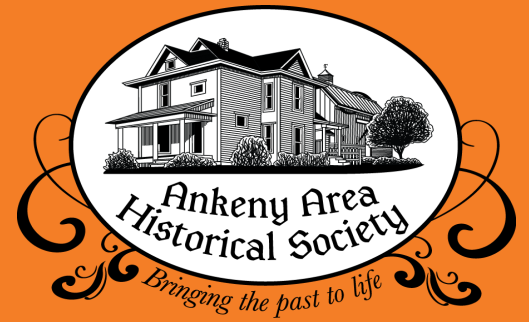


NEWSLETTER

Fall 2024, Winter 2025



ANKENY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY **Volume 31 Number 3**

2024 Officers

JoAnn Adamson, Co-President

Lois O'Donnell, Co-President

Carmine Boal, Vice-President

Rosemary Hutton Taylor,
Secretary

Jim Nervig, Treasurer

2024 Board of Directors

Sue Davidson

Jason Duke

Bob Fontana

Renee Heberer

Asa Hutton Jr.

Rob Logan

Norman McCleary

Joe Pitts

Janet Willey

Ex-Officio

Dr. Erick Pruitt

Ron Sampson

John Stratton

Office Manager

Stephanie Lindsley

301 SW Third, PO Box 1111
Ankeny, IA 50021
Phone: 515-965-5795

history@ankenyhistorical.org
www.ankenyhistorical.org

Message from the Presidents

As you read this edition of our newsletter, we, as co-presidents, can only say at this point, WOW! We have had a full and fun 2024 with all the events and open houses at the museum. Thanks to all of you who attended and continue to be such loyal members or followers!

2025 will be a huge year for our fine city – the sesquicentennial of its founding (that is 150 years)! We've completed some very interesting research in Ankeny's history for this newsletter. We think you will be amazed when you read the article. So many unknowns of Ankeny, as history comes alive in our hometown.

We surely aren't the small town we remember as children when the population was only around 1200 residents!! Yes, some exciting times are just ahead of us as we prepare to celebrate next year. A planning committee for the sesquicentennial has been hard at work to make some memorable events for celebrating. The celebration of events will be kicked off in January of 2025, so be prepared to see what unfolds. It's the history of all of us ... old or new to Ankeny!

Yours in history,

JoAnn Adamson & Lois O'Donnell



(Continued)

From 1875 to 2025 – a Success Story!

*What does 2025 represent to Ankeny? It's the **150th anniversary** of the founding of the city! 2025 will be the year for the entire city to celebrate its growth and success!*

Then and now...

In April, 1875, John Fletcher Ankeny and his wife Sarah purchased 80 acres of land along the narrow-gauge railroad track that ran from Ames to Des Moines, later bought by the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad and changed to a standard-gauge line. He called the town Ankeny, and that area of town consisted of about 10 blocks. He was a stockholder in that railroad, and he knew the area north of Des Moines would be a good spot for the train to stop to pick up cattle or grain from local farmers. There were several farms in the area, since the Federal Government had passed the Homestead Act of 1862.

By 1880, over a dozen houses and businesses had been built in Ankeny, Iowa, and the population was starting to grow. The town expanded beyond the original plat (First Street on the north, Maple Street on the west, Walnut Street on the east, and Fifth Street on the south), and "Main Street" changed from Cherry Street to Third Street, today is known as "Uptown." As folks moved into town, the streets stretched east to Pleasant, Logan, and School Streets.

Schools

Around ten one-room school houses had been structured on the outskirts of town, every square mile or so, before Ankeny was settled. One of the first schools, built of logs in 1850, was located one mile south of Ankeny until it was moved to the east side of (now) Ankeny Boulevard just south of First Street. Shortly, a second school was built across the street from the first one. In 1902, a 3-room school was built on Third and Schools streets. By 1910, the population had grown to 445, and that old school building was too small and was torn down. A two-story, eight room school was created near that spot at Third and School Streets and served the town for over 60 years until damaged by a tornado in 1974. Over time, many new schools were added around town, including Neveln School in 1919 and Parkview in 1952, both of which have been the high school and junior high (or "middle") schools over the years, and Neveln now holds the district and administration offices. Today, there are two colleges, several

pre-schools and private schools, 11 public elementary schools, four middle schools, and two high schools – with talk of adding a third one!



Fire & Police Departments and Post Office

In 1907, the volunteer fire department started operating out of the Odd Fellows Hall, using three ladders and 20 galvanized pails. The volunteer fire department was organized in August of 1910, and the town purchased a man-drawn chemical cart. As vehicles improved, so did the fire trucks for the town. In 1920, a Model-T Ford was purchased, and in 1950 an army surplus 1949 Chevrolet was the first real fire engine put into service. The department today has over 88 members and 3 stations (with 4th in 2026) with the most up-to-date equipment, and they respond to more than 7,300 "911" calls each year.

The police department was organized in 1903 and consisted of one marshal, Oley Landey. The position was paid \$25 per year until 1911 when it was raised to \$50 per year! Ankeny's first female police officer was Joyce Lundstrom in 1974, and the longest-serving chief was Bruce Christensen, who retired 2019 with over 39 years of service. Today, the department has over 68 sworn officers and 11 civilian employees besides the chief.

The Ankeny Post Office was opened shortly after the town was founded (1875) and was housed in the general merchandise store at the time. Since then, it has moved several times to different buildings in Uptown, and now is located on Ankeny Boulevard.

Success - Continued

Churches

Churches quickly started popping up in the town, with the Methodist Church having their first location at 315 Walnut in 1881 and moving to Second and Walnut Streets in 1886. The Congregational Church (now United Church of Christ) built their church on the northwest corner of Second and Cherry Streets in 1898, but after it burned around 1932, they constructed a new one on Third and School Streets. The Church of the Brethren had begun as the Des Moines Valley Church of the Brethren around 1868, and as the membership divided into different groups due to travel and lacking a central meeting house, they built one 1-1/2 miles southwest of Ankeny around 1876. Since then, they have moved different times and currently are on SE Grant Street. These days, there are over 36 churches in over 12 denominations.

Growth and Business

The city continued to grow. Along with the growth came businesses. At the turn of the 20th Century, three coal mines in the area created many jobs for immigrants. Then, grocery stores, restaurants, banks, taverns, and other stores emerged in Uptown to supply the growing numbers of people with supplies and services. Each wave brought more and more folks to work and live in town. Some of those Uptown businesses are still remembered by older residents: Ankeny State Bank (earlier Bank of Ankeny, today Community State Bank), Logli's grocery stores (Uptown and on Third and Ankeny Blvd), Fontana's Bakery (with Lamberti's), and Ankeny Motors Ford dealership. Today, while numbers are hard to tack down, the city has over 1,700 businesses and 30,000 jobs to serve the population.

World War II into Industry

Ankeny played a very important role during World War II by making .30 and .50 caliber bullets for the war. The Federal Government decided the area was good for a large munitions plant in 1941, and within 6 months, it was built and running just west of Ankeny. Over 19,000 people worked there, 24/7, to send over four billion bullets overseas from January 1942 to July 1945. After the end of the war, the area became the Des Moines John Deere Works complex!

(Sources - Ankeny Area Historical books, Images of America Ankeny, and Wikipedia)

Organizations

As the town grew, so did the number of local organizations, such as Ankeny Star Lodge (Odd Fellows of Iowa, 1896, and Rebekah, 1899), Logic Lodge (1921), Eastern Star (1921), and several more. While some are defunct, others are going strong, like the American Legion (1919) and Lions Club (1941). The Ankeny Chamber of Commerce was chartered in 1952, and they continue to be an important organization in the city.

Successful City

The success story of Ankeny, Iowa continues. The population grew to over 73,000 in 2024! In 2025, we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of its founding. There will be several events in town throughout the year, and the Ankeny Area Historical Society will hold open houses and activities at the museum. The Uptown Association will host several events, and the Chamber of Commerce's Summerfest will have a special focus on the anniversary in the parade. The Historical Society will have a special "chicken feed" (similar to those held for decades in the park) to be served in Uptown at the AMP after the parade, and tickets will be sold in advance. A celebratory video has been created about our fine city you will not want to miss. So, watch our website and Facebook posts and those of the Chamber and Uptown Association for fun ways to celebrate this special occasion ... and to learn more about the history of one of the nation's best cities (in our opinion)!



Fun at the Annual Ice Cream Social



Much fun was had by all at the 17th annual social on August 25. We honored Ankeny's Fire Department for their loyal service since 1907! Thanks go out to everyone who volunteered to help ... and to everyone who attended!



(Continued)

Museum Event Highlights

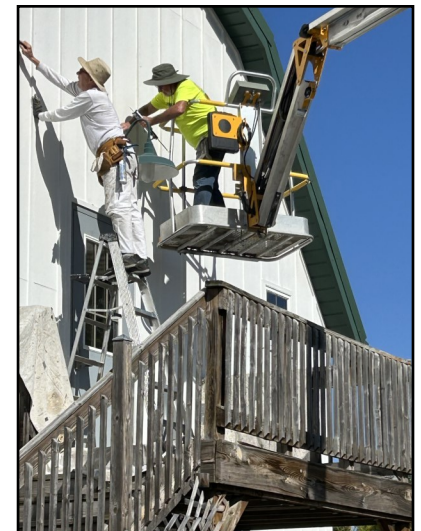


Night at the Museum (June 18) was a blast! John & Joan Jensen, Cathy Handley & Sue Davidson, and Asa Hutton looked pretty authentic for farmer & wife, school marm, athlete, and storekeeper, among others. We also recognized the 50th anniversary of the big tornado that ripped through Ankeny on that same date in 1974.



On May 12th, Mark Schlenker came to speak about his 40+ years living in the tundra of Alaska. Everyone enjoyed hearing how his life is so different from ours in “balmy” Iowa. (His book is available at the museum.)

October was a good month for painting, so board members Norm McCleary, with Asa Hutton and Joe Pitts, finished the painting of the upper half of the barn on Oct. 7th and 8th. With the help of a lift, they got the 40-foot-high project completed!



On May 3rd, students from Ankeny Centennial helped with our spring cleaning. Thanks, guys and gals!

On September 3rd, a special visitor came to see Floppy, along with four classmates from southern Iowa. **Connie Foster** was Floppy and Duane’s “sidekick” on his cartoon show back in the day! She went on to perform in movies and on TV and lives in the Chicago area now. She really liked our video we had of her on the show. Thanks to Connie for her gift of a photo of the three of them!



Fall Fun



Pumpkins and Pints has become an annual event in Uptown Ankeny. The museum was asked again to supply the pumpkins (part of our fundraising efforts) at this event on Sept. 28.



The museum has had this fundraiser for several years, and folks just love the locally-grown pumpkins, thanks to John & Joan Jensen and Linda Schlenker, who did the planting and weeding. A big thanks goes to Asa Hutton (and Tom O'Donnell) and others for harvesting and delivering over 1,600 of them to the museum!



Uptown's Trunk or Treat (on Oct. 17 this year) has become a treat for young and old. Several of the museum board members participated in costume: Carmine Boal, Renee Heberer, Asa Hutton, JoAnn Adamson, and Sue Davidson (not shown, Lois & Tom O'Donnell and Jim Brazelton). Some of us are just kids at heart!



Expressing Gratitude to Our Donors!



General Donations

Your donations are truly appreciated.

Please accept our apology if your name was not included with this issue.

Dave & Deetra Polito

GreenState Credit Union

MidAmerican Energy
Foundation

Janet Christians

Mary Jo Bennett

Bruce & Jeanette Beckwith

Jim & Elaine Brazelton

Imprint Archtiects

Lewis & Connee Doubleday

Tim Flowers & Linda
Alleman

Struthers Bros Kawaski

Madison Zirretta

Jim Nervig

Gary & JoEllen Nervig

Linda Cherry

A big thank you to **Jason Duke and John Deere crew** for the taking time to complete our annual landscaping cleanup here at the museum. We appreciate your hard work!

**The museum is grateful for the support of our
newest corporate members:**

The Funky Zebra Boutique, The Genchi Group LLC, Emma's Nails, Main Street Café and Bakery, Real Deals Ankeny, Real Estate Professional Group, *and* GreenState Credit Union

*Thank
You*

Come Visit Us Soon!

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
9:00am - 2:00pm

Tours can be scheduled by
contacting us at:

515-965-5795 or
history@ankenyhistorical.org

