



WARREN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Box 256, Indianola, IA 50125

Phone -515-961-8085

(Highway 92 West, 1300 West 2nd Ave. Turn north into fair grounds, then turn east)

E-mail - contact@warrencountyhistory.org

May 2026

WHAT'S INSIDE?

Page 5 Indianola Opera House
Page 6 Bicentennial Century Farms
page 8 Grandma Kate Remembers

2nd Thursday of Month

9:30 Board Meeting

10:-00 LCF Meeting

Tuesday May 26th, 6:30 to 7:00

Museum Tour/Reception

Tuesday, May 26th, 7:00 pm

General Meeting

Speaker: Dennis Johnson

Artemus, Return to Moon and

NASA Space Program

Garage Sale

June 19th & 20th

Qualified Charitable
Distribution



Here is a tax-smart way for traditional IRA owners, age 70 1/2 or older to give to WCHS. Make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) and pay no tax on the gift. For 2024 you can transfer your QCD gift directly to Warren County Historical Society.

Please continue to collect Indianola HyVee receipts and bring them in to the museum. We have a large glass container near the kitchen where you can place them. We can use gas, pharmacy, grocery or any other HyVee receipt. It is an easy way to raise funds for WCHS. When HyVee asks if you want to have your receipt, say YES!



FAMILY CELEBRATION of LOCAL HISTORY MONTH, MAY 1—31

Tour of the Warren County History Center and Heritage Village and a discussion of SPACE and NASA

Tour and Program, Tuesday, May 26th



Museum Tour & Reception
6:30 pm — 7:00 pm



Program 7:00 pm. Dennis Johnson, Certified NASA Ambassador from Des Moines, will discuss Artemis, Return to Moon, and other NASA Space Programs. Come and have your questions answered as we enter a new era of space exploration. Artemus sparked your interest now learn more.

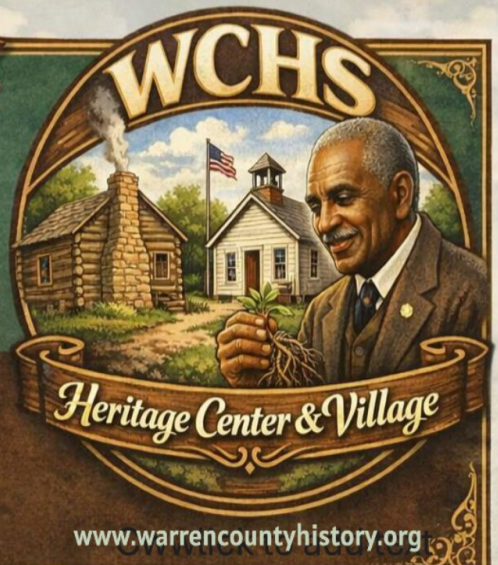


In 2003 the UK created an observance dedicated to exploring and celebrating the unique history of communities and local history. The US has also encouraged awareness of local heritage. WCHS is celebrating May 1— 31st as Warren County History Month. We invite you to tour the Warren County History Center & Heritage Village at 6:30 pm Tuesday, May 26th, followed by Dennis Johnson's NASA program at 7:00 p.m.

May 1-31

Local and Community History Month

Celebrate Warren County Historical Society!



www.warrencountyhistory.org

THANKS to WONDERFUL WCHS VOLUNTEERS & INDIANOLA 5th GRADERS, WE HAD a FUN,

WEATHER SAFE PIONEER SCHOOL! May 14-19



WARREN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUMMER HUGE, Multi GARAGE SALE

Friday June 19, 3:00 to 7:00 pm & Saturday, June 20th 9:00 to 2:00

Highway 92 West, Turn into Warren County Fairgrounds on north and then turn right to WCHS

We are accepting donations June 1st at the WCHS Museum & Thursdays 9:00 to 4:00 or Saturdays 9:00 to noon through Thursday June 19th.

Want to help sort and price, work at sale or have questions? Contact Linda Beatty at 961-3088 or stop by WCHS on Thursdays, 9 to 4 or Saturday 9 to noon.



Please help us make this annual fundraiser a success.

Consider sharing your excess items/clutter with WCHS for our annual garage sale. We will be accepting donations beginning June 1 to June 18.

LOG CABIN FESTIVAL

BEFORE 1870

Honoring Old Settlers, Farmers & Communities

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2026
Parade 10:00 Heritage Village 11 to 4



- * Heritage Village Tours
- + Pioneer Farming Demonstrations
- + Stories & Artifacts
- + Community Heritage Exhibits
- + Music & Dance
- Old Settlers Celebration

SHARE YOUR WARREN COUNTY PIONEER ANCESTOR'S (1849-1870s) With WCHS for LCF
Celebrating the 250th US Birthday is a wonderful time for you to share the Warren County story of your pioneer relatives through art, photos, word, charts or artifacts.

1. Register your Warren County farm that has been in the same family for 75 years or longer
2. Share your Warren County family history by photo, video, manuscript (essay, poetry, etc.), art, or chart
3. Pioneer Demonstrations — dancing, weaving, broom making, caning, Dutch Oven Cooking etc.



WCHS Garage Sale, Friday June 19, 3:00 to 7:00 pm

Bring your donations to WCHS beginning June 1st through Thursday, June 18th. We are open on Thursdays 9:00 to 4:00 and Saturdays 9:00 to Noon.

Dear WCHS Members and Interested Parties:

I have been a volunteer at Warren County Historical Society (WCHS) for nearly two decades and believe our museum, research library and 9-building heritage village is Warren County's best kept secret. Where else in the county can you visit 10 buildings with so much information at no cost?



During the past few years, we have made a special effort to maintain and improve our wonderful physical plant by:

- Restoring the Log Cabin's foundation, replacing logs, chinking, and roofing;
- Painting and roofing Freeman's General Store;
- Remodeling the Pioneer Church with new walls, ceiling and lighting fixtures, siding and ramp;
- Painting Mount Hope School, Quaker Meeting House, Gazebo, Outhouse and portions of the Museum.

Indianola's General Joseph Warren Questers adopted Mt. Hope School and have done a terrific job making significant improvements on the inside including painting and replacing windows. We are also indebted to Mike Vanderpool for grading and rocking our driveway, leveling and seeding our newly purchased property and engineering our museum's south-end drainage issues.

This year's building priority is the 1990 George Washington Carver Museum dedicated in 1990, 100 years after Carver entered Simpson Collage. We need to secure the roof-walls, replace ceiling tiles and paint the inside. As the Museum is receiving more public attention every year, we need to do our best to ensure its prominence as a first-rate resource on Carver. The Museum is featured in Indianola's periodic tourism bus tours and has been visited by national public figures and historians and will be highlighted in a forthcoming article on Carver in **Iowa Outdoors**, a publication of Iowa's DNR. When the Winterset-Indianola portion of Highway 92 is renamed in Carver's honor, the museum is likely to get additional recognition.

Three years ago WCHS purchased two acres of land from the city of Indianola and is now in the process of deciding how to best develop this property to preserve Warren County's heritage for future generations. We welcome your thoughts and ideas.

Finally, we are all saddened by the recent passing of structural engineer-electrician-tech person, Dwight McCormick who contributed so much to the life of WCHS. He built our computer and security systems, installed office equipment and lighting fixtures, and performed countless tasks too numerous to list. Dwight was an invaluable volunteer who will be sorely missed.

Sincerely,

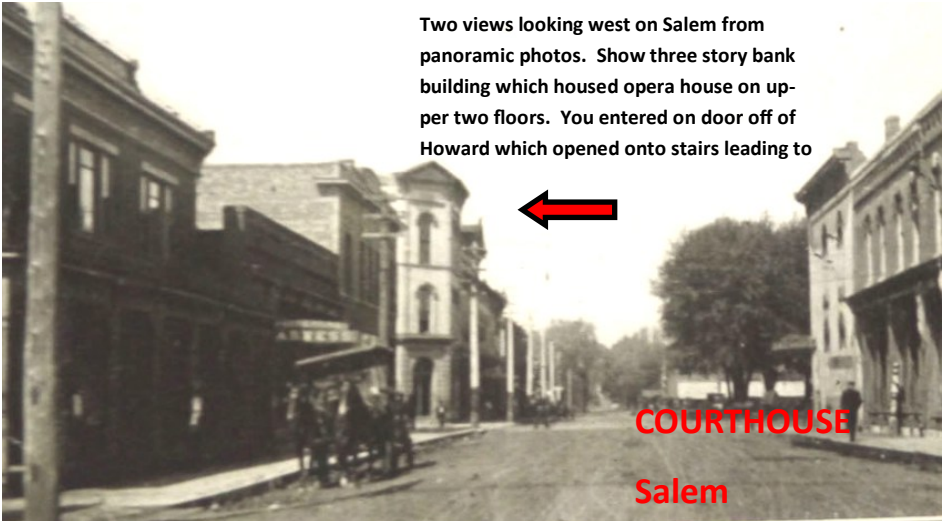
Jerry Beatty, President, WCHS

Brian Button, Editor of DNR'S magazine, Iowa Outdoors. The magazine is writing about George Washington Carver and love of plants.



Douglas Brinkley, Presidential Historian, author and history professor at Rice University was in Indianola to speak to Simpson students. He visited our Carver Museum and hopes to write a book about G.W. Carver.





Two views looking west on Salem from panoramic photos. Show three story bank building which housed opera house on upper two floors. You entered on door off of Howard which opened onto stairs leading to

SPRAY OPERA HOUSE



A source of entertainment for people of Indianola during the late 1800s and early 1900s was the Spray Opera House located at the southeast corner of the square at Howard and Salem. The opera house was built in 1875 by Henry Spray and J.W. Carpenter. The entrance to it was by a stairway opening on the west side of South Howard in the rear of the Warren County Bank building and in the middle of the building housing it. The bank faced on Salem on the public square. The stairway crossed transversely across the bank building and led to an auditorium on the second floor over the two storerooms west of the bank. The stairway is in use but the auditorium has been made into apartments.

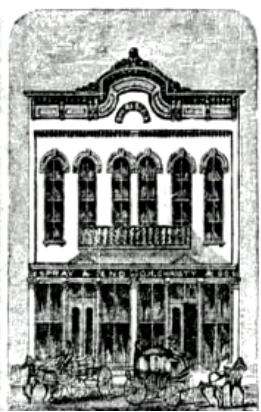
Don Berry provided the following dimensions: the auditorium was 42 by 80 feet and the ceiling was nineteen feet from the floor. In the center of the ceiling was a dome twelve feet in width and six feet high inside. In the dome hung a larger chandelier with twelve oil lamps. The stage was forty-two feet in width and twenty feet in depth with dressing rooms on each side. The main hall and the gallery seated about 550. The opera house ceased with the popularity of silent movies in the early 1900s.

Many touring companies performed here as well as an unusually good home talent company known as the The Enterprise Club. Among the thespians who made up that company were: Howard Carruthers, Will Perru, Ruth and Florence Williamson, Ned Perry, George Huffman and others. Will Perry generally was cast as the comedian. One night he played the part of a tin peddler. While he was reciting his dialogue his goatee fell off into a tin pail. Will was a great kidder and he never heard the last of that incident.

On another occasion a military play was produced. First the Union Army charged only to be driven back by the Confederates. Eventually the Federalists won a fiercely fought battle amidst a deafening staccato of rifle fire. Howard Carruthers was mortally wounded and sat on a box with the blood steaming down his face. George Huffman — the drummer boy — was slightly wounded and fell just in front of the footlights. The curtain went down and George had to get up and crawl into the flies as the audience roared. The fly system is the rigging of ropes, pulleys, counterweights and related devices that enables a stage crew to quickly, quietly and safely fly components such as curtains, lights, scenery, stage effects and sometime people.

Perhaps the most comical incident occurred during the performance of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Living in Indianola at that time was a character, one Jack Young. He was the curtain raiser and he wanted the whole world to know it. Joe Baker was the property man. The actor playing Simon Lagree lost his whip and asked Jack Young where it was. At the very touching moment when Little Eve asked Uncle Tom, "Where is the New Jerusalem, Uncle Tim?" Jack Young bellowed, "How the hell do I know? Ask Baker." The remark was heard plainly all over the opera house and nearly broke up the show.

When Lonnie Young was boy, he lived in an apartment created when the Opera House closed. He has been interested in the Opera House and roamed theater areas that remained after the apartments were created. To the right is an Opera House flyer an aunt gave him.



J. W. CAMPBELL, HENRY SPRAY.

Campbell & Spray's

OPERA HOUSE

ONLY ONE IN THE CITY

Size, 42x80, with Gallery. Stage, 20x42 with four Dressing Rooms and six sets of scenery.

WILL PLAY FIRST-CLASS ATTRACTIONS ONLY.

NO OTHER NEED APPLY. SIX SEATS ALWAYS RESERVED FOR FAMILIES. FOR TERMS AND DATES ADDRESS

J. W. CAMPBELL, Manager.

INDIANOLA

Is located twenty-three miles south from Des Moines at the terminus of the C. R. I. & P. R. R., also the C. B. & Q. R. R. Population, 2,500. Simpson Centenary College is located here, also several Manufacturing Establishments. Hotels.

Weekly papers, Advocate-Tribune, and Indianola Herald. Bill poster J. H. Eno.

Twenty-five Warren County farms qualified as Century Iowa Farms during the 1976 Bicentennial Year. To qualify for Century Farm designation , the farm must have been owned by the same family for 100 years or more by July 4, 1976. See the following list of Warren County Century Farms:

- Barkley, J.T., Cumming (1854)
- Bean, Harriette M., RR#1 Swan (1851)
- Beem, Lester L., Carlisle (1864)
- Brown, Mrs. James William, Indianola (1863)
- Bruce, Allen N., Carlisle (1863)
- Bumgarner, Darl & Elaine, Indianola (1868)
- Brockway, Mr. & Mrs. B.J., New Virginia (1854)
- Butler, Thomas A., Indianola (1856)
- Cain, Marie A., Norwalk (1855)
- Churchman, Frederic V., Norwalk (1867)
- Cole, Shirley S., Carlisle (1871)
- Coon, Delmar B. & McDanel, Ruth, Carlisle (1870)
- Dittmer, Faye Gibson, Milo (1874)
- Dittmer, Norbert, Lacona (1859)
- Gilbert, Mrs. Aubrey, Milo (1865)
- Goode Keith A., Lacona (1856)
- Goodhue, Mrs. Wilbur, Carlisle (1845)
- Harbert, George E., (1856)
- Henry, Roy R. & Ruth G., Indianola (1865)
- Howell, Mr. & Mrs. Lavon, (1875)
- James C. Bliss, & Corda J. Estate, (1864)
- Johnston, Richard & Virginia, Carlisle (1852)
- Kimzey, Merle, Milo (1854)
- Lane, O.B. & Christie B., Cumming (1866)
- McKee, Wallace F., Carlisle (1853)
- Martin, Sam W. St. Charles, (1872)
- Merrell, Lloyd & Esther, Milo (1875)
- Michener, Bessie L., Milo (1876)
- Middleswart, M.L., Indianola (1873)
- Miller, Elliot A. & Ira M., Carlisle (1848)
- Mitchell, Don L., Lacona (1858)
- Morris, Dwight E., Ruth Salyers, & Bonnie Boothe, Carlisle (1853)
- Morrison, Neil, New Virginia (1870)
- Nicholls, Allen M. & Dale. Carlisle, (1864)
- Nutting, Eldon A., Indianola (1864)
- Ogle, Roy R. & Betty R., Indianola (1865)
- Parsons, Eugene & Diana, Carlisle (1855)
- Pendry, Dale & Maxine, Hartford (1874)
- Runyan, Jocyphine Estate, Milo (1874)
- Sandy, Annabelle C. & Carl C., Milo (1867)
- Schooler, Mrs. Arthur B., Reynolds, Eleanor & Johnson, Louise, Carlisle (1871)
- Smith, Jesse P, Coorn, Loise H., Smith, Roberta P., Smith, Russell J., & Robert E., Hartford (1860)
- Spain, Lillis V, Life Estate, Hartford (1864)
- Spangler, Gertryal C., Cumming (1855)
- Spear, C.D., Indianola (1854)
- Stotts, Audrey L. Pleasantville, (1853)
- Strable, Mrs. Ernest, St;. Charles (1865)
- Turner, Melvin L., Lacona (1869)
- Warren, E.F., Pleasantville (1869)
- Wilbur, Kent, Milo (1850)
- Wiley, Ellen C. & Wiley, Pearl, Carlsile (1866)
- In 2006 the Heritage Farm Program was created to honor families whose ownership of at least 40 acres and consecutive operation of a farm by members of the same family for 150 years. The Century Farm Program continues and now you can achieve Heritage with the addition of 50 more years.**



In 1976 the Warren County Bicentennial Committee ran a contest for the best Warren County Bicentennial Design. 16 year old Craig Smith from Martensdale St. Marys School submitted the winning design. The Committee had pins made, which sold for \$5:00. We have some of these pins at the museum if you would like one.



WCHS GRANT RECIENT FROM WARREN COUNTY PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERSHIP

Juanita Ott and Jerry Beatty receive a \$1,800 grant from the Warren County Philanthropic Partnership for website redesign. We are thankful to Warren County Philanthropic Partnership for this gift. This grant allows us to have Indianola's Gradient9 Studio update and enhance our website www.warrencountyhistory.org



Come visit our refurbished Pioneer Church — new ramp, doors and cedar siding. Marty and Shawn Adams completed the work this sp



Excerpt from Grandma Kate Remembers by Gertrude Kathryn Casady Wilson

Last week the Log Cabin Hostess Committee met at the Warren County Historical Society to get started on a list of weekend hostesses for the log cabin which is kept open each Sunday afternoon., 2-5, June through August and early September. The committee, appointed by the Warren County Historical Society, also cleaned the cabin and rearranged the interior a bit.

My father and mother and six kids lived in this cabin for five years. And as we worked, lots of memories flooded through my mind.

In May I wrote about having helped at “the birthing” of my baby brother. Well — that event took place in this cabin about 1914. When we lived in it, it didn’t look like a log cabin. A house had been built over and around the cabin and it looked much like most houses with weather — boarding outside and plastered walls inside; two rooms were upstairs and a small room to the east and there was a shaded kitchen and porch on the north. We also had a log ice house and an “authentic” smokehouse. (No — not to smoke in. To smoke the meat at butchering time.)_

Even in childhood an active curiosity made me wonder why our living room (we always said front room) had such deep window sills — a foot or more deep, not like most other houses. A neighbor told us the house was built over a log cabin. The fireplace had been removed leaving only a chimney where the stove pipe connected. (The fireplace has been reconstructed after the cabin was moved to WCHS.)

There is a stationary cot in the northeast corner of the room now much as it was when we lived there. (That’s an iron framed bed with sides that fold down to make a cot or up to make a full size bed. Or with one side up and the other down and lots of nice cushions one could have a pretty nice davenport. Mother had long wanted a stationary cot and was very happy when she finally got it. We needed the extra bed as well as a sitting room.

But my most vivid memory concerning the cot in that room is when my sister had convulsions and blood poisoning following an injury when she jumped into a pile of hay in the feedway of the barn and a pitchfork pierced her ankle.

She was a very sick child and we were a very frightened family as we held her on that cot, and the wait for the doctor’s arrival seemed an eternity. He had to drive nine miles with a horse and buggy. Sister recovered but it took a long time. Just hearing the word “convulsions” always brings visions of that scene in that corner of that cabin room.

The cabin was originally built in 1854. The additional building around it fell to decay and crumbled several years ago and the original cabin was moved to the Warren County Historical Society in Indianola and reconstructed. The room, as it now stands, is somewhat smaller because it was necessary to remove rotted ends of the logs during reconstruction.



Kate with son Bill. Kate was born in 1904 and died in 1990. She married James Harry Wilson and they lived on a farm near Indianola.



INVITATION to WARREN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

RESEARCH RETREAT

Saturday, May 30, 2026

1300 West 2nd, Indianola

Noon until 6:00 pm

The Warren County Historical Society (WCHS) offers a wealth of resources for exploring the county’s history and genealogical records. You can access our research library, which includes family history files, probate records, court records and more. We also have historical documents, such as birth, marriage and death records, building histories and local newspapers. (Suggested donation \$5.00)

Spend an hour or 2 hours or 6 hours using WCHS resources and WIFI.

Optional presentations:

2:00 — Using land records for Historical and Genealogical Research

4:00— How to research using digital newspapers, such as Warren County’s newspapers and Chronicling America

