



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 47 No. 1

# NEWSLETTER

January 2024

## From the Executive Director

by Colton Overton

The Des Moines County Historical Society would like to express a warm happy holiday to all our patrons, volunteers, staff, and board members once more and a happy New Year as we are now in 2024. The year 2023 was great for programming and collections, and we are excited to see what 2024 has to offer DMCHS.

Earlier in December, we sent out our annual appeal and capital campaign to all of our patrons and volunteers. We are grateful for the support given to us in order to continue our mission of preserving Des Moines County history.

Recently, we have made many advancements to the museum following the Harry and Virginia Murray Foundation grant of \$25,000. The Bart Howard Lounge is getting its final touches as we put up signage and reinstall some interactive displays telling the story of Bart's life. We brought the original manuscripts back into the display cases and will be rotating the Bart Howard Collection every three months starting in February. The room has a fresh coat of paint, laser projections of stars and a moon, and lighting while keeping the Blue Angel Nightclub look. During museum hours, the room is an exhibit and a relaxing stargazing lounge, while at night, when the room is rented for events and performances, it features that 1940's-50's look for the Blue Angel. Come in sometime with the family and play among the stars!

Another project we have been working on is the removal of the wooden boat pergola from our Grand Gallery. Unfortunately, the weight capacity of the massive display case structure exceeded the weight limit of the floor in the room and was a possible floor hazard. We also felt the square footage of the pergola in comparison to the

room wasn't being used appropriately in relation to the actual display space from the pergola. The parts of the pergola will be retrofitted for other uses within the museum, such as check-in desks and cabinets for the Hall of Crinoids. My plans for the space have caused excitement in the community, as I will be turning it into a much-needed history research room and lecture room. This room will be converted into a comfortable display space for patrons, historians, and researchers to conduct their studies. We will house historic maps, books, atlases, paintings, and general Des Moines County information on display for our patrons. This room will also be a lecture hall for our history programs, which our community dearly enjoys, and what better place to have it than in the old reading room that hasn't changed much since the 1890's.

Back when I was at the University of Iowa receiving my degree in History and Museum Studies, I started a program called "My Collections" where the community could share their accumulated collections at the Museum of Natural History (McBride Hall Building Hallway). This is a three-month rotating display in our newly wired Perkins Display Case by our Miss Lilly Bar at the Heritage Center. Currently, we are looking for three patrons for the months of February, March, and April who have a collection and would like to share a sample with the public. I have seen everything from butter dishes to geodes, clocks, Pez dispensers, and more. As I will be finishing the paperwork detailing what is included in this project, if you are interested, please contact me to share your collection.

On behalf of the Des Moines County Historical Society, we thank you for all your support through your donations!

# Upcoming Events

## Sounds of the Past (Holiday Duds Pt. 2 & Christmas Gifts) January 20

10 am to 12 pm

Executive Director, Colton Overton, will be performing holiday music that did not make the top hits on the historic Martin Bruhl piano in the atrium of the Heritage Center. As a music historian and avid sheet music collector, Colton Overton brings in rare copies of music, gives a general background history of each score, and plays them on the piano. This is a golden opportunity to hear music never played in public in over 100 years. This program is free for patrons. Please use the Fourth Street door (main entrance at the top of the ramp on the west side). Doors open at 9:45.

## Annual Meeting Thursday, January 11

4 pm

Meet us at the Heritage Center at 4:00PM in our NEWLY REMODELED Bart Howard Lounge and learn about the progress we've seen in 2023 and the exciting things we have planned for 2024.

Basement (Blue Awning) Entrance of Heritage Center,  
501 N 4th Street

## Making History at Home

One of the best ways to experience history for yourself is by looking at an old family cookbook. Every month, Des Moines County Historical Society staff scour the collections for a unique recipe for our patrons to add to their own recipe books. The family recipe book, object #03.132, is a collection of handwritten recipes from circa the 1850s. This book was given to the museum in 2003 by a family whose early English ancestors settled north of Kingston, Iowa. The book documented 30 years of recipes in a single-bound book. We chose a recipe we encourage you to try at home!

### *Pearl-ash Cake*

- *1/2 lb Butter*
- *3/4 lb Sugar*
- *4 Eggs*
- *1/2 pint Milk*
- *1 tea spoonful pearl-ash*
- *As much flour as the above will mix to the consistency of dough.*

Although no directions were provided for baking time or temperature, we can guess at 350 degrees until golden brown

What is Pearl-ash you say?

Pearl-Ash, or Potassium carbonate is an inorganic compound with the formula  $K_2CO_3$ . It is a white salt, which is soluble in water and forms a strongly alkaline solution. Pearl-ash was mainly used in the production of soap and glass. Potassium carbonate is the primary component of potash and the more refined pearl ash or salts of tartar. The first patent issued by the US Patent Office was awarded to Samuel Hopkins in 1790 for an improved method of making potash and pearl ash. In late 18th-century North America, **before the development of baking powder**, pearl ash was used as a leavening agent for quick breads.

## Memorial Brick Garden

Outside of the Heritage Museum, many of you remember our memorial brick garden. The bricks are the perfect way to show your support of the museums, memorialize or honor a family, or mark a special occasion.

Each donation of \$150 per 4" x 8" India red granite brick will include a maximum of two lines of 15 characters each. Spaces between words count as characters. The opportunity also exists for donors of \$1,000 or more to be recognized with a special, light gray granite brick.

Making a gift will last beyond a lifetime and will be a stepping stone towards the history and future of the Des Moines County Historical Society and our three historical locations.

For more information on adding your engraved brick, please our website at [www.dmchs.org](http://www.dmchs.org) for a request form, or contact me at [coltonn@dmchs.org](mailto:coltonn@dmchs.org) or 319-752-7449, and I will be happy to help. We need 6 more to meet the minimum of 10 to start the additional engraving process. Sign up today to have your name added to the outdoor classroom and picnic space!

## 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, by phone at 319-752-7449.

## Become a Volunteer

As the holidays approach, the coming year will be one of the busiest and most exciting times for the Des Moines County Historical Society.

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  
Kara Houston  
Paula Logan  
Don Weiss

Forest Gahn, Honorary Board Member

### 2023-24 Officers

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

## DMCHS Staff

Executive Director .....Colton Neely  
Museum Assistant .....Kay Swanson  
Docent.....Cora Herman-Wicham  
Docent.....Jarod Shaffer  
Docent.....Amy Power



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

# Out of the Collection

By Colton Overton

Object #74.268

History of Epergnes

Within our collection and historical sites, we have a unique collection of glass or metal Epergnes featured on display and in the collection. These Victorian furnishings are more than another one of Grandma's china cabinet fines. But many people do not understand why they were made or the proper use for them. Here is one example that is a staff favorite that's been in the collection since 1974 and was our 268th piece to come in. It has a handmade copper twisted base with three small green glass vases and one long green pointed pendant-like vase in the center. It stands roughly 17 1/2" inches high and about 12" inches wide. Our accession books don't list its importance, and we are unsure of why it came into the collection. However, it's certainly odd in the sense that it looks like something that could have been used in the Grand Gallery of our Heritage Center museum back in the 1890s. Its frilliness and design indicate it could have been manufactured here in Burlington since the decor seems to match several other Burlington-related furnishings/pieces.

Typically, an epergne is a type of table centerpiece that is usually made of silver but may be made of any metal, glass, or porcelain. The term Epergne is a French word that means "saving," the idea being that dinner guests were saved the trouble of passing dishes. In addition to the word, epergne in French can also mean "spare," another way of saying "to save," or a spare, meaning "reserve or extra." An epergne may be used to hold any type of food or dessert. It may also be used as a designer object to hold candles, flowers, or ornaments for a holiday. In traditional use, an

epergne is a fancy way to display side dishes, fruit, or sweetmeats; it can be used for chips, dips, or other finger foods. Object #74.268 is one object that holds flowers in a nice tight bouquet.

To see this object, visit the Heritage Museum Grand Gallery in January to view it as a cosmetic display as it enhances the rooms' regal feel.



# 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

Lester and Rosemary Worley  
LaVon and Judy Worley

## Donations:

Lois Close  
Sandra Allgood

## Memberships:

Marianna Brinck  
Robin & Kathy Thomas  
Shane Horn  
Josh Horn  
Ted & Barb Horn  
Bob Boyle  
Dan & Kathy Cahill  
Dave Sheridan  
John & Lindsay Fruehling  
Nancy Huppenbauer

Steve Rowland & Mary Eipert

Ann Menke  
Bernard Perry  
Doug & Heather Beckman  
Lois Close  
Bill & Pam Daws  
Donald Lippert  
Patrick Hazell  
Herbert Price  
Bettie Raines

## 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

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



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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: Please contact Heritage Center for private tours.  
 Updates will be posted through Facebook, email and our webpage: [www.dmchs.org](http://www.dmchs.org).