

# Ames Historical Society

AMES • IOWA

FOUNDED 1980 AS AMES HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

2007 SUMMER.. ISSUE #3/4

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



This baptism took place near Soper's Mill, another early mill on the Skunk River in Story County.

**Ames Historical Society Board:**

**President** Kathy Svec  
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Roger Coulson, Joanne Goldman, Dottie McGee, Nick Howell, Carol Phillips, Neal Tarman, Dennis Wendell

The Board meets the 2nd Monday of each month at City Hall at 6:30pm. Members welcome!

**Administrator** Alan Spohnheimer  
**Staff** Sara Vouthilak, Dennis Wendell, Colleen Hamilton

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  
**Mail:** PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010  
**Phone:** 515-232- 2148  
**E-mail:** ameshistorical@qwest.net  
**Website:** www.ameshistoricalsociety.org

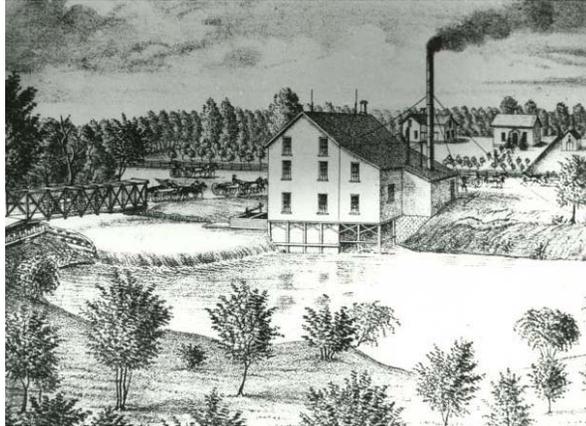
The newsletter is published four times a year for AHS members. Direct comments & questions to: Editor, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010 or e-mail above.

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

## River Revelation: The Past Emerges with an Artifact from Hannum's Mill

By Jim Graham, Ames Historical Society member & local history enthusiast

A couple years ago, my friend, Scott Sorem and I were walking up the Skunk River just north of Ames and east of Ada Hayden Lake, looking for fossils or artifacts. It had been a very dry fall and the river was almost dried up, making it



perfect for checking out the rocks and sandbars of the river bottom. Scott noticed an unusual looking device partially buried in the gravel of a sandbar just below the old Hannum Mill site. (The mill is shown, left, in an 1875 engraving from the Andreas Illustrated Atlas.)

After digging it out of the sand, he found it to be a five-foot long, three-inch thick object with metal ends on an octagonal shaped wooden shaft. This shaft had small wooden teeth or paddles in a spiral configuration. It looked like to us like some kind of auger that would have been used in a machine.

Neither of us had any idea what this strange device would be used for but Scott, an amateur historian himself, was very curious. He took the device home, cleaned it up, and added some preservative to the wood to protect it.

Nothing more was found about the strange device until this summer when Scott was visiting the Wagaman Mill museum in Jasper County. There, he found augers almost identical to what he had found in the Skunk River. The guide at the museum explained that what Scott had found was a typical wood auger that was used in almost all of the old mills. "Wood was used to reduce sparks which might cause a explosion from the mill dust," the museum guide said.

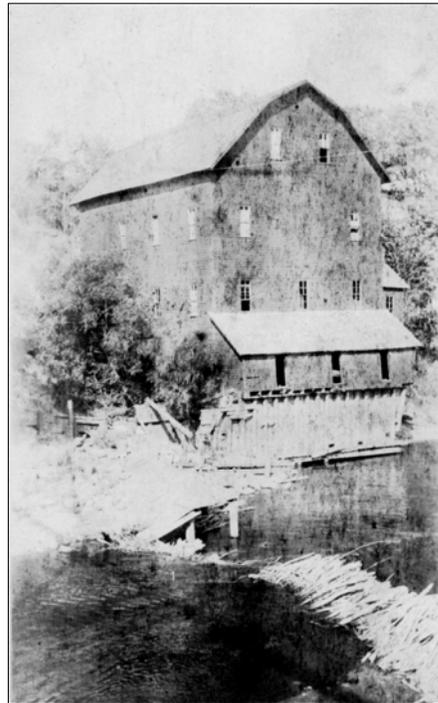
This was exciting news! In 1882 Hannum's mill was shut down and moved to Odebolt in Sac County, which means that the wooden auger must have laid in the river bed for at least 125 years! Another local mill historian, James Andrew of Jefferson, told us that what we found was certainly an auger from a 19-century mill. "These augers were used in a horizontal plane to move the grain prior to milling," said Andrew.



Some of the original logs and limestone used in the crib dam, which was built by millwright Hiram Ferguson in 1856, can still be seen at the mill site. The first owner, John Miller, used the water power to operate a sawmill and most of the lumber for buildings in the old town of Bloomington was sawed at this Mill.

Robert Hannum later purchased the Mill and converted it to a grain mill. Problems with low water forced a steam engine to be added in 1870 to help power the mill. One of the first bridges across the Skunk River was also built at this location, on one of the stagecoach routes to the west. The abutments for the bridge are still visible.

## Images of Soper's Mill



Soper's Mill was another early Story County mill located on the Skunk River about seven miles north-east of Ames. This picture (left) dates from around 1870.



The auger, left, shown by Scott Sorem, may be the only artifact left from the Hannum's Mill, except for a few of the crib timbers that were used in the original dam.

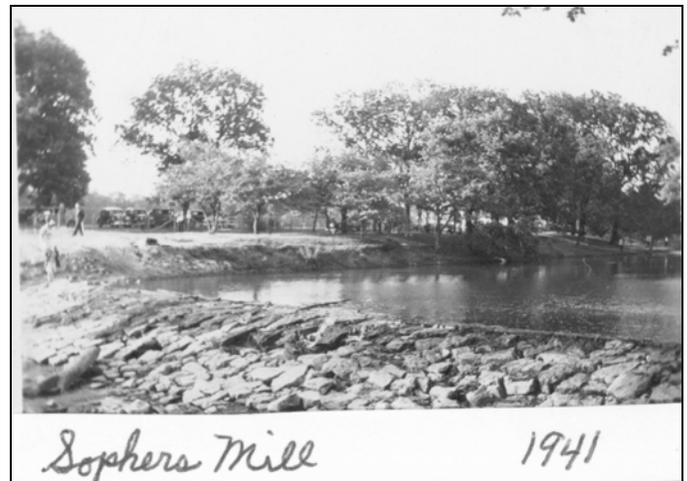
There are no known photos of Hannum's Mill - only a lithograph picture of the mill in an 1875 atlas (shown on page 1). A US Geological survey cement dam was built at the same site in the 1940s. This dam also has been abandoned.

Both the logs from the old mill dam and the cement USGS dam have been hazards for boaters. A number of boats have overturned while going over the dam and two people have drowned at this location in recent years. The Skunk River Paddlers and the Ames Historical Society have been discussing this problem. How can the dam be made safer for boaters without destroying the historical significance of this 151-year-old site? Many experts at the local and state level will study the problem in months to come.

To see this historical site, take the little-used path from the Sleepy Hollow parking lot just off Riverside Road. Follow the path upstream staying on the west and north side of the river to the dam. Remember to stay on the path because there is some private property in the area.



Above is a baptism near Soper's Mill.



*Sophers Mill*

1941

Compare this 1941 image to the 1870 image above.

### Society Building Fund Update

May 2007 \$39,979                      October 2007 \$42,288

### Society Operations Endowment

May 2007 \$13,073                      October 2007 \$14,700

# Ames Historical Society News

## You Send Us Mail!

**From:** Lee D. Booton  
**Sent:** Monday, April 23, 2007  
**Subject:** College Savings Bank & Dean Knudson

Greetings Ames Historical Society! My name is Lee D. Booton from Ankeny Iowa. I'm 62 years of age and I've been to Ames countless number of times. My late Uncle was Dean A. Knudson, the son of C. Albert "Al" Knudson, President of College Savings Bank in campus-town, Ames since 1926. I knew C. A. or "Al" as we called him. We would go to his cabin north of Ames on many national holidays. I have many, many, stories about Dean and the Knudson family, and a lot of his photos and his wartime scrap book have been given to me by his son Sumner Dean Knudson. Dean was a member of the 1st Ranger Battalion known as "Darby's Rangers" and served as a 1st Lt up to a Captain with Col. William Darby. Dean was put in charge as a Captain of training the 2nd Ranger Battalion. The famous movie actor, Tom Hanks, plays a 1st Lt. from that unit in the movie "Saving Private Ryan". I have photos of Dean and Col. Darby at Fort Benning, GA training the Second Ranger Battalion.



In this picture, Dean, right, is presenting President Dwight David Eisenhower (in Ames, Iowa) with a stuffed elephant made by Collegiate Manufacturing, a company that Dean's Bank financed.

**From:** Marjorie C Healey  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 11, 2007  
**Subject:** Otto Brue

Dear Ames Historical: I just about fell out of my chair. I was going through your site and came across the Otto Brue story. I thought to myself that name sounded familiar, I remember my dad talking about Del Brue. Then I saw the picture of the house at 1421 Duff. I couldn't believe it. I grew up at 1412 Duff and looking out our front window I could see Mrs. Gilchrist's house and the house at 1421 Duff. Up the street on the corner lived Margie, Mac and Tommy Shaw. Thanks for the memory!



**From:** Steve Macdonald  
**Sent:** Monday, June 04, 2007  
**Subject:** Bike Parade (vintage photo printed in *The Tribune*)  
It's fun to see these photos of 1950. I can see my sister Sheri along with an uncle & aunt in the center of the photo. I didn't know this photo existed. Thanks for the trip down nostalgia lane. You guys sure have made it fun for our MacDonald family to recall those great times, growing up in that wonderful place called Ames. If I still lived in Ames, I would be volunteering to help in the process for sure. Great website!

**From:** New member, Liz Poletti, Marco Is., FL  
Anne and Bob Burk sent me the 2007 Winter issue of your newsletter. What a great job the AHS is doing! I'll enjoy reading the newsletter for the coming year.

**From:** Gary Moore  
**Sent:** September 26, 2007  
**Subject:** Carr's Pool

(In response to the successful Ames vote for a new aquatic center that will end use of Carr Pool.)  
I well remember the fun I had at Carr's when I was growing up. At that time, the steep hill going down to the pool was a cinder road. Going down that hill on a bike was a fast trip; however, if you dumped your bike, you lost a lot of skin to the cinders. Going back, you had to stand on your pedals and work hard to get to the top of the hill. The Carr house was on the south side of the road and I remember the long clotheslines full of blue jeans. Most of these were from the many foster children that the Carrs cared for over the years. They were kind and loving people. Dad Carr was often at the pool. Sometimes, if someone came to the pool and did not have money to pay the fee, Dad would have them pick up bottles or paper for 15 minutes or so and let them in free. I never saw anyone turned away. He was such a kind person. The people of Ames were lucky have the Carr family in our community.

# Curator's Report by Dennis Wendell

## AHS Commitment

Without question, archival materials form the core of AHS collections. The one-million image Tribune Photo Archive is our single most heavily-used resource. Its images reach over 12,000 readers weekly through our "From the Archives" series in the Ames Tribune.

U.S. and foreign publishers tap our Ames Historical Photo Archive for images to be published in school textbooks and literary works. Local and out-of-state genealogists visit us while researching their ancestors who once lived in Ames. Important historical stories are shared on our much-visited website.

Researchers are consulting the records of businesses and organizations and papers of individuals for their histories, presentations, and advertising. Builders and contractors regularly consult the thousands of building plans in our city-based collections. AHS truly functions as the de facto archive for Ames government, businesses, organizations and residents. For 100 years, no organized attempt had been made at preserving the totality of Ames history. With the aggressive efforts of Ames Historical Society the loss of Ames' important records is **at last being stemmed!**

## Donations to the Collections

Readers are encouraged to visit AHS headquarters to view recent acquisitions. These quarterly highlights only suggest the diversity of historical material we receive.



### • Joe Gerbrach memorabilia

This summer, the Jan (Gerbrach) Szyperski family donated two bulging scrapbooks containing hundreds of photos, clippings and correspondence associated with the local entrepreneur who operated all the movie theaters in Ames. This exceptional collection spans the years 1927-1962 and documents his innovative promotions and outreach to the community. Above, 1938 construction of Collegian Theater, Main Street.

### • Hansen collection

The Ruth (Hansen) Boast estate contributed boxes and trunks of historical material related to Ruth's parents. Her father, Hans, was an early Danish immigrant builder and contractor (see Fall 1999 newsletter). His building records are of interest to Ames residents living in his



homes. An 1893 Chicago Cottage reed organ was also donated. AHS will greatly miss Ruth's enthusiasm, clear memory and consistent support. Left, Hans's tools.

### • Story & Clark player piano

Grant and Betty Quam responded to our solicitation for a vintage player piano. Their gift of the 1918 piano came with a bonus of 50 rolls. Town & Country Kiwanis members are to be profusely thanked for moving this weighty instrument. Superbly restored by Jim Lester in 1993, the piano provides daily entertainment to visitors. Attendees at last month's MusicWalk enjoyed pumping out a tune or singing along with the word rolls.

### • 1949 Admiral TV

Young people of today find it hard to imagine that consumers once enjoyed viewing the tiny 6" screen on Ardis McMechan's donation. The retractable antenna is as fascinating as the 1949 TV.

### • Civil War artifacts

Farwell Brown's grandfather, Kendrick Wade Brown, served the entire duration of the War Between the States. This collection of prime artifacts, once displayed in the Brown mansion at 1011 Kellogg, came to us courtesy of Farwell's son and K.W.'s namesake, Kendrick L. Brown. In addition to weaponry and documents, a piece of 146-year old hardtack survived! The collection offers an intimate feel for that difficult period in our history.

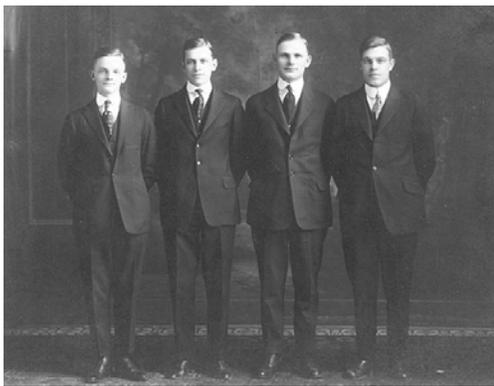


- **Moore Dairy artifact and recollections**

Gary Moore, a regular visitor and donor, offered up his usual array of enticing artifacts and stories, including a galvanized 20-quart ice cream container used at his uncle's dairy, as well as deaccessioned 1950s dosimeters (Geiger counter and pocket radiation monitors) from the City of Ames, and a guide to WWII airplanes.

- **Photographic images**

AHS administrator and webmaster, Alan Spohnheimer, frequently enhances our collections with images obtained through his purchases on eBay. These include real photo post cards of Ames and campus from various vintages as well as student annuals and Collegiate Mfg. Co. artifacts.



- **Ringgenberg collection**

With the passing of Ruth (Ringgenberg) Matson, the Society lost another treasured supporter. Her son, Lynn, continued Ruth's tradition of sharing this prominent family's history through books (Ames centennial); photos (Oakwood School class in 1939); and artifacts (souvenirs from Clyde Black & Son and a jar of 50-year old canned raspberries!). Above: Carl Ringgenberg is 2<sup>nd</sup> from right in the YMCA Quartet.



- **Ames Sister City**

Former Ames mayor, Don Newbrough, was a member of the delegation visiting Loja, Ecuador, Ames' first Sister City. Scrapbook and photos from his 1966 trip form a valuable record of this historic venture and complement items given earlier by delegation member, Bob Pasley.

- **MGMC Auxiliary artifacts**

Jane Milleman's donation of Mary Greeley Medical Center Auxiliary artifacts document a special aspect of activities during Christmas time.



Curator Dennis Wendell (left) and Administrator Alan Spohnheimer receive artifact donations on a regular basis. Here they are shown with a Civil War Camp stool. Grant and Betty Quam's player piano is in the background.

## American Archives Month

October is American Archives Month: Celebrating the American Record. This annual awareness activity was first launched in the late 1980s and targets policy makers, community leaders, resource allocators, prospective donors, researchers, future archivists, the media and the general public.

## WWII Service Records Index

To mark this year's Archives Month, AHS will be mounting an online index to WWII service records for Story County. The original index, created on 3x5 cards by Ames Public Library staff and volunteers, was transferred to AHS this summer. Over the past 3 1/2 years, Wayne Beals has been scanning these 8,000 cards and indexing them by keyword. The digital database created by this dedicated volunteer will soon be available on our website to assist genealogical and other research.

## Exhibit at 416 Douglas, Suite 101

Complementing the launch of the WWII Service Records Index is a small exhibit of World War II memorabilia at our headquarters. Ration books, Nazi and Japanese artifacts, a U.S. Army raincoat and poncho made by Collegiate Manufacturing Company, maps of cultural monuments not to be bombed, and other interesting items are featured in the exhibit. Older residents of Ames will recall that Collegiate was given the prestigious Army/Navy E Award for excellence in war production for its efforts. Photos of the award ceremony and the actual plaque are available for viewing.

# Announcing the Society's 2008 Lecture series!

All lectures will be at Ames City Auditorium, 6<sup>th</sup> & Clark, Ames; \$2 donation is requested at the door

**Monday, January 28, 2008 at 7pm**

## **All the Smoke and Cinders You'll Ever Want: Ames & College Railway's "Dinkey"** by Dennis Wendell

The "Dinkey" carried passengers, mail, freight and building materials between downtown Ames and Iowa Agricultural College for sixteen years, 1891-1907, during a period of rapid growth by both entities. Society Curator, Dennis Wendell, combines dozens of vintage images with anecdotes and facts about the original

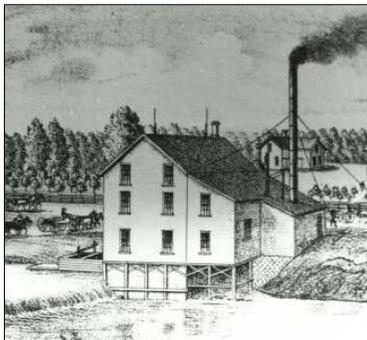


incorporators, route, terminals, rolling stock, passengers, freight, and advertising. A sole surviving artifact will also be shown.

*An Iowa State University Sesquicentennial event.*

**Monday, February 25, 2008 at 7pm**  
**Bears, Baptisms and Other Tales**  
by Greg Vitale

Travel down the South Skunk River and back through time with Greg Vitale, a founding member of the Skunk River Paddlers. Along the way, you'll explore former Native American hunting grounds, meet early settlers, find remnants of old mills, talk of war, bears, baptisms and other stories that take us downstream and back to the present.



The Lecture Series is open to the public. Society members, friends, families and community residents are invited to enjoy these entertaining local tales that will open your eyes to Ames' colorful past. Mark your calendars now!

Co-sponsored with Skunk River Paddlers.

**Monday, March 31, 2008 at 7pm**

## **The "Heart Of Iowa" Leg of the 1908 New York To Paris Great Auto Race**

by Bill Jepsen

Put on your driving gloves, strap on those goggles and slip on that linen duster. You are invited to experience the tale of one of the most adventurous treks ever undertaken. The 1908 New York to Paris Great Race was a colossal international undertaking and a huge news event exactly one hundred years ago. What's more, its route brought it through the "heart of Iowa" and Ames. Using period photographs, information about the race, vehicles, individuals involved and post race hoopla will be presented, concentrating on the happenings here in Central Iowa. Don't miss this wild ride!



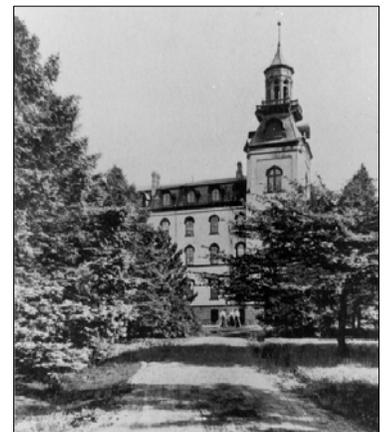
**April 28, 2008 at 7pm**  
**Celebrating 150 Years of the Cyclone Experience**

by Tanya Zanish-Belcher

Join Tanya Zanish-Belcher, Head of Special Collections & University Archives at the ISU Library, as she describes her Department's Sesquicentennial projects. From artifacts to oral history interviews, from blogs to websites, from diaries to snapshots, documenting the ISU Sesquicentennial is a full-time effort.

The 150th celebration also demonstrates the ongoing importance of keeping archives. The 15,000 linear ft. of papers, records, and 1,000,000 images in the Archives were used in numerous university projects and publications. She will also share some of the more unique objects from the collection.

*An Iowa State University Sesquicentennial event.*



# Ames Historical Society News



## July 4, 2007: A Great Day!

Ames Historical Society members marched in the Ames Fourth of July Parade and promoted Hoggatt School. Jeff Benson, lower left, and Carol Phillips, Hoggatt School Curator, right, had a great time passing out Hoggatt School postcards and heritage seeds. Also parading were Margaret Elbert, Peter Benson, Ken Cameron and Roger Coulson. The Society provided a vintage red convertible for Mayor Ann Campbell, top.

## Hoggatt School Sees Many Visitors



Hoggatt School saw over 300 visitors during June, July and August week-end open hours - nearly 2 ½ times the number last summer! The school was also

well-used by elementary school classes that visit the schoolhouse museum with their teachers in the spring and fall. Curator Carol Phillips hosts wearing her vintage Civil War era costume, adding to the authenticity of the experience. Thank you letters from the students are charming and demonstrate the impact of a "real" 1860's experience. Carol is seeking enough slates to provide hands-on use for up to 25 students. Society members who would like to assist in the purchase of slates may contact us at 515-232-2148.

## Worldly Goods Benefit Night: Gifts That Give 3 Times

On the evening of **Wednesday, November 14**, a Main Street business will donate 20% of their sales to the Ames Historical Society. Worldly Goods, located at 223 Main Street, features Fair Trade handcrafted items from around the globe.

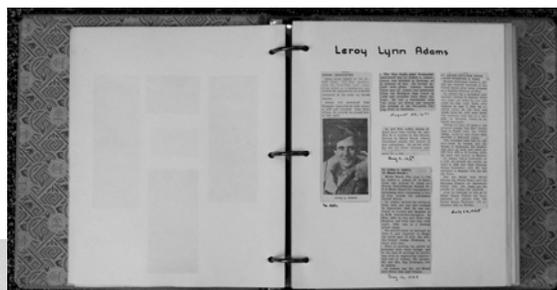
Anything purchased between **5 and 8pm that day** gives once to the recipient, once to the global artisans whose wares are sold and once to support The Society. Mark your calendar and spend a pleasant evening at Worldly Goods! In addition to a wide selection of unique, handmade goods, refreshments will be provided, including Fair Trade beverages such as hot cocoa, coffee and Tea.

Plan to do some holiday shopping and help us make this a successful event!

## World War II Items Exhibited

The airing on public television of Ken Burns' film, *The War* has prompted us to exhibit a number of interesting 1940s items from our collection through November. Open hours at 416 Douglas are Wednesday - Friday, 1-5pm. Visitors can also view the impressive Story County Service Personnel database that organizes information about local residents who served during World War II.

Additionally, there are 27 notebooks filled with clippings about individuals who participated in the war.



More specific information about Ames and the World War II years is on our website - click "About Ames", then click the bottom entry, "World War 2 - rationing - civil defense."

## Your Involvement is Needed!

As the activities of the Ames Historical Society grow, members can play more active small, medium and large roles in day-to-day operations.

Here is a sampling of the types of important spots volunteers are invited to take:

- hosting during open hours at Society Headquarters
- thank you note writing
- marking artifacts with reference information
- quarterly newsletter labeling for mailing
- entering collections data on the computer

These activities could be weekly or some other regular schedule.

Those with genealogy or other research experience would be valued to assist in answering patron questions and tracking down information.

Those who enjoy interviewing could conduct oral histories with current and former residents to capture important stories before they are lost.

Please call 515-232-2148 to offer your skills!

## Are you current?

**Membership renewals** for 2007 are due on the one-year anniversary of last year's payment. See the label on this newsletter for information about your membership.

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

**Additional amount for:**

Building Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Operations Endowment \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Checks payable to Ames Historical Society; send to:  
**Ames Historical Society, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010**

### Ames Historical Society

#### Member Benefit

**10% off collector's reference books at  
ANTIQUÉ AMES, 202 Main, Ames  
Offer good by showing this newsletter.**