

# Ames Historical Society

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AMES • IOWA

## Newsletter to Members 2013 WINTER....ISSUE #1/4

*Discovering our history,  
Preserving our past,  
Sharing our stories.*



*Improvements in early road and bridge-building came from expertise at Iowa State College, where the Iowa Highway Commission was originally located. IHC was forerunner of today's DOT.*

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The Board meets the 2nd Thursday of each month 6:45pm at 416 Douglas. Members welcome!

<b>Director</b>	Casie Brockert Vance
<b>Staff</b>	Alex Fejfar, Margaret Vance Hannah Frederick
<b>Volunteer Curator</b>	Dennis Wendell
<b>Facility Manager</b>	Neal Tarman

Ames Historical Society is an incorporated, 501c3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in local and state history through publications, programs, exhibitions and operation of an archive and historic site.

**Headqtrs:** 416 Douglas, Ames, IA 50010  
Open Wed-Fri, 1-5pm  
**Mail:** PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010  
**Phone:** 515-232- 2148  
**E-mail:** mail@ameshistoricalsociety.org  
**Website:** www.AmesHistoricalSociety.org  
**Facebook:** www.facebook.com/ameshistoricalsociety

The newsletter is published four times a year for AHS members. Direct comments and questions to: Editor, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010 or e-mail above.

Hoggatt School is located on the grounds of Meeker School, near 18<sup>th</sup> and Burnett, Ames, Iowa. Open April 1 through October 31.

## Ames & Iowa Celebrates 100 Years of the DOT!

*Adapted from information on the Iowa Department of Transportation website*

On April 13, 1904, the 30th Iowa General Assembly created the Iowa State Highway Commission (IHC), recognizing the need for improved roads.

It was originally established in Ames as part of Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (today, Iowa State University). The IHC was to provide information and serve as an administrative advisory agency to local jurisdictions.

Although severely handicapped by a biennial appropriation of just \$7,000, the commission was to:

- conduct public highway demonstrations
- provide information to county supervisors
- create standards for highway repair and construction
- investigate Iowa road problems
- record and report progress annually to the governor

At Iowa State, the work was assigned to the divisions of Agriculture and Engineering, directed by C.F. Curtiss and Anson Marston, respectively. Others involved were Thomas MacDonald, H.M. Bainer and J.T. Hoover.

While IHC was productive, it remained hindered by the lack of funds and needed specialized skills. Administrators wanted to carry out laboratory tests of Iowa road materials, build sections of experimental roads and make working tests of materials and construction techniques suited to Iowa's special needs. In addition, testing and designing concrete culverts and bridges, compiling and publishing road census information and mapping county roads was needed.

To partly relieve the problems inherent in the "disproportionate" relationship between desired results and allotted funds, the commission conducted a road school in June 1905 to train others in specific skills – such as culvert construction and operation of road machinery.



On April 9, 1913, the IHC separated from the Iowa State College, becoming an independent state-administered organization – but it remained in Ames. It was managed by a three-member commission: Anson Marston, H.C. Beard and J.W. Holden.

Immediately, the newly organized IHC set about resolving poor business practices that undermined the needs of the state.

Its first challenge: the state was divided into districts by supply and bridge companies, allowing insufficient competition and limited oversight. To tackle such tremendous responsibilities, the IHC increased its personnel and re-organized itself into four departments: Office, Designing, Field and Education. The commission was also given supervisory control over all county and township road officials.

The IHC continued to operate for 62 years, adapting to the changing needs of the state and making significant contributions to modern highway engineering and construction. Ultimately, it became an integral part of state and federal legislative initiatives, gaining a national reputation for excellence.

By the late 1960s, existing transportation networks were in need of transformation. In 1969, Governor Robert Ray initiated a transportation study.

As a result of its findings, in 1974, the 65th Iowa General Assembly created the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT).

It placed other modal agencies (rail, aeronautics, etc.) under the department to promote more orderly and effective planning and funding of programs, and to achieve a more balanced transportation system.

For more than a century, the IHC and Iowa DOT have promoted the growth and betterment of Iowa's transportation system. Still headquartered in Ames, the agency continues to serve the transportation needs of Iowa and its citizens.

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## Iowa Transportation "Firsts"

- 1819** First steamboat to pass along Iowa's western border, on the Missouri River.
- 1823** First steamboat (the "Virginia") to pass along Iowa's eastern border, navigating the upper Mississippi River from St. Louis to St. Paul.
- 1838** First "official" road in Iowa territory, the route from Keokuk to Iowa City.
- 1838** First regular stagecoach line, operating from Burlington to St. Francisville.
- 1856** First "manned" balloon flight (Burlington).
- 1856** First railroad bridge over Mississippi River was completed near Rock Island, IL.
- 1867** First railroad line to traverse the state was completed (Union Pacific).
- 1888** First electric street car put into service (in Des Moines, the second electric railway in U.S.)
- 1899** First automobiles displayed in Iowa, at a fair in Linn County.
- 1904** First concrete paved street (Eagle St., Le Mars).
- 1904** First required registrations of motor vehicles.
- 1905** First person killed in an automobile accident.
- 1911** First regular passenger bus line (operated between Charles City and Waverly).
- 1917** First federal aid for highways received.
- 1919** First official road map published.
- 1920** First commercial air freight flight to Iowa.
- 1920** First regular consignment of U.S. airmail reached Iowa.

- 1925** First state motor vehicle fuel tax.
- 1928** First scheduled airline in Iowa (Midwest Airways Corporation).
- 1928** First asphalt paved roadway.
- 1930** Iowa woman becomes the first airline stewardess in the country (Ellen Church, Cresco).
- 1931** Lock & Dam 15, on the Mississippi River's mile 483 at the NW tip of Arsenal Island, Rock Island, IL is the first structure built as part of the 9-foot navigation channel. Locks built from April 1931 to December 1932; dam built March 1932 to May 1934.
- 1935** Lincoln Highway became first paved trans-continental highway.
- 1947** Slipform paver invented in Iowa.
- 1949** Iowa Road Use Tax Fund established.
- 1953** Salt first used experimentally on roadways for ice removal.
- 1958** First Iowa segment of interstate, I35/80, opened on the SW edge of Des Moines.
- 1971** Iowa's original AMTRAK system put into operation.
- 1986** Seatbelt law enacted.

For more historical information and many pictures, visit the IDOT's website and click on the Centennial banner at the top of the homepage.

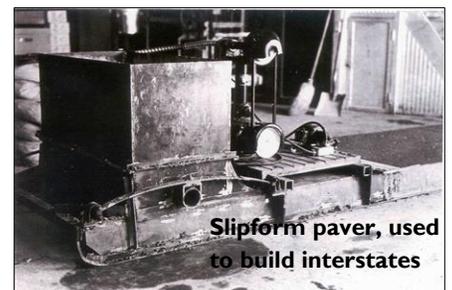
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## Centennial Exhibit Opens June 7: *DOT: A Journey in Transportation*

An exhibit showcasing chapters from Iowa's transportation history will be on display at the Octagon Center for the Arts, 427 Douglas Avenue, from June 7 through August 4, 2013.

The opening reception will be Fri. June 7, 5-8pm, during Main Street Cultural District's annual ArtWalk.

Watch the AHS website for announcements about programs or gallery talks in conjunction with the exhibit.

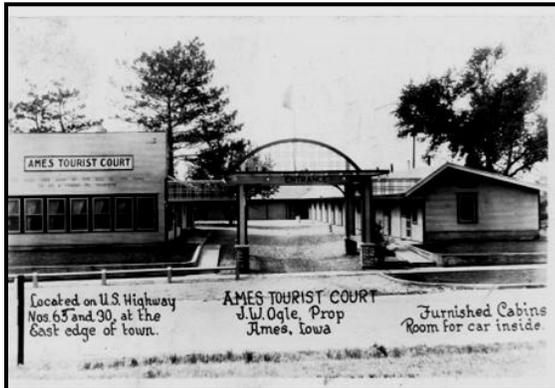


## Upcoming Special Events

Final Lecture in 2013 Series:

**Tuesday, April 30, 7:00 pm**

At Ames City Auditorium, 520 Sixth Street



### By the Side of the Road: Along the Lincoln Highway in Ames

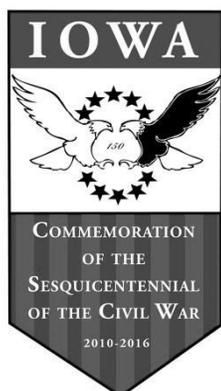
by Jeff Benson, Lincoln Highway Historian

The Lincoln Highway was established 100 years ago in 1913 as the first trans-continental road in America. Its tremendous influence on local economies across the country can be seen in Ames, where businesses of all kinds flourished along the route. Highway historian, Jeff Benson, will provide a tour through time of what sprang up by the side of the road.

Free: Co-sponsored by the Ames Historic Preservation Commission. Open to the public.



The re-dedication event for Story County's Civil War artifacts will be held Flag Day, June 14 at noon, Story County Administration Building, 900 Sixth Street, Nevada, IA.



### Civil War Sesquicentennial Event on Flag Day Commemorates Story County in the Civil War

On Flag Day, June 14, a ceremony commemorating the original dedication of two important Story County Civil War artifacts will be held in Nevada. The U.S. is observing the sesquicentennial of the Civil War from 2011 through 2015.

A cannon and bronze tablet, long a part of Story County history, will be re-dedicated at 12:00 noon in front of the Story County Administration Building, 900 Sixth Street, Nevada.

The cannon is a Confederate Parrott 3-inch cannon that was placed in front of the old courthouse in 1901 by the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic). The tablet, mounted on granite, features a profile of President Abraham Lincoln and the words of the Gettysburg Address. It was dedicated on Flag Day 1930 by the WRC (Woman's Relief Corps).

SUVCW (Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War) re-enactors will take part in the ceremony that will also honor Jason Devillo Ferguson, Story County's first hero of the Civil War. He was mortally wounded at the Battle of Shiloh, 6 April 1862, where he is buried. Grand Army of the Republic Post #31 and the Woman's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the GAR Post #147 are named in his honor. These organizations donated the historic cannon and tablet to the county.

All Civil War soldiers who volunteered will be honored as well as the 511 veterans who found their final resting place in Story County.

The event has been endorsed by the Iowa Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee. The public is invited.

The event is supported by National Woman's Relief Corps, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Story County Board of Supervisors, Story County Veterans Affairs, Iowa Genealogical Society, Story County Genealogical Society, Story City Historical Society, Slater Area Historical Association, Nevada Community Historical Society, Maxwell Community Historical Society, Ames Historical Society, Cambridge Historical Association Society, Gilbert Historical Society and Huxley Historical Society.

More information, call 515.460.8304 or email [gretchen.triplett@gmail.com](mailto:gretchen.triplett@gmail.com).

For a day-to-day history of the Civil War, go to [www.civilwar150.org](http://www.civilwar150.org)

## Headquarters Happenings: Around 416 Douglas

### Ames Aviatrix Subject of Project



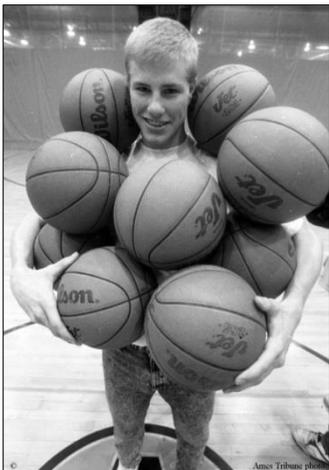
A group of students preparing their History Day project visited headquarters to study materials about Neta Snook, the Ames resident and pioneer aviatrix who became famous for teaching

Amelia Earhart to fly. The Snook collection is one of our most heavily used as history buffs discover it on our website. On display are a variety of family artifacts, photographs and publicity in addition to a model of Neta's famous barn-storming, Canuck biplane constructed by local model-airplane enthusiast, Denny Goodrich.

Many of the Snook items were donated by Neta's niece and nephew, Kären Smedal John and Karsten Smedal. Their mother, Vivian Snook Smedal, also a pioneer pilot, served as Neta's agent and editor of her book. Included in Kären's and Karsten's most recent donation are seven versions of Neta's book, *I Taught Amelia to Fly*, as well as photos and articles about Neta, Amelia and Ann H. Pellegrino, a former Story City resident and important flyer, aviation historian and author of the three-volume *Iowa Takes to the Air*.

### AHS a "Go To" Organization

In January, Society staff supplied the cable network HBO with four photos of Neta Snook and Amelia Earhart from the Karsten/Kären Smedal collection. They intend to use them in bonus content for the Season 3 DVD and Blu-ray discs of *Boardwalk Empire*. Organizations such as HBO pay a fee for image use that supports our operations.



Then in February, staff supplied ESPN with an early photo (left) of ISU basketball coach, Fred Hoiberg, to use in one of their TV broadcasts.

Fred grew up in Ames and played basketball for Ames High School before becoming a well-known collegiate and professional player and coach.

### We get Mail!

✉ In February, we received this note from Ron Sexton: "I am a 1967 grad of AHS and have been enjoying the historical photos (in the Ames Tribune). I grew up on 5th Street, right where the parking lot is [near the Veterans' Memorial] so I grew up downtown on my bicycle. Seeing all those old photos sure brought back memories! Thank you for making me smile."

✉ Last summer, this email arrived from David Babington: "Thanks so much for the interesting account of the Quade Photographic Studio in Ames. Today, from a genealogy contact in California, I received a great photo that was taken at the Quade Studio in about 1905 of my Great Uncle David Babington (1878-1961) with two young nieces, Josephine Wylie (1898-1989) and Arveta "Helen" Wylie (1900-1988). Doing a Google search for "quade photography ames iowa" revealed your information. I am not sure why the photo was taken in Ames, since the Wylie girls were from Colfax Twp., Boone County, IA - so I assume that Ames would have been close enough for traveling to have a family photo taken. Now I know something about the fellow who took the photo I am very pleased to have."

✉ This thank you note from Phyllis Harris followed a presentation on the history of the Ames Public Library: "I appreciated Kathy's Svec's *Women and the Ames Public Library* talk at Collegiate Methodist in January. Anita Wald-Tuttle and I were 7<sup>th</sup> graders in (Library Director) Letha Davidson's apprentice class along with John Willis, Jean McDonald, Ada Biester and others. Then we worked at specific jobs for the library through high school into college. In other words, we were marked for life by Letha Davidson!"

✉ An email in March from Rebecca MacRae thanked curator Dennis Wendell for images of Tolbert MacRae, former Iowa State music professor: "I can't tell you what a gift you have given me and my family. It truly was Divine Intervention (that I found your name on the website). The pictures you sent will be forwarded to my cousins on the MacRae side. One picture shows Tolbert's sister, my great aunt Kate. A few days ago I heard back from Iowa State regarding photos I took of what I believe to be Tolbert's letter sweater. They saw the photos and said they would love to have it in their archives. I've had it in the closet, protected and felt the best place for it would be back home in Iowa. I'll be sending it within the next few days. It's actually in beautiful condition. I feel my parents would be happy about this and now others can enjoy them."

## Society News



### Spohnheimer Visits

Former Society administrator Alan Spohnheimer (center, with kangaroo) visited headquarters in January with aides from the On With Life center in Ankeny. It was a good outing, as Alan recognized staff and seemed familiar with the role he had formerly played. Alan suffered severe brain injuries in a fall on August 31st of last year. He has since been discharged from the rehab center, and lives in Ames with his wife Gina. In-home caregivers, family members and friends visit the couple regularly. Though regaining speech function has been slow, those around him are heartened by his continued ability to perform the music he has played and enjoyed for years. Pictured, l to r: Casie Brockert, Margaret Vance, Dennis Wendell, Alan, Neil Tarman, Jerry Litzel.

### From Interim to Director

Casie Brockert, former Assistant Administrator who stepped in as Interim Administrator after Alan Spohnheimer's injury, has been named full-time Director of the Ames Historical Society as of the first of the year. In this new role, Casie oversees daily operations at Society headquarters, staff and volunteers, and programming. Casie is in the office daily during regular business hours.

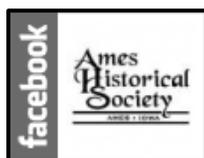


Casie took on yet another new role when she and Kellen Vance were married April 6. Kellen will graduate from Iowa State in May. We all extend our congratulations! (Note: Kellen is no relation to staff member, Margaret Vance!)

We're on Facebook!

"Like" us and follow us there:

[www.facebook.com/ameshistoricalsociety](http://www.facebook.com/ameshistoricalsociety)



### Ames 150<sup>th</sup> Approaches

The Ames Sesquicentennial will be marked in 2014 with a number of special events that are now in the planning stages. The Society has invited local organizations to take part and hopes for a varied schedule of happenings.

The Society plans several exhibits focusing on items from our collections. Members who would like to help by choosing and/or researching these items and writing exhibit captions are welcome! Call 515-232-2148 to state your interest, or email [mail@ameshistorical-society.org](mailto:mail@ameshistorical-society.org). Individuals and organizations interested in providing an activity or program in conjunction with the Sesquicentennial may also contact us.

### Expansion Plans!

Through the support of our loyal members, the Society has accumulated the resources to expand into more space in our building at 416 Douglas. We are in the planning stages for taking over the entire first floor by fall. This will entail shifting one of our tenants, but will enable us to provide more space for exhibits, presentations, staff and storage. We will also use the main building doors as our entrance. Stay tuned!

### Mark Your Calendars...

More upcoming events for local history buffs:

Thursday, June 18, 7pm

at the Octagon Center for the Arts, 427 Douglas

***The Library Story: From Grocery Shelf to Gigabytes***  
by Kathy Svec, Society co-president

The public library in Ames grew from loaned space in a grocery store in 1892 to the multi-story, high tech, growing facility we know today. Learn about the dedicated group of local citizens - especially Ames women - who sought to ensure the existence of a library in our city, and the influential leaders who built the institution into the facility we know today: one of the top ten libraries in the US for cities our size!

Friday, October 18, 7pm

at the Octagon Center for the Arts, 427 Douglas

***Abe Mezvinsky and his Legacy***  
by Norton and Ed Mezvinsky

Many Ames residents remember Abe Mezvinsky and his three Ames Fruit & Grocery Stores. During this program, Abe's sons will trace his life from his arrival in Ames around 1934 until his retirement and move in 1980 to Kansas City, MO, where he died in 1982. The focus will be on Abe as a businessman and benefactor and on life for one of Ames' very few orthodox Jewish families.

# 2013 Summer Season at Hoggatt School

## Hoggatt School: 1860s One-Room Country School Museum

While thoughts and plans for warm-weather days in June, July and August are still a few months away, plans for summer at Hoggatt School have been set! We hope this news will give you plenty of advanced notice so you can join us for pleasant times at the country school!

Hoggatt School was built in 1861- 62 for the families of pioneer children before Ames was established. The school played a dual role: it was first a country school and then was the first public educational building in the city of Ames. It was used until 1868, a total of 6 years.

Restored to the 1862 time period, the school is open by appointment for group tours and programs from April 1 to October 31, 2013. Call 515-232-2148.

**Regular 2013 public open hours are  
Sundays, June 2 to August 25, from 2 to 4 p.m.**

Hoggatt School is located on the grounds of Meeker School, at 18<sup>th</sup> and Burnett in Ames.

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**Sunday, June 2, open 2 - 4 p.m.**

**3 p.m.** – Civil War-era Games

Come play the simple but energetic games that school children played in the 1860s!

**Sunday, June 9, open 2 - 4 p.m.**

**2:15 – 3:15** Mary Atherly Presenting; Family

Connections: Hoggatt School & the ISU Farm House

**Sunday, June 16, open 2 - 4 p.m.**

Come hear the stories of the first school in Ames, Iowa.

**Sunday, June 23, open 2 - 4 p.m.**

**2:15 – 3:15** Bob Bourne Presenting; Connections: The

Railroads to Ames History

**Sunday, June 30, open 2 - 4 p.m.**

Come hear the stories of the first school in Ames, Iowa.

**Sunday, July 7, open 2 - 4 p.m.**

**3 p.m.** – Civil War-era Games

Come play the simple but energetic games that school children played in the 1860s!

**Sunday, July 14, open 2 - 4 p.m.**

**2:15 – 3:15** Tom Richards Presenting; Connections:

Sing Pioneer Songs & Connect to Ames History

**Sunday, July 21, open 2 - 4 p.m.**

Come hear the stories of the first school in Ames, Iowa.

**Sunday, July 28, open 2 - 4 p.m.**

**2:15 – 3:15** Janice Roxberg Presenting; Connections:

Pioneer History to Button Collecting

**Sunday, August 4, open 2 - 4 p.m.**

**3 p.m.** – Civil War-era Games

Come play the simple but energetic games that school children played in the 1860s!

**Sunday, August 11, open 2 - 4 p.m.**

**2:15 – 4:00** Ice Cream Social and Doug Provow

Presenting; Sing-a-Long & History Behind the Songs

**Sunday, August 18, open 2 - 4 p.m.**

Come hear the stories of the first school in Ames, Iowa.

**Sunday, August 25 open 2 - 4 p.m.**

**2:15 – 3:15** Pam Riney-Kehrberg Presenting;

Connections: The Homestead Act to Pioneer Life

## Group Tours Available

Hoggatt School curator, Carol Alexander Phillips, takes requests from groups for tours of the school outside regular open hours. Scout troops, school groups, reunion classes and others have scheduled trips to Hoggatt. Call 515-232-2148 to arrange a tour.



Visitors to Hoggatt School will be able to view the new wood shake shingle roof installed last summer (above), funded in part with a State of Iowa Country Schools Grant, funded by REAP, Resource Enhancement And Protection. The repairs were made in keeping with the historical character of the structure.

# Website Wanderings: [www.AmesHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.AmesHistoricalSociety.org)

The Ames Historical Society website provides a wealth of information! There are materials that are helpful for researchers as well as stories and pictures that are simply fun to browse. Here's a sample of what you might find:

On the homepage, click on **QUICK FACTS**, in the main menu. Among many interesting tidbits is this list:

### Former Ames residents of note:

- Billy Sunday: professional baseball player/evangelist
- Albert Caldwell: Ames High School principal and survivor of the Titanic sinking
- George Washington Carver: plant scientist
- John Atanasoff: inventor of the first electronic digital computer
- Neta Snook: pioneer pilot/ Amelia Earhart's teacher
- Dick Schory: noted percussionist
- Peter Schickele: composer and musical parodist (a.k.a. P.D.Q. Bach)
- Ada Hayden: botanist and prairie scientist
- Art Fry: inventor of the Post-it Note
- Nick Nolte: Hollywood movie actor
- Ted Kooser: U.S. Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner in poetry
- R. Crumb: counterculture comic book artist



**QUICK FACTS** also includes words to *The Song of Ames* from 1922, information about the Ames connection to the sinking of the Titanic, and pictures of Ames' weightiest resident, 612 pound G.W. "Fatty" Nichols who traveled as a side show to state fairs around 1915.

Under **BOOKS and MAPS**, researchers can find the complete text of the first history of Ames, written in 1876 by C. E. Turner. Ames was just 8 years old at the time it was written during the U.S. centennial. Also appearing is the section on Ames from the 1887 *History of Story County, Iowa* by William G. Allen.

You may also find *Place Names of Story County* by George H. Scheetz, a comprehensive guide to Story County's named places and political subdivisions, past and present. It includes county, townships, precincts, cities, towns, villages, hamlets, inhabited locales, railroad junctions, and post offices.

Under **YOUR STORIES** are many reminiscences from current and former Ames residents, such as:



### The Magic Window by Jack Morris, Ames High Class of 1959

"Back in 1954, I was invited to bring some of my turtles to Iowa State College's WOI TV studio for the Magic Window Show. The host must have been Betty Lou Varnum. My mother, Dorcas, worked at Morrill Hall for the ISC Extension Service and helped me get on the show. It was great fun for a 7th grader to be on TV and talk about my turtles! I remember bringing

some painted turtles from Lake Laverne and explaining how I cared for them. While at the studio, I got to star in live commercials by drinking a glass of milk from the Trow Distributors and sampling other items from their studio kitchen while the announcer pitched products." We welcome stories about memorable times in Ames!

**HELP IDENTIFY** is one of the website's popular sections. Posted are pictures from our collection or those submitted by members that came to us without information. Though we have had readers who have been able to help us, a number of pictures remain anonymous.

One example is the picture below, taken in 1951 at (we think) Crawford School, where a number of little buckaroos are posing for the camera!



So far, no one has come forward to identify this picture... Any helpers out there?

# Museum Shop

Many unique items!



Corn husk doll kits and marble sets

Vintage handkerchiefs and handkerchief doll kits

Picture postcards of historic images

Children's activity books; Ames t-shirts

Union Pacific Sesquicentennial light pole banners  
from the 2012 celebration

Out of print books on local history

All of Farwell Brown's books on Ames

Open Wed-Fri 1-5pm or by appointment, 515-232-2148

## Is it time to renew your membership?

Renewals are due on the one-year anniversary of last year's payment. Check this newsletter's label for information about your membership. Memberships fund the day-to-day operations of the Society, allowing us to continue to be a valued community resource. We thank you!

<b>Introductory - 1st year</b>	<b>\$10</b>	<b>Sustaining</b>	<b>\$100</b>
<b>Individual</b>	<b>\$25</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>\$250</b>
<b>Family</b>	<b>\$40</b>	<b>Benefactor</b>	<b>\$500</b>
<b>Friend</b>	<b>\$50</b>	<b>Patron</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Ames Historical Society, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010**

## Goodbye Old House



In August 2012, the house at 6<sup>th</sup> St. and Grand Ave. occupied by Shoppes on Grand and once owned by the McCarthy family (of Emma McCarthy Lee Park) was torn

down to make way for an office building. At one time, it was one of four large houses facing Grand in that block.

Return Service Requested

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