
**EXETER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 141
EXETER, ME 04435-0141**

**NEWSLETTER
MARCH-APRIL 2002
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**MEMBERSHIP FEES:
SINGLE - \$8 / FAMILY - \$12
DUE ANNUALLY
TEL. 285-7903 OR 379-2449

We hope you are all keeping warm this winter. It won't be long now before we are all enjoying the warmer weather and thinking about our gardens. Just think "Spring".

Condolences go out to our Secretary/Treasurer, Deanna Wetzler, whose mother just passed away recently. At our last meeting we decided to have post cards made, with old photos of Exeter. There will be four different cards available, and will be ready for sale at our spring Rummage and Bake Sale on Saturday, June 1st, 2002.

The application and design for our "Welcome to Exeter" signs has been submitted to the Department of Transportation. We will now wait for their approval. Many thanks go to Skye Dillon for all of his efforts, and spearheading this project.

Thanks also go out to Floyd & Olivia Curtis, and James & Julie Leavitt for loaning us old photos to copy.

EXETER MILLS HALL

Three ladies of Exeter, Mrs. Benjamin Laird, Mrs. Edmund Canney, & Mrs. Hammon Eastman, got the idea to start a literary club for entertainment and mutual social benefit. The first meeting was Dec. 20, 1873 at the home of Mrs. Canney. Besides these ladies, present were: Mrs. Amasa Stetson, Mrs. Harry Palmer, Mrs. Calvin Buswell, Mrs. Charles Davis, Mrs. Jacob Eastman, Mrs. Vernon Barker, & Miss Elizabeth Laird. Officers elected were: Mrs. Canney, president; Mrs. Laird, clerk; and Mrs. Hammon Eastman, treasurer. Meetings were held on Saturday evenings at the homes of members and dues were one cent per meeting. The time was spent in reading, subjects for debate, singing, needlework, knitting, etc. They soon wished they had a hall for their use, and also as a public community house. With the help of Noah Barker, they incorporated. The application was signed by 26 members and was dated Apr. 29, 1876. The meeting to incorporate was held at the home of Hammon Eastman on May 16, 1876. The site for the building was donated by Hammon Eastman and the whole village helped in lumber and labor. The building was dedicated on Nov. 2, 1876 with a big meeting and oyster supper.

Prayer was offered by Reverend Thomas Marsden, Rector of the Exeter Corner Episcopal Church, with singing by Elisha C. Tibbetts, and his sons, Clarence & Dayton. At this time the officers were: Mrs. Joanna Davis, president; Mrs. Lorenzo Eastman, vice president; Mrs. Cordelia Laird, clerk; Mrs. Julia Eastman, treasurer; Mrs. Eliza Eastman, collector; and Dr. Samuel Chase, Hammon Eastman, and Charles Woodbury, building committee. The following passage was written by Noah Barker, and published in the "History of Penobscot County, Maine": "To the ladies of Exeter Mills and vicinity was reserved the crowning honor of erecting, in the centennial year of our national independence the first free house within the precincts of the town, where the people of every creed and denomination may unite in worship of the great common father, and in the mode and manner that his conscience shall dictate; it being designed not only as a place of worship, but for scientific lectures and social gatherings, but also, for the convenience and benefit of a free, intelligent and progressive people." The hall was used by Exeter Grange No. 86, P of H, since the granting of it's charter, and also, by the Exeter Universalist Parish, as they had no church building in town. In the 1930's The Exeter Mills Ladies Literary Society continued their meetings at the homes of it's members, and the

building was sold to the Exeter Grange. At it's peak, the Exeter Grange boasted nearly 200 members. The Grange closed in the late 1960's and the building reverted back to the town.

A group of town residents organized the Exeter Community Center Association in 1979, and leased the building from the town. This included a video arcade, library, pool and air hockey tables, and a snack bar. Dances were held in the second floor dance hall eight times a month, with a DJ on Friday nights, and live bands on Saturday nights.

The center also hosted Halloween and Christmas parties, with visits from Santa for the younger children. Holiday dinners were served for the town's senior citizens, at no cost.

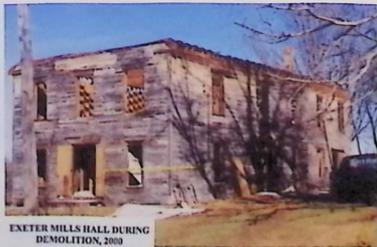
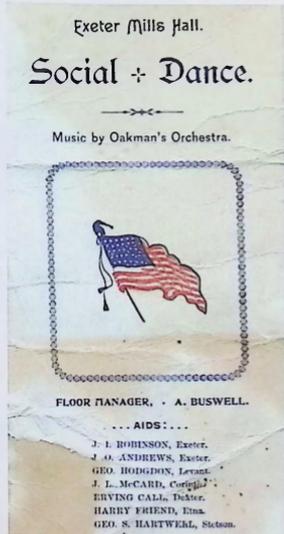
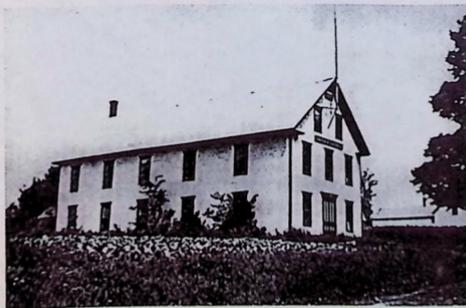
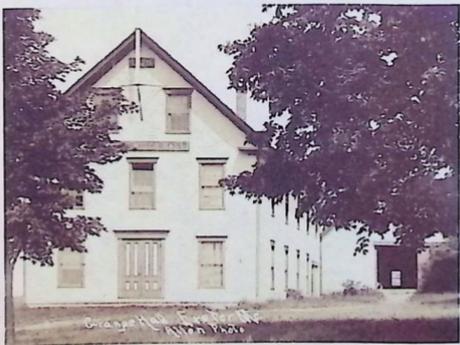
The center closed after only two years, and the building fell into utter disrepair. The hall was demolished in the fall of 2000, after 124 years of use.



Grand opening

The Exeter Community Center held its grand opening recently, featuring a special honor to Miss Margaret DeBerna (right), who donated a picture of her grandmother, Cordelia Laird, one of the original founders of the hall. Leo D. White (left), a community officer, assisted in the exhibition, which featured a cake baked into the shape of the original hall and decorated by Judy Boas of Bangor. (Jennie Kevoy photo)

(TOP LEFT)-VIEW OF THE EXETER MILLS HALL IN THE LATE 1800'S.
 (MIDDLE & BOTTOM LEFT)-VIEWS OF THE EXETER MILLS HALL AROUND
 THE TURN OF THE CENTURY.
 (TOP RIGHT)-DANCE CARD FOR SOCIAL DANCE, EARLY 1900'S.
 (MIDDLE RIGHT)-ADMISSION TICKET TO TURKEY DINNER, EARLY 1900'S.
 (BOTTOM RIGHT)-DEMOLITION OF THE HALL IN THE FALL OF 2000.



EXETER MILLS HALL DURING
 DEMOLITION, 2000