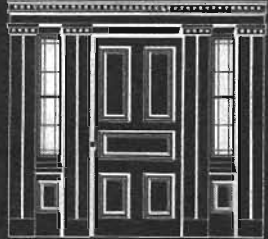


MUSEUM ON
MAIN STREET

A Museum Of County Life

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Lewis Miller Murder
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Area Events

Impressions is published seven times a year, from September to May

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The Washtenaw County Historical Society is a 501(C)(3) organization. Annual Dues, which are from January through December are:
Individual: \$15; Couple/
Family: \$25; Student or Senior (60+) \$10; Senior Couple: \$19; Business/ Association: \$50; Patron: \$100.

IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • FOUNDED 1857

MoMS Hosts Exhibit Open House

WCHS board members, Washtenaw County civic officials and Washtenaw County Historical Consortium members were invited to the Museum on Main Street on September 10, for a special viewing of the current exhibition, *Murder, Mayhem & Mischief in 19th Century Washtenaw County*. On hand to help explain some of the mysteries displayed were new docent John Kilar and many of the volunteers who helped construct the exhibition. James Dickson, a reporter for AnnArbor.com, was among the guests, as were local historian and writer Grace Shackman (see OFF THE SHELF, P. 6).



From left, Docent John Kilar, Bob Creal, Society Vice President Ralph Beebe, and Society Treasurer Patty Creal



City Council Ward 1 Representative Sabra Briere, center, second from left, was among the guests enjoying the exhibition.

“Whad’Ya Know?”

Let Us Hear from You

Been searching through the trunk in the attic or basement? Tell us what you found and how it relates to the history of Washtenaw County! Do you have family stories of life and happenings in Washtenaw County? Send them to us! Got memorabilia pertaining to Washtenaw County? Tell us about them! Heard family or neighborhood legends or folklore about Washtenaw County? Let us know!

Send us notes, scribbles, pictures or a story, and we will edit here at *Impressions* and ready your contribution for publication. Send your contributions to mjnesbit@umich.edu.

Applause!! Applause!!

Much applause goes to volunteers Bob Yuhaz, Lenea Howe and Stephanie Blank for sharing their time and talents with the exhibition committee, thence the Society as a whole. Once again Bob pulled us out of what could have been a deep hole, with his carpentry work, and Lenea and Stephanie came through with flying colors for the jail cutout and window scrim, respectively. All three helped illustrate the stories of crime in 19th century Washtenaw County.

**WASHTENAW
COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
LEADERSHIP**
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LESLIE LOOMANS**President's Letter**

Preservation of area history, as noted in last month's letter, is a prominent theme of our Mission Statement. Our collections, artifacts of the past, are mostly hidden away in storage (purposefully for preservation) except when we are able to present them in exhibits. One of our goals under discussion is to place online, hopefully in the not too distant future, at least the most important artifacts, where everyone can view them anytime.

However, our primary artifact, the Museum on Main Street, is of course available for everyone to view and experience nearly continuously. As you will recall, our Museum structure is the 1835/1839 Kellogg-Warden home, which was moved to its present site in 1990 and opened as a museum in May, 1999, after years of restoration.

Preserving and operating our primary artifact is a continuous, challenging and expensive project. To preserve it and lower our energy expenses, we need to install compatible, custom-made storm windows. If fundraising goals can be met quickly, we expect to complete the installation yet this fall before cold temperatures return. Look for our fundraising mailing with the enclosed thermometer—we would greatly appreciate your contribution.

Together we will continue to preserve Washtenaw County history.

FRONT YARD NEWS**In the Garden**

Oranges don't grow in Michigan, but Vitamin C is still readily available just outside the Museum on Main. Perhaps during the summer you noted the roses growing against the south side of the house. Well, check that bush again. It is covered with orange berries on their way to becoming a little larger and darker in color. And guess what! Those berries, known as hips, are full of Vitamin C.

Rose hips have been used for centuries as a source of Vitamin C and have been available in cultivated gardens and along roadsides, fences, open woods and meadows. There are about 35 varieties of "wild" roses that produce the valuable hips.

Various studies have touted the amount of Vitamin C found in the hips, measuring their juice from six to 24 times richer than orange juice. During World War II, England harvested more than five million pounds of hips from roadsides and used them to replace scarce citrus fruits.

Lois Hole writes in "Herbs and Edible Flowers" that her mother and aunt insisted that eating rosehips kept them healthy. "We used to pick hips wild or right from Mom's garden, eating them like apples, savoring the thin layer of flesh." Hole suggests picking the hips when they are red and plump, but not soft and overripe. An ancient herbalist once wrote that the use of roses in cookery [including the hips] "Maketh a man merrie and joyful, putteth away all melancholie and madness."

Worth a try?



A Cold Case Relived at WCHS Lecture

Those who gathered on Sunday, September 20, to hear James Mann talk about "The Mysterious Death of Dan Corey" experienced what it might have been like to serve on the coroner's jury at the inquest more than 100 years ago. Mann, a well known Ypsilanti historian and area journalist, provided the facts of the case and then gave audience members a chance to ask questions and reach their own conclusions.

The Background

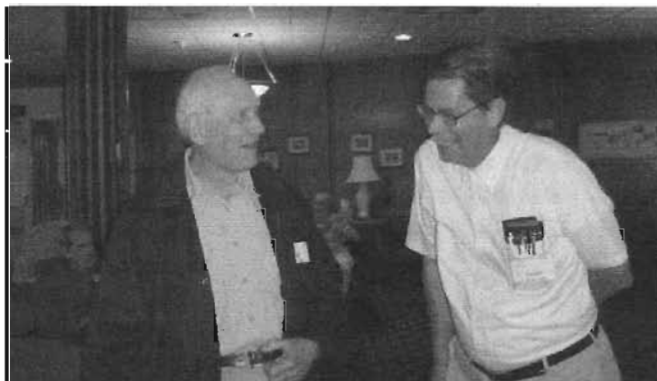
On December 31, 1907, a Peninsula Paper Mill employee found a frozen body imbedded in ice in a mill spillway grate. The body was identified as Dan Corey, a ditch digger from Chelsea who had been working in Ypsilanti. Oscar Lawrence, known in the community as an "unsavory character," was the last to see Corey alive. After examining the body, the coroner said that since there was no water in Cory's lungs, he must have already been dead when he hit the water. No money was found on Corey's body. The sheriff called the death a suicide and the death certificate gave "stopped breathing" as the cause of death. An inquest was held to determine if he had died naturally, as the result of suicide, because of an accident, or because he was murdered.

Facts Uncovered in the Investigation

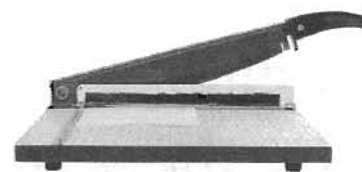
Mann said that Corey was known to have had \$175 hidden in the shirt pocket under his vest - money he had saved to buy a team of horses. His body was wrapped in carpeting that the mill used to clean equipment and which was stored in a room with an outside door. A child's dress and coat and a black hat with initials JBC were found at the scene. Corey had an "abrasion" on his head and one witness said he had heard a dragging sound at the mill.

Now it was the audience's turn. They asked questions to clarify the facts and provide missing details. Then, in their role as the coroner's jury, nearly unanimously declared that Dan Corey had been murdered. The actual verdict at the time was "murder by persons unknown."

Mann then provided the following epilogue. In August of 1911, a Mr. Miller of Ypsilanti was fleeing town due to a threat on his life by Oscar Lawrence who was in jail for larceny. "It was Miller who had got him sent to jail and it was Miller who was having an affair with Lawrence's wife," explained Mann. Miller told his own wife to tell the police, after he was long gone, that Lawrence and his brother-in-law, Grant Kline, had killed Dan Corey for the \$175. No charges were ever brought against Lawrence and Kline and Lawrence died before 1918.



Former board member Dean Smith, left, enjoys a laugh with speaker James Mann.



Large Paper Cutter Needed

The Exhibition Committee needs a LARGE paper cutter (new or used) — one at least 36 inches square - for creating signs for displays and exhibitions. Please call 734-662-9092 if you have one to loan or donate.

Courthouse Comments in Perspective

A new Washtenaw County courthouse is under construction in Ann Arbor. As usual pros and cons as to whether such an effort was needed were offered at public and private meetings. There was nothing, however, quite as volatile as this entry in the August 1879 *Manchester Enterprise*.

"Ann Arbor people won't allow an Ypsilanti man to say a word against the courthouse, but they curse it themselves, up-hill and down-dale. They say the material is worthless and the workmanship worse. The doorsills are already rotten. The glass is so thin that a jar breaks it. The pitch of the lumber runs through the paint. The clock looks like a young bull's eye lantern, etc., etc. But remember, Ann Arbor is the only place that has a right to find fault."

Crime by the Numbers

According to the Chapman's 1881 *History of Washtenaw County*, 553 crimes could be found in 54 years of county court records. That indicates an average of 10 prosecuted crimes per year. Forty percent of those violations were one type of crime. Six categories of criminal behavior comprised 85 percent of all cases judged by the county court. Murder, such as the one committed by George Burkhart, despite their notoriety, constituted a mere 3 percent of the total cases.

To learn which crimes were the most prevalent in 19th century Washtenaw County, stop by the exhibition at the Museum on Main Street or check the next issue of *Impressions* for the answer.

The Museum is open Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 pm. Groups are welcome, as are individuals, by appointment. Arrangements can be made by calling 734-662-9092. Admission and parking are free. Donations are appreciated.

FROM THE CURRENT EXHIBIT

It was a Dark and Stormy Night

What happened 134 years ago could be a newspaper or television headline of today.

Just prior to midnight, on August 13, 1875 during a severe thunderstorm in Dexter, Michigan, 30-year-old Lewis Miller, a local farmer with 245 acres of land, was murdered. Miller, who was married and had two sons, was killed with his own shotgun at point blank range. The bullet entered Miller's left shoulder piercing his lungs.

The murderer apparently leaned over Miller's wife and small son while the three lay asleep in their bed. Mrs. Miller awoke with a start. Finding her husband covered in blood and on fire, she at first thought he had been struck by lightning. But a culprit was soon arrested, confessed and was sentenced to life in prison. Eighteen years later he was pardoned.

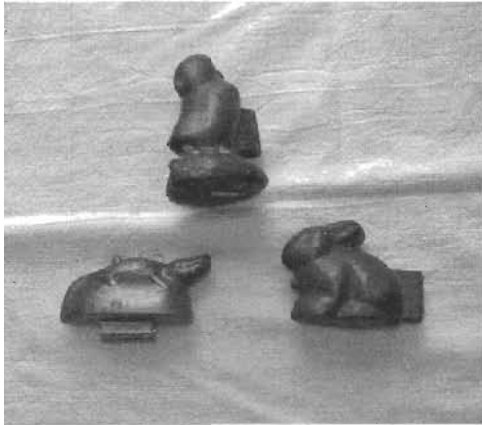
Perhaps you are thinking that he should have been hanged for such a callous crime, but that is because you have not yet been told the rest of the story. Several important facts may help to explain his escape from the hangman's noose, and his ultimate pardon.

The perpetrator was not a seasoned killer but a teen-aged boy, George Luman Burkhart, who was Lewis Miller's nephew. That alone seems to make the deed seem even more reprehensible, but there is more. George's parents were separated. His father, according to the *Dexter Leader*, was "vicious and immoral" and left Dexter for Ann Arbor where he took up residence with a "mulatto" woman. George's mother then deserted George and his brother.

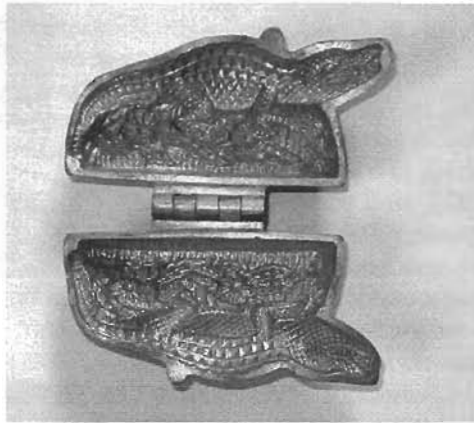
Miller eventually took his "orphaned" nephew into his home. According to the newspaper, "Miller had recently chastised him [George] for misconduct." That was the published motive for the crime. John Morrison, however, in his unpublished papers at the Bentley Historical Library, describes this event differently. He claims that Miller treated the boy like a slave. It was because of this mistreatment that Burkhart killed his uncle.



Emma Groh, one of the first visitors to the Murder and Mayhem Exhibition, was put "behind bars," but only to take a picture.



LEFT: Of the three molds donated, the rabbit is unmarked, the crocodile is marked with the number 394, and the bird is marked 'E & Co. NY' and the catalogue number is 651.



RIGHT: The open rabbit mold shows the fine carving inside.

WAY BACK WHEN

From the Ziegler Files

By Susan Wineberg

In the last installment of the continuing search for a WCHS home, we referred to the letter President Orlan W. Boston wrote to Roscoe Bonisteel regarding the placing of WCHS artifacts in the barn of the Tuomy House in 1967. The details of this letter are fascinating and we reproduce the letter here:

April 14, 1967,

Dear Mr. Bonisteel,

As requested by the County Board of Supervisors, we moved the material of the Washtenaw Historical Society stored at the County Infirmary to the garage on the Tuomy lot Thursday April 13. I locked the center and northern doors from the inside, and the southern door by lock and key. This is with "SW" scratched on it and the one for the center door marked "C" are hung on a nail, head high, just inside the door to the left of the garage near the house.

I am grateful to you for letting the Society store this material in the garage. I was not able to get any other space except costly storage by Hurds.

I am calling a meeting of the Board of Directors of the society for Monday evening at seven o'clock to report this move and discuss the future of a possible museum. We are talking of making a drive to raise funds for a museum. I am often asked about the future use of the Tuomy home and I can answer only that I do not know. Any information you may give me in this connection will be appreciated.

Again many thanks for your favor and with hopes of your continued interest in the work of the Washtenaw Historical Society I am, sincerely, Orlan W. Boston (1845 Arbordale, Ann Arbor)

FROM OUR COLLECTIONS New Additions to Society Collections

Thanks to the generosity of Hazel Proctor, former Society president, the WCHS now has three pewter ice cream molds. Proctor made the presentation at the May Annual Meeting.

Pewter has been associated with ice cream molds for more than 200 years. A recipe by Hannah Glasse in 1747 used two pewter bowls to mold ice cream with berries. Early large 'banquet' molds were used commercially during the Victorian era to produce elaborate frozen desserts, each serving as many as ten people. Smaller molds for individual servings made at home were also popular at that time.

Schall & Company of New York, founded in 1854 and changed to Krauss Company in 1860, was the first to make molds in the United States. Their molds, known for integrated rather than soldered hinges, are marked 'S & Co.' In 1918 another New York company, Eppelsheimer & Company, hired Joseph Micelli, Sr., an expert metal fabricator known for his molds. Micelli's molds are marked with 'E & Co NY' and a catalogue number.

Upcoming Events

Salem Area Historical Society

WHAT: The History of the Grand Hotel with speaker Bob Tagatz, resident historian of the Grand Hotel for the past 13 years.

WHEN: Wednesday, Nov. 4, 7 PM

WHERE: Salem Township Hall, 9600 Six Mile Road, Salem, MI

DETAILS: In addition to the history of the hotel, Mr. Tagatz will discuss the people and the personalities that have made The Grand Hotel what it is today. This presentation will be followed by a short Q&A session.

INFORMATION: sahistory.org, 248-486-0669

Kemph House Museum

WHAT: Noon Lecture Series

WHEN: Wednesdays, Noon to 1 PM

Oct. 21: The First German Settlers, presented by Barbara Foster

Oct. 28: A Great Day in Harlem, presented by Stu Johnson

Nov. 4: A Retrospective on Classic U of M Songs, presented by Michael Montgomery

Nov. 11: Lustron Homes, presented by Kjirsten Blander

Continued next page.

OFF THE SHELF All About Webster Township

Want to buy some cheap land in Washtenaw County? You're just a little late – about 173 years late. In 1826, land was selling in Webster Township at \$1.25 an acre and with the required minimum of 80 acres, it was possible to buy a farm for as little as \$100.

In her book "Webster: A Time, A Place, A People," Grace Shackman tells of numerous families who settled in Webster Township. Among those was the Dexter family. One member of that family was Samuel, who came to the area from New York after the death of his wife.

"I came to Michigan to get rid of the blue devils, or to speak more politely, of the ennui which like a demon pursues those who have nothing to do," he wrote to a cousin. Sam set down roots and built a mill. Although it happened to be over the county line in Scio Township, his cabin home was in Webster – the first log cabin to be built in Webster Township.

The Dexter family eventually took up residence at Gordon Hall on Island Lake Road. The house was named after Dexter's mother, whose maiden name was Gordon. Shackman reminds us that the new settlers of Webster Township were often idealists who wanted to create a better society in their new homeland than they had on the East Coast. The first arrivals helped others build houses and barns and organize churches and schools. Though they faced hardships, these hearty folk pushed on to establish successful crops, roads and fellowship with newcomers, often sharing their homes until new houses could be built.

And why was this newly established township in the Michigan Territory named Webster? Well, let's just say that Daniel Webster may have been an influence. But one needs to delve deeper into Shackman's book to find that answer, as well as answers to other questions about the history of Webster Township, including Podunk.

Shackman's hardcover book is available in the Museum's gift shop for \$32.50. But don't forget that 20 percent discount for members!

Another book available in the gift shop about Webster Township is "The Third Marked Tree" by James Baldwin Parker and Osbert Oliver Williams. Subtitled "Paths Through the Wilderness – John Williams of Webster Township and His Descendants," this hardcover offering includes the early history of the John Williams family, the Webster Church and its cemetery, interviews with descendants of the Williams family and appendices that include the inventory of Osbert Williams' Estate and the 1878 diary of Jeremiah D. Williams. With 320 pages, 75 photographs and illustrations and numerous appendices, this publication is available for \$20.

Either or both of these books would make a great gift.



WCHS News

By Pauline Walters

FUNDRAISING

As mentioned in the President's Letter, our fundraising goal this year is to install custom-made storm windows in our 1830's building. During past winters, we have placed plastic film over most of the windows to guard against the cold Michigan winter. Also, several years ago as the building was being refurbished, we insulated the entire 1839 attic and sidewalls of the 1835 portion. While these measures have made a difference, it is time to take the next step. We hope you will use the thermometer included in your fundraising mailing to help make the Museum on Main Street even more energy efficient.

MEMBERSHIP

Our current membership stands at 450 with an additional 50 who choose to be donors only. If you have not renewed for 2009, please consider doing so now. The annual renewal date for members is January, but by joining now you can lock in the current membership rate for 2010. Check the mailing label for your last year of paid membership or donation. And while you're at it, tell your friends about the great WCHS membership deal. If they join now for 2010, their membership becomes effective immediately.

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL CONSORTIUM

Some 30 units of historical and cultural interest in Washtenaw County have joined together for the mutual benefit of the group. Their current project is a revision of the 2006 brochure, which will be in a map-like, foldout format. There will be a photo, name of the unit, sponsor of the unit, address, phone, e-mail and Web information. Those interested in more information can contact that unit.

The initial printing will be 10,000 and is supported by the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti Convention & Visitors Bureaus, the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation and, of course, each of the member units. WCHS members/donors can expect a copy with a future mailing of *Impressions*.

MoMS MUSEUM SHOP

Members can receive a 20 percent discount on all items in the gift shop for the remainder of 2009. In addition, our popular coverlet featuring historic buildings of Washtenaw County is on sale for only \$40 - a great buy! Don't pass up this opportunity to shop for yourself or friends.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

The MoMS Museum Shop is in need of a volunteer manager, for about an hour per week, to review the stock, decide on purchases, enter sales into the computerized inventory and bank the sales money.

Questions about membership, fundraising, the consortium or the museum shop?

Call 734-662-9092

WHERE: 312 S. Division St., Ann Arbor, MI
ADMISSION: Members, \$1; Non-Members, \$2

DETAILS: Parking available in the large public lot just south of the house

INFORMATION:
 kempfhousmuseum.org,
 734-994-4898

WHAT: Kempf House Open House Tours

WHEN: Sundays, 1 to 4 PM

Oct. 18, 25

Nov 1, 8, 15, 22

DETAILS: Tour the 1853 Greek Revival home of the musical German-American Kempf family and learn about the early history of Ann Arbor.

Admission free, donations accepted.

INFORMATION:
 kempfhousmuseum.org,
 734-994-4898

Saline Area Historical Society

WHAT: November Educational Meeting
 Michigan Mania: Experiences of Early Female Settlers in the Michigan Territory, presented by WCHS Board Member Susan Nenadic


WHEN: Wednesday, Nov. 18, 7 PM

WHERE: Saline District Library, 555 N. Maple Rd., Saline, MI

DETAILS: Education programs are free and open to the public

INFORMATION: 734-944-0442

**MUSEUM ON
MAIN STREET**



A Museum Of County Life

**WASHTENAW COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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Be Sure to Visit Our
MUSEUM SHOP
Many Items of Local Interest

Sunday, October **18** @ 2 PM

**World War II:
Front Line Nurse**

**Speaker:
Mildred MacGregor**

**Bentley Historical Library
1150 Beal Ave.
Ann Arbor**

Members & Guests Welcome

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY *IMPRESSIONS*

OCTOBER 2009

Make Note Fall Dates to Remember

Sunday • November 15

Ann Arbor Railroad • Dan McClary

Glacier Hills Retirement Community, Hanson Room
1200 Earhart Road, Ann Arbor, MI

Looking Ahead:

Sunday • February 21, 2010

**Ann Arbor Restorations • Wystan Stevens
and Kingsbury Marzolf**

Ann Arbor District Library, Ann Arbor, MI

Save the Date!

Mission Statement

*The mission of the Washtenaw
County Historical Society
is to educate
and inspire our community
to engage in the preservation
and presentation of area history.*