

Ames Historical Society

AMES • IOWA

Newsletter to Members
2010 FALL.....ISSUE #4/4
30th Anniversary 1980-2010

The mission of the Ames Historical Society is to preserve local history and illuminate its stories.



Upper right: a Davy Crockett-style "coon skin" hat adorns the head of a Curtiss Avenue kid.

Ames Historical Society Board:

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

Administrator Alan Spohnheimer
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Facility Manager Neal Tarman

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

Headqtrs: 416 Douglas, Ames, IA 50010
 Open Wed-Fri, 1-5pm
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Website: www.AmesHistoricalSociety.org

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 18th and Burnett, Ames, IA. Open April 1 through October 31.

Growing up on Curtiss Avenue in Ames

By Mary E. (Meg) Speer, Society Board member

Curtiss Avenue in Ames is a relatively short street that runs north and south between 10th and 16th Streets. The Avenue is named for a prominent Iowa State University person, Charles F. Curtiss, who joined the faculty in 1891 and was Dean of Farming from 1900 to 1933. Curtiss Hall and the Curtiss Farm were also named in his honor.



In the 1950's and 60's, many families with active children lived on Curtiss. South of 13th Street were the Morgans, Constantines, Ricketts, Coveys, and Russells. North of 13th were the Huisman, Lofgren, Williams, Curry and Kluge families and others with children. The Kattlesen, Huston, Speer and Jackson families lived on the east side in the 1400-1500 blocks. The Crawford,

Fritsch, Reinbold and Mulhall families lived on the west side - a total of 30 children in those families alone!

Now adults, former Curtiss Avenue kids are scattered across the country - New York, Washington D.C., South Carolina, Colorado, Arizona, California, Washington State and states in between. They were asked to share some of their best memories about growing up on Curtiss - and here are highlights from their tales.

The children attended St. Cecilia's on Lincoln Way or Roosevelt School on 9th Street. The three Morgan children – Jack, Mike, Betty Jane - attended Roosevelt all seven years (K-6), just like their father did. Steven Lofgren was remembered on a plaque sculpted by Christian Petersen in the lobby at Roosevelt. Steven died in May 1956 while crossing 13th Street on his way to school. *

The children were Campfire Girls and Cub Scouts. They took swimming lessons at Carr's Pool in the summer and walked to school, even in cold weather. Everyone wore rubbers and overshoes in rain and cold and their families sat down at the table to eat meals together. Church and Sunday school were weekly events. The kids had sleepovers and Barbies and paper dolls. They played in a street almost free of traffic – sledding in the winter and playing ball in the summer. Dads took them pheasant hunting. When a little older, the youngsters had jobs and some earned money detasseling corn in the summer. Boys had paper routes to deliver and collect for weekly.



Just to the west, Chicago & Northwestern trains whistled and rumbled north and south across 13th Street as parents crossed their fingers and hoped their paper carriers paid attention. Greg Mulhall remembers the Ames Tribune cut his route in half and he took a pay cut of \$5 a week!

The Beatty grandchildren came to visit from California, probably the summer of 1964 and introduced the skateboard phenomenon. Roller skates were taken apart and nailed to 2x4" boards. Karine Fritsch McLaughlin remembers what great times were had until Mr. Mulhall, a WOI-TV executive, hit the bump in the sidewalk in front of the Fritsch's house, despite the kids screaming warnings to him to stop! Remembering his football days at Iowa State, he fell and rolled, cracking only his elbow. His kids said, "Dad why do you think we never go down that side of the street?"



Before Bethesda Lutheran Church was built, one could look west from Curtiss to what seemed like a never-ending cornfield, where kites were flown and football fields were custom-made with lawn mowers. A hastily announced kick-the-can contest at night could quickly draw 25 kids. "Little Pine Forest" was great for games of Hide-and-Go-Seek or playing house (located south of what is now Bethesda Lutheran Church). Mice from the cornfield were frequent visitors to homes to Curtiss Avenue

Between the Fritsch and Mulhall houses there was an empty lot. The kids spent all summer "mining" the lot, creating forts from which they threw shelled corn or entire ears at boys in another dugout pit. Weeds grew high and one day the fire department arrived to put out a fire. The firefighters hit the first pit, muttering, "Darned kids!" Then as they crawled out and hit pits #2 and #3, neighbors heard, "Those blankety, blankety kids!" Maggie Mulhall and Ann Mulhall Rees remember that when all the vegetation was burned off, about a dozen bunkers could easily be seen!

Neighbors gathered on summer afternoons in open garages to watch storms roll in. There were neighborhood picnics. Parents sat on front porches and drank coffee in the evening. Kids had to be called "in" for supper. May baskets were passed around, fire flies were caught in glass jars with holes punched in the lid and croquet was played in back yards.

One year the boys had homing pigeons in the Jackson's back yard. There were frog eggs and hatching tadpoles in the window wells and bull snakes, salamanders, chameleons, horned toads, butterfly eggs and caterpillars to find.

Kay Mulhall remembers the Fritsch girls taught her to keep her finger on the telephone receiver until ready "to listen in" on the party line. Mrs. Fritsch was kind enough to let Kay's little brother "who just happened to come by" at many meal times, sit down and eat at the table. He still looks sheepish when his family brings up the subject, which they do as frequently as possible!

All ages played together in the street -- games like "Kick the Can", "Father May I", whiffle baseball, and various street and backyard games. The Constantine girls got the first hula-hoop. Mike Morgan recalls that the Coveys always held a neighborhood ice cream social and the kids were allowed to turn the crank.

In the winter there were snow tunnels in the yards, and sled riding down the hill to see how far they could "fly". Diana Speer Sarussi remembers one winter when the mountain of snow in their double driveway reached the basketball hoop - snow was almost to her second-story bedroom!





In the lower level of the Speer's house, neighborhood kids put on magic shows, played with trains, Barbie dolls, Monopoly and jigsaw puzzles, built airplanes, and one year even tried to make wine!

Back then, milk was delivered to insulated wooden boxes on front porches. The Fritch children got their first kitten and took it across

the street, temporarily placing it in Speer's milk box while playing. Unfortunately, without air, the kitten did not survive; the neighborhood was in tears!

Marston, the neighborhood "enemy street" and Curtiss Avenue each had boys close in age. Big basketball games would occur between the Curtiss Cobras and the Marston Martians. They were played on the home and away driveways of the Speer, Tyselling, and Burgason families. (Steve Burgason went on to play basketball at Iowa State.)

Karla Fritsch remembers the Christmas Eve fire on Marston when the Burgason's house burned. Burgasons never did move back in and sold the house.

Steve Huston's work takes him around the world today. When asked for his memories, he e-mailed back one word - CHECKERS. Reid Crawford, writing from Washington D.C., said the same thing.

Checkers, a Springer Spaniel and Stonewall Jackson, a Black Labrador were the neighborhood dogs.

"Stoney" was known for visiting around the neighborhood for any treats left on the porch to cool, but Speer's dog, Checkers, was the one the kids loved to chase and play football with. They would come to the door asking, "Can Checkers come out and play?"

The Speers traveled each summer and the Hustons were kind enough to keep the dog. This is a quote from the review of their 1968 trip: "Checkers was overjoyed to have his family back. The neighbors had kept him and one day had taken him along to their factory. On the way home, one of the boys was driving,

practicing new skills with his two-day-old driver's license. His brother and father were in the front seat with him and Checkers was in back. The father turned around to talk to the dog – and so did the driver, taking both hands off the wheel. The car went into the ditch, plunged down the hill, and hung over the creek. The Dad required 15 stitches in his forehead and Checkers was scared to death to get back in the car. Though he slept with their kids at night and was a really privileged dog, he was awfully glad to have us home!"

In those days, everyone visited a tree farm to cut their Christmas trees. It was Checkers' absolutely favorite time of the year! He was always taken along when the family was searching for the perfect tree.

We thank all the Curtiss Avenue "kids" for sending in their memories. The Society would be very pleased to receive other recollections of growing up in Ames, regardless of the neighborhood or time period.

** The Steve Lofgren plaque is now in the collection of ISU's University Museums along with other Petersen art works.*



Thanks to Meg Speer and Kay Mulhall for pictures.

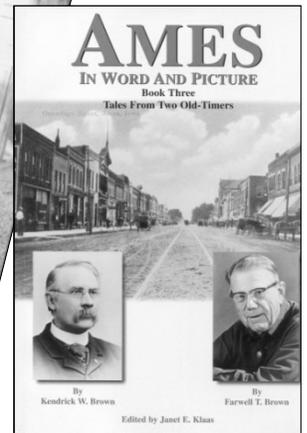
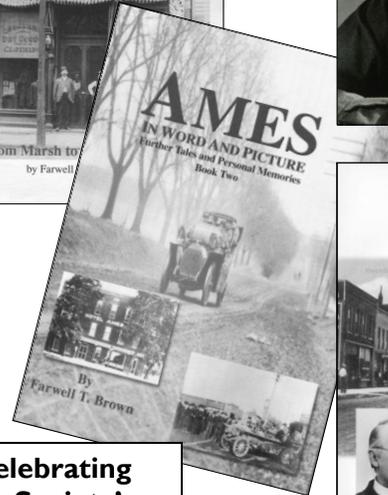
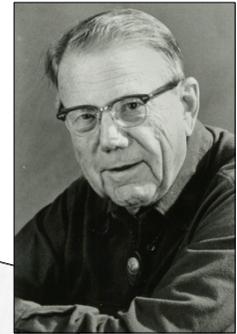
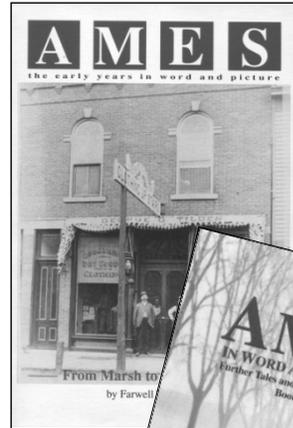
Dec. 18th is "Ames Reads (and Remembers) Farwell Brown"

The Ames Historical Society and Ames Public Library will sponsor "Ames Reads (and Remembers) Farwell Brown" on **Saturday, December 18 from 1pm to 4:30pm** in Farwell T. Brown Auditorium at the library.

Farwell Brown was the official Ames historian and founder of the Ames Historical Society as well as the namesake for the Library's auditorium. He passed away on September 1. December 18 would have been the day following Brown's 100th birthday. The event also celebrates the Society's 30th anniversary.

The afternoon-long event will be a community-participation "happening" with local residents reading aloud from Farwell Brown's written legacy. The first half-hour of the program will be an "open mic" for anyone who would like to reminisce about Farwell and share stories about their interactions with him.

Providing a backdrop for the readings will be a slide show of pictures Farwell collected throughout his life. His books will be for sale that day and light refreshments will be served at the program's mid-point. Audience members may come and go throughout the afternoon. The program is free and open to the public.



Celebrating
the Society's
30th anniversary
1980-2010

WW II Theme at Annual Meeting, March 5, 2011

Mark your calendars now for the Society's Annual Meeting of the membership on **Saturday, March 5, 10am** at the Ames Public Library auditorium.

Featured will be a program, **The Home Fronts of Iowa, 1940-45** by Lisa Ossian, associate professor of history, Des Moines Area Community College, Ankeny.

During World War II, the home front contributions of Iowans and Americans divided into four historical fronts: the farm front, the production front, the community front, and the kitchen front.

Food for Freedom directed American farmers in the all-out production needed for the war effort and the Allies' relief and Iowa farmers lead the nation in crop and livestock production.

Iowa's small businesses and industries such as Maytag added to the "Arsenal of Democracy" by filling many military sub-contract orders while the two newly constructed ordnance plants in Burlington and Ankeny produced thousands of bombs and millions of machine gun bullets. Iowa's small towns and cities matched and

exceeded records in the eight War Bond Drives as well as the numerous scrap drives for iron, paper, rubber, and tin, and Iowa's women met the rationing and production requirements demanded from the federal government in all home kitchens.

Lisa Ossian earned her Master's Degree in women's studies at Eastern Michigan University and her doctorate at Iowa State University in agricultural history and rural studies. Ossian has conducted research on Iowa during the early Depression era along with the WWII home front years. She also did a national survey of children's experiences during the Second World War. She has been elected twice to the State Historical Society of Iowa Board of Trustees. She has written a book, *The Home Fronts of Iowa, 1939-1945*.



Funded by Humanities Iowa, National Endowment for the Humanities, Iowa Community Cultural Grant Program, Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs.

Announcing the 2011 Lecture Series!

All lectures will be at Ames City Auditorium, 520 Sixth Street, Ames; a \$2 donation is requested at the door

Tuesday, January 25, 7pm



The Life and Legacy of Jack Trice

presented by Dorothy Schwieder, Iowa State University Professor Emerita of History

Noted Iowa historian, Dorothy Schwieder, will recount the life of Jack Trice, the namesake for ISU's football stadium. Trice - the only African American member of the team - died in 1923 as a result of a football injury. Setting her story in the context of changing racial and social attitudes, Schwieder will also describe the long struggle to rename the stadium in his honor.

Tuesday, February 22, 7pm



Mad for the Movies: Joe Gerbracht and Theaters in Ames

Presented by Kathy Svec, Ames Historical Society Board member

Joe Gerbracht started in the movie theater business in 1912 when he was a senior in high school. By the time he retired in 1962, he had owned and operated six theaters, including the Ranch Drive-In. Learn about his colorful 50-year career in the entertainment business, during which he weathered controversy and embraced changing technology.

Tuesday, March 29, 7pm



Jealous Husband, Mafia, Stranger, Wife: Who Killed Henry Chavis?

Presented by Nancy Bowers, Co-Administrator of Iowa Cold Cases

The most intriguing murder in Ames's history is also the one the Society gets the most inquiries about. The November 7, 1948 murder of Henry Chavis on what is now South Duff Avenue in Ames has never been solved. Though law enforcement was never able to say who was responsible, local residents had plenty of theories. Presenter Nancy Bowers will also touch on the Hollingsworth and other unsolved Ames murders.

Tuesday, April 26, 7pm



The McFarland Clinic Story: Making Medical History for 65 Years

Presented by Shelley Goecke and retired clinic physicians

At a time when many physicians offered services from their homes or small offices, G.E. McFarland, Sr., MD, introduced a model of care that at the time could only be labeled as revolutionary. In 1946, Dr. McFarland invited his two sons and two additional partners to join him in a group practice and planted the seed of what has grown into Iowa's largest physician-owned, multi-specialty clinic. Learn about its founding members, its history, and advances in medicine as it celebrates 65 years of service in central Iowa.

Residents are invited to enjoy these entertaining local tales that will open your eyes to Ames' colorful past.

The Lecture Series is open to the public. Plan to join us!

A letter to our members...

December 2010

A letter to the Members of the Ames Historical Society

From the Society's Board of Directors:

*Meg Speer, Fred Walker, Kathy Svec, Neal Tarman, Sharon Wirth, Peggy Baer, Matt Donovan,
Mike Quinn, Rollie & Willie Struss, Bob Bourne, Carol Phillips, Mary Atherly, Ken Cameron*

Because you are a valued member and donor to the Society, we'd like to provide an update on several key development-related issues and activities that the Society has been involved in this year.

Ames Public Library Space. As the Ames Public Library's expansion plans have proceeded, an idea came forward that opened the possibility of the Society's sharing space in their building. Last spring, we began discussions with the Library regarding possible occupancy of the older parts of the building (the original Carnegie space and the 1940 addition). This was a possibility because early proposals included tearing down the 1984 addition and building a new space that would allow moving out of the older library area. Recently, we have been informed that it is unlikely that the Library will be able to afford to give up the Carnegie/1940 space. We now see this idea as very remote and discussions have therefore ended.

Mary Adams Property. More than five years ago, the Adams property, a five-acre parcel and home in north Ames, was given to the City. The property was divided it into two sub-parcels – a three-acre parcel that was merged into the Ames Park System that provides access to Ada Hayden Park and a two-acre parcel containing the house to be sold at auction (thus preserving the unique home). Proceeds, less City maintenance expenses, will come to the Society. We anticipated the auction would be held this Fall, but now believe that it will be well into 2011 before this transaction can be completed. When it is, the portion of funds coming to the Society will be used for building payments or renovations at 416 Douglas.

Legacy Ames Campaign. From 2008-2009, our efforts raised a majority of the funds needed to pay off the contract for 416 Douglas (due Dec. 31, 2011). There is a remaining balance of \$115,000. The campaign to enable us to "burn the mortgage" will be resumed in early 2011.

Development Committee. A new group has been formed to carry on fundraising activities. Members of this committee include: Karen Petersen, Craig Hastings, Darrel Rensink, Kathy Svec, Rollie Struss, Dennis Wendell and Peggy Baer. Among the goals for the next two years are paying off the contract, occupying the remainder of the first floor and building the Endowment to support operations. Additional members are sought for this group and interested members may contact us at mail@ameshistoricalsociety.org or 515-232-2148.

Pantorium Building. The recent sale of this building has ended further consideration of the Pantorium for our purposes. We continue to seek space elsewhere in downtown for artifact and archive storage.

We trust this will bring you up-to-date on these major activities and we look forward to working with you to "take Ames history into the future".

Thank you for your support and continuing involvement.

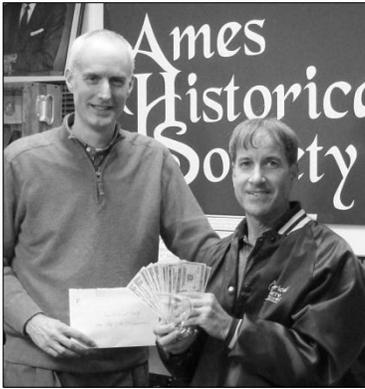
PS: Gift memberships or suggestions for memberships are gratefully accepted!



Society News

ISU Foundation Surprises Us!

Kevin Stow, (left) ISU Foundation Asst. VP/Human Resources, stopped by to deliver donations received from ISU Foundation personnel who opted to pay to go



casual and wear jeans on Fridays. At the beginning of the year they choose 12 non-profits to receive the "take" and selected the Society for October. Their note says: "The staff of the ISU Foundation recently held a "Jeans Day for Charity" and raised

\$82 for the Ames Historical Society. We are pleased to provide you with this donation and thank you for the good work you do for the Ames community."

Oral Histories Wanted!

Teresa "TJ" Larson stopped in at the museum to talk with staff about her interviews for the "Did You Know..." oral history project. If you know someone



who has memories of living, learning, or working in Ames and would like to talk about them, phone the museum and let us know. We would be pleased to schedule a video interview.

Welcome Mike, Thank You Kelly

Ames Public Library Reference Librarian, Mike Quinn, joined the Board in November to fill out the remaining term recently vacated by Kelly Popp. We thank Kelly



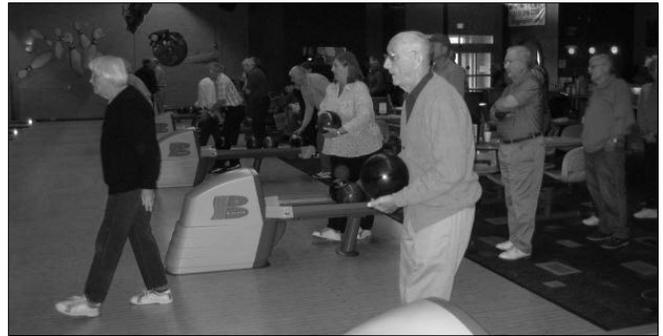
for his efforts for the Society and look forward to working with Mike. President Peggy Baer, right, hands over Mike's Board member hand-book. Welcome!

Did You Know...?

Ames Historical Society Oral History Project
by Willie Struss, Society Board member and "Did You Know?" Co-Chair

Did you know there is a bowling league for Seniors in Ames? Well, there certainly is! The group was recently interviewed for the "Did You Know..." project.

Although no one in the league knows exactly when it started, the league is going strong at the new alleys at Perfect Games, 1320 Dickinson Avenue - their new location after the last "100 year flood" in 2010 closed Twentieth Century Bowling on Duff for good.



The League meets Wednesdays at 1pm. There are 25 alleys at Perfect Games for the league to use and the day we visited all but one was in use! There are two qualifications for becoming a member: must be age 55 and have a desire to bowl. Teams consist of both men and women and the oldest member is 98.



Don Riggs (right) has been bowling for 70 years; Don Voelker (left) for 71 years. Don started while in college when he served as a pin setter in the Iowa State Memorial Union's bowling alleys.

He probably has the most trophies and ribbons.

However, Lysle Musgrove, (right) 98, is still bowling with an average of "about 160". He says he "will keep bowling as long as he can roll a ball down the lane!"



Continued next page...



Harvey Thompson, (left) 90, actively bowls with “about a 150” average. He says “It feels good to keep bowling. It’s good exercise.”

Alpha Nelson, (right) 90, “enjoys bowling with the League and has been an ‘off and on bowler’ for years.”



If you are thinking you can’t carry that heavy old ball around, not to worry! Claire Twedt (below) shows the newest way to get the ball to the alley. The bag rolls like a suitcase and holds two balls.

Even if you can’t bowl, you can come and watch these “Seniors”. It makes you wonder if they really deserve the title!

**We are celebrating the Society’s
★ 30th anniversary ★
Dec. 1980 – Dec. 2010!**

“Did You Know?” is an ongoing project of the Ames Historical Society, recording the stories of Ames residents. Rollie and Willie Struss, co-chairs, 515-232-0865.



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

Introductory - 1st year	\$10	Sustaining	\$100
Individual	\$25	Sustaining Plus	\$101-500
Family	\$40	Benefactor	\$500
Friend	\$50	Patron	\$1,000

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