.



Photos by Susan Wineberg.

Top Right. Cake Toppers from the collection of Susan Wineberg.

Left. Spoons were a wedding gift in the 1890s in Webster Township.

Around The Town

A new historic district is being proposed in Ann Arbor. This is the **Washtenaw-Hill Phase III** district that will add 167 structures to the already existing district centered on the intersection of Washtenaw and Hill. A public hearing was held May 1 and committee members expect the ordinance to go to City Council in the fall. The district contains many fraternities, sororities and cooperatives and also houses that were built by faculty members and businessmen. The district is unique among Ann Arbor's historic districts in exemplifying buildings from the 20th century. Over 65% of the structures were built between 1900 and 1930. **Ellen Ramsburgh** is the Chair of this study committee, which is composed of local residents. You can read the preliminary report by accessing the website of the Ann Arbor (www.ci.ann-arbor.mi.us), going to the Building Department, then to historic districts and then to Wash-Hill.

Not to be upstaged, the North Side has finally had its historic district study committee appointed by the Mayor and Council as of May 6. The committee will consist of **Eunice Burns, Sabra Briere,**

Rosemarion Blake, Norm Kerr, Tom Stulberg, Susan Wineberg and Frances Wright. No meetings have been held yet so this district is way off in the future. The Study Committee will be called the **Lower Town Historic District Study Committee**, reflecting the historic name of this neighborhood around Pontiac Trail and Broadway.

The **Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County** holds its next lecture on **Sunday May 19th**. The topic is "Evidence" and the speaker is **Bobbie Snow**, Librarian of the UM Law Library. The Class is entitled "There are no Dumb Questions." Meetings are at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, 5205 Elliot Drive and begin at 1:30. Use Parking Lot P. The date of the Annual Picnic is TBA, as is the Cemetery Reading. Find out more using their website www.hvcn.org/info/gswc/.

The **Kempf House** exhibit on "Graduations: Pomp and Circumstance of Ann Arbor Graduates from the 1800s to 2002" continues until June 9. Of special interest are items related to **Elsa Kempf's**

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Around The Town

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Graduation 100 years ago. Kempf House, a city-owned 1853 house managed by a volunteer board, is located at 312 S. Division St. (near Liberty) and is open for tours on Sundays and Wednesdays May 19, and June 2 and 9. Admission is \$1.00 and children under 12 are admitted free. Call 734-994-4898 for more information.

Historic Hill Auditorium will close this month and re-open in 18 months after its first major restoration since it was constructed in 1913. At a gala dubbed "*Hills A'Poppin*," it was closed with a great flourish, with speeches by Interim University President **Joe White**, University Musical Society Director **Ken Fischer** and architects from Albert Kahn Associates and Quinn Evans. Your editor and several other board members were part of a group called the "**Preservation Ladies and friends**" who gave tours of the building while wearing UM hardhats. **Julie Truettner** of the UM Architects Office spearheaded this effort. We are all looking forward to the new and historic color schemes, additional bathrooms, and restoration of the medallion lights in the arches in the main hall. This showplace, which has seen performances by some of the world's most accomplished musicians and artists, will once again be the jewel in the crown of the UM stable of **Albert Kahn**-designed buildings.

For the entire month of June, the **Huron River Watershed Council** is partnering with **Ayres, Lewis, Norris and May, Inc.** to sponsor an exhibit at the **Ann Arbor District Library** about this historic river. The exhibit will include maps, drawings, artifacts, tools and photographs used to survey the river by founder Gardner Stewart Williams in the early 1900s. **Grace Shackman** has helped set up the exhibit and will be speaking on "*Life along the Huron*" in the multipurpose room on Thursday, **June 20** at 7:30 PM. Thank you **Ellen Offen** for this information!

Cobblestone Farm celebrates Independence Day **July 4th** from 12-4 by letting you picnic on the lawn, make your own ice cream, hear a public reading of the Declaration of Independence, and play law games. On **Friday June 7**, come to the **Civil War Reenactment** in nearby Buhr Park. Come one, come all to this 1844 city-owned facility at 2781 Packard Road. Call 734-994-2928 for more information.

Around The County

Scully Road in Webster Township became Washtenaw County's seventh **Natural**

Beauty Road in April. However, this designation won't protect it from a dispute over development as residents had hoped, according to an article in the *Ann Arbor News* (4/10/2002). Other Natural Beauty Roads in the county are parts of **Gale Road** in Ann Arbor Township; **Warren Road** from Curtis to Dixboro in Ann Arbor and Superior Townships; **Tubbs Road** from Huron River Drive to Stein in Ann Arbor Township; **Mahrle Rd from Grossman** to Sharon Hollow in Manchester Township; **Marshall Road** from Zeeb to Baker in Scio Township and **Riker Road** in Dexter Township. The state has designated 111 Natural Beauty Roads since 1977. The purpose of the designation is to identify and preserve, in an undisturbed condition, county roads with "unusual or outstanding nature beauty by virtue of native vegetation or other natural features." Some of you may remember that **Glazier Road** lost its designation when development required the widening of the road and the loss of many trees.

Pittsfield Township made history when the Township Board voted 5-1 to purchase 535 acres at a cost of **\$11.3 million** to be used as a park and prevent development. This controversial decision will protect a current rookery, wetlands and farmland and dwarfs the Michigan Land Conservancy's holdings many fold. Although expensive, township supervisor **James Walter** says they will not have to raise taxes or cut services (*Ann Arbor News*, 4/21/2002). Once the closing takes place, the township will decide how to use the land—as park, wilderness, etc. We will keep you posted.

The **Hack House in Milan** was featured in the Spring 2002 newsletter of the **Michigan Historic Preservation Network**. This grand, Eastlake style structure built in 1888 with an addition in 1895, received a Historic Preservation Fund Grant to restore the three porches and the summer kitchen chimney; to paint the house and privy; and repair the masonry foundation. The HPF grant program provides funding to certified local governments for preservation projects. Contact **Teresa Goforth** at 517-373-1904. The Hack House was rededicated last October and is open the first Sunday of the month from May to November. Hours are 1-4 PM. Call Milan Area Historical Society President **Bonnie Jurgensen** at 734-439-7522. It is located at 775 County St. in Milan.

The **Sharon Mills County Park** commissioned **Cooper Design** to develop a Master Plan for the development of the new park including reconstructing lost elements such as the front porch; add parking, three bridges, a pergola, fishing decks and a canoe put-in and take-out area. The project is currently under construction.

The **Dexter Museum** announced the date for **Dexter Daze** as Friday and Saturday **August 9 and 10**. The Museum usually has a display at the museum and sponsors a tour of Forest Lawn Cemetery at 2 PM on Saturday.

The DAHS will also have a booth downtown to raise money and distribute information about Gordon Hall (see related article). Watch your local paper for more details.

The **Saline Area Historical Society** is once again operating the **Rentschler Farm Museum** beginning **May 11**. It remains open every Saturday from 11-4 until Saturday October 5. Also every Saturday you can get a free tour of the **Depot Museum** from 11-3. The Society has an impressive website with lots of information. The Rentschler Farm is located on US 12 (1265 E. Michigan Ave.) just east of the Saline Visteon Plant. For more information call **Agnes Dikeman** at 734-769-2219.

Also in **Saline**, we are happy to report (with the help of the *Ann Arbor News* of 4/30/02) that another **262 acres** of Washtenaw County farmland will be preserved as farmland. The **State of Michigan** has agreed to pay **Howard and Kelven Braun** \$1.3 million (less than half its value) for the land and its development rights. The farm, located on **Bemis Road**, will remain farmland in perpetuity as a result. The Brauns' grandfather purchased the farm in 1907 and they just couldn't bear to see it chopped up. The state was able to purchase the land through its **PDR Program** that purchased another 214 acres of the farm in 2000. The Braun brothers are to be commended for this wonderful gift to the citizens of Washtenaw County.

Beyond Washtenaw

Detroit and its environs still beckon us with spectacular house tours and lovely neighborhoods and parks. This year's **Junior League of Detroit Designer Show House** is an **Albert Kahn**-designed 25-room French Tudor house built in 1906 for industrialist Lewis H. Jones. Originally in Indian Village, it was dismantled brick by brick and moved in the 1930s (when labor was cheap) to 41 Provençal, a tony address in **Grosse Pointe Farms**. The house will be open until May 27 and is the first house in Grosse Pointe Farms on the tour in two decades. Tickets are \$20 at the door and \$15 in advance. For information call 313-881-0040. The house is closed on **Mondays**. All proceeds will benefit the **John Montiel Library** on Detroit's East Side.

The **Detroit Club Preservation Foundation** and the **Historic Preservation Program** at **Eastern Michigan University** are hosting a series of lectures by nationally respected experts on paint analysis, decorative finishes and historic plaster. On **Saturday, May 28th** **Ron Koenig** of Saline will lead the class, from 10-2 with a break for lunch. On **Saturday, June 1**, from 10-2 with a break for lunch, **Steve Seebom** of Petoskey will talk

about faux finishes and decorative paints. On **Friday, June 14** from 5:30-8:30 PM **Andrew Ladygo** of Washington DC will focus on decorative plaster. All classes are at **The Detroit Club**, 712 Cass Ave. Reservations are required and the cost is \$15 for each class or \$35 for the series. For more information call **734-487-0232**. Make checks payable to **The Detroit Club Preservation Foundation**.

The **Historical Society of Michigan** will host its **53rd Upper Peninsula History Conference** on **June 21-23** in **Munising** near the entrance to the **Picture Rocks National Lakeshore**. The conference features tours, lectures and unique outdoor events, including a fish boil hosted by local fishermen. Various topics of discussion will be lighthouse preservation, CCC camps in the U.P., Munising history, using computers and grant writing for small non-profits. Harvard professor **Loren Graham** will present *A Face in the Rock* based on his local research. For more information call **517-324-1828** or e-mail hsm@hsmichigan.org.

The folks at the **Waterloo Area Historical Society** are once again opening their **Farm Museum (1855-1880)** and the **Dewey School Museum**. On **May 19**, they will host their Annual Meeting and have a speaker on the life of **George Custer** at 1 PM. **Sunday, June 30**, is **Log Cabin Day** and **Education Day** and **Blacksmith Festival** from 1-5 PM. Visit their 1850s log house and observe fireplace cooking, see where children slept in a one-room house and discover how they got water. An ice cream social is usually part of this event, and this year **Ms. Ruth Pickl** presents "Sears Catalog Homes."

Their **Quilt and Textile Show** will be held **Sunday, July 27** from 10-4, a **tractor show** will be on **Saturday, August 24** from 10-4, and **Pioneer Day** will be **Sunday, October 13** from 12-5. This Fall Festival has lots of hands on crafts demonstrated and the house and outbuildings are open to all. Admission is by donation to the school and \$3 for adults to the farm museum. To contact them, get directions (you'll need them) or reserve a group tour, call **517-851-8247**.

The **Plymouth Historical Museum** presents a new special exhibit entitled "*The Civil War: Remembrances from the Homefront*." Visitors can see how even civilians far from the battlefields were affected by the war. They worked in hospitals, relief fairs and ammunition factories. This exhibit is on display until September 2002. They also have a new permanent exhibit called "*The Weldon Petz Abraham Lincoln Collection*" which opened February 11. The Museum is a 'family-friendly' place and features a Museum Scavenger Hunt where every child wins a prize. Hours are Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 1-4. Admission is \$3.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children. The family rate is \$7.00. They have many lectures listed on their website so check out www.plymouth.lib.mi.us. / or

call **734-455-8940**.

We had nice things to say about **Livingston County's Green Oak Township** in our last issue. Unfortunately, we learned (*Ann Arbor News*, 4/29/2002) that two historic houses will be demolished for a Golf Learning Center in the **Huron Meadows—Metropark** south of Brighton. One of the two houses on **Rickett Road** dates from **1858** and is one of the oldest houses in the township. Built by **Almon and Maynard Maltby**, emigrants from New York who were some of the first white settlers in the area, the house is an upright and wing in good condition. The other house dates to 1927 and is not considered as important to preserve.

Green Oak Township is working to identify and preserve historic homes in the area and has identified six already as historic districts. They hope to add two more this year. **Marianna Bair**, President of the **Brighton Area Historical Society**, is unhappy they don't have the money to save it. However, **Gary Bartsch**, Director of the **Huron-Clinton Metro Authority** said the houses could be given away to non-profits. Let's hope they

find one soon.

Underground Railroad Tours This Summer

The **African American Cultural and Historical Museum** has announced tours of **Underground Railroad sites** in the county that will be offered this summer. The dates are **Saturdays June 8 and 15, July 13 and 28 and August 10 and 17**. You will ride in an air-conditioned bus and have a professionally guided tour of Underground Railroad Sites in **Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti**. The cost of each tour is \$25 and tickets must be purchased in advance from **Boersma Travel**, 3368 Washtenaw, **734-971-0420**. Credit cards are accepted. You can get more information from their website at www.anotherannarbor.org.

BY LOUISA PIEPER

Historical Consortium Is Productive

This issue of *Impressions* contains a new feature, a calendar of historical happenings in Washtenaw County covering the next four months. This is the first product of a committee of representatives from several local historical organizations: **Washtenaw County Historical Society, Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County, Kempf House Society, Cobblestone Farm, Parker Mill, and the Ypsilanti Fire Museum**. We are including the **Ypsilanti Historical Museum and the Saline Historical Society** (with their two museums) and hope they will send someone to join our group soon.

WCHS President **Pauline Walters** invited all of us to meet at MoMS, hoping to find ways in which we could share resources, improve communication, and expand our overall audience. After a few highly productive brainstorming sessions, here are our short-term plans: 1. **The Calendar** - we hope you like it, use it, and spread the word! This is the first calendar devoted completely to the county's historical happenings. For now we are concentrating on places that have public visiting hours. If the calendar is well received, we hope to continue printing it but will need to work out how often and where it will be published and how that will be funded. We appreciate your feedback.

2. **A combined mailing list** - this is somewhat more controversial and will be used in the future only with the permission of the boards of the participating organizations. We see big advantages in being able to reach larger audiences of those people most likely to be interested in our respective programs. We will need jointly to work out rules for the use of such a potentially valuable tool. The list is being used for this mailing, so if you are NOT a member of the Washtenaw County Historical Society and wondered why you are so lucky to receive the *Impressions*, that is why!

3. **A Brochure** - most of us have brochures about our respective groups and facilities. We will put together a combined brochure on all eight organizations with a county map showing the various facilities. Our first effort will be somewhat rough just to show how it could work. If it is well received, we plan to seek funding for a more professional version. Eventually the brochure would be placed in area chambers of commerce, local hotels, libraries, and places like that.

We will continue to meet and report back to all of you. If you have questions or ideas for our group, please tell your board or contact **Pauline Walters** at **734-662-9092** or PopoWalt@aol.com.

BY PAUL COUSINS

Gordon Hall Update

Following Rachel's presentation, Paul Cousins spoke for the **Dexter Area Historical Society (DAHS)** on the current situation at **Gordon Hall**. After giving some background on what the UM wrought in the 1950s (including demolition of wings, gutting of the interior including removal of historic trim and staircases, adding of aluminum siding, removal of shutters, etc.) Cousins described his meetings with UM officials regarding a donation of this property to the DAHS, which worked hard to get this property designated (the property is in both Webster and Scio Townships). **Grace Shackman** and **Jean King** were particularly instrumental in getting historic designation for the property. However, this didn't mean that the DAHS acquired the property.

"UM still owns it, the tenants are gone, and a farmer is still farming 40 acres after 30 years, and the slow process of negotiating with the UM is ongoing. That process has been slower than we'd hoped, but we are making progress. We've had a

personal meeting with the **Interim President Joe White**, and have sent him a letter asking him to act on our meeting. He informs us that he is still in the process of digesting the results of our discussions and is waiting until the issue of the UM Presidency is settled. We have pretty much been assured that they will not put the building up for sale and will allow us to try to acquire the property. Of course, we hope they will donate it to us, much the same way the **Tuomy House** was donated to the **Historical Society of Michigan** when UM no longer could use it. This fact was unknown to Joe White and the legal implications of such a donation thus have a precedent. **Frank Wilhelm**, a former colleague of mine when I taught school here in Dexter, now works in the Alumni Division at UM and his help has been invaluable.

"We are actively raising money and I must tell you that the kindergartners raised \$900 by having a bake sale! Two weeks ago, we were honored by the second

graders in the Village of Dexter, whose ten teachers have devised 50 questions about Gordon Hall, Dexter Village, and the State of Michigan. The kids went around getting pledges from those who answered the questions correctly, and in this way they raised \$4,646! This was really exciting (though it was a little painful for me since four of those teachers were former students of mine and that made me feel old.) They are an inspiration to us all. We hope we'll get the building, restore it and its gardens, interpret its use on the Underground Railroad, and move our museum there from its current location. We'd like it also to be a retreat and preserve its great pastoral setting. Remember that Gordon Hall was once part of a 1700 acre-farm."

If you are interested in sending money for this project, you can mail your checks to the **Save Gordon Hall, c/o Dexter Area Historical Society, 3443 Inverness, Dexter, Michigan 48130.**



WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Post Office Box 3336
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-3336

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Look at our masthead and maybe you'll see the name of an old friend. Come and join that old friend in helping out at the Museum. You can docent (be a guide) on weekends for a few hours, sew, help plan future exhibits, help raise money, or provide anything you think you can help with. We like having our members involved and Pauline is always happy to hear from you!
Call her at 734-662-9092.



enclosed
SPECIAL MESSAGE
JUST FOR YOU
Resolution:
THANKS FOR YOUR HELP

CALENDAR ENCLOSED
Open hours: Summer 2002
Parker Mill County Park
2nd, 3rd, 4th weekends: September
Open: Noon - 3 PM

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