Medfield

History Weekend 2023

Site Information & Highlights

Main paid & reserved ticketing site accessible here.

Friday, April 28 – Sunday, April 30

Medfield Public Library, 468 Main St. (regular library hours)

- Children will have the chance to explore the library and participate in a scavenger hunt.

Saturday, April 29 & Sunday, April 30 – OPEN SITES

These sites will be open to visitors, **10 a.m. to 4 p.m.** on **SATURDAY, April 29**, and **1 to 4 p.m.** on **SUNDAY, April 30** (free ticketing and/or fee may apply):

Dwight-Derby House, 7 Frairy St.

Located opposite Meetinghouse (Baker's) Pond, Dwight-Derby was built in 1651 and is one of the 10 oldest wood-frame houses in America and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1996, the house dodged the wrecking ball after the Town bought it for preservation purposes and community use. Visitors can:

- Tour the entire house and attached barn (on the hour only until about 2 p.m.);
- See newly unveiled exhibits that trace the Dwight-Derby House occupants and their families since it was built nearly 375 years ago;
- Join in the birthday celebration of former resident George Horatio Derby at Noon on Saturday, April 29; and
- Come back at 3 p.m. on Saturday for a talk and book signing with Town Historian Richard DeSorgher.

Kingsbury Grist Mill, 127 Spring St. (due to safety/traffic concerns, advanced ticketing for this **free** site is required)

This 300-year-old, water-driven mill on Spring St/Rte. 109 was once used to grind corn and wheat to help sustain Medfield residents. Situated alongside scenic Kingsbury Pond and surrounding woods with its abundant wildlife, visitors can:

- Learn about the history of the mill;
- See the indoor waterfall, the old turbine and crusher, and an assortment of tools and utensils; and
- Explore the larger site along Kingsbury Pond.

Medfield Historical Society, 6 Pleasant St.

Established in 1891, the Medfield Historical Society is one of the oldest in the Commonwealth, providing connections with local history that enrich people's lives and the local community. During this long-awaited opening, visitors can:

- Talk with Society leaders and curators;
- Explore the various files and other resources for family tree or antique house research; and
- Learn about many of the unique items on display or in the archives, including maps, postcards, tools/gadgets and hats made from the old Straw Hat Factory.

Peak House Heritage Center, 347 Main St. (advanced fee-based, timed tickets required; parking details on ticket site)

Dating from 1711 and designated a National Historic Place, the Peak House is one of the earliest surviving examples of post-medieval English (Elizabethan) architecture and is the only free-standing structure of its kind in the U.S. Its exceptionally steep pitched roof is the highest on record in Massachusetts for a building its size; hence, its name. Today the Peak House Heritage Center artfully combines self-guided tours that:

- Inform and engage visitors about earlier residents and their lifestyles;
- Demonstrate outdoor Colonial kitchen and vegetable gardens featuring native plants that provided food, medicine and household benefits; and
- Offer Interactive displays highlighting architectural features and archaeological artifacts discovered on site.

Saturday, April 29 (only) – SPECIAL ACTIVITIES (various times)

Downtown Medfield History Walking Tour, **meet at 7 Frairy St.** (advanced fee-based tickets required; various departure times 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; tickets reflect 10 minutes in advance of tour time.)

Town Historian and author Richard DeSorgher will take visitors on a narrated 90-minute walking tour of downtown Medfield to explain its history, point out notable sites, and show how the area has evolved over many decades. Following a total route of under one mile, the tour will begin at the Dwight Derby House, head south on North Street, down Main Street to South Street, west through town center to Baxter Park, and then back to Dwight Derby House via Upham Road.

Town Clock & Steeple Tour, **meet at 26 North St.** - First Parish church steps (free; advanced reservations required; various times until 11:30 a.m.)

The Town Clock is housed in the historic former town Meetinghouse now known as First Parish Unitarian Universalist church. The Meetinghouse and its 150-year-old clock are intertwined with the history of the town. Every half hour, visitors will climb the stairs in the 1789 steeple to view the clockworks with official Keeper of the Town Clock, David Maxson. The tour begins with a brief overview of the history of the building, listed on National Register of Historic Places.

Richard DeSorgher Special Q&A and Book Signing, Dwight-Derby House, 7 Frairy St., 3 p.m. *(approximate time)*

Town Historian will inspire visitors with his talk about what Makes Medfield Medfield, and to engage in a book signing.

Hannah Adams Exhibit, Medfield Public Library, 468 Main St., 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Medfield-born Hannah Adams (1755-1831) was the first woman in America to earn a living as a professional writer. She also petitioned the federal government for the first U.S. copyright law. She developed a circle of female friends who wrote verses that were shared and admired within the circle, and it is this group that is believed to be the First Woman's Club on record in the country. Visitors can view the exhibit to see and hear more about Medfield's most famous female who influenced the 1894 creation of today's Hannah Adams Woman's Club.

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Sunday, April 30 (only) – SPECIAL SITES & ACTIVITIES (various times)

Medfield State Hospital Walking Tour (11:30 a.m.) - one free two-hour tour; no reservations needed
Meet by school buses parked adjacent to Service Road entrance off Hospital Road (across from sledding hill).

John Thompson, chairman of buildings and grounds for the former Medfield State Hospital site, will lead visitors on a walking tour to share information about the campus, including:

- The history of various buildings;
- The role that MSH played in the treatment of mental illness; and
- The proposed redevelopment by Trinity Financial.

Wear comfortable walking shoes, and bring water and sunscreen. A bathroom facility will be on site by chapel. Dogs welcome but must be leashed.

Narrated Old Town Trolley Tours hosted by MEMO (various times 1-4 p.m.; paid tickets required - $10/$5 purchased online; $15/$5 if purchased at departure (if still available) at Hinkley Swim Pond/Playground parking lot, 51 Green St.

Experience the popular narrated tour of historic Medfield on the Old Town Trolley! During a 45-minute, five-mile loop, riders will learn about significant historical sites, including The Peak House and Clark Tavern site, the old Hat Factory, and the Kingsbury Grist Mill. Stories will be told about Medfield's Native American past, the history of town churches and schools, the importance of composer Lowell Mason and artist George Innes, and the personalities that helped settle and develop the town. Many interesting historic houses will be pointed out along the way.

Lowell Mason House, 59 Green St. (1 to 5 p.m.)

The historic home is birthplace of Lowell Mason (1792-1872), best known as the Father of Music Education in America's public schools, but also a composer, arranger and music director. The non-profit organization, under the same name, saved the house from demolition in 2010. Visitors will have the chance to experience activities on the site and learn about restoration plans for its re-use.