



Spring 2021 Newsletter

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Volume 27 Number 1

2021 President's Message

The yearly rebirth of Spring is even more important this year, not only after our yearly winter doldrums but especially after a year under the rule of the evil king, COVID the 19th! It is wonderful to see the resilience of not only nature and all of us impacted by the pandemic, but also how many volunteers of the Ankeny Area Historical Society (AAHS) have been able to use their skills and talents, creating a rebirth at AAHS. Even though our closure, social and physical distancing, and general lack of social activities as usual limited in-person meetings and events, it has allowed AAHS volunteers to actively engage in museum reorganization, improve our technology displays, improve signage, develop new displays, keep membership strong, and secure funding through memberships, donations, and grants to keep AAHS operational and in the black!

A couple of items that I have observed in the last year that I would like to address are artifact donations and volunteerism, both of which are granted to you through your membership to AAHS. Regarding artifact donations and our extensive collections, I continue to be surprised at the depth and breadth of our current artifacts that are on display and in storage waiting to be used in future displays. There is also a nice library of books, newspapers, magazines, and scrapbooks and a growing number of electronic artifacts that can be shared with our members.

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Museum Re-Opening

The Board of Directors has approved the following guidance to reopen our museums:

(Date to be announced)

- Masks are required on people ages 5 and up.
- Limit number of people touring each museum at the same time.
- Hand sanitizers will be available.
- Designated areas will be cleaned after each group is finished.
- Visitors will be encouraged not to touch anything.

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However, much of our collection is based on “old Ankeny” prior to 1970. While we have some more current artifacts representing the past 50 years, I believe our collections could be improved and increased. If you think you may have an artifact that would help us better tell the Ankeny area story, please consider donating to AAHS to be used in our collection and be saved for future AAHS museum visitors to enjoy. If you are not yet ready to donate your belongings to the museum, it could be shared through pictures and a personal story written by you that we can either post physically or share electronically in our digital library.

Things to consider in donating to AAHS:

- Do you have a distinctive artifact that can help better tell the Ankeny area's unique story?
- Are there things you can share that will help fill holes in our collections?
- Is there a personal story through an artifact that can be told allowing us to share diaries, letters, and documents? Examples of this could be: Immigrants new to the Ankeny area; Workers at the DMOP; Young people who grew up in Ankeny and their experiences; Members of the military sharing their experiences with family or friends; Oral histories that you may want to share through video, etc.
- Scrapbooks, Newspapers, Pictures all help us tell the Ankeny area story.
- Your expertise on a particular topic to be used for quotes and/or verification of content.

In regards to volunteerism, I keep thinking about a strong suggestion made in our Bravo Grant confirmation letter, which read, “*May need to consider volunteer capacity to achieve objectives.” I understand that many of our efforts regarding on-site volunteers have been severely limited due to Covid restrictions. But I would like to think about the value of your membership which allows you the opportunity to volunteer in a variety of ways. Yes, when we re-open, we will need volunteers to host Open Houses, help with tours, put old displays in storage and set up new ones, help with technology operation, serve at the ice cream social or help with the cookie walk or pumpkins. However, think further about all aspects of volunteering. We could use volunteers in short-term and/or long-term events, such as:

- Develop pamphlets and brochures to be used in advertising AAHS to the public
- Help collections committee organize and process artifacts.
- Scan pictures and documents to digitize collections.
- Type and format articles and captions to be used on digital displays.
- Help the office manager develop and design our quarterly newsletters.
- Use your skills in graphic design to help update the displays telling the Ankeny story.
- Express ideas for new long and short-term displays and volunteer to help design them.
- Offer to share your personal collections with the public in temporary displays.
- Offer to share your personal story/oral history in video form to be shared in digital form.
- Use your financial skills in fund-raising and grant writing

Well, a lot to think about, but I know that there are many unique ideas, talented and creative people, and informed and knowledgeable members in our community that can continue to meet our mission statement, which is “to inspire in our community a sense of meaning and belonging by sharing the history and culture of the Ankeny area.”

Enjoy the resilience and rebirth of Spring!

Yours in History,

John Stratton, AAHS President

From the Archives, March 1998, Volume 4, Number 1

Tired Old Dietz House Keeps Frontier Secrets of Another Era: *Just west of the former Ankeny Ordnance Plant at the top of the hill where Highway 60's boomeranged curve swings sharply to Des Moines, one of Polk County's oldest residential structure stands on the edge of the frowsy timber land, erect and proud with its bricly elegance beginning to crumble, worn out and faded like an old opera tune.*

Dietz Place Built in 1867: It is the old Conrad Dietz home, one of the state's richest in pioneer lore built in 1867. An anachronism, the house seems to breathe great sweeps of the past as it rests tiredly between a modern home on the west and the industrial splendor of the John Deere plant on the north like today rubbing sympathetic sides with yesterday.

The true native of Ankeny-Polk City refers to this nostalgic niche as "Dietz Corner," and those who traffic the road from Polk City to Des Moines will remember the corner well because its exasperating sharpness for motorists. For Highway 60 follows the so-called Daniel Boone Trail (actually this territory was not explored by Daniel Boone but by his son, Captain Nathaniel Boone) and the pioneers who walked or horse backed along the path had no need for the niceties of modern, well banked curves and paved roads.

Stage Riders Hid from Indians: The house was originally used as a stopping place for stage coaches which made the route from Des Moines to Polk City and Boone. It was a familiar landmark many years ago where frightened stage riders took refuge in a secret tunnel behind the house..... For it was here that Indians lurked in the blackness of the marginal fringe of timber which now circumvents the area.

In his early boyhood Conrad Dietz came to this country from Germany and erected a small cabin on the side where the brick home now stands. He homesteaded the land in the areas and continued to work hard so that the family was soon able to purchase more and more land.

Brought Timber from Rock Creek: Later to build the present place, timber was brought from a nearby sawmill located on Rock Creek and bricks were hauled from Des Moines. Each year the Dietz family would trek to Keokuk to have wheat ground into flour for the winter. The Dietz's purchased flour and supplies in Des Moines ad Polk City. Mail was delivered as far as Saylorville.

The old house contains the original doors and sills and the beams are as solid as the beams in many houses and buildings more recently built. Above the door, in a pretentious faded script, are the words, "Built by Conrad Dietz in 1867." The words are barely legible as the tired sign has faded from age and weathering. Here, indeed, is not just another house by the side of the road, but a house from the heart, a house grown richer from its great experience with the early Polk County frontiers.



Our monthly "Ankeny through the Decades" feature is in its fifth year!

Committee Updates:

Collection Committee:

Submitted by Rosemary Hutton Taylor

Members Barb Nagle Agan and Rosemary Hutton Taylor, of the Collection Committee, have been working weekly on inventory of the society's artifacts. This winter was spent on the inventory of artifacts that had been on display in the workshop area and now will be stored in our storage unit.

The process to inventory an artifact takes about twenty minutes per artifact. It has to be checked for an accession number, checked off our list of artifacts, photographed, placed in a location determined by the type of artifact and that information and photo placed in our museum data base called Past Perfect.

Items stored in the Museum Basement



Exhibits Committee:

Submitted by Dennis Adamson

The exhibits committee has been very busy during our pandemic shutdown. In order to make the museum a place to revisit and display new exhibits and experiences, we have re-organized and added new artifacts to explore. Thanks to a generous John Deere grant, we have added new technology to enhance your learning and enjoyment while visiting the museum.

Video displays have been added to help tell the stories of what helped shape our community.

A new athletic team championship display has been added to allow graduates and fans relive the Ankeny community's 60 sports team championships from 1969- 2020.

We have interviews with 6 Ankeny championship coaches and a local sports writer to watch on one of our new video displays. Soon we will have QR codes that will give you more information on your smart phone while viewing the exhibits in addition to video displays telling stories of our parlor, farming, military, local schools and the changing Uptown business area exhibits.



Some of these projects are still in the production stages, but that will make the museum a place you will need to return to often to see the progress and changes that we have been making. We are looking forward to the time you can all be invited back.

Brick Project Update: “Ring Around the Bell”

Submitted by Lois O'Donnell

Thank you to everyone who donated toward the memorial bricks that will be placed around the old school bell being moved to the museum yard from Parkview school! We had over 150 bricks ordered, and they should arrive in the late spring. We want to place them as soon as the bell is moved to the new foundation. Our “ring around the bell” will be a wonderful way to remember all those folks and school classes.

Many thanks to all of you!



At Parkview, the Bell was at the far right side of the photo.



At Central, it was on the top of the building.

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

Laura Benjamin
Joe Bianchi
Lyn Van De Pol
Ron Fontana
Dan and Pat Fliger
Barbo Westerlund Garlund
Terry and Nancy Handley
Jim and Lynn Harkin

Tom and Karen Jones
John and Marjorie Ley
Tom and Lois O'Donnell
Sandra Plage
Deetra Buehler Polito
Marilyn Shay
Linda Schlenker
72 Degrees

* We apologize if we left you off the list.

Memorials

Memorial monies donated to Ankeny Area Historical Society in memory of the following individuals:

Elizabeth L. Howard

Did you know AAHS participates in the Amazon Smile program?

What is AmazonSmile?

It is a simple way to support Ankeny Area Historical Society every time you shop, at no cost to you. Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases. Please support AAHS at [Smile.Amazon.Com](https://www.smile.amazon.com)

How do I shop at AmazonSmile?

You simply go to [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) on your web browser or your Amazon app. Check to make sure you see the "AmazonSmile" logo to make sure you activated AmazonSmile.

Can I use my existing Amazon.com account on AmazonSmile?

Yes, you use the same account.

How do I select Ankeny Area Historical Society as my charitable organization?

On your first visit, you will see the button to select your charity. Once you select Ankeny Area Historical Society, your selection will be set for all your purchases.

Thank you for your yearly membership! Without it, we wouldn't be able to keep our doors open for future generations to enjoy and learn about Ankeny's amazing history!!

Helping to bring the Past to Life



Last January, we applied to Bravo Greater Des Moines, for an Arts & Culture Program Grant (ACPG). This grant is program specific and may be a one-time event or a defined series of events.

We are pleased to announce, AAHS received a \$2,000 grant from Bravo Greater Des Moines for 2021 to support our Programs and Events at the Museum.

Bravo is proud to invest in our work to provide essential arts, culture and heritage experiences for those who live, work, play and visit Central Iowa.

Thank you Bravo.

2021 AAHS Board of Directors

John Stratton	President
Lois O'Donnell	Vice-President
JoEllen Nervig	Secretary
Jim Nervig	Treasurer

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Christine Schumacher

<u>Ex-Officio</u>	
JoAnn Adamson	Past-President
Al Azinger	Interim Superintendent
Ron Sampson	Past-President

Check out our webpage at www.AnkenyHistorical.org.

Did you know you can pay for your membership online?

A members only section lets members view newsletters, upcoming events, flyers and pictures of Ankeny through the

Dates for 2021

***Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic
Our Open Houses and Programs
Are On Hold***

***Please check out our website for
upcoming
dates and programs at
ankenynhistorical.org
and follow us
On Facebook!***

Mission:

***The Ankeny Area Historical Society's mission is to
inspire in our community a sense of meaning and
belonging by sharing the history and culture of the
Ankeny area.***

Spring is Here

