

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Invited: George Jewett Trophy Comes to Howell Opera House in Historic Homecoming

HOWELL, Mich. — The How Well We Live Foundation is proud to announce a special celebration welcoming the George Jewett Trophy to Howell. The event honors a remarkable local discovery connecting one of college football's most important pioneers to the city's earliest football history.

According to reporting by The Livingston Post, the connection between Jewett and Howell surfaced when an 1895 broadsheet for a "Musical and Athletic Entertainment" was discovered in the historic Howell Opera House. Further research at the Howell Area Archives showed that Jewett held the event at the Opera House as an early fundraiser for Howell's first football team, with proceeds helping cover away-game train fares and referees.

Dr. George Jewett holds a singular place in American football history. He was the first African American football player at both the University of Michigan and Northwestern University, and he is recognized as the first Black player in Big Ten football history. In 2021, Michigan and Northwestern established the George Jewett Trophy, the first Football Bowl Subdivision rivalry game trophy named for an African American player.

At the 1895 Howell Opera House event, food, music, and a demonstration of the new game of football helped introduce the sport to the Howell community. Jewett served as head coach and emcee, using the Opera House gathering to build support for his players and the new program. Howell's inaugural football season finished with a 3–6 record.

From that modest 1895 beginning, Howell football grew into a proud and enduring community tradition. The program's later success, long-standing rivalries, and generations of players and supporters trace back to the foundation Jewett established—teaching the game, organizing the first team, and rallying Howell behind its new sport at the Opera House.

"Bringing the George Jewett Trophy to the Howell Opera House and then to the Howell football game is more than a sports celebration; it is a homecoming for a story that belongs to Howell," said Ervin Suida, How Well We Live Foundation President. "The discovery of the 1895 program reminds us that history is sometimes waiting right beneath our feet. Sharing the trophy at both places gives our community the opportunity to honor Dr. Jewett's courage, leadership, and lasting impact—from the Opera House fundraiser that supported his first team to the field where Howell football continues today."

The celebration will highlight the story of the 1895 Opera House fundraiser, Jewett's role in coaching and managing Howell High School's first football team, and the broader significance of the George Jewett Trophy. Following the Opera House program, the trophy will be featured at the Howell vs. Brighton football game to honor Howell's football history and Jewett, who introduced and coached the sport for Howell's first team.

This special homecoming would not have been possible without the assistance from the University of Michigan, former Michigan wrestler and Livingston County resident Justin Spewock, Michigan Football Hall of Famer Jamie Morris and Sam Logan Khaleghi of SLK Media.

Members of the media are invited to attend, cover, and share this historic homecoming. Reporters, photographers, videographers, and broadcast crews will have opportunities to document the George Jewett Trophy at the Howell Opera House, hear the story of

the rediscovered 1895 fundraiser, capture historical presentations, and document portions of the filmmaking.

Opera House Event Details

- **What:** George Jewett Trophy media event, historical presentation, and community homecoming
- **Where:** Howell Opera House, Howell, Michigan
- **When:** Friday, Oct. 9 | 2–4 p.m. | Howell Opera House
- **Program:** historical presentation, documentary filming, recognition of the 1895 Opera House program, and photo opportunities with the George Jewett Trophy and special University of Michigan guests

Howell High School Football Event Details

- **What:** George Jewett Trophy on display at Howell vs. Brighton Football Game
- **Where:** Howell High School Memorial Stadium
- **When:** Friday, Oct. 9 | Gates open at 5:30 p.m.
- **Program:** The George Jewett Trophy will be on display in the concourse near the concession stand with photo opportunities prior to kickoff at 7:00 p.m. There will be a special presentation honoring Jewett and his connection to Howell football between the first and second quarters of the game.

About George Jewett

George Henry Jewett II was a scholar, athlete, physician, coach, and entrepreneur whose life helped shape the history of football in Michigan and beyond. A standout student-athlete from Ann Arbor, Jewett played football at the University of Michigan and Northwestern University and is recognized as the first Black football player in Big Ten history. After earning his medical degree from Northwestern in 1895, Jewett returned to Michigan, where Howell Public Schools Superintendent Robert Briggs hired him as coach of Howell High School's first official football team.

About the Howell Opera House

The Howell Opera House, led by the Livingston Arts Council, has long served as a landmark gathering place for arts, culture, and community history in downtown Howell. Its cultural ties extend far beyond Howell, connecting the community to regional and national stories such as the legacy of George Jewett. The rediscovery of the 1895 Jewett fundraiser program underscores the building's role as a keeper of local history and a place where Howell's past continues to inspire its future. With its rich history and far-reaching cultural significance, the Howell Opera House must be preserved for generations to come.

About the How Well We Live Foundation

The How Well We Live Foundation is a federal 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to preserving Howell's rich history and sharing the stories of its civil rights pioneers, local heroes, and community legacy through cinematic storytelling. By bringing relevant stories from beneath the Opera House stage and out of the archives, the Foundation seeks to bring history to life on screen and share its meaning with audiences in Howell and beyond. Donor support also helps us present significant community programs, including the first opera staged in the Howell Opera House in more than 100 years and the homecoming of the George Jewett Trophy to Howell.

Become part of something bigger by donating today at howwellwelive.com. With your help, we can continue presenting meaningful programs, produce educational and cinematic documentaries about *EXIT 137*, and share Howell's story with the world.