

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2022/WINTER 2023



ANKENY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 29 Number 3

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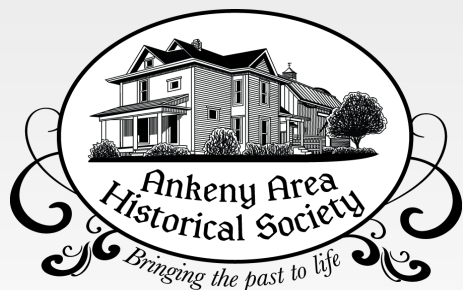
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Message from the President

As Myrtle L. Sexauer wrote in her December 1998 Message from the President, "My year as president is nearly completed. I think everyone should have the experience." In my case, my three years as president is nearly completed and I fully agree with Myrtle's sentiments. There is so much to learn about Ankeny history, the operations of AAHS and the museums, the members and their reasons to belong, and (most importantly) what AAHS has to offer to Ankeny and the historical community.

The reason the Ankeny Area Historical Society exists is stated in our mission statement. "The mission of the Ankeny Area Historical Society is **to inspire in our community a sense of meaning and belonging by sharing the history and culture of the Ankeny area.**" As Ron Sampson wrote in his President's Message found in the Summer 2010 newsletter, "Ankeny's spectacular history and noteworthy stories will always need to be told." I believe all of us who are involved with the Ankeny Area Historical Society believe this to be true.

In the March 2008 newsletter, Ron's President's Message was entitled "Why We Do It..." and he said, "Some people have a passion for golf. Others live to boat, dance, sing, or do yard work. Still others spend hours, days, weeks, and even years preserving the past... Thank goodness for those who have chosen to pursue their happiness in the preservation of history for their hometown and museums of Ankeny. The jewel that is now on display in the heart of Ankeny... is so much more than nostalgia and memories.... But why Ankeny? Is it really so special?"

I think any of us who have been involved with the Ankeny Area Historical Society can answer the questions Ron posed without pause. We all have our own ideas why Ankeny is special. As JoAnn Adamson states, "There are three kinds of people in Ankeny. First, Old Ankeny, people living here with connections from 1950 and before. Second, Long-time Ankeny, which includes people living here since 1950 to 1990. Third, New Ankeny, which would be people moving and living here since 1990." Whether you're Old Ankeny, Long-time Ankeny, or New Ankeny, something drew you and your families to Ankeny looking for opportunity.

(Continued)

A Message From the President—*continued*

Encourage others to come visit the museum to help them answer “Why We Do It...” Some people will find interest in the beginnings of Ankeny due to land speculation and railroad development. Others may have more interest in the early settlers to the area and what their lives would have entailed. Still others, Ankeny in the Great Depression and why it was chosen as the site of a major World War II munitions plant. Or possibly Ankeny’s growth during the 1950s-1980s, taking it from a small farmer’s town to a city. Or most recently, how Ankeny’s accelerated growth has created the conditions for Ankeny to become Iowa’s sixth most populated city. No, I haven’t even scratched the surface of the happenings and stories that are the fabric of Ankeny... education, business growth, land development, John Deere, sports.... But most importantly, the people.

To answer “Why We Do It...”, my interest in the Ankeny Area Historical Society began when the history teachers at Parkview Middle School brought all 7th graders for springtime museum visits. It continued to evolve as I learned more about the Des Moines Ordnance Plant, which I used as the topic of my Master’s thesis. Things evolved from there, becoming a member of the board of directors and then eventually becoming president.

As my tenure as president ends, there will be new and continuing members of the executive team, board of directors, and volunteers involved in a variety of tasks that allow the Ankeny Area Historical Society to tell about “Ankeny’s spectacular history and noteworthy stories.”

How do you answer “Why We Do It...”?

How do you answer “But why Ankeny? Is it really so special?” I’m assured we all know the answer...

“to inspire in our community a sense of meaning and belonging by sharing the history and culture of the Ankeny area.”

Yours in History,
John Stratton



Historical Society Receives 1900 Comforter

A thank you to Don Brazelton for donating this 1900 comforter. The comforter was made as a fund-raiser for the Elkhart Christian Church in Elkhart. A hand-written note says “The date on this comforter is Sept. 26, 1900. To the best of my knowledge each person paid 10 cents to have his or her name on it. J.H. Mathis then bought the finished comforter...Dorothy Brazelton.” A typed note by Dorothy says “This quilt was made sometime before 1900. My grandfather, J.H. Mathis, had the highest bid and received it. He left it to my mother, Effie McClung, who then gave it to me...Dorothy Brazelton.” Dorothy was Don’s mother. Besides the names of Brazelton, McClung, and Mathis, there are many names on the comforter that are still around in the area. Some of those names are: Hutton, Cory, Doubleday, Kaltenhauser, Spooner, Ault, Longnecker, Fleming, Holland and Spahr just to name a few. The comforter will be on display in the bedroom of the house. Please come and look at it. Maybe you will see one of your family members who had their name put on it!





Pumpkins: The Rest of the Story



IN THE BEGINNING....

By John Jensen

I started growing pumpkins in 2012 for family and friends and etched their names on them. Then I started donating them to the National Guard, Camp Sunnyside and the FFA. Through JoAnn and Terry Adamson, my wife and I joined the Ankeny Area Historical Society. Because of my past history and all the people that I knew in Ankeny, I wanted to give back to the history of Ankeny. We started donating pumpkins to the historical society and suggested that they etch names of Ankeny businesses on them. The businesses then started donating to the historical society, enabling funds to be raised for various projects and activities.

By JoAnn Adamson

Yes, what a brilliant suggestion and idea when John and his wife approached me about a potential fundraiser to help with siding the museum house! Initially, there were about 4 or 5 from AAHS who learned from John what we needed to do, then we were off and running. We were so excited with over \$5,500 that was raised to help pay for new siding! Since then, the pumpkins have been planted in many different locations, including the Adamson farm, the Yates farm, and Linda Schlenker's acreage. New leaders have emerged as Terry and JoAnn Adamson stepped aside and Jo Ellen Nervig and Jim and Elain Brazelton began running the operation, with the help from many volunteers who put in countless hours of etching, picking pumpkins, and delivering to the many businesses and to the museum grounds. All deserve a huge thanks!

AND NOW...IN 2022....

Thank-you to the Ankeny Community, Business and everyone who helped with their generous support this year in making our Annual Pumpkin Fundraiser such a success! Special thanks from AAHS Project Chairs Jim & Elaine Brazelton and Jo Ellen Nervig go to John and Joan Jensen for continuing their support again this year with time, equipment, and more, which allowed us to be able to have pumpkins available. Also, to the donors of the seeds and to Linda Schlenker for donating the use of her land and many hours of volunteering in the field. Jerry, Mindy and Tyson Rexroat deserve a big thank-you for being there every single day we asked for help during the six week project.



AAHS Board Member Bob Fontana and his wife Shari continue the tradition with their grandchildren (5th generation)!

Pictured at left are Will (11), Jase (10), Kinsley (7), Kyle (5), Olivia (3), and Wes (1). Parents are Spencer and Amanda Fontana.

Pictured at right are Jack (3) and Lucy (8 months). Parents are Madison Fontana-Zirretta and Matt Zirretta.



From the Archives

September 2007, Volume 13, Number 3

New Barn is Grandly Opened

Just 10 years after the Civil War ended the town of Ankeny was platted. Now, 132 years—two world wars—a few conflicts—the automobile—electricity—telephones—television and computers—and nearly 40,000 residents later, we

are dedicating the new addition to the historical preservation to what is Ankeny's link to a very important past.

On Wednesday, July 11 over fifty Chamber of Commerce and Society members attended the ribbon cutting ceremony officially opening the new "old barn." Later that week on Sunday, July 15 over 150 folks toured the new facility and admired the treasures from early days in agriculture, education, medicine, business and life.



Could Be A Great Program For Your Club or Organization

If you are in charge of entertainment or education for a club, church group, business or class. . . consider a tour of the Ankeny Area Historical Museums. These tours can be as simple as "wandering about" tours with one tour guide in about an hour of time. . . or they can be done with guest speakers from the society to talk about the WWII Ordnance Plant, agriculture and coal mines of the area, old classrooms, a country kitchen and the period house. Tours are free but donations are



Share Your Photos With Us!

The Historical Society is looking for photos to help us tell Ankeny's history (anything that happened before today is history).

Check your photo albums for family photos and photos of community, school and organizational activities and events that help tell our history, then contact us.

You may send you photos by :

- e-mail to: history@ankenyhistorical.org
- mail to: Ankeny Area Historical Society
P.O. Box 1111, Ankeny, IA 50021
- Or drop them off at the house: 301 SW 3rd St. (In the heart of Uptown).

If you send photos that you would like returned, be sure to note that on the photo. We will scan it and return the original to you.

December 1998, Volume 4, Number 4

Ankeny Disasters

Fires

January 21, 1932: "South Side of Ankeny's Trade Area Destroyed by Fire" - \$10,000/\$15,000 damage

Bert O'Keane's Restaurant, Dr. Patterson's building, Jay Good Barbershop, Brewbaker Plumbing Shop

July 20, 1936: Fire burns elevator-Wagner Grain Co. - \$20,000 loss

May 14, 1940: "Half of Ankeny's Trade Area Destroyed in \$50,000 Blaze" (north side)

Continued

Page 4

Rex/Frank Lamberti (brothers) meat market/grocery store; George Thompson harness office; Dr. J.A. Henderson, veterinarian; Wright Pharmacy, Mayor Fred W. Wright; Sexton Café, J.W. Sexton; Margaret's Beauty Shop, Margaret Gilbert.

Fire was discovered at 3:30 a.m. by Wilbur Lundholm in Beauty Shop where it is thought to have originated. Cause was unknown.

January 29, 1952: Denniston-Partridge Company, SW Third Street west of tracks destroyed.

April 1988: "Fire Levels Art Barn" located at Otter Creek Golf Course, \$30,000 damage

May 20, 1997: "19 Horses Destroyed in Stable Fire" at Tri-B Farm, SW Ankeny (Polk City Drive/Irwindale)

Tornadoes

1890: Tornado dropped down west of Ankeny and destroyed a church.

June 18, 1974: "Ankeny: Terror, Rubble. Two Die as Tornadoes Dance Around Heart of State"

Homes unroofed- 20-25% of homes have serious damage. Damage to schools estimated at \$3 million. Trees flattened or snapped in half, gaping holes that were once windows, debris covers lawns and streets, electric wires lying in streets, thousands without service.

March 20, 1990: "Tornado Rips Ankeny": A rare winter tornado with no notice hits about 20 homes that received serious damage, while 16 others had moderate damage. A completed condominium had damage.

Snow Storms

March 12, 1959: One of the worst snowstorms in many years hit Ankeny, paralyzing traffic and stranding motorists. Many homes took in over-night guests, who were unable to reach their homes. More than 200 John Deere Des Moines Works employees had to spend the night at the plant. Schools dismissed and while most students were home by 2pm, some were much later, but fortunately all reached home safely. Some rural areas were isolated for nearly two days.

December 22, 1961: Mother nature assured Ankeny of a white Christmas. Strong winds accompanied 7-9" of snow brought everything but emergency equipment to a standstill. Approximately 200 stranded motorists spent the night in Ankeny, many at the Legion Hall.

January 26, 1996: Heavy snow/ strong wind, white out conditions. Des Moines has 14 inches. 140 people stayed at Ankeny First United Methodist Church.

October 26, 1997: "First Snow Wallops Iowa. It Looks Like Somebody Bombed the Place." Electricity cut to at least 100,000 homes with some people without power for a few days. Six inches of heavy snow. Cleanup may cost \$60,000.

Hailstorm

October 8, 1958: Huge hailstones, some so big they were like blocks of ice, fell out of a thunderstorm over Ankeny about 7pm. One block was ten inches in diameter. Almost every house in the town was damaged. Some of the chunks of ice fell with such force they smashed through rooftops leaving gaping holes. Hoods and roofs on cars were badly dented. Thousands of window panes were broken. Total damage to schools was \$100,000 or more.



Helping to bring the Past to Life



Autumn Fun



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TOUR

Ankeny teachers took advantage of the beautiful weather for a trip to the AAHS to learn about local history on September 27, 2022. Ankeny East Elementary School second graders were led by volunteer guides to tour both the house and barn museums. There were lots of questions and enthusiasm from this great group of children!



UPTOWN TRICK-OR-TREAT

A fun family and safe alternative Halloween event was sponsored by our friends at the Uptown Association on October 20, 2022, from 5-8pm. AAHS helped with the festivities by handing out candy and small pumpkins to the many cute beggars that stopped by. So much fun!



DONATIONS

Without the philanthropy of our donors, the programs and improvements to our museum would not be possible. We wish to publicly thank you for your generosity.

General Donations~

Ankeny Class of 1977

Susan Ballard

Mary Bennett

Adam and Bobbie Bentz

Jim and Elaine Brazelton

Marilyn Dennler

Donna Kelling

Lee and Cindy Lundstrom

Jim Nervig

John and Nancy Peterson

Sue Rasmussen

John and Valerie Stratton

Memorial monies donated in memory of the following individuals:~

Bonnie Ballard

Diana Houge




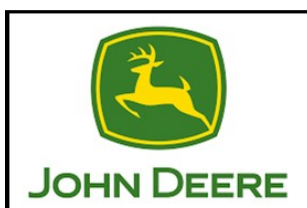
James Nelson Sr.

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

Your donation was truly appreciated.



We want to acknowledge our appreciation for the support and grants received by:






ANKENY AREA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S

*Annual Christmas
Cookie Sale*

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2022
301 SW THIRD STREET, ANKENY - HOUSE MUSEUM

MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT
WWW.ANKENYHISTORICAL.ORG OR CALL 515-965-5795

2 dozen cookies \$20
(Plus 1 treat from the goody table!)



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.

Memberships

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

Fall & Winter Hours

First Sunday of the month, 2pm to 4pm

Sept - Nov, Feb- May (closed December/January)

By Appointment

Call 515-965-5795 or
email history@ankenyhistorical.org



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

