

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2026



ANKENY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY *Volume 33 Number 1*

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Rose Hutton Taylor, Co-President
Rob Logan, Vice-President
Madison Zirretta, Secretary
John Wolff, Treasurer

2026 Board of Directors

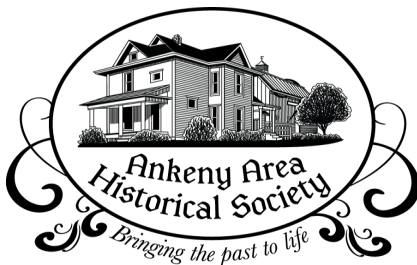
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Ex-Officio

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Stephanie Lindsley



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Message from the President

Greetings, AAHS Members -

In January, Rosemary Hutton Taylor and I began our service as Co-Presidents of the Ankeny Area Historical Society. I first joined the Society as a Board member in 2020; however, my husband, Steve and I have been family members of the Society for many years. While I have served on many other boards, the AAHS Board is unique because its officers contribute a great deal of volunteer time and effort. While both of us love our community, Rosemary's Ankeny roots are much deeper than mine. She grew up in Ankeny, and I moved here in 1986, growing up in a small community in Southeast Iowa. I think one of the positive aspects of living in Ankeny is we have a true mix of residents who have always called Ankeny home, and many others who decided to move here after living in other places. City officials report that six or seven new people move to Ankeny every day (about 2,100 a year), so it seems a lot of people value what many of us 'Ankenians' already know — we've got something great going on here! The AAHS mission is to inspire in our community a sense of meaning and belonging by sharing the history and culture of the Ankeny area. We are motivated to do that so every person in Ankeny can learn about our history and help us to continue to create a history of which we can all be proud. Whether you've lived in Ankeny your whole life, or you just moved here, I encourage you to visit our website (ankenyhistorical.org) to join the Ankeny Area Historical Society, patronize local businesses who are business members, and stop by for a tour at one of our open houses.

We look forward to seeing you!

Sincerely,

Carmine Boal

CELEBRATING 250 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE - SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

As we celebrate our 250 years of Independence we have on display in the basement of our house museum three quilts that were made for the Bi-centennial. These handmade quilts were made by students of Elaine Baley Smith's 4th grade class at Northwest Elementary in 1975 and Mike Reberry's class from Terrace Elementary and Ann Yarrington's 5th grade class from Terrace Elementary in 1976. We invite you to come see the talented handiwork of these students. Special invitations to those students who help make these quilts. We are sure your children and grandchildren would love to see your handiwork.



Our Juneteenth exhibit will be open for display on Saturday, June 20 from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Explore the coal mine areas that surrounded Ankeny at the time of their existence and how the African-American community added to our history.

Also, David Baker will be providing a program about the Semiquincentennial on July 12 at 1:00 p.m.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU

A big thank you to past presidents Lois O'Donnell and JoAnn Adamson. Their leadership and guidance these past several years has grown the Ankeny Area Historical Society to be a special place for events, activities and a local attraction not only in Ankeny, but central Iowa. Thank you, ladies! We couldn't have done it without you.

THANK YOU INTERNS

We like to give a special thank you to Margaret Nervig, Liz Ernst and Nicholas Taylor, our interns this year. They helped us with projects in collections, displays and public relations.

ADDITIONS TO THE SCHOOL AREA DISPLAYS

New additions to displays in the school area of the barn have been added. Class composites have been taken out of their frames and put into a notebook for easier viewing. A display on GRA, Girls Recreation Association, tells the beginning of GRA, along with gym suits from the 60's, 70's and 80's. Pep display has a Pep Club uniform from the 60's & 70's, Bleacher Bum t-shirt from the early 70's, cheer uniform from the '70's and a cheerleader's jacket from the 50's. The band area photos have been added to show the band uniforms on display. A track singlet worn by the first team from Ankeny to win a state championship is also on display. These are just a few of the changes made to the area. We hope you will come and check out the displays. Who knows, you might find yourself, parent or grandparent in one of these displays.



ANKENY SCOUTING ON DISPLAY

Troops 88 and 188 have put together a display on scouting in Ankeny. You will find a timeline of Troop 88 and its association with the Ankeny American Legion, uniforms with some dating back to the 1950's, Klondike sled and many more artifacts.



ANKENY LIONS CELEBRATE 85 YEARS – APRIL 12 AT 1:00 PM

The Ankeny Lions Club is celebrating 85 years in Ankeny. The group signed its charter on April 30, 1941. That charter is on display at the museum barn. At 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 12, the Lions will present a power point about their organization over the past 85 years in the basement of our house museum. Come learn about this organization and all the community service that they have provided to Ankeny these past 85 years. An open house will follow the program from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the museum house and barn.

DEDICATION OF PLAQUE TO THE LAMBERTI FAMILY FOLLOWED BY A PROGRAM ON THE USS IOWA

Join us on Sunday, May 3, at 1:00 p.m. as we dedicate a plaque of gratitude to the generosity of Don and Charlene Lamberti and Kim Lamberti Pitts and her late husband Larry Pitts. Like many of you, the support has been a great help to the Ankeny Area Historical Society to sustains our museums and provide funding for our many activities and projects.

Jeff Lamberti will speak on the preservation of the USS Iowa following the presentation. Jeff was a big proponent of getting the USS Iowa restored and moved to the Port of Los Angeles where it is now a museum to tour.

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM - JUNE 11

It's not every night that founders John and Sarah Ankeny, Rosie the Riveter, Henry Hutton (Ankeny's first store keeper), Farmer John and others come alive to tell you about Ankeny's history. Join us Thursday, June 11 from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 pm for our Night at the Museum open house. Special treat – Wise Guys Pizza will be in the parking lot serving their fantastic pizza.

THE MAKING OF SAYLORVILLE LAKE – JUNE 11

Have you ever wondered how a man-made lake came to be in the middle of Polk County? Here is your chance to find out. On Thursday, June 11 at 6:00 p.m., a video of the making of Saylorville Lake will be shown in the basement of the house museum. Corp of Engineers from Saylorville Lake will be on hand to help answer questions. The video is courtesy of the Big Creek Historical Society.

We Need You!

AAHS is always looking for volunteers to help us to share the Ankeny area's history. There are several opportunities. Open houses, tours and special events always need volunteers. Think you don't know enough about the history? Don't worry -- we will help you with the information you will need! As hosts, tour guides or helpers at special events, you not only learn about our history but you meet interesting people who come to visit.



Do you wonder how we get the artifacts we have on display or which artifacts are chosen to be on display? Join the Collection Committee. This is the committee that processes the artifacts that are donated to the museums. After being processed, the committee selects where these artifacts fit into our displays. The Collection Committee meets the 2nd and 4th Thursday each month from 10 am to noon.

To sign up to be a volunteer, email us at history@ankenyhistorical.org, or contact the office at 515-965-5795.

Why Join AAHS?

Your financial support helps us fulfill our mission of inspiring in our community a sense of meaning and belonging by sharing the history and culture of the Ankeny Area.

Yearly Memberships	
Individual	\$25
Family	\$50
Business	\$100

Purchase online at www.ankenyhistorical.org
or mail payment to
PO Box 1111, Ankeny, IA 50021

ANKENY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2026 EVENT CALENDAR

APRIL

- 04/12 AT 1PM
 - SPECIAL PROGRAM: ANKENY LION'S CLUB
- 04/12 FROM 2PM - 4PM
 - OPEN HOUSE
- 04/28 AT 6:30PM
 - BOARD MEETING


MAY

- 05/03 AT 1PM
 - DEDICATION OF LAMBERTI PLAQUE & SPECIAL PROGRAM BY JEFF LAMBERTI: THE USS IOWA
- 05/03 FROM 2PM - 4PM
 - OPEN HOUSE
- 05/16 FROM 10AM - 4PM
 - ANKENY ART CENTER ARTS FESTIVAL (*HISTORICAL SOCIETY NOT OPEN*)
- 05/26 AT 6:30PM
 - BOARD MEETING

JUNE

- 06/06 FROM 10AM - NOON
 - OPEN HOUSE
- 06/11 AT 6PM - IOWA MUSEUM WEEK
 - SPECIAL PROGRAM: THE MAKING OF SAYLORVILLE LAKE
- 06/11 FROM 7PM - 8:30PM
 - NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
- 06/20 FROM 10AM - NOON
 - OPEN HOUSE FEATURING JUNETEENTH DISPLAY
- 06/23 AT 6:30PM
 - BOARD MEETING
- 06/27 FROM 10AM - NOON
 - OPEN HOUSE

PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

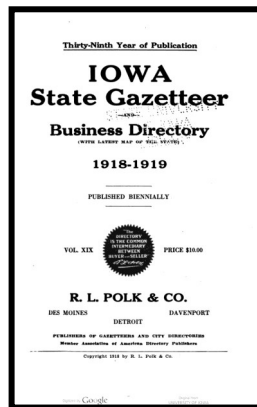


Iowa Gazetteer and Business Directory

By: Dave Baker

For anyone who spends time digging into local history or tracing family stories, the *Iowa Gazetteer and Business Directory* is one of the most valuable tools printed about our state. These thick volumes are easy to overlook today, yet in their own time they served as practical guides to every community in Iowa. Long before phones, computers, or online maps, a traveler or businessperson could open a gazetteer and quickly learn what existed in a town and who operated it. The first half of the book typically listed businesses by category—bankers, blacksmiths, doctors, merchants—while the second half organized the same information town by town. In effect, it was a statewide snapshot of Iowa’s commercial life.

The directories began appearing in 1881, published roughly every two years by R. L. Polk & Company, a firm with offices in Des Moines, Chicago, and Detroit. The books were aimed primarily at the business community. Traveling salesmen relied on them as guides that identified towns along railroad lines and listed the merchants they hoped to call on. Wholesalers and manufacturers used them to locate retailers and professionals across the state. Local business owners consulted them to identify suppliers and contacts in other communities. Even people considering relocation or investment found them useful, because each entry summarized the resources a town offered—its rail connections, population, churches, banks, newspapers, and more.



Beyond their original purpose, these directories now provide historians with a remarkable window into the past. Many volumes have been digitized and are freely available online through the University of Iowa (<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100896692>), allowing anyone to explore how Iowa towns developed over time. The entries reveal not just population numbers, but the everyday economic life of a place: who ran the general store, who practiced medicine, who operated the grain elevator or the livery stable. For genealogists, these listings can confirm where an ancestor worked or lived. For local historians, they capture the rhythm of community life in a way few other sources can.

Take Ankeny as an example. In the 1885 directory, the town was described as a small settlement on the Chicago & Northwestern Railway with a population of just seventy-five people. The business community was small but identifiable: a general store run by B. A. Lamason, a grain dealer, a blacksmith, a saloon keeper, and a handful of other occupations typical of a young prairie town. By 1919 the picture had changed dramatically. The population had grown to more than six hundred, two banks operated in town, the *Ankeny Times* newspaper was in print, and businesses ranged from garages and hardware stores to physicians, lumberyards, and livestock dealers. For genealogists and local historians alike, these directories do something special: they place real people into the working life of a town. Instead of simply knowing that a person lived in Ankeny, the gazetteer shows where they fit into the community—what they did for a living, who their neighbors in business were, and how the town around them was beginning to grow.

Museum Events

On Thursday, March 5, the Uptown Association held their meeting at the Ankeny Area Historical Society. There were 42 people in attendance. One of the highlights of the meeting was all the events the Association is sponsoring throughout 2026. The Association also shared information about the Ankeny Art Center moving to Uptown.

A big thank you to Kevin Harrington at Leaning Tower for providing pizza for all who attended the meeting. After the meeting, the business owners were given a tour of the barn at the AAHS.

The Ankeny Area Historical Society appreciates the opportunity to connect with the Uptown Association and host their meeting. Enjoy looking at some of the photos that were taken at the meeting and the tour of the barn.



On Sunday, November 2, AAHS held the dedication of Heritage Corner. Heritage Corner was created in recognizing nine Ankeny families. These families' ancestors were long time Ankeny residents, dating back to the early 1920's and served this community in a variety of ways, whether they were a superintendent, a farmer, a coal miner, a police officer, a teacher, a factory worker, a city employee or a big equipment owner and operator. These families had many generations go through the Ankeny schools, and it's only fitting that eight of the nine families were represented by descendants in attendance at the dedication.

As our Sesquicentennial in Ankeny was being celebrated, this was a special day in 2025. This corner sits on the property of the original Ankeny High School at Third and School Streets. We are grateful for the memories that were created over the years and their contributions to the Ankeny community. Their family names are displayed at Heritage Corner.

The families that were recognized are: Terry & Joann Kochheiser Adamson, Bonnie Ballard, Tina Battani, Art Doubleday, Ron Fontana, Bill & Donna Huber, Rob & Janis Logan, Ed Neveln, and Bob & Linda Thorson.



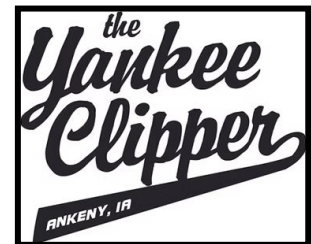
Recognizing Our Generous Business and Civic Supporters



Thank you to our two newest business memberships!



We appreciate these recent business renewals:



Come Visit Us Soon!

Monday - Thursday
8:30am - 12:00pm

Tours are by appointment only
and can be scheduled at:

515-965-5795 or
history@ankenyhistorical.org