

April – June 2025

## Dunning Grant Funds Upgrades

The Margaret Dunning Foundation provided \$30,000 in funding to allow the Plymouth Historical Museum to complete two upgrade projects in the June-July time frame.



By the time you read this, the first project will be completed. The two murals on the front of the Museum building have been there since 1996 and were in great need of being cleaned and having a new finish added. Pete Smith, the Paint Smith, and his helper worked on the murals.

The second project is a tile



*Murals before cleaning. Photo by Marty Kerstens.*

replacement on the Museum's Main Street and near the office. The tile being replaced outside the office is original 1970s tile that is very dated. The tile being replaced on Main Street is a combination of 1970s and 1990s tiles that are different shades of the same tile (see photo on left). Mike Murdie of Camelot Installations will be replacing the tile in the last half of July.

The Museum will be closed July 7–August 12.

## TIME ESCAPE ADVENTURE at the Plymouth Historical Museum

**If you like escape rooms, you will love this teamwork scavenger hunt. You have entered a time portal to the 19th century. You are challenged to locate a time machine to return to the present before you are vaporized. All of your sleuthing skills will be needed to save yourself and your party.**

- **Groups must be between 4 and 8 people.**
- **Age requirements: 12 to adult. Ages 12-17 require the accompaniment of a ticket-holding parent or guardian.**
- **Please arrive 15 minutes before start time.**

734-455-8940 x0  
[www.plymouthhistory.org/events](http://www.plymouthhistory.org/events)

**TICKETS ARE  
\$30 PER  
PERSON**



*SCAN ME*

**UPCOMING ADVENTURES:**  
**FRIDAY, AUGUST 15, 6-7 PM**  
**FRIDAY, AUGUST 22, 6-7 PM**  
**FRIDAY, AUGUST 29, 6-7 PM**  
**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 6-7 PM**  
**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 6-7 PM**

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 holidays)

### Board of Directors

Kathy Sullivan	President
Margaret Harris	Vice President
Joseph LeBlanc	Secretary
Jim Burroughs	Treasurer
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Stephen Beltran	Director
Eric Joy	Director
Ivy Lung	Director
Cam Miller	Director
Mark Salloum	Director
Tim Tingstad	Director

### Staff

Janet Burns	Office Manager
Alex Downie	Assistant Archivist
Laura Elder	Marketing Specialist & Administrative Assistant
Mike Hoggard	Facility Manager
Elizabeth Kelley Kerstens	Executive Director
Anita Strach	Museum Store Manager
Mary Thackston	Exhibits Coordinator
Marissa Warren	Archivist
Cindi Willard	Education Coordinator
Carolyn Zaborsky	Cashier/Scheduler

### Newsletter Editor

Elizabeth Kerstens, [director@plymouthhistory.org](mailto:director@plymouthhistory.org)

The Newsletter is printed four times a year.

### Monthly Drawing

Volunteers Kathy Hall, Mike Janz, and Wendy Mitchell are the respective winners of the drawings for a \$25 gift certificate for April, May, and June.

## Donations Received

### March – May 2025

Thank you for the following generous donations that were received between March and May 2025:

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

Sam Fullerton

#### The Lincoln (\$1,000–\$2,499)

Jim Burroughs  
Richard Kaylor

#### The Starkweather (\$500–\$999)

Joe Grima  
Marty & Liz Kerstens  
Gerald Sabatini

#### The Penniman (\$250–\$499)

Lawrence Mack

#### The Kellogg (\$100–\$249)

Cynthia & John Hartsig  
Lori Hemingway  
Giving Hope  
Brian Kidston  
John Marshall  
Gerald Sweet  
Karl Williams

#### Under \$100

Annalee  
Janis Campbell  
East Elm Kitchen  
Sue Marie Klimek  
Debra Kuptz  
Dan LeBlond  
Jane Libbing  
Joyce Nicora  
Leslie Ryder  
Edie Wysocki  
Takeda Yoshido

#### Sponsorships

Hamilton (\$600)  
First Financial Strategies

#### Family Fun (\$300)

RE/MAX Classic Plymouth

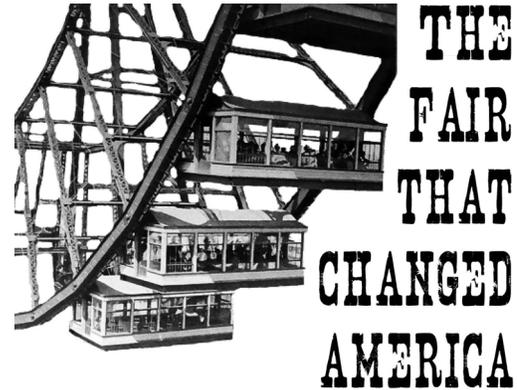
# Bits 'n Pieces

By Elizabeth Kelley Kerstens, executive director

Those who have been Museum members for a while may remember that in 2015 we had a special exhibit called “The Fair That Changed America.” It was one of my favorite exhibits because it highlighted one of the most transitional events of the nineteenth century. We’re bringing it back, with some changes here and there, beginning August 13!

The World’s Columbian Exposition (also known as the Chicago World’s Fair) was held in Chicago in 1893 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s arrival in the New World in 1492. The exposition was an influential social and cultural event and had a profound effect on architecture, sanitation, the arts, Chicago’s self-image, and American industrial optimism.

More than 27 million people attended the exposition during its 6-month run. Its scale and grandeur far exceeded previous world’s fairs.



The legacies of this World’s Fair are legion, including the telautograph (precursor to the fax machine), picture postcards, commemorative coins and stamps, spray painting, the automatic dishwasher, the first electric moving sidewalk, a braille writer, products such as Cream of Wheat and Juicy Fruit gum, and the Ferris Wheel. Our version of this first-ever ferris wheel was made by our maintenance crew for the 2015 exhibit and is now on permanent display near the general store (look up!).

A most notorious legacy was that of Dr. Henry Howard Holmes, one of the first documented serial killers in modern times. Holmes opened the World’s Fair Hotel, about 3 miles west of the Chicago fair area. He designed and built the hotel specifically with murder in mind, and it was the location of many of them. He confessed to 27 murders, of which nine were confirmed, but his actual body count could be as high as 200. Our 2015 representation of his hotel can be seen in the picture on the left.

We’re excited to resurrect this incredible exhibit with new features incorporating the changes in our exhibit spaces in recent years. Thanks go to our amazing exhibits crew, led by Mary Thackston, as well as our sponsor, The Ledger.



## Ticket Sale Dates for Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Members	Public
August 12	The Fair That Changed America Preview	Now	N/A
August 24	Puzzle Quest Ice Cream Social	Now	July 14
September 21	Wilcox House Tour	July 21	August 4
September 27	The Prohibition Experience	July 28	August 11

# Collection Treasures

By Marissa Warren, Archivist



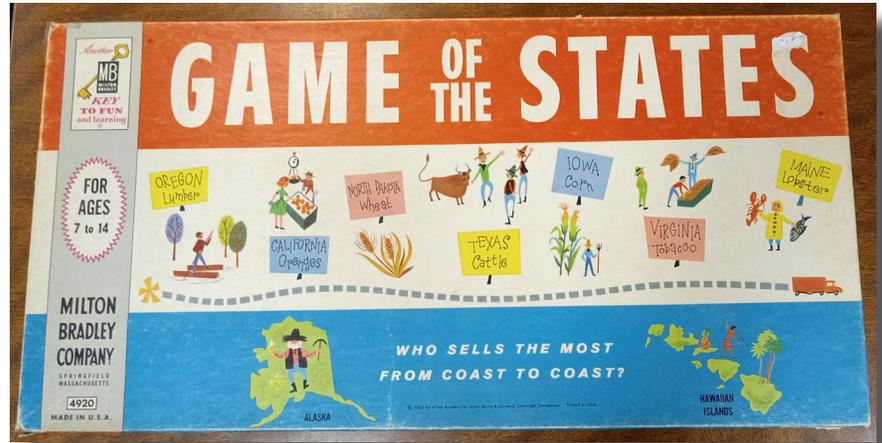
## Water Pitcher & Basin

Washing up wasn't always as simple back before indoor plumbing became more common place. Instead of sinks, people had water pitchers and basins in their bathrooms for washing their hands and hair. This specific pair was made by the Smith Phillips China Company in the 1910s and are part of a lovely collected set that will eventually be added into our new Victorian Home exhibit.

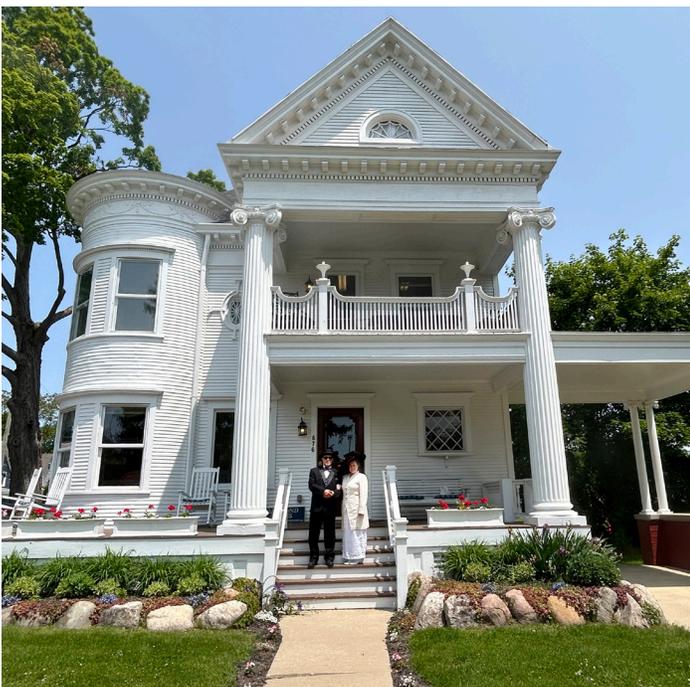
## Game of the States

This board game was made in 1960 by Milton Bradley company. As the instructions say, the game “teaches the location of each of the states, the capital city, [and] its important industries and products.”

Michigan has automobiles, salt, and machinery as its important products. Newer versions of the game have been released over the years, and you can see the changes of what the makers saw as the major industries of each state. Just like now, board games were one of many ways they tried to make learning fun and give hints of what life was like for the kids back then.



# Wilcox House Tours Available



The tours on Sunday, July 27 are sold out.

Tickets will be on sale to members for the September 21 Markham/Wilcox House tours beginning July 21. If you're interested, please don't hesitate as this event usually fills up quickly. You will be notified by e-mail when the sale starts.

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• Welcome New Members! •

• Chris Ernst, Plymouth •

• Margaret Gordon, Plymouth •

• William Jouney, Plymouth •

• Jessica Karl, Northville •

• Lilly Meek, Royal Oak •

• David St. Amant, Plymouth •

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**A SLICE OF History**

# LET THERE BE LIGHT

## Plymouth's history with electricity

By Elizabeth Kerstens and Ellen Elliott

**T**HE French Industrial Exposition of 1844 in Paris began a tradition of global fairs that highlighted technological inventions and advancements. Contemporary state-of-the-art science and innovation were center stage in 1851 London, 1853 New York, 1862 London, 1876 Philadelphia, 1889 Paris, 1893 Chicago, 1900 Paris, 1901 Buffalo, 1904 St. Louis, and 1915 San Francisco. Inventions using electricity were first introduced during this era.

George Westinghouse won the bid to light the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition with alternating current (AC), beating out a General Electric bid by one million dollars. The World's Fair included a large display of electrical exhibits, and exposition structures were lit at night with electricity for the first time in history. Westinghouse's demonstration of AC power proved its reliability, efficiency and safety, and piqued the interest of the American people.

By January 1894, the Plymouth Mail was calling for the introduction of electrical lights, not only for illuminating the streets, but also for residential use.<sup>1</sup> The editor of the paper was inspired by what was being implemented in

Milford, about 20 miles away. By partnering with Northville, they speculated that costs could be lower than the \$6 per year Milford was charging. For the next decade, the paper continued to agitate for electric lights, encouraging voters to select council members who would be forward thinking and look out for the best interest of the majority.

A March 1903 Plymouth



Electric light plant, built in 1903.



village election saw voters overwhelmingly support the construction of an electrical plant using bonds as payment. By February 1904, businesses and residents were actively adding electric lights. According to the Plymouth Mail, "Probably the best and most handsomely electric lighted residence in the village is that of Mr. and Mrs. W. O. Allen. One hundred and twenty-eight lights may be turned on on the premises at once if occasion requires."

The same newspaper indicated that businesses, including Gayde Bros. and the Hotel Victor, now had electric lights.<sup>2</sup>

The electric light plant was built on the site of the former railroad depot on the north-south line. Detroit Edison bought that plant in 1916 for \$50,000. New substation facilities were built at the corner of Farmer and Theodore streets in 1925. That substation is still used today.

The Plymouth Historical Museum's special exhibit, "The Fair That Changed America", will open mid-August and run through the end of December. It highlights features of the 1893 Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. In conjunction with the exhibit, the Penn Theatre will have a documentary showing of "Expo: Magic of the White City" on Thursday, July 31 at 7 p.m. Ticket cost is \$5 and includes a lecture prior to the film.

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.

**The most Practical of All Gift-Shops**

Electrical Christmas gifts are both useful and ornamental—and their novelty adds to their appropriateness. Here are a few suggestions from our varied assortment.

- CHAFING DISH
- CURLING TONGS
- HEATER
- GRILLS
- HEATERS
- HOT PADS
- IRONS
- ELECTRIC COOKER
- PERCOLATORS
- DISC STOVES
- TOASTER
- VACUUM CLEANERS

**The Detroit Edison Co.,**  
PLYMOUTH, MICH.

<sup>1</sup> Plymouth Mail, January 5, 1894, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Plymouth Mail, February 19, 1904, p. 5.

# The Penn Theatre

760 Penniman Avenue  
Downtown Plymouth



Thursday, July 31, 2025  
7 p.m.

Narrated by Gene Wilder, *EXPO – Magic of the White City* vividly brings the 1893 Chicago World's Fair to life. Through captivating storytelling and rich visuals, the film transports viewers to the heart of the Columbian Exposition—a landmark event that showcased some of the greatest scientific, technological, and cultural achievements of the era. Step into the vibrant world of the Midway Plaisance, a mile-long carnival of sights and sensations where visitors indulged in exotic performances, raucous entertainment, and old-fashioned fun. The fair, known as the “White City” for its stunning neoclassical architecture and glowing electric lights, drew nearly 28 million people and left a lasting legacy. Innovators like Henry Ford and Frank Lloyd Wright found inspiration here, and icons like the Ferris Wheel and Cracker Jack made their dazzling debut, marking a bold step into the 20th century.

RUNNING TIME | hour 56 minutes

## PRESCREENING PRESENTATION

Highlighting the new exhibit at the

Plymouth Historical Museum

ALL SEATS \$5.00



[www.penntheatre.org](http://www.penntheatre.org)



## Cracking codes never tasted so sweet!

At the Puzzle Quest Ice Cream Social, kids will journey through puzzle stations in the Museum's Timeline of Plymouth to collect secret codes, use a decoder wheel to solve a final message, and earn a ticket to build their own Ultimate Ice Cream Creation!

Join us for a fun adventure at the Plymouth Historical Museum on Sunday, August 24, 2-4 PM.

Recommended for children ages 7 to 10; minimum age is 7. Tickets are on sale now for members; non-members can purchase beginning July 14. Members with e-mails on file were sent the link to purchase during the 2-week presale period.

Tickets are \$30 for one adult and one child; \$15 for additional children or adults. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Limit of 40 children for the event, so please sign up early.

The ice cream social is sponsored by the Plymouth Canton Optimists. Desserts are catered by Diann's Catering. Call 734-455-8940 x0 for more information.

**Sunday,  
August 24,  
2-4 PM**



**Saturday,  
September 27,  
7-10 PM**

## Whisper the password!

Sneak in through our hidden stairwell and step into a roaring 1920s speakeasy filled with music, dancing, and vintage charm. Come in character (optional), enjoy themed alcoholic drinks, and learn about the fascinating history of Prohibition in a night of immersive fun at the Plymouth Historical Museum.

Minimum age is 21. Tickets are \$50 per person and include the entertainment, drinks and appetizers. Tickets go on sale to members August 4 (you'll get an e-mail with the link); non-members can purchase beginning August 18. Call 734-455-8940 x0 for more information.

The Prohibition Experience is sponsored by Stella Contracting.

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

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

**Return Service Requested**

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## **Calendar of Events**

Tickets can be found at <http://plymouthhistory.org/events/>.

### **July**

- 6—Last day of “War’s Over...Now What?”
- 7—Museum closed for upgrades, exhibit changeover.
- 27—Wilcox House Tour. Sold Out.

### **August**

- 12—Members-only Preview, 6-8 PM. Tickets available at [www.plymouthhistory.org/events](http://www.plymouthhistory.org/events).
- 13—Museum reopens with Special Exhibit “The Fair That Changed America.”
- 24—“Puzzle Quest Ice Cream Social,” 2-4 PM. Member tickets available now, call 734-455-8940 x0.
- 31—“Expo: Magic of the White City,” 7 PM at the Penn Theatre. \$5 admission.

### **September**

- 21—Wilcox House Tour. Tickets available July 21.
- 28—“The Prohibition Experience,” 7-10 PM. Member tickets available August 4.