NEWSLETTER

Fall / Winter 2026

ANKENY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY *Volume 33 Number 3*

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Message from the President

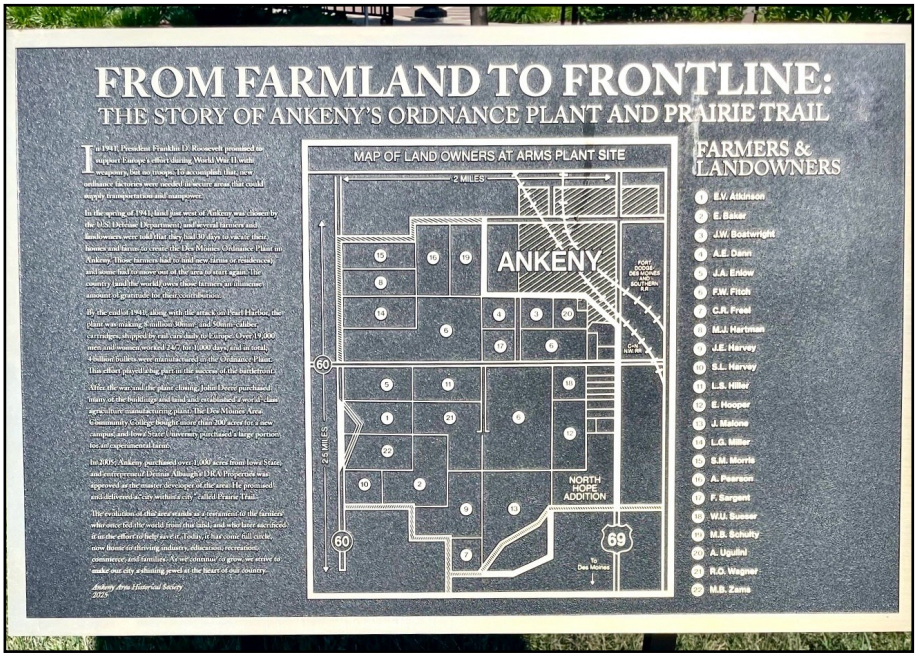
With patriotic fervor at a higher pitch than normal during this past summer's Fourth of July celebrations due to the country's celebration of its 250th birthday, I thought it appropriate to highlight historical evidence of the patriotism of past Ankenians.

To learn of the number of Ankeny citizens who served in the various American conflicts, I consulted Wayne Rude, treasurer of the Albaugh-McGovern Legion, Post 42. Because the American Legion only came into existence in 1919 by an act of Congress, Post 42 only has an official record of the approximately 480 veterans from the Ankeny area who served in World War II. It is notable that in 1940, Ankeny had a population of only around 1,200. Although that is admirable, our patriotic actions went even further in that conflict. In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt promised to support Europe's effort during World War II with weaponry, but no troops. To manufacture that weaponry, it was determined that new ordnance factories were needed in secure areas of the country that could supply transportation and manpower.

In the spring of 1941, land just west of the city limits of Ankeny was chosen by the U.S. Defense Department as one of these locations. Twenty-two farmers and landowners in that area were told they had thirty days to vacate their homes and farms to make way for the building of an Ordnance Plant. Some of these twenty-two were able to move within the area, but others were forced to move out of the Ankeny area to start again. The new Ordnance Plant caused an influx of workers to seek jobs at the plant. Available housing in Ankeny at the time was not sufficient to take care of the needs of these workers, and as a result, there were stories of people camping in Ankeny residents' lawns. This likely began Ankeny's reputation as a bedroom community. With the attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, along with the existing war on the European front, the demand for weaponry was such that by the end of 1941 the Ankeny plant was producing 8 million 30mm and 50mm-caliber cartridges, shipped daily by railcars to Europe. All told, over 19,000 men and women worked 24/7 for 1,000 days to make a total of 4 billion bullets.

(Continued)

To commemorate and honor the twenty-two landowners and farmers who were willing to vacate their land in 1941, the Ankeny Area Historical Society commissioned a plaque (shown below) to honor these patriotic citizens. The plaque, located in the District, was dedicated in June. The Museum also has a replica of the plaque, along with many other military artifacts donated by local Ankeny families whose loved ones served in World Wars I and II and other conflicts. Although the Legion does not have an official record of Ankenians who served in more recent conflicts, Wayne estimates there were 200 in Korea and 250 in Vietnam. We are proud to live in a community that has a legacy of patriotism and a willingness to do what is necessary to serve our country. The Ankeny Area Historical Society is also proud to make sure the patriotic history of our community is preserved.



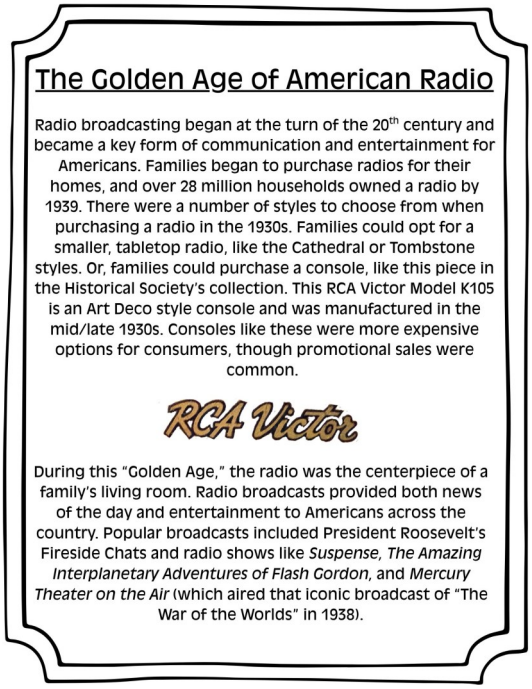
Sincerely,
Carmine Boal
Co-President

A Message From the Collections Department

Happy Fall! The collections department has been busy this year and we are excited to share these updates! First, we wish to thank our two summer interns, Josi and Allison. They assisted in a variety of projects over the course of the summer and were tremendously helpful.

Item Feature Cards

The first thing we tackled this summer was the installation of "Item Feature Cards." Each card is a one-page write-up that corresponds to a specific artifact or display found in the museum. These cards make displays more engaging and informative, and we hope to continue adding more this fall and winter. Currently, we have five cards ready for viewing. Our intern Josi wrote the cards about the following topics: vintage makeup, Wrigley's Juicy Fruit Gum, and paper dolls. The other two cards are about depression glass and the Golden Age of Radio.



New Displays

In an effort to refresh the museum, our interns designed a few new displays. To our school section, Josi added a display about drama and the arts at AHS. This display includes information about the madrigal dinner from 1980 and features a variety of programs from class plays as far back as the 1920s! In addition, Josi and Allison collaborated on designing small displays about paper dolls and vintage makeup. These displays can be viewed in the library and bedroom of the house, respectively.

Updated Display Tags

One of the largest undertakings this summer was updating artifact display tags. This is an extremely involved project with very specific steps. Allison helped with two important steps in this process: photographing current tags, and utilizing our files and database to verify information and add any missing components to the new tags. This project will continue long into the fall and winter, and we hope that the new display tags will be more useful to patrons of the Historical Society.



Feedback Opportunity and Social Media Updates

Finally, we want to let you all know about a new feedback opportunity. Our intern Josi created a Public Engagement form for us this summer. We appreciate any feedback and look forward to continuing to grow. If you would like to fill out the form, the link is available on our social media profiles. Paper copies are available on-site at the house and barn.

Don't forget to connect with us online! The Ankeny Area Historical Society is on Facebook and Instagram. We post updates about events and collections projects, and have more fun things planned for the future! We will also be collaborating with the Uptown Ankeny social media pages, so look for us there too!

Facebook: Ankeny Area Historical Society
Instagram: @ankenyhistory
Uptown Ankeny Facebook: Uptown Ankeny
Uptown Ankeny Instagram: @uptownankeny

As always, please reach out if you have any questions or would like to help with projects!
Liz Ernst, Registrar

Samuelson Sisters Visit Museum



On August 6, Lisa Samuelson Nelson and Julie Samuelson, daughters of Gene Samuelson, visited The Ankeny Historical Society for the first time. The two sisters were in Ankeny to attend Gene's burial and services. Julie lives in France and Lisa lives in Charlottesville, Virginia. The two sisters had seen an article about the generous donation made to the Historical Society in Gene's memory and contacted us to request a tour.

After a two-hour visit, the Samuelson sisters were thankful that they took the time for a tour as they learned more about the Ankeny area than they knew before. We learned more about their family as well, as Julie brought letters, articles and pictures of Gene's relatives that worked in the Enterprise coal mines.

The Historical Society is very thankful to the Gene Samuelson family for their very generous memorial left to us in their father's honor. We are thankful they took the time to learn more about our museum!

Ghost Towns of Northern Polk County by Dave Baker

When most people hear the words “ghost town,” a certain image probably comes to mind. We picture something out of the Old West: a weather-beaten false-front building with broken windows, an abandoned church standing alone on the prairie, or an old schoolhouse slowly collapsing into the weeds. Those are certainly signs of a ghost town, but in Iowa, our abandoned communities often look very different. After all, unlike the desert Southwest, we have weather here. Storms, tornadoes, derechos, blizzards, floods, humidity, and the constant cycle of freezing and thawing can make surprisingly quick work of destroying a building once people stop maintaining it.

As a result, many of Iowa’s ghost towns have few, if any, physical remnants left behind. There is another factor at work too: land is valuable. A former townsite sitting in the middle of productive farmland is eventually reclaimed for agriculture, while former communities near growing cities are often swallowed by development. Roads change, railroad tracks disappear, buildings come down, and before long there may be nothing left to tell you that people once lived, worked, worshiped, shopped, and went to school there. Time marches on, and some communities simply disappear from the landscape. Others are absorbed into larger places nearby, sometimes with surprisingly little notice given to their passing.

Around Ankeny, there are a couple of places that almost always come up when people talk about local ghost towns. Enterprise and Oralabor were once bustling coal-mining communities with their own schools, churches, businesses, and hundreds of residents. Today, both are shadows of what they once were, but technically neither one has completely disappeared. Enterprise is a far cry from its peak population, but people still live and even work there. Oralabor has been almost completely surrounded by Ankeny, yet it remains an unincorporated community and still retains a sense of identity among people who live in that neighborhood. That raises an interesting question: if Enterprise and Oralabor are not quite ghost towns, then what exactly is a ghost town?

The answer is more complicated than it sounds. There is no universally agreed-upon definition, and the line between a declining community, an abandoned community, and a true ghost town can be surprisingly subjective. That is one of the things I will explore during my Ghost Towns of Northern Polk County program on October 4. Along the way, we will also visit some communities that have disappeared so thoroughly that many people living nearby today probably have no idea they ever existed.

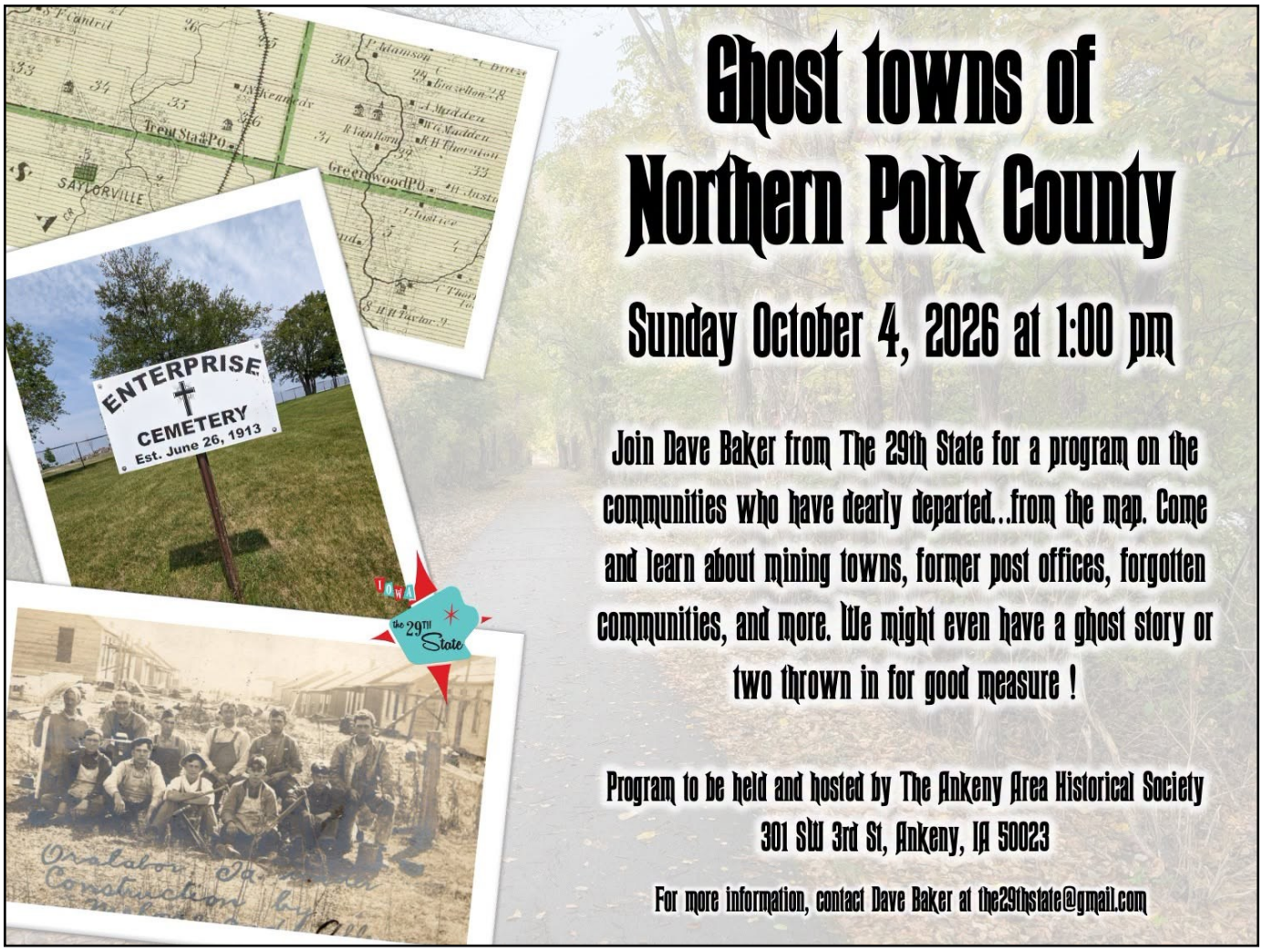
Take Pelton, for example. At one time there was a railroad stop by that name along what is now NW Weigel Drive. Under slightly different circumstances, Pelton might have developed into a town much like Alleman or Sheldahl. Unfortunately, it never really had the chance. The railroad changed its route, and Crocker was laid out a short distance to the north. Pelton faded away before it could become much more than a name on a map. Crocker fared considerably better, but even it now sits close to that blurry line between a living community and a ghost town. The railroad that gave Crocker its reason for existence is long gone, and the community that remains today is much smaller than the place its creators envisioned.

On the south side of Ankeny is another example that thousands of people probably drive past without realizing what was once there. Greenwood Friends Cemetery survives along Oralabor Road, but Greenwood was once more than a cemetery. During the Civil War era, it had its own busy post office, a place critical for receiving and sending news and exchanging information. The community continued long after the war ended as well. Twenty years later, the Iowa Gazetteer and Business Directory described Greenwood as having two churches, a school, two livestock dealers, a blacksmith, and a general store. Today, all of that has vanished. The cemetery is one of the few obvious clues that a community once existed there at all.

Just a short distance away, also along what is now SE Four Mile Drive, was the community of Yoder. It began as a station along the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad, another reminder of just how important the railroad was in determining which Iowa communities lived and which ones died. There are plenty of other forgotten names scattered across northern Polk County as well. Some, like Marquisville, might sound vaguely familiar to longtime residents. Others, such as Lavish Grove, have disappeared so completely from our everyday vocabulary that most people would probably never guess there had once been a place by that name.

That is what fascinates me about ghost towns. I am interested in the abandoned buildings and old maps, of course, but the real story is not the ruins. It is the people who lived in these places and the circumstances that caused one community to grow while another disappeared. Every one of these places had people who called it home. They built houses and businesses, sent their children to school, attended church, opened stores, worked farms and mines, waited for trains, received their mail, argued with their neighbors, celebrated weddings, buried loved ones, and assumed that the place where they lived would probably continue to exist. Sometimes it did. Sometimes it didn't.

The communities that disappeared are easy to overlook precisely because there is so little left to see. My goal with this program is to put some of those places back on the map, at least for an hour, and tell the stories of the people who once called them home. In doing so, I hope we can better understand not only why some Iowa towns disappeared, but why the communities that survived are still here today.



Annual Ice Cream Social

Pezzetti, Sharp and Smith honored at Ankeny Historical Society

(compiled by Bob Fontana)



Coach Jerry Pezzetti, Coach Fred Smith and Coach Bob Sharp

On Sunday, Aug. 23, the Ankeny Historical Society honored legendary Ankeny coaches Jerry Pezzetti, Bob Sharp and Fred Smith during the annual Ice Cream Social. Each coach was presented by a former student-athlete as a biography was read, along with stories and comments.

There were 70 former student-athletes in attendance amongst the 300 people in the crowd. Some of the guys had to leave before the large group photo was taken of the former athletes with the three coaches.

There were former athletes in attendance from Ankeny's graduating classes in 1964 to 2007. We also want to give a shout out to guys that came from distance for this special recognition -- Mark Schlenker from Alaska, Bruce Holten from St. Louis, Tom and Steve Akers from Kansas City, Scott Cole from Sun Valley, and any others that came from outside of the Ankeny area. We also want to give a big thank you to Andrew Cochran at Hy-Vee North for their generous donation of all the ice cream and water for the Ice Cream Social that day.

Below are some thoughts and comments from former student-athletes that had the opportunity to call these men "COACH":

Ron Sampson (1970)

The event saluting three coaching icons in Ankeny is more testimony on how Ankeny retains its 'Our Town' image and reputation no matter the size of the community. As a player, as a parent of players and most recently as a ref and umpire, I really appreciate the leadership and dedication our athletic and academic community gives Ankeny. Those three honored set the standard for careers that we all continue to benefit from.

Steve (1972) and Tom Akers (1974)

We both thoroughly enjoyed our short trip home to Ankeny to honor three Hawk athletic icons. Both Tom and I were blessed to have both Coach Pezzetti and Coach Smith play significant leadership roles during our time at AHS. The memories shared with both those coaches and old teammates brought back the feeling of our high school Friday night football games and big track meets.

The way these three men (including Coach Sharp from the great Hawk wrestling program) mentored so many young high school students in an unbelievably positive fashion is a testimony to their character and dedication. Each inspired us to learn more about ourselves, to test our own limits and to strive for excellence.

To top it off, the setting at the Ankeny Historical Society campus for this reunion allowed us to take further walks down memory lane. The great displays that organization has accumulated to commemorate our own history is inspiring in its own way. Thanks to my classmate Rosemary Taylor for her role in the creation and growth of that special place.

We are proud to have been born and raised in Ankeny and appreciate the lifelong effect the city and men like these three coaches have had on our lives.

Bruce Holten (1973)



Co-President Rosemary Hutton Taylor presenting Bob Sharp with a certificate and t-shirt

First off, I'd like to compliment the Historical Society team who set up the event and participated in allowing all of us to have food and beverages, making the afternoon so much more enjoyable for all who attended. That was very nice. I hope the vendors and residents that provided food and beverages are recognized too, as well as Bob Fontana for inviting numerous former athletes to attend.

Basically, the three coaches that were recognized were, in my opinion, some of the finest people who ever had the title of teacher and coach. We could've had thousands of people there, and it still would not have even touched all the students and student-athletes that these three men affected in their careers at Ankeny. I personally can say that the person I am today is basically a work in progress of the brilliant example that these coaches provided for us. How they taught all of us how to grow and how to assume the role of a citizen in the community and how to grow into being a man. Besides all of the sporting knowledge that they passed on to us to help us be better student-athletes and perform better for Ankeny.

I personally feel like I am the lucky one who got to go to school in Ankeny, and benefit and grow because of these men who gave me a priceless education in academics and sports. I'd like to say thank you to the people who put on this event and thought it was worthwhile for the community. I enjoyed myself immensely and just want to say how grateful I am to share in this recognition of these three gentlemen. We can never repay them or thank them enough for all that they gave to all the students and student-athletes. I'm proud to say that Ankeny is my hometown.

Mark Grant (1976)

As a kid growing up in Ankeny in the 70s, it was my dream to play football for Ankeny and Coach Pezzetti. I lost my dad in 1973 and was going into my sophomore year. It was a crushing blow, but it was coaches like Jerry (and his assistants) that became a father figure for me. I must say I felt honored to have been a part of some of the teams that helped Jerry become the winningest football coach in Iowa history. To say I was the starting tailback at Ankeny my senior year was something I will always hang my hat on. We had a good run that year, the first team to win six games for Jerry. And look where Ankeny is now. It's boggling to think Jerry is still there.

Like I said earlier, I am honored to have played a small, small part in the early years of a program that has changed thousands of young men's lives for 50-plus years. Once a Hawk always a Hawk!

Scott Cole (1976)

What a great event at the Ankeny Historical Society Ice Cream Social, honoring coaches Pezzetti, Sharp and Smith. Until listening to their bios, I never realized how much these three men dedicated themselves to Ankeny High School athletics and helping grow young athletes into young men and women.

I also want to give a special shout out to Bob Fontana as well. Thank you for your commitment and leadership bringing together the community of alumni, family and friends to recognize these men and their positive impact. Job well done!

Lou Solari (1984)



Co-President Rosemary Hutton Taylor presenting Fred Smith with a certificate and t-shirt

I graduated from Ankeny in 1984, and looking back, I realize how fortunate I was to have had remarkable men guiding me during those high school years. Jerry Pezzetti coached me in football, Bob Sharp coached me in wrestling, and Mr. Fred Smith served as our athletic director. At the time, I did not fully understand how much they were teaching us. Their lessons went far beyond football, wrestling, wins, and losses. They taught us discipline, hard work, accountability, toughness, respect, and commitment. They expected a lot from us because they believed we could become more than we sometimes believed ourselves to be. Those lessons stayed with me long after graduation.

The values I learned from Coach Pezzetti, Coach Sharp and Mr. Smith have shaped my life and career. They taught me how to compete, handle adversity, work with others, and most importantly, to keep going when things get difficult.

I know I was not the only student they influenced. Generations of young men and women in Ankeny were shaped by these coaches and educators. They were not just building athletes; they were helping build people. Seeing these men honored and together again is a powerful reminder of the impact a coach, teacher, or mentor can have on a young person's life. Coach Pezzetti, coach Sharp and Mr. Smith—thank you. You helped mold me into the person I am today, and I will always be grateful. Ankeny was lucky to have you, and I was lucky to have you in my life.

Todd Kluver (1986)

Regarding the ceremony at the Ankeny Historical Society honoring Jerry Pezzetti, Fred Smith and Bob Sharp, to see so many familiar Ankeny faces in attendance honoring three Ankeny legends was truly emotional and amazing. As teachers, coaches and administrators these three men truly helped lay the foundation for the outstanding success Ankeny's programs have maintained over the years!

I simply can't thank Coach Pezzetti enough for the impact he has had on my life as an educator and coach! He is absolutely the best of all time. Thanks, Coach Pezzetti!

Eric Kluver (1991)

It was a pleasure to be in attendance to recognize three legendary men in Ankeny sports history. These three didn't just build successful athletic programs, they helped build generations of young people and helped shape the identity of Ankeny. I was fortunate to play for Coach Pezzetti. He not only was a great role model, but he taught us about hard work, discipline, toughness and integrity. I am a coach today because of the impact coach made in my life.

Cory Kluver (1994)

To be one of many former Ankeny athletes in attendance spanning multiple decades, you couldn't help but go back to the memories those three men had a part in creating for us at Ankeny High School. They were true servant leaders to thousands of Ankeny athletes.

Andy Brodell (2004)

When I think of Ankeny, those are the guys I think of. They touched so many lives throughout their great careers. I feel incredibly fortunate to have spent as much time as I have with Coach Pezzetti as a player, student and fellow coach. What a legacy they have all left for generations to come. We don't deserve them!

Aaron Tjarks (2007)

This event was special. Seeing the different generations, the band, the families, and the sheer number of people who came out to show their love and support…it was awesome. All three men are role models as coaches and men, and all three set the standard and are the example of what it's all about.



(Above) Co-President Rosemary Hutton Taylor presenting Jerry Pezzetti with a certificate and t-shirt, along with a kiss as she did at the 1971 Homecoming Pep Rally as Pep Club President



(Left) Margaret Pezzetti, Coach Jerry Pezzetti, Coach Fred Smith, Fran Smith and Coach Bob Sharp



(Right) A group photo of former student-athletes with Coaches Pezzetti, Smith and Sharp

Night at the Museum



(Above) Farmer John Jensen checks out the latest in farming techniques.



(Above) Jo Ellen Nervig tell visitors about the 1905 Farmhouse museum.



(Above) Miner Evan Albaugh answers question on how a mine works.

(Below) Henry Hutton (Ankeny's 1st Store Keeper) Asa Hutton tries to sell Sailor Tom O'Donnell some candy.



(Below) Liz Ernst & Josi Syata have Mr. Ankeny test his knowledge about Ankeny.



Night at the Museum



(Above) Mrs. Ankeny Rosemary Hutton Taylor and Mr. Ankeny Tom Quinlin tell about the community they founded.



(Above) Pioneer Mom Joan Quinlin shows how nothing takes electricity in her kitchen.



(Above) Schoolmarm Madison Fontana Zirretta visits with Rosie the Riveter Lois O' Donnell

(Below) Scout Bill West shows off the scouting display.

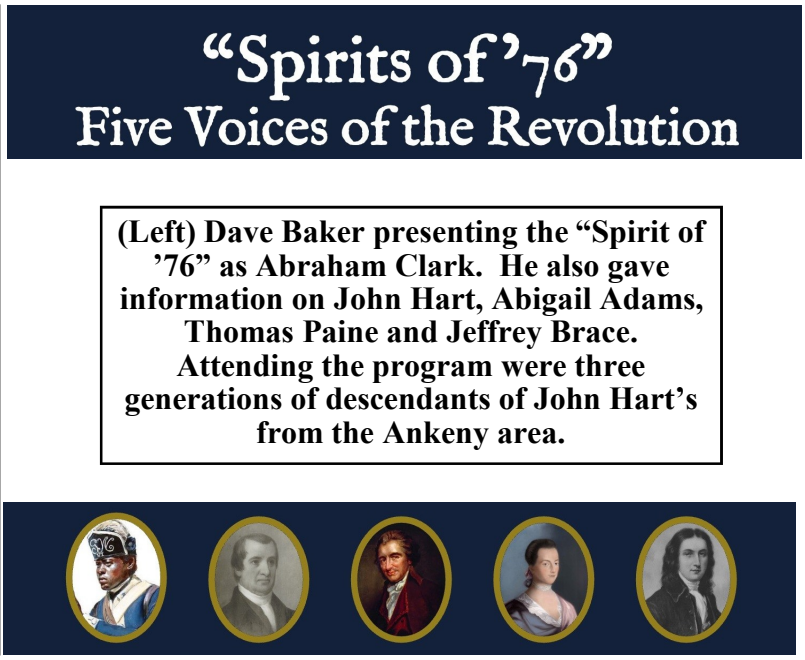


(Below) Rob Logan and the WiseGuys staff make the best pizza!



Spirits of ‘76





(Left) Dave Baker presenting the “Spirit of ’76” as Abraham Clark. He also gave information on John Hart, Abigail Adams, Thomas Paine and Jeffrey Brace. Attending the program were three generations of descendants of John Hart’s from the Ankeny area.

Upcoming Programs

October 4
1pm – “Ghost Towns of Northern Polk County” by Dave Baker

October 4
2-4pm - Open House

October 8
4-8pm - Halloween Uptown

November 1
“Finding Your Patriot” by DAR members Karla Kasper and Karla Wright

November 1
2-4pm - Open House

November 14
5-8pm - Champagne & Mistletoe

December 12
9-11am - Santa’s Holiday Bake Shop

Thank You To Our Two Newest Corporate Members!



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Fall Pumpkin Fundraiser



Our annual pumpkin fundraiser will begin soon! Thank you to **John and Joan Jensen** for growing and donating them to us. Come support AAHS and pick up a pumpkin or two from the picnic tables in front of the museum house. Free-will donations are appreciated!



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Donations are those funds that support the museum above and beyond the annual membership fees. Since those fees and donations are what keep the museum going ("keeping the lights on"), they are greatly appreciated!

Many members and donors have been very generous over the years with their monetary support. We cannot thank you enough! Our conviction is to use donations wisely to provide an inviting, educational, interesting museum for all to visit.

Thank you for your support!

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Come Visit Us Soon!

Tours can be scheduled by
contacting us at:

(515) 965-5795 or
history@ankenyhistorical.org

Ankeny Area Historical Society
Bringing the past to life

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