

July-September 2023

75 Years Ago June 1948

## Interest Shown in Historical Society

Nineteen Plymouth residents met with Dr. Lewis Beeson, secretary of the State Historical society, at the library last Tuesday, June 8, indicating interest in the formation of a similar organization in the city.

During the afternoon session, Dr. Beeson explained some of the benefits of having a historic organization within the city, telling that it is important to preserve and keep interest in past events alive. He pointed out that a museum would attract tourists to a city, and would also preserve records which would be useful to school children.

Mrs. Arthur Mills was named as acting secretary for the meeting, and she reports that it is expected that membership will be open to all residents of Plymouth and the township, and it is their hope when the by-laws are drawn up, she states, that non-resident membership will be available.

Those attending the meeting included: Mrs. Mary Hillmer, Mrs. Phila Underwood, Mrs. Maxwell Moon, Miss Eleanor Klix, Mrs. Whipple, Mrs. Lucy Ware, Mrs. Avis Waldecker, Warren Hull, Miss Pauline Peck, Mrs. Norma Cassady, Mrs. Maude Bennett, Mrs. Harriet Wilcox, Mrs. George Burr, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Mills, Mrs. Wier, Mrs. Ada Murray and Mrs. Milton Laible.

**Support the Museum**

Plymouth Historical Museum  
155 S. Main Street, Plymouth, MI 48170  
734.455.8940  
[secretary@plymouthhistory.org](mailto:secretary@plymouthhistory.org)

**OUR TIME, OUR HISTORY.**  
PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN



75 Years Ago October 1948

## Historic Society Meets Tuesday

Initial organization of Plymouth's Historical Society will get underway at the meeting planned for next Tuesday, October 12, at 7:45 p. m.

Mrs. Phila Underwood, chairman of the meeting, announces that it will be held at the home of Mrs. Austin Whipple. She extends an invitation to all persons in the city, who are interested in the history of Plymouth, to attend.

The first meeting of persons interested in the formation of such a group was held last June in the library.

75 years ... and the venture keeps growing and getting better!

**W**e are extremely proud of the work we do at the Museum and that goal is to simply bring Plymouth history to life. Over the past many years, thousands of visitors have graced our Museum halls, learning and being fascinated by Plymouth history. We at the Museum are especially thrilled experiencing the excited faces of school children as they view the realistic reenactment of a train rolling into the Plymouth station, or visiting an actual caboose reminiscent of 40 years ago, or witnessing and reliving Main Street Plymouth from the nineteenth century!

But the challenge is to not remain static because we want to continue to bring our Museum guests the best up-to-date and state-of-the-art displays, which is why we are currently pursuing a complete makeover of the current Victorian corner display in our Museum.

Just imagine walking through a home of the early 20th century and witnessing the way people of that era lived by viewing their everyday life in the parlor or kitchen or dining room of their home back in 1915. You might even catch a Model T noisily buzzing by the home from the front window.

But we are looking for your generosity in order to make this dream display a reality. We are asking you to help this worthy cause with making a contribution. Donations of \$100 or more will put your name or business on a special donation plaque that will be proudly displayed by the new exhibit.

Let's keep the tradition going by helping the Museum continue to be the "best small town Museum in America." We can do this with your help. Can we count on you?

**Plymouth Historical Museum**  
 155 South Main Street  
 Plymouth, Michigan 48170  
<http://www.plymouthhistory.org>  
<http://www.facebook.com/plymouthhistory>  
 734-455-8940 Fax: 734-455-7797

**Hours**

Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday  
 1-4 PM all days  
 Open year round (except some holidays)

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**Museum Memo Editor**

Gerry Sabatini [sabatini1983@att.net](mailto:sabatini1983@att.net)  
 Proofreader—Elizabeth Kerstens

The Museum Memo is printed four times a year.

**Monthly Drawing**

Pam Lasazen, Judy Sameck, and Cathy Webster are the respective winners of the July, August, and September drawings for a \$25 gift certificate.

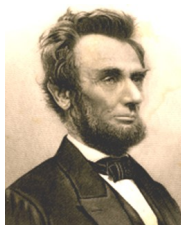


**75 Years Ago**  
**November 1948**  
*Plymouth Mail*

**Historical Society  
 Chooses Officers**



THANK YOU  
 FOR SUPPORTING  
 THE PLYMOUTH  
 HISTORICAL  
 MUSEUM



WE APPRECIATE  
 YOUR SUPPORT!

Balloting by members of the Plymouth Historical Society on November 16 gave the title of president to Mrs. Phila Underwood.

The official roster is further composed of: Mrs. Roderick Cassady, first vice-president; Robert Jolliffe, second vice-president; Mrs. Arthur Mills, recording secretary; Warren Hull, corresponding secretary; Charles Root, Sr., treasurer; Mrs. Bessie Dunning, curator, with first assistant, Ada Murray.

Committee appointments made by Mrs. Underwood, were: membership committee, Mrs. P. L.

Bennett, Arthur Mills, Mrs. Mary Hillmer, Mrs. Burton; program committee, Pauline Peck, Mrs. Maxwell Moon, Mrs. R. E. Cooper, Mrs. Robert Jolliffe, Mrs. Carl Pursell.

The finance committee consists of: Mrs. Roderick Cassady, Mrs. P. L. Ware, Mrs. K. H. Starkweather, Roy Pursell; education committee; Mrs. Austin Whiple, Robert Jolliffe, Avis Waldecker, Anna Root, Mrs. Ada Murray.

On the museum and research committee are: Mrs. G. H. Wilcox, Clarence Stevens, Mrs. Austin Whiple, Mrs. Bessie Dunning, Warren Hull, Nancy Worth, Ernest Henry.

Discussion at the recent meeting dealt with the possibility of using the second floor of the library for a city museum and meeting place for the society.

**New Members—Welcome!**

Laila Carr, Plymouth  
 Catherine Coburn, Plymouth  
 Amanda Dort, Plymouth  
 Steven Glavas, Commerce Township  
 Jack Nachman, Plymouth  
 Rose O'Connor, Plymouth  
 Stella Contracting, Plymouth  
 Gail Turner, Plymouth

# Bits 'n Pieces

By Elizabeth Kelley Kerstens, executive director

Plans are progressing on the upgrade to the Museum's Victorian rooms. Thank you to everyone who has responded to our appeal for donations! Your generosity is much appreciated. If we are able to secure enough funding, construction will begin in July 2024. Donations are still being accepted at the Museum or here: <https://www.givesendgo.com/GAWZ6>

As we approach the holiday season, please keep an eye out for an invitation to the November 21 Members-only Wine and Appetizer Reception highlighting our next special exhibit, "A Dickens of a Christmas." These members-only events are very popular and fill up,

so if you want to attend, please be sure to reserve either one or two tickets as soon as you get the invitation.

The exhibit after Christmas will be dedicated to 100 years of the Rotary Club of Plymouth. That exhibit will open January 31, 2024, with the members-only event being held on January 30. The exhibit will run through June

30. Coinciding with this exhibit, a new book will be available in March titled *Plymouth Rotary Club Chicken Barbeque*, by Ellen Elliott and myself. It will be for sale in the Museum store at that point. It's another Arcadia Publishing book, with lots of pictures showing the progression of the chicken BBQ 1956–2023. We're very proud of the work of the Plymouth Rotary Club!

## Ticket Sale Dates for Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Members	Public
Oct. 28	Plymouth Ghosts Cemetery Walk	Now	Now
Nov. 11	Superhero Unleashed! Junior Comic Creators Workshop	Now	Now
Dec. 2	Winter Wonderland Murder Mystery	Oct. 2	Oct. 16
Dec. 16	Simply Dickens	Oct. 9	Oct. 23

PLYMOUTH HISTORICAL MUSEUM PRESENTS

# SUPERHERO UNLEASHED

## JUNIOR COMIC CREATORS WORKSHOP

SPONSORED BY  

Encourage Your Child's Creative Potential: Join our Junior Comic Creators Workshop this Veteran's Day! Your child will not only learn the art of comic book creation but also receive comic creating tools, capture memories with their favorite superheroes in a picture, and enjoy light refreshments as they embark on a creative adventure.



155 S. MAIN STREET,  
PLYMOUTH, MI, 48170



NOVEMBER 11, 2023  
(VETERANS DAY)



1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

AGES 8+ - \$15 PER PERSON

- » COMIC BOOK CREATING WORKSHOP  
LIMITED SEATS AVAILABLE!
- » PHOTOS WITH SUPERHEROES
- » OPEN DRAWING TABLES AND TOOLS!



2:30 PM - 4:00 PM

ALL AGES - \$5 PER PERSON

- » PHOTOS WITH SUPERHEROES
- » OPEN DRAWING TABLES AND TOOLS!

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO REGISTER! →

OR VISIT [HTTPS://WWW.EVENTBRITE.COM/E/723307511237?AFF=ODDTDTCREATOR](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/723307511237?AFF=ODDTDTCREATOR)



eventbrite

## Donations Received June – August Thank You!

Thank you for the following generous donations that were received between June and August 2023:

### **The Dunning (\$2,500 +)**

Jim Burroughs  
Plymouth Lions Club

### **The Starkweather (\$500–\$999)**

Jack Grant  
William Lawton

### **The Kellogg (\$100–\$249)**

Cheryl Allerding  
Joan Anderson  
Cynthia Hartsig  
Geraldine Kilsdonk  
John Krieman  
Jack Nachman  
Roy Pilkington  
Spotlight Tours

### **Under \$100**

Janis Campbell  
Marie-Louise Capote  
Clark Chapin  
William Cole  
Judy Costa  
Debra Evans  
B.J. Haire  
James Haling  
Jane Hasse  
James Komula  
Terry Smith  
Alicia VanPelt  
Kenneth Watson Jr.  
Takeda Yoshido

### **Sponsorships**

#### **Plymouth Ghosts (\$500)**

Stella Contracting

#### **Victorian Rooms Upgrade**

#### **The Lincoln**

#### **(\$1,000-\$2,499)**

Kiwanis Club of Colonial  
Plymouth

### **The Starkweather (\$500–\$999)**

Joan Anderson  
Carol Bimberg  
Broasted Brothers Chicken  
James Burroughs  
Patricia Carroll  
Louis Christenson  
Colonial Heating & Cooling  
Ruth Dostie  
Ellen Elliott  
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William Gayde  
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Lori Hemingway  
Hidden Cove Estates  
Elizabeth Kerstens  
Geraldine Kilsdonk  
Sue Marie Klimek  
Dan LeBlond  
John Marshall  
Stephen Marulis  
Carol Mills  
William Moore  
Gregg Packard  
Dan Packer  
Geraldine Pritchard  
Dick Raison  
Fred Robinson  
Allen Salyer  
Win & Susan Schrader  
Simply Fresh Mediterranean Grill  
Gerald Sweet  
Travel Leaders  
Mike Woloszyk  
WSDP

### **Under \$100**

Ann O'Shaughnessy  
Anne Marie Reilly  
Barbara Rogers  
Emily Rosenquist  
Veralou Scott  
Elsie May Trink



*Woo Woooo! All Aboard! the CSX Railroad Caboose, permanently on display at the Plymouth Historical Museum.*



The **Plymouth Historical Society** was organized in 1948 with 52 original members. By 1987, the membership had increased to 400 and in 2005 the membership was about 700. The Plymouth Historical Society Museum opened its doors to the public on February 14, 1976, and an addition was completed in 2001. Since 1948, the Plymouth Historical Society (also known as the Friends of the Plymouth Historical Museum), has operated through the generosity of donors who value the rich fabric of Plymouth's important history. The Plymouth Historical Museum is both proud and honored to be a valuable treasure in the community.

### **Visit the Museum Store!**

The store features an assortment of gifts and books pertaining to Plymouth's history. Museum admission is not required to visit the store. Museum Hours: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, & Sunday, 1-4 pm. 155 S. Main Street, Plymouth, 734-455-8940.

# Park Passion

Long-ago resident ensured land stays as green space for years to come

By Elizabeth Kelley Kerstens  
and Ellen Elliott

*A Slice of History, courtesy of  
Plymouth Today magazine, issue  
Third Quarter 2023*

**T**HE city of Plymouth is home to 16 parks, with the most familiar being Kellogg Park. These spaces provide a unique place for the community to gather for socialization and exercise. Nine of the 16 parks are playgrounds, and many are shaded and have pavilions.

Caster Park is at the junction of Holbrook and Caster streets. This small parcel of land has an interesting story.

In 1860, Mary Markham owned property on N. Holbrook Street north of Main Street, designated as lots 3, 4, and 5 of Block 8 in Section 26. Her daughter, Louise, purchased lots 3 and 4 from her mother in 1897.

Louise loved Plymouth and lived here for most of her life. She moved to a retirement home in Detroit when she was in her late 80s, but her heart was still devoted to her hometown.

As Louise neared the end of her life, she was concerned about what would become of the property on N. Holbrook Street after she died – it was sought after by developers as it contained an abundance of gravel. It was said that she had been offered \$2,000 by interested buyers but was opposed to seeing it turn into a gravel pit, so she did not sell the property.

Louise needed to find a way to protect it from any undesirable future use. She came up with a perfect plan. On July 11, 1940, she signed a quitclaim deed that bequeathed the property to the city. The following stipulations were noted:

1. That the property shall never be used as a gravel pit;
2. The property shall be used by the City of Plymouth for no other purpose than as a municipal park.



Photo courtesy of Pete Mundt.

If either of these conditions was violated, the property would revert to her estate.

The Plymouth City Commission, led by Mayor Ruth Huston-Whipple, unanimously passed a resolution on July 15, 1940, accepting the donation of the land and officially naming it "Louise Markham Park." Louise was extremely pleased to have this transaction complete, stating "I have always had a warm spot in my heart for the city of Plymouth, and it makes me happy to be able to give this property to the citizens of the city for park purposes."

The transfer of ownership took place just in the nick of time. Louise died on August 12, 1940, age 99, a month after she donated the land to the city. Her forethought allowed the parcel to be protected from the threat of development for at least a few decades.

In 1960, the City attempted to revert ownership of the park to heirs but was unsuccessful. A sparse amount of playground equipment

was eventually added to the space and enjoyed by neighborhood children. By that time, the park was referred to as Holbrook-Caster Park and then Caster Park, because of its proximity to the streets near which it was located.

As time passed, the park became tired but would ultimately see a renewal when the Starkweather Lofts apartment buildings were completed in 2016, just east of N. Holbrook Street. As part of the public benefit detailed in the agreement for the project, the park was eventually revitalized with a pathway and gazebo.

To learn more about Plymouth history, please visit the Plymouth Historical Museum's special exhibit "Hidden Plymouth," which opens July 19. The Museum is located at 155 S. Main Street in Plymouth and is open Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday 1-4 p.m. Admission is \$7 for adults and \$3 for children 6-17.



*Donor happy collection is on display in Plymouth*



**Lincoln logs**

*Exhibit is latest success for museum*

As far as Dr Weldon Petz is concerned, the collection of Abraham Lincoln memorabilia he developed over 50 years is now in the right place the Plymouth Historical Museum

"I'm very pleased where the collection is located," said Petz "And, it's rewarding they've completed a permanent place for it

In Plymouth, there's a bit of legacy instead of just being part of another collection "

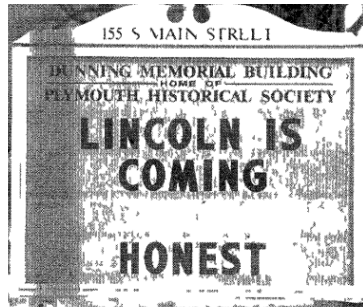
Petz sold his collection to the museum nearly five years ago for \$75,000 However, he is quick to point out that money wasn't the main reason Plymouth is now home to one of the largest Lincoln collections in the country

"The collection could have gone to many places But, there isn't a

museum the size of Plymouth's, or a town the size of Plymouth, that has a collection this size," said Petz "In a larger place the collection could have become lost In Plymouth, it will be more accessible to people, and will become a prime source for study by children

"A place where they can see original documents and read lots of Lincoln human interest stories "

**21 Years Ago**  
**February 2002**  
*Plymouth Mail & Observer*



*The Dr. Weldon Petz Abraham Lincoln Exhibit at the Plymouth Historical Museum opened in 2002, and contains more than 1,200 books, photos, graphs, clip files, and historic Lincoln artifacts.*

It's been a decade in the planning stages And, finally, it all comes to fruition Monday evening as the Plymouth Historical Museum holds its grand opening of the Abraham Lincoln exhibit in the newly constructed \$13 million expansion

While visitors will be able to see 900 pieces of Lincoln exhibit material it will be a big day for the Plymouth Historical Society and its president Dan LeBlond

"When I was elected president in June 1992, we had the opportunity to purchase the Lincoln exhibit from Dr (Weldon) Petz," said LeBlond "Since then, life hasn't been the same "

LeBlond said the Historical Society came up with a five year plan to purchase the Lincoln memorabilia

"We realized we needed money," he said "But, we also knew we needed a place to put it "

'Our benefactor, Margaret Dunning, came forward and said if we took care of the funds for the purchase and displaying of the Lincoln exhibit, she would take care of the brick and mortar ' said LeBlond

Ground was broken in 1992, with the shell completed the next year It took volunteers three years to complete the inside for occupancy

The Petz collection was purchased in 1998



**The Plymouth Historical Museum Proudly Presents:**

The popular annual  
**PLYMOUTH GHOSTS**  
**CEMETERY WALK**  
at Riverside Cemetery

SPONSORED by  
Schrader-Howell  
Funeral Home

Saturday, Oct 28, 2023

Tours Begin at 4 PM

Last Tour at 8 PM



Tickets are \$20 per person. <https://plymouthhistory.org/events/upcoming-events/>. For groups of 8 or more, tickets are \$15 per person. To reserve, please phone the Museum at 734-455-8940 x0.



Walks can last up to 90 minutes. Wear walking shoes. This event is rain or shine. Bring a flashlight and umbrella. Park within the cemetery on the cemetery streets that are not closed to traffic or in the Massey Field Parking Lot.

50 Years Ago  
May 1973  
*Plymouth Mail  
& Observer*

## *Antique Car Is Museum Gem*

The surprising unveiling Sunday afternoon of one of the most coveted antique cars in America furnished the highlight of the dedication of the Dunning Memorial Building that will house the Plymouth Historical Society museum.

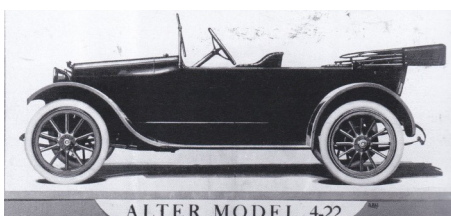
It was an Alter car, last of fleet that was manufactured in Plymouth shortly after the turn of the century and considered a "prize" as the first exhibit in the new building.

Before the unveiling, Margaret Dunning, with a choked voice, dedicated the building to the memory of her parents, Charles and Bessie Dunning, and then presented the key to George Burr, president of the Historical Society.

Rated one of the finest museums for its size in the country by Solon Weekes, curator of the Detroit Historical Museum, the building is unique in that its main floor

is a replica of a small town Main Street with the dainty little shops and the other attractions of a by-gone day.

One of these shops houses the exhibit of the Daisy Air Rifle Co., one of the pioneer industries in Plymouth. It contains all shapes and sizes of the rifles that once carried the name of Plymouth around the world.



ALTER MODEL 422

*Produced in Plymouth, Michigan*

## Volunteer Spotlight

Thank You Volunteers!  
Volunteers Make a Difference!

### Cindi Willard

Please help me welcome one of our newer volunteers, Cindi Willard, who started as a guide back in February.

If she looks familiar to some of you, she may have been your flight attendant on Delta Airlines out of Metro Detroit. She retired from her flight attendant job of 14 years just a couple years back and has been keeping busy ever since.

Cindi lives in Plymouth Township, but she grew up in Livonia and graduated from Stevenson High School. Prior to working for Northwest and Delta Airlines, she worked for the Observer-Eccentric Newspaper as a key liner.

Besides being one of our more reliable and steady guides, Cindi keeps active gardening and traveling. Her next trip is planned for Costa Rica with four of her friends. Besides touring the world as a flight attendant, Cindi also traveled since retirement to Ireland, Scotland, and England. Her favorite pastime, however, is spending time with her six grandchildren, ages 4–21.

Cindi has always been impressed with the Plymouth Historical Museum, stating "what a great Museum for a small city." She was a major component of the exhibits crew that set up the Museum's current exhibit, "Hidden Plymouth." Her past jobs have taught her to be a people person, and that quality shines through here at the Museum.

The Museum hopes to see that smiling personality for many years to come.

—Written by Mike Woloszyk, Museum marketing director



*Alter Car Factory on Farmer Street*

From 1914 to 1916, the Alter Motor Car Company in Plymouth produced the Alter Car from a design by Charles Alter of Manitowoc, Wisconsin. The car was made of component parts shipped to Plymouth by rail and then assembled at the factory that still stands on Farmer Street. The company couldn't keep up with demand or acquire additional financing and went into receivership. The only known Alter Car still existing is on permanent display at the Plymouth Historical Museum.

### Plymouth Historical Museum Quotes

*News that the Historical Museum was to become a reality was met with great appreciation by all city and township officials and businesses. They see it as another jewel in the city's crown and a boon to the downtown area.*

—W. W. Edgar, *Plymouth Mail & Observer*, 1971

*It should bring happiness to a lot of people.*

—Margaret Dunning, 1971

*One of the finest museums for its size in the country.*

—Solon Weekes, Curator of the Detroit Historical Museum, 1973

# Plymouth Days Gone By

Compiled by Gerry Sabatini from the newspaper archives  
at the Plymouth District Library



62 Years Ago  
May 1961

## Museum To Be Reality

Something new in the cultural life of Plymouth is ahead — thanks to the effort of the Plymouth Historical Society and the Plymouth City Commission.

One year's free lease was offered the Historical Society Monday night for use of a City-owned building for a historical museum. The lease will take effect June 1.

The Historical Society will take over the old home located on the north side of the City Hall that has been rented to the Clark Aerial Survey Co. for the past several years. Clark recently moved from the building.

In a motion approved by the Commission, the Historical Society was offered one year rent-free in the building and a second year at \$50 a month.

Frank Henderson, president of the society, and Ernest Henry, chairman of the Society's museum committee, both appeared before the Commission. They had asked for use of the building at a "reasonable" rent. It had been renting at \$100 a month.

They pointed out that they hope to use the building just as a start in what they hope will some day result in finding a permanent location owned by the Society. Such a museum, they feel, will be used extensively, especially by young people.

The Society, which has a membership of around 100, already has hundreds of artifacts in its possession and there are many more promised to the Society if it could find a place to display them.



Former home of Orson and Margaret Polley. The Plymouth Historical Society occupied the Polley house from 1961 to 1971.



Orson (1827-1903) and Margaret (1828-1904) Polley. Orson served as the Village blacksmith. They were two of Plymouth's earliest settlers.

Prior to the construction in 1972-73 of the current Plymouth Historical Museum brick building, which officially opened in 1976, the Plymouth Historical Society occupied the former home of Orson and Margaret Polley from 1961 to 1971. The Polley house stood at the corner of Main and Church streets, in the same location as the present Museum. The Polley house was razed in 1971 when a larger and more modern museum building was necessary in order to provide adequate storage space, and suitable display areas, for the numerous historical artifacts accumulated by the Plymouth Historical Society. In the 1800s, Orson Polley served as a skilled blacksmith for the village. His tradesmanship was vital to the community for making metal nails, tools, cooking pans, door knobs, hinges, and gates. Polley house photo, 1968.



Spring of 1972. Ground-breaking ceremony for the Dunning Memorial Building, the new home for the Plymouth Historical Society Museum. Pictured (left to right): George Burr, 1972-73 president of the Historical Society; Margaret Dunning, who was the major donor for the building in honor of her parents; and Clarence Moore, 1973-74 Historical Society president. The Museum has two floors of exhibit space and features a "Main Street" of Plymouth in the 19th century.



**Sanford Burr**  
1926-2016

Plymouth Historical Society  
President Emeritus

Sanford Burr was a lifelong Plymouth resident. He was known for his dedication to the Plymouth Historical Museum and his love for Plymouth history. Burr proudly served three times as president of the Plymouth Historical Society. In 2008, the city of Plymouth awarded Burr for his lifelong contribution to Plymouth. The Sanford Burr Meeting Room at the Museum was named in recognition of Burr.



47 Years Ago February 1976

## Museum to open

The Plymouth Historical Museum's time has come.

The imposing red brick building on Main St. will open its doors to the public Saturday Feb. 14 at 10 p.m.

Director Mark Hunt and a team of volunteers will be ready to show visitors through the facility, which features a "Main Street" of Plymouth in the 19th century, period rooms that offer a glimpse of Plymouth lifestyles of the 1880s and 1890s and on the lower level, some 10 exhibits, ranging from Plymouth's own vintage Alter motor car to an authentic blacksmith shop which lacks nothing but a horse.

The Dunning Memorial Building, which houses the museum, was dedicated two years ago, and is a memorial to the parents of its donor, Plymouth resident Margaret Dunning.

Although the building had provided a meeting room since then for the Plymouth Historical Society, it remained closed to the public while volunteers toiled to complete the numerous exhibits.

New director Mark Hunt has labeled the museum one of the finest of its kind in the country. He lauded the volunteers who have spent so much time putting the finishing touches on its interior.

*The Plymouth Historical Society Museum sits on the former site of Orson Polley's blacksmith shop and home. The Historical Society Museum started out in the Polley house in 1961. Ten years later, because of the increase of donated artifacts and widespread community interest, a larger facility was required. In 1972-73, a new brick building was built to replace the old wooden Polley house. In 1998, more space was again necessary when the Museum purchased the personal and extensive Abraham Lincoln collection from Dr. Weldon Petz. In 2001, thanks to a generous donation from Margaret Dunning, an expansion of 9,800 square feet was added to the existing 15,000 square foot building. Museum photo, 1970s.*



46 Years Ago  
November 1977

## Widow's estate rescues museum

An elderly woman's bequest has substantially eased the financial woes of the Plymouth Historical Museum.

According to Richard Gornick, president of the Plymouth Historical Society, long-time society member Winnie Ray, who died Feb. 10 at age 76 in her Fairground Street home, bequeathed to the society an estate valued at close to \$150,000. Most of that sum has been earmarked to bolster the society's meager \$67,000 museum endowment fund, which officials recently predicted would be exhausted by inflationary operating costs at the museum.

47 Years Ago  
February 1976

## Plymouth's past is here in print



*Plymouth Historian and Author  
Sam Hudson 1911-1988*

*Hudson donated all proceeds from his book to the Plymouth Historical Society.*

Sam Hudson's new book -- the first book-length history of Plymouth -- has been received from the printers and is now on sale at the Plymouth Historical Museum.

Entitled "The Story of Plymouth, Michigan: A Midwest Microcosm," the 240-page, hard cover, book includes 25 pages of pictures, a bibliography and an index.

It is a history of the community from 1824, when the first settlers arrived.

Among the 10 chapters are reports on Plymouth's role in the Underground Railway during the Civil War; the days when Plymouth was the air rifle capital of the world; and the period when automobiles were manufactured in the city.

57 Years Ago  
 March 1966  
 Plymouth Mail

Plymouth Historical  
 Society Museum,  
 Photo 1967



The Scribbler \_\_\_\_\_

Historic moments

\_\_\_\_\_with Joyce Holmes

This week I'm directing the column to relative newcomers to the Plymouth community like myself who know very little of its past, but you old-timers can read along to be sure I have my facts straight.

One Sunday I spent an interesting afternoon in the Plymouth Historical Society's museum on Main St. It is open Saturdays and Sundays from 2 to 5 p.m. and is filled to bursting with artifacts from Plymouth's past, including of all things, a mastodon tooth found right in this area in 1865.

The collection of old-fashion toys and dolls interested me a great deal, and lo, I found one of those 3-D viewers which I haven't seen since I rummaged in my grandmother's attic many years ago. A case that displays old-time medicines made me wonder how many calls druggists have for Parke, Davis & Co.'s black cohosh, cleavers, arnica flowers or coltsfoot today.

What intrigued me the most was the room dedicated to old photographs, maps and newspapers of the city of Plymouth. It's fun to see how it evolved from a town that looked like a set from "Death Valley Days" to the city of today.

Once upon a time, for instance, there was a livery stable where the Plymouth Art Theatre is now and minstrel shows were held at City Hall. The main streets were Main and Sutton, now Penniman — Mr. Penniman hadn't earned the honor yet.

The Detroit Free Press, dated April 19, 1893, gives a vivid account of a ravaging fire that completely demolished the business district. Such establishments as the First National Exchange Bank, a barber shop, drug store, dry goods and hardware stores were all reduced to ashes, but the postoffice escaped damage.

The estimated damage was \$40,000, a sum that seems small to us today. The amounts of insurance carried on each business were listed, the highest being \$4,500 with the average around \$2,000, an amount that would be insufficient for a private house today.

Getting back to Ebenezer Jenks Penniman I learned that he was a prominent businessman who arrived in Plymouth in 1835 from New York. He made his fortune in the mercantile business and banking. Mr. Penniman was elected to Congress and was a member of the group that organized the Republican party "Under the Oaks" in Jackson in 1854.

A lot of other items in the museum are awaiting the perusal of interested people, but as I said every available nook and cranny seems to be used. The Society would very much like to build a new museum but their only source of revenue is dues and special money raising projects. Anybody can be a member, the dues being just one dollar a year. Membership entitles you to attend the monthly meeting every second Thursday of the month where some more of Plymouth's past is brought to light.

52 Years Ago  
 September 1971  
 Plymouth Mail  
 & Observer

Gift From Margaret Dunning  
 Speeds Plans For Museum



Margaret Dunning  
 1910 - 2015  
 American Business-  
 woman, philanthropist  
 and benefactor  
 of the  
 Plymouth Historical  
 Museum

The long dreamed of historical museum is going to become a reality.

Through the generosity of Margaret Dunning, one of Plymouth's most dedicated philanthropists, it will be built as a memorial to her parents— Charles and Bessie Dunning— and presented as a gift to the people of the entire Plymouth community.

News that the Historical Museum was to become a reality was met with great appreciation by all city and township officials and businessmen. They see it as another jewel in the city's crown and a boon to the downtown area.

It will be a most important segment of what is now the cultural center of the city and is certain to fulfill the hope, of the donor who repeated, "It should bring happiness to a lot of people."

The new museum will be known officially as the Dunning Memorial Museum, and will contain two floors of exhibit space. There will be a lower level (basement) and the first floor.



Plymouth Historical Society directors, 1972-73. Front row: Bruce Richard, George Burr (PHS president), Margaret Dunning (museum director); 2nd row: Irma Kaiser, Lucille Reeves; 3rd row: Robert Bake, Mildred Burr, Mrs. Louis J. Norman; Back row: Herald Hamill, Clarence Moore, Edna Campbell, Harold Joliffe.

55 Years Ago -  
December 1968

## *Kiwanis Plan For Historical Museum*

Several weeks ago the Plymouth Kiwanis Club announced that it had taken as its project for the coming year the establishment of a fire-proof historical museum—a much-needed facility in view of the glorious past of the entire area.

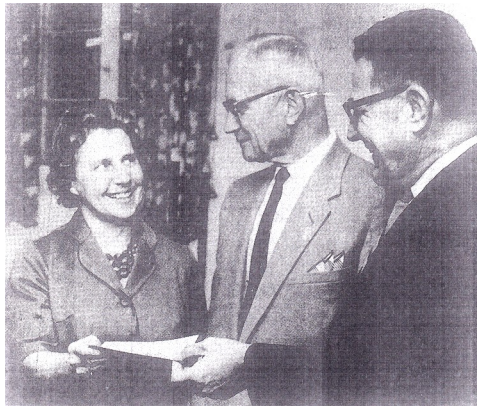
In making the announcement the Kiwanis also let it be known that it would gladly accept help of any kind—especially financial aid—to make a success of the project.

This is an invitation that should not go unheeded. For it would be to the benefit of every man, woman and child to have a historical museum they could point to with pride.

The present plan calls for adding a second story to the Community Building in the rear of City Hall and while this is a noble project, it should be just a starter of a larger and grander museum that would house many reminders of the area's past.

**FOR MANY YEARS** such things as historical museums were not taken too seriously by the average person. Interest in such things was left to the older folks and they often were looked upon as sentimentalists who were trying to foist their feelings on someone else:

But no more. Thanks to a few outstanding personages, the historical museum has now come into the position of being a real asset.



*An impressive start was given to the campaign to raise funds for a new Plymouth Historical Museum, when the Kiwanis Club of Plymouth, which is sponsoring the drive, presented a check for \$5,000 to the Historical Society. At the ceremony, from left to right, were Mrs. Betty Norman, president of the society; Clarence Moore, chairman of the society's building committee; and Kiwanian William Leonards, who made the check presentation.*



52 Years Ago  
1971

*E. David Reitzel Jr., 1932-2022  
Architect of the Plymouth  
Historical Museum*

*During his retirement years,  
Reitzel was a volunteer at the  
Museum.*



*The Plymouth Historical Museum, constructed 1972-73, was designed by architect E. David Reitzel Jr., and encompassed 15,000-square-feet of space for storage, displays, and meetings. In 2000, Reitzel also designed the expanded section of the Museum when additional space of 9,800 square feet was required in order to display the extensive collection of Abraham Lincoln memorabilia that the Museum purchased from Dr. Weldon Petz. Reitzel was a graduate of Plymouth High School (when the school was across the street from the Museum site) and received a Bachelor of Science in Architectural Engineering from Lawrence Tech University.*



*In addition to designing the Museum building, architect Reitzel was the principal designer for the Plymouth City Hall, shown above, and the primary architect for numerous other buildings in southeastern Michigan. The cornerstone for the new Plymouth city hall was set in place on May 22, 1964.*

Friends of the Plymouth Historical Museum  
155 S. Main Street  
Plymouth, MI 48170

Non-Profit Org  
U. S. Postage  
PAID  
Plymouth, MI.  
Permit No. 111

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## Calendar of Events

Events are at the Museum unless otherwise specified. Tickets can be found at <http://plymouthhistory.org/events/>.

### October

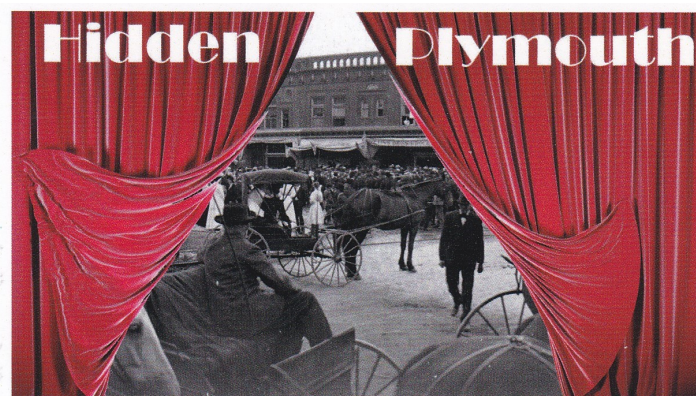
28—Plymouth Ghosts Cemetery Walk, 4-8 pm.  
Tickets on sale now.

### November

5—Last day of “Hidden Plymouth” exhibit  
11—Superhero Unleashed: Junior Comic  
Creators Workshop, 1-4 pm. Tickets on sale  
now.  
21—Members-only Preview for “A Dickens of a  
Christmas” exhibit  
22—“A Dickens of a Christmas” special exhibit  
opens  
25 & 26—Santa in the Caboose

### December

2—Winter Wonderland Murder Mystery, 6-9 pm  
2, 3, 10, 16, 17, 23—Santa in the Caboose  
16—Simply Dickens, 7 pm



**“Hidden Plymouth”**  
**Sponsored by Joe & Ellen Elliott**  
**and Jim Burroughs**

**Special Exhibit ends**  
**Sunday, November 5, 2023**

**Plymouth Historical Museum**  
**155 S. Main Street, Plymouth**