

Saxe Gotha Dispatch

Museum to Host Haunted History Halloween Program

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The Lexington County Museum will host the eighteenth Annual Haunted History Halloween program at 231 Fox Street in Lexington this year.

As ghoulish guides lead guests on a spooky but not too scary journey of the museum property, visitors will hear ghostly stories, including strange and unusual events in Lexington County's colonial and antebellum history.

Guests will hear amazing stories and meet memorable specters along the way. Visitors will also learn about some of the superstitions held by Lexington County residents. Watch out for

frights and surprises around every corner!

Tours will last around forty-five minutes each and will take place on the evenings of Thursday October 23 and Friday October 24 at 7:00, 8:00, and 9:00 pm. Tickets are \$6.00 for adults and \$3.00 for children under 12.

Members get in free with a membership card. This event frequently fills up so

reservations are required. To make a reservation, call the Lexington County Museum at 803-359-8369 or email the museum at jfennell@lexingtoncounty.sc.gov. This event is a great way to learn about Lexington history and is educational, family-friendly and, most importantly, fun!



Museum Past and Upcoming Outreach Efforts

Museum staff members continue to speak to community groups about the museum and county history. Over the past few months, museum employees have spoken to the Lexington Main Library, Wellmore Retirement Home, the B-L SCV, and led an Irmo Murders and Mysteries tour.

In the future, museum staff will speak to the Lexington County Main Library, Gilbert Library, St. Davids Church, and the Shealy Family Reunion.

If you'd like to have a museum staff member speak to your group either virtually or in-person, don't hesitate to give us a call. We can speak on a

variety of topics related to the museum, the county, and its history. Some of the most popular topics include the quilts and other artifacts from the Dutch Fork, Lexington County-made rifles, and the history of alcohol in Lexington County.

Loom Room Repairs

The museum's Loom Room, also known as the Senn Cabin, received lots of new siding and a fresh paint job earlier this year. The old siding had been replaced after the tornado hit in 1994 and had deteriorated due to the sun, rain, age, etc. Lexington County's Building Services Department did the work and did a fantastic job. The Loom Room was built ca. 1772 in what is now West Columbia for the Senn family. We now have it interpreted as a loom room, an area that many plantations had for weaving and sewing.



Using Property Records to Research the Past: Part One

Any history buff knows that there are an endless number of ways to learn about the past. From overworked middle school teachers to the latest offering of Oversimplified History on YouTube, the modern era offers us any form of history education that suits our fancy. Any detailed historical researcher, however, knows that to go beyond the level of mere historical puffery, more esoteric sources are often necessary. Every day, research is conducted at the Lexington County Museum using much more specific sets of sources: court records, newspapers, private papers etc. One type of document has recently revealed something unexpected: the humble RMC.

The Register of Mesne Conveyance is a funny way to pronounce "deed books," but it is the source of a great deal of information if you know how to use it. As an example, we can look at a case of a man named James "Jimmy" Rawl. He had been enslaved by David Rawl on Main Street in Lexington until 1865, working as a blacksmith at Rawl's carriage factory located just west of Rawl's house (now the 210 Shoppe and Studio). Jimmy is the subject of some interest at the Museum because of a story which seemed to take shape as research into the John Fox Papers progressed. As the story goes, following Emancipation, Jimmy came to live on Fox's property in one of the old slave cabins. He and another Freedman, Rev. Peter Norphlet (also known as Peter Koon), then purchased one of those cabins and lived with their families, even taking out a mortgage from Fox. After Peter died, Jimmy could not afford the house on his own, and Fox supposedly foreclosed on the mortgage, then in turn gave Jimmy a new note in hand (i.e. one not recorded at the courthouse) and let Jimmy live there the rest of his life. He even set aside land for Jimmy in his will, and the family still lived there many years later.

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The house itself is supposedly the core of a house that still exists on nearby Saxe Gotha Lane, which makes verifying the story very important for staff at the Museum since only two of Fox's slave cabins are otherwise known to have survived, both on the grounds of the Museum. So how can we dig into the story to know if it is true? The answer, of course, is the RMC. Here we can find copies of any deed recorded with the County after 1839 (earlier deeds were mostly lost in the 1865 fire set by General Kilpatrick's troops as they left town). Sure enough, John Fox had a deed recorded in the Summer of 1866. Found in Book W, Page 563, the deed describes the sale of one acre of land by Fox to Koon and Rawl. Sold for \$250, the property is described as "...One Acre (excepting the privilege of a Road, of the usual width, through the West end of said Lot to pass from the said John Fox's residence in the direction of Mrs. Souter's residence) and bounded on the N.E. + N.W. by land belonging to the said John Fox, S.W. by Rev. W. Berley's and S.E. by lands said to belong to... Wilson. The same being part of a Two-acre Lot of land conveyed to" Fox by Edward Sill back in the late 1840s. Berley's land, incidentally, is everything west of modern Fox Street, with the Berley house today being a private residence known as Corley Hall or the William Berley House.

The description tells us far more than the words themselves might suggest. The neighboring lands are very important to understanding where a property is located, if you know a little bit about the neighborhood. Fox's residence is clear: his Village House is the centerpiece of the Lexington County Museum located at 231 Fox Street. His land in the Village of Lexington was made up of three tracts he had purchased next to each other: A 6-acre lot where his house sits today, a 14.25-acre tract encompassing the area on either side of modern King Street, and a two-acre tract nestled in the inside corner of the first two. Drawn on a modern map, they appear like this:



To be continued. Check out the next issue of the newsletter to read part two.

Museum Visitation in July and August 2025

Although we saw our usual drop in visitation from school groups, visitation from tourists remained high.

In July, 441 visitors came to the museum, including visitors from eleven states

other than SC and two foreign countries. In August, the museum saw 214 visitors, including tourists from ten states other than SC and one foreign country.

The number of school groups visiting the museum was low. We had various public and private groups from Richland and Lexington Counties come out for field trips.

Summer Event Photos



Museum Calendar of Events



- Sept. 29 History of Gaston Presentation
5:30 pm
Gaston Branch Library
214 South Main St. Gaston, SC
Free to the public/No reservations or tickets needed
Attendees will learn about the early settlement of Gaston, the coming of the railroad, and the development of the town in the 20th century.
- Oct. 23-24 Haunted History Halloween Program
Tours start at 7 pm, 8 pm, and 9 pm
Lexington County Museum Complex
231 Fox Street Lexington, SC
\$6 for adults/\$3 for children/Free for members
Reservations required
Come out to experience a spooky tour of the museum and meet memorable specters along the way.
- Dec. 12 “Murders and Mysteries” Lexington Walking Tour
8 pm
Tour begins at the Icehouse Amphitheater
107 West Main St. Lexington, SC
Free to the public/No reservations or tickets needed
Attendees will learn about some of the spookier and more gruesome aspects of Lexington’s history as we will discuss murders, crimes, and mysteries that occurred along Main Street. Because of the mature subject matter, we ask that attendees be 18 or over or have parental permission.
- Dec. 14 Lexington County Museum Christmas Open House
1 pm to 4 pm
Free to the Public
Lexington County Museum Complex
Many of the museum’s historic structures will be decorated in period fashion. A cooking demonstration will also take place.

Call the museum at 803-359-8369 or email
museum@lexingtoncounty.sc.gov to find out more about these events.

Lexington County Museum

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A Story Behind Every Door



We're on the Web!

<https://lex-co.sc.gov/lexington-county-museum> and
www.lexingtoncountymuseum.org

The Lexington County Museum was started in 1970 to collect, preserve and present the history of Lexington County. After initially having only one historic house, the museum expanded and now has thirty historic structures over seven acres in downtown Lexington. Through exhibits in historic houses, the museum interprets everyday life in the town of Lexington and throughout Lexington County from the eighteenth century to the start of the Civil War. The museum offers guided tours to visitors for a small fee and has thirteen different hands-on programs for school groups free of charge by appointment. These programs attract schools from around the state and educate students about the history of Lexington County and about the everyday life of Lexington County residents in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Friends of the Lexington County Museum is a non-profit group founded in 1997 with an advisory board, officers, and a board of trustees representing all municipalities in Lexington County. Its mission is to enhance the Lexington County Museum through its duly appointed commission and to support, aid, and assist in the improvement and expansion of the Museum. The Friends group sponsors fund-raising projects to help further the Museum's valuable contribution to the county. The Friends group has raised over \$290,000 for the museum so far. To learn more about the Friends or to join, visit the museum's webpage (<https://lex-co.sc.gov/lexington-county-museum/friends-museum>).

Highlighted Artifact from the Museum's Collections

Our highlighted artifact is a 1974 photo of the Laurance Corley Log House before its removal to the museum grounds. The house was located in the area now known as Heritage Hills subdivision.

