



# DES MOINES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Heritage Museum • Bart Howard Lounge • Garrett-Phelps House • Crapo Park Log Cabin

501 N 4th Street • Burlington, IA 52601 • 319.752.7449 • www.dmchs.org

Volume 46 No. 6

## NEWSLETTER

June 2023

### From the Executive Director

by Colton Neely

Summer is around the corner, and we have seen many interesting events that have occurred recently in town. We saw the Mississippi River water levels nearly crest the flood wall by the Port of Burlington. Fireworks light up the sky above the Great River Bridge in memorial to the lives of Andrew Whitcomb and Pearson Franklin. As the regular flies are biting this year, the mayfly population is starting to come back, telling us our beloved Mississippi River's ecosystem is healthy. At DMCHS, we have started the beginning stages of the various repairs to Garrett-Phelps House. As many people know, an older house is more than just a structure to maintain, but a structure that is alive with its beauty, craftsmanship, and history. The Garrett-Phelps House is due for extensive repairs from weather, sun, age, and the hundreds of people who visit the site alongside Snake Alley. Our expectation is to have the house both period-accurate, educational, and beautiful inside and out. If you are interested in donating to the following projects listed below, please contact me at [coltonn@dmchs.org](mailto:coltonn@dmchs.org). Our projects include inserting a steel beam into the basement, tuckpoint work on the front brickwork, new roof, a bright new paint job, a new back porch, and a revival of the exterior landscape. Once we beautify our house on the outside and the structural interior, our inner spaces will be reviewed in order to make our house more ADA friendly, exhibit diverse topics, and artifact maintenance, cleaning, and repair!

On a related note for Garrett-Phelps, the teas are picking up more steam, with more spots being filled by the day. We thank all of those who participate in these teas, and the donations toward rebuilding the Garrett-Phelps back porch. With a new back porch, guests will once more be able to look at the Memorial Garden, Snake Alley, and scenic downtown Burlington.

On Mother's Day, Cornerstone Wedding & Event Center collaborated with us on a Mother's Day Tea that served off an unusual collection of dishware originally belonging to the Phelps family. On behalf of DMCHS, thank you, Megan and Logan Brincks, for helping us. We sincerely look forward to more collaborations with you! If you are interested in joining us at the dining table at Garrett-Phelps for tea, consult Kay Swanson at 319-752-7449 for more information on open seating.

We were also honored to have the opportunity of having the Arancia Piano Quartet visit the Heritage Center on May 17th. This four-part piano and string quartet was sponsored by the University of Iowa Arts Share and the UI Chamber Residency Program. This touring group of individuals traveled to various locations in Iowa to perform classical works such as *Piano Quartet in Eb* by Dvorak and *Thousandth Orange* by Caroline Shaw. This 45-minute performance ended with a standing ovation from the audience. Our staff had the privilege to hear them warm up to Bohemian Rhapsody. We enjoyed the class the performers brought to the Heritage Center, and we were delighted to hear about a possible return in the future.

Lastly, I would like to introduce you to three new part-time docents at the DMCHS. Jarod Shaffer, Cora Hermann-Wickham, and Amy Powers are joining us as new staff members. They come from diverse backgrounds in history, science, library work, and more. We are absolutely thrilled to have such enthusiastic people working in our collection, giving tours, and providing a sense of stewardship for our sites!

Visit us at the Heritage Center, dine with us at Garrett-Phelps, and explore the outdoors at the Crapo Park Cabin!

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**Our Mission: Provide Opportunities for education, research and the preservation of Des Moines County History**

# Upcoming Events

## **Town Hall Lectures**

### **First Saturday of Every Month**

**12 to 3 pm**

Every first Saturday of the month, the Heritage Center will host a speaker, historian, or lecturer to give a presentation to the community about a particular topic related to Burlington or Des Moines County. This program will typically be free for patrons; the only time admission is charged for this program is for *special* lectures. Each participating patron will get a sticker from our museum staff that allows free admission all day at the Heritage Center. Please use the Columbia Street door (with the blue awning). Doors open at 11:45.

## **Tea for Lunch**

### **Call for Available Dates**

**1 pm**

Tea for Lunch is a grand social gathering in the Garrett-Phelps House dining room. Scones, Savories & Sweets will be served. Maximum capacity 12 participants.

**Cost \$25 per person**

## **Teen Curators**

### **June 10 & 24**

**Starting at 2 pm**

This Saturday program is for teenagers (ages 15–19) who will work as a team with the Executive Director in building an exhibit for the museum. This program is for teens who aspire to work in the museum field and learn key research techniques, exhibit development, and exhibit fabrication. See the Heritage Center Calendar or website for fall dates and sign-ups. Maximum capacity 15 participants.

**Cost \$45 per person**

## **Heritage Center Kids Camp (Ages 7 - 12)**

### **July 24 - 28**

**10 - 11:30 am**

This summer program is full of STEM and STEAM-related activities with kids learning about fossils, flying machines, and more by playing games, creating art, and science experiments at the Heritage Center. Includes field trips to the Garrett-Phelps House and Crapo Park Log Cabin. Maximum capacity 14 participants.

**Cost \$75 each per person**

## Taste of the Holidays December 7 and 9

This holiday dinner at the Garrett-Phelps house hosts up to 12 people per night. The night will start off in the library, where our volunteers will serve wine and refreshments. Light hors d'oeuvres will be served while guests socialize in the back parlor. When dinner is ready to be served, our interpreters will guide guests to be seated in the dining rooms. As dinner is being served, our historians will give a presentation of the Garrett-Phelps house and family heritage. This holiday dinner experience is a beloved tradition in the community hosted by the Des Moines County Historical Society.

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## Become a Volunteer

This autumn proved to be one of the busiest and most exciting times for the Des Moines County Historical Society. It won't be long before a new season of American Queen and Viking dockings will be starting up, and volunteers are needed more than ever to help us provide the best experience to those coming to Burlington.

Volunteers are always needed to help catalog and preserve artifacts, prepare exhibits, and maintain our facilities. Please talk to any of our staff about all the opportunities.

## Board Members

Megan Brincks  
Martha Clyde  
Terri Dowell  
Michael Herron  
Paula Logan  
Don Weiss

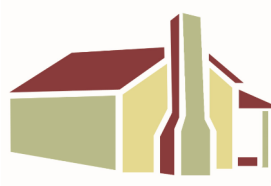
Forest Gahn, Honorary Board Member

### 2023-24 Officers

President .....Don Weiss  
Vice President.....Paula Logan  
Treasurer .....Terri Dowell  
Secretary .....Megan Brincks

## DMCHS Staff

Executive Director .....Colton Neely  
Museum Assistant .....Kay Swanson



Offices located at Heritage Museum  
501 N 4th Street Burlington, IA 52601  
Voice: 319-752-7449 FAX: 319-753-2449  
dmchs@dmchs.org

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# Out of the Collection

By Colton Neely

Object No. 75.576 (2 objects)

With June being the traditional time for wedding, the Heritage Museum holds at least 113 years of a curious tradition.

Object No. 75.576 comprises two identical objects of the same description. It was donated in 1975 and was the 576th object to be inserted into our collection of culinary delights. It measures about 4–34” inches long, 2” inches wide, and 1–14” deep in white, silk-covered card stock boxes. Each box has a creme-white bow looped around each vessel. If you look closely, you will be able to see there is an embossed marking stating “F. W. B.,” or Frances William Brooks, and “H. McC.,” or Hester McConnell.

If you have a theory on how this 113-year-old cake survived submit your explanation to the Executive Director at [coltonn@dmchs.org](mailto:coltonn@dmchs.org). The best theory will be announced in the next July newsletter.

**Original Transcription of the DMCHS Accession Book**  
*“Wedding Cake - Pieces of Chocolate and White cake in White box tied with white ribbon. Initials “H.McC” in upper left corner; initial “F.W.B.” in lower right corner. (Hester McConnell and Frances William Brooks.)”*



Although the outside of the box seems mundane, it's what's on the inside that counts. Believe it or not, there are small slices of chocolate and vanilla cake on the inside, speculated to be from circa 1900–1910. The texture is similar to sponge candy without the hard chocolate coating, and yes, it still faintly smells like wedding cake.

Stories of these relics have circulated for years, but if you have information, please let us know! The question our staff and board members seem to ponder is, “How did it last this long? Is there a preservative that inhibits decomposition, like leaded baking sugar? Or was the pantry too dry and caused the cake to mummify?”



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# Donations & Memberships

Names are for receipts dated from the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

**In Memory of**  
**MacArthur Coffin**  
 Fred and Gwen Scholer  
**William and Martha Pratt**  
 Jeff Heland  
**Ilene Frank**  
 Jonnie Tiemeier

**Donations:**  
 Jessica Gardiner  
 Howard Rescot  
 Susan Brooks  
 Shoquoquon Chapter of Questers  
 Colleen Heibner

**Memberships:**  
 Ruth Ann Sandrock  
 Beverly Fisher  
 Allie Kammerer  
 Lois Orth  
 Howard Rescot  
 Josh and Kathleen Schier  
 Judy Stevens  
 Jane Tadelski  
 Frances Eckhardt  
 Patricia Short  
 Mary Kay Wright  
 Susan Brooks  
 Milton and Laurine Paule  
 Ed MInard II  
 Evelyn Shaw  
 Jacqueline Johnson-Onesto  
 Jonnie Tiemeier

## A Gift in Your Will or Living Trust

A gift in your will or living trust is one of the most effective ways to provide for the future of DMCHS and allows you to retain your assets during your lifetime. In addition, your estate may benefit from a charitable estate tax deduction.

The gift may be easily included in your will when it is written, or it may be added through a simple codicil or amendment. You may wish to leave DMCHS a stated dollar amount; a percentage of your residual estate (what remains after debts, taxes and specific bequests have been made); or a specific asset, such as securities or other marketable property.

It can be as simple as adding the following language to your last will and testament: *"I give and bequeath to the Des Moines County Historical Society, presently of 501 N 4th Street, Burlington, IA 52601, the sum of \$\_\_ to be used for its general support."*

For further information, contact Colton Neely, Executive Director, at 319-752-7449.

## Donation Form/Membership Renewal

**Check** ( # \_\_\_\_\_ )  **Cash**  **Credit Card** (For credit card please call the Heritage Museum @ 319.752.7449)

Please send completed forms to DMC Historical Society, 501 N 4th Street, Burlington, IA 52601. Make checks payable to DMCHS.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

This donation is to renew my membership (Select only one:) Individual \$25 Family \$50 Bronze \$250

I am making this donation (Select one)

IN MEMORY OF      IN HONOR OF      ON THE OCCASION OF



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## Museum Hours

Heritage Museum: Open Tuesday through Friday from 10 to 4 pm and Saturday from 10 to 3 pm.

Garrett-Phelps House & Crapo Park Log Cabin: Open Sunday from 1 to 4 pm.

Updates will be posted through Facebook, email and our webpage: [www.dmchs.org](http://www.dmchs.org).