

# NEWSLETTER

## SPRING 2024



**ANKENY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Volume 31 Number 1**

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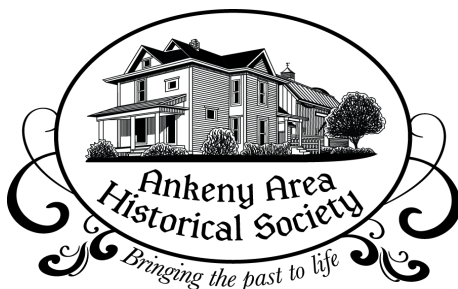
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## Message from the President

### Families ... a huge part of Ankeny's history

In 2008, Ankeny was recognized as one of the top ten towns for families by *Family Circle* magazine, and in 2009 it was ranked #62 in *MONEY* magazine's top 100 places to live.\* As many folks know, Ankeny has always been family-oriented. It's known as a great place to raise a family.

Over the years, Ankeny has had several well-known family names – Ballard, Hildreth, Sexauer, Hutton, Wagner, Howard, Randolph, Fontana, Brazelton, Albaugh, and so on. Some of us older residents have known members of those families or are part of them! We are so proud of our city and those people who have helped create the community we live in. But, Ankeny's significance started years prior.

We need to go *waayy* back to the beginning of our town – 1875, that is. You may know that the Ankeny family created the town then. John Fletcher Ankeny (and his wife Sarah) purchased about 80 acres along the railroad passage and named the town. But, are you aware of the history of that family that gave us our city's name?

Let's go back farther: The date is 1746. **Johann Theobald "DeWalt" Ankeney** (sic) came to the New World from Europe with his uncle on that date, and he purchased property in Lancaster and Bedford/Somerset Counties in Pennsylvania. (In Europe, the name was spelled Angne or Angene. Sounding it out, the American spelling happened. The spelling of the name has been questioned and is thought to be spelled differently by portions of the family.)

DeWalt was a Revolutionary War Patriot because he supplied food, supplies and shelter for the Colonial Cause. He is

*(Continued)*

## Message From the President—*continued*

the patriarch of many descendants in America. He married Mary Jane Domer, and they had two sons: Christian in 1749 and **Peter** in 1751. (After Mary's death, DeWalt married second wife Margaret Becker Frederick, who was a widow and had children from a previous marriage, and they had several more children.)

Peter Ankeny is the second descendant from whom our city hails. Peter chose to use the spelling Ankeny, and he and his wife Rosina Bonnet had several children, settling in Pennsylvania. Peter registered for military service in 1776 (important year) and was Captain of the 5<sup>th</sup> Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Bedford County Militia in 1781. At his death Peter was known to be the largest landowner in southwest Pennsylvania. One of their many children, **Joseph**, was born in 1802 and was our third descendant.



Joseph Ankeny,  
*father of*  
John Fletcher Ankeny

In 1823, Joseph married Harriett (Susana Giese). Their first four children (all boys) were born in Pennsylvania, including their oldest son, John Fletcher Ankeny (our town's founder), born in 1824. Joseph and Harriet moved to Ohio in 1831 with four little boys in a covered wagon equipped with their



John Fletcher Ankeny,  
*son of Joseph and our city's*  
*founder*

belongings to make a new home for their family. Four daughters were born to Joseph and Harriet in Ohio. Joseph was a leading merchant in Millersburg for two decades, and purchased land in Ohio, Illinois and Iowa. He became postmaster of Millersburg in 1838 and was one of the electors who carried the Ohio vote to Washington at the time of Lincoln's first election. In 1867, they moved their family to Iowa and settled on land he had previously entered claim to in 1854 when land was able to be purchased. Eventually, all members of this large family with their wives and children moved to Iowa and made Iowa their home.

**John Fletcher Ankeny** married Sarah "Sally" Wolgamot in Ohio in 1856, moved to Illinois, and they had four daughters. John Fletcher was associated with the Lincoln campaign in 1860 and was elected to the Illinois legislature. He was also a doctor by trade and an adventurer by calling. He and Sarah resided in Des Moines in 1869, and he was elected to the Des Moines City Council in 1872. He was a stockholder in the narrow-gauge railroad from Ames to Des Moines and saw the importance of a settlement north of Des Moines. He bought the land that

*(Continued)*

would become Ankeny on July 1, 1874, for \$1,600. He built a rooming house, a hotel, and the town's first store. He also built a house (still standing today), but the Ankeny family *never* lived in the town named after him! They continued to live in Des Moines where their friends and family members lived.

Even though John Fletcher didn't live in Ankeny, his name lives on. Many ancestors of the Ankeny family remain in Iowa and around the country (but John Fletcher had daughters, so their married names are different). From time to time, some of these ancestors have visited our museum and city.

The award-winning city of Ankeny is proud of its historic family ... and the city has made the family proud. That strong family history continues to be so important to our community. Over the years, families settled in our town and grew with extended family members. And grew and grew. Now, if a resident, you are part of that history! We can only imagine what family names will continue to impact the history of the city going forward!

Historically yours,  
Lois O'Donnell, Co-President

*With information provided by Karla Wright, descendant of the Ankeny family, who resides in Johnston.*

### John Fletcher Ankeny's genealogy at a quick glance:

Johann "DeWalt" Ankeney  
(Agne or Angene)



Peter Ankeny



Joseph Ankeny



John Fletcher Ankeny

\*Portions were taken from  
[www.en.m.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.m.wikipedia.org) > John Fletcher Ankeny and City of Ankeny, Iowa,  
[www.weebly.com/AnkenyFamily](http://www.weebly.com/AnkenyFamily), and  
*Ankeny Press Citizen*, April 1975.

(When researching, be sure to use the entire name, as the names were repeated for offspring.)

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# Museum Snapshots: Unforgettable Moments!

In the Fall of 2023, the annual pumpkin sale excelled, becoming the most successful to date. Thanks again to Jim & Elaine Brazelton, Jensen Family Farms, and all of the countless volunteers who picked, hauled, washed, etched and displayed all 2169 pumpkins! So much hard work goes into this project behind the scenes. We are much obliged!

Shown below, (l) Elaine Brazelton and (r) Lois O'Donnell represent AAHS at the popular Uptown Trunk-or-Treat event.



(Above) Annual Cookie Sale volunteers (from left) E. Brazelton, J. Quinlin, N. Breitreutz, K. Kasper, M. Nervig, M. Zirretta, J. Nervig, R. Taylor and C. Handley prepare to don their elf hats before customers choose their holidays treats. This is a well attended tradition at AAHS.

We enjoyed hosting Ankeny East Elementary 2nd graders at the museum in September. One group is shown at left, along with Superintendent Dr. Erick Pruitt.





The weather was unexpectedly pleasant for the late fall/early winter seasons and some much needed maintenance projects were completed.

The front steps and sidewalk of the house were repaired to prevent any accidents, along with the porch itself being stabilized by board member Joe Pitts.

We're also grateful to John Deere Des Moines Works for their assistance in November with yard work and barn museum tasks. They are such excellent supporters of the museum!



Norman McCleary, one of our newly elected 2024 board members, can often be found attached to the opposite end of a paint roller! In addition to owning Norm McCleary Painting for over 25 years in Ankeny, he has an added interest in keeping up the appearances here at AAHS. Norm *lived* in our house museum while growing up when it was located at it's original South Ankeny Boulevard location. Oh...the stories he can tell you about the history of this house!

Thanks for all you do, Norm. And welcome to the Board!



# From the Archives

Do you recognize the Ankeny home in this photograph? Are you familiar with its history as an orphanage? The following excerpt was taken from an article originally published in the September 2003 AAHS Newsletter, Volume 9, Number 3. *Source of Information: Brethren Church History, Hazel Moeckly*

At the annual conference of the Brethren Church in 1873, there was an outgrowth of concern for the care of neglected children.

“Child Rescue Work” was organized and a statement of “The Child’s Rights” was written. The Middle Iowa District of the Northern plains was the first to move on the “Child Rescue Work”. In 1887, a request was sent to the other two districts in Iowa suggesting a children’s home be established with the concerted efforts of all three districts.

The project was “deferred for a year”; then enthusiasm waned throughout the larger conference and the efforts were discontinued for several years. However, in 1909 the Middle Iowa District again brought the issue to the attention of the Brethren Church. A Child Rescue and Orphan’s Society was organized, designed after that adopted by the Oklahoma and Kansas Conference. A study committee, a Board of Trustees, and Constitution were the results of careful planning. “Everybody’s Friend” of Stillwater, Oklahoma would become the advertising medium. Subscriptions would cost 50 cents a year. A contract with a select family on trial would include providing the fund, clothing, and education of the child.

At the 1912 District Conference a report informed the people, “At present there is one application to be filled. Children have been placed in the following homes: Levi Laugh-



*Above photo donated by Richard Logli.*

man of Adel; Edgar Page, Wadena; Jerry Smith, Ogden; Elmer Powers, Ogden; S.A. Powers, Rippery; D.F. Walker, Adel”.

The report the following year included, “We now have three children awaiting homes, two boys each age four, and Baby Roy, four months. Three children have been placed in homes; two children are on trial, three more on hand and five applications on file”. A later report indicated “children on hand—three boys and three girls ranging in ages from five months to fourteen years”. Six were placed in 1916.

In 1917 it was decided to build a receiving home in Ankeny. “The Child Rescue Home” opened April 1, 1918. Stewards at the home were “Brother & Sister” A.E. Simpson followed by I.J. Erb and his wife. The number of children more than doubled. In 1923 twelve children were placed and eleven were adopted. “We urge one and all to visit the home and see what an attractive place it is, and judge for yourself whether it is not worthy of your co-operation”, Irving Haughtelin, manager.

*(Continued)*



In 1927, nine years after the opening of Ankeny's Rescue Home, it ran into difficulties because of changes in receiving the children, stringent laws giving much state control, and lack of financial support. In 1931, the Director of Finance & Properties was authorized to sell the property.

Because of the Depression, it was difficult to dispose of the Ankeny property. The house

was rented for \$240 - \$255 per year. In 1940 the Child Rescue Home was sold to Alice L. Radcliffe subject to contract. "The terms were \$250 on contract and the balance of \$2000 to be paid in \$25 monthly payments with 5% interest on unpaid balances".

The house remains today at 110 SW School Street.

### ***SPRING OPEN HOUSE SCHEDULE***

|                   |         |
|-------------------|---------|
| Sunday, March 3rd | 2 - 4pm |
| Sunday, April 7th | 2 - 4pm |
| Sunday, May 5th   | 2 - 4pm |

Office Hours:  
Tuesday/Thursday 10am - 2pm

Tours can also be scheduled by  
calling 515-965-5795 or  
emailing  
[history@ankenyhistorical.org](mailto:history@ankenyhistorical.org).



## **Get Ready for a Whirlwind Adventure with our Upcoming Tornado Exhibit!**

**The 50th anniversary of the devastating estimated F4 tornado in Ankeny, which claimed two lives, injured over 50 people, and caused extensive destruction, will be commemorated with a special display.**

**Created by member Rosemary Hutton Taylor, this exhibit will be featured at this year's "A Night at the Museum" event on June 18th. There will be a variety of things to explore, including literature, videos and photographs.**

**Stay tuned for more details on [www.ankenyhistorical.org](http://www.ankenyhistorical.org).**

Thank  
you

Expressing our gratitude to the  
museum's generous donors for their  
continued support.

General Donations:

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