Warmer weather brings Spring projects

Taking up more than 120 acres, the area used during the Old Threshers Reunion consists of land and buildings owned by the Association as well as the City of Mt. Pleasant and the Henry County Fair. When considering improvements to the area, OT board members look at the needs of the whole space. Many improvements throughout McMillan Park and on OT property are paid for jointly. However, this year’s projects were both in areas owned by the Association. A new road was put in the campground on the northwest side. Paid for by grants from the William M. and Donna J. Hoaglin Foundation and the Enhance Henry County Foundation, this road will allow expansion of Festival of Lights as well as improved accessibility for campers during the Reunion. The drainage project between the Heritage Museums started just after the 2019 Reunion and was funded by Old Threshers.
Greetings from Midwest Old Threshers, Spring 2020

Back in the early 1950s, things like kids wearing coonskin caps, Mr. Potato Head Game and the Hula Hoop were making their mark on America. Other firsts like, kidney transplant, Diners Club first cardboard credit card, disposable diapers, television remote control “Lazy Bones”, Saturday Morning Children’s Programing on TV and the first Peanuts Comic Strip by Charles Schultz were changing the world.

Also in 1950, after several meetings, the election of the Board of Directors and lengthy discussions about a Mount Pleasant event, the Association was chartered on August 21, 1950. The FIRST Annual Old Threshers Reunion was held September 20 and 21. Records showed that 15 steam engines and 8 separators were exhibited at the first Reunion.

Now, 70 years later in 2020! 2020 is like 1616, 1717, 1818, and 1919, because the first two digits match the second two digits. ... Being alive in 2020 is special because that is the only year you are likely to live through wherein the first two digits will match the second two digits. The next year that follows this pattern is 2121 and that makes a baby being born in 2020 101 years old. 2020 will go down in the history books with many firsts that we have all had to face. Today they are all talking about the Coronavirus (COVID-19), social distancing, The World Health Organization, Hand Sanitizer and Toilet Paper shortages, lock downs, shelter in place orders, small business shut downs, and our normal day to day life has come to a halt.

Not the case here at Old Threshers, I promise you that! The 2020 Old Threshers Reunion September 3-7 is steaming ahead as normal. The Reunion will be happening as planned on our part unless we are directed differently by the State of Iowa Public Health Declaration. We have had to postpone, and even cancel, some of our early events and programs this spring. It doesn’t seem right not having 1000s of kids here for school tours and our first yearly whiff of steam engine smoke has been missed. The staff and I are keeping it all positive for this year, camping reservations are up, admission early discount sales are going well, and the entertainment is still a hot topic for folks. We have already made improvements to our grounds this spring with a new road and drainage in the campgrounds and a low area in the campgrounds is being raised and leveled a lot. But for the staff and me, we can’t wait for all of you to stop into the gift shop and office area. Thanks to the Board of Directors and the yearly Old Threshers Foundation financial support, we have remodeled the gift shop and office area. This was a large undertaking that began back in mid-December and is just days away from the final touches arriving. All I can say is WOW it looks great and so do the plans for the 2020 Old Threshers Reunion.

To all of you, please take care of yourselves now so that we can all get together soon at the Old Threshers Reunion and celebrate. Thanks again for your support of Old Threshers today and into the future.
Reunion Grandstand Entertainment

Lorrie Morgan
Thurs. Sept. 3

Carly Pearce
Fri. Sept. 4

Craig Morgan
Sat. Sept. 5

Rodney Atkins
Sun. Sept. 6

Free With Reunion Gate Admission
Featured for 2020

1967 IHC Cub Cadet Original
Owned by: Ralph & Donna Oliver
Cambridge, IA

After 1914 2 1/2 HP Brownwall
Owned by: Bill & Lori Ballard
Marengo, IA

1915 20HP Reeves
Owned by: Duane & Lana Wood
Wallace, NE

1932 Chevrolet Cabriolet
Owned by: Robert Bixenman
Wever, IA

1933 Farmall F-12
Owned by: Tammy Dingman
Burlington, IA

1955 IHC S-160
Owned by: John Marson
Basco, IL
At the end of the 2018 Reunion, Old Threshers’ 32 Reeves Canadian Steam Traction Engine was moved to storage where it was stripped of its gears in early November. The gears were washed and loaded on a trailer for the trip to Anderson Industries in Webster, South Dakota.

The old gears were used to take measurements. From there, computer aided drafting was used to make images of the new gears. Next, molds were made. Some of the gears were shipped to Mt. Pleasant in August of 2019 with another shipment arriving in December. The last pieces to the puzzle arrived in May of this year.

The new parts, manufactured by Dakota Foundry (An Anderson Industries Company,) were machined by Larson Welding & Machine in Fargo North Dakota.

The temporarily assembled 3000+lb. assembly (pictured at right,) when installed with other parts previously received, will essentially make up a complete crankshaft to rear wheels drive train for the engine. The drive train is made up of a crankshaft drive pinion, differential driven gear with new spider gears and shafts, left side differential bevel gear with attached drive pinion, re-babbited cannon bearings that were line bored to fit the newly re-machined 6" countershaft, right side drive pinion and both left and right bull gears.

The only component not replaced was the left side bevel gear that was still in good condition (fixed to the countershaft and driven by the three spider gears that only revolve when turning corners). All of the new gears are made of poured nodular cast iron that is 2 to 3 times stronger than the original gray cast iron.

The group of volunteers working on the project will gather once COVID-19 restrictions allow.

Horse Area volunteers have productive work weekend

Horse Area volunteers gathered in mid-March, prior to the COVID-19 shutdown, and had a great weekend at Old Threshers.

“About 20 horse area volunteers worked on 4 projects,” said Director Paul Bishop. “We built Woody and Chip. These fine horses will be harnessed to a wagon at the Reunion so folks can get up close and see how a harness fits on horses and pretend to drive the team.” Paul says this new interactive exhibit is geared toward kids and will give them some fun photo opportunities.

Platforms and bench seats were constructed for the manure spreaders allowing double occupancy. They also took the dry rotted front axle off the Case separator and it will be replaced. Thanks to all who were able to be there.
Old Threshers office gets a much needed renovation

The Old Threshers office and gift shop has certainly seen its share of changes over the last several decades. Thanks to financial support from the Old Threshers Foundation, the latest changes include a remodel of the inside.

The cracked concrete floor of the gift shop was removed and replaced with a new, stamped and stained concrete floor. The eight-foot ceiling was removed opening up the new area to the rafters.

The small kitchenette area was remodeled to include a larger bathroom and more cabinet space. Floors were replaced along with staff desks. A fresh coat of paint in the office area and board room has it looking like a new building.

While moving and sorting thousands of negatives and photographs, we ran across several that show the evolution of the office and gift shop.

The OT gift shop was gutted to the studs while closed over the 2019 Holiday season.

A new concrete floor, raised ceiling and better lighting are just a few of the improvements to the OT gift shop.

Then and now. The Old Threshers gift shop and offices have gone through a lot of changes over the years.
Barbara Elgar

Barbara D. Elgar, 91, of Mt. Pleasant, died September 25, 2019, at Donnellson Health Center, Donnellson, Iowa.

Born February 2, 1928, in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, IL, she was the daughter of Robert W. and Marion (Bartlett) Dennis. She married Alanson K. (Lany) Elgar on August 5, 1950. Barbara graduated from West Chicago High School in 1946. She then graduated from Iowa Wesleyan College in 1950, with a degree in elementary education. She taught first grade in the Des Moines Public School District for one year.

When Lany passed the bar examination in June of 1951, they returned to Mt. Pleasant. Barb was active in her children’s school activities from the time they started kindergarten until they graduated from high school. She was a member of Zeta Tau Alpha sorority and opened her home numerous times for sorority events. When Lany became a member of the Iowa Wesleyan College Board of Trustees in 1970, they regularly attended and hosted Wesleyan events. She was an active member of First United Methodist Church, having served as President of the United Methodist Women. She and Lany served as the first volunteer coordinators for the Midwest Old Threshers steam powered carousel.

Barbara belonged to United Methodist Women, Chapter DD of TTT, Chapter Original A of PEO, Wednesday Club and Women’s Club. She was a founding member of the Women’s Club gourmet group. She enjoyed entertaining, yard work, reading and traveling.

She is survived by sons, Alan (Gale Kolbet) Elgar of Iowa City and Rob (Sue) Elgar of Plainfield, IL and daughter, Mary Elgar of Mt. Pleasant. She is also survived by granddaughter Meredith (Reed) Peterson of Plainfield, IL and grandson Nicholas (Andrea LeJeune) Elgar of Lombard, IL and nieces, great nieces, nephews and great nephews.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Lany, by her parents, her sister Martha Lydiard and husband, Jack Lydiard, and her brother Robert Dennis and wife, Lucette.

The family has established memorials for Iowa Wesleyan University, the Old Threshers Foundation (carousel) and the First United Methodist Church.

Francis Driscoll

Francis T. Driscoll, 77, passed away suddenly on December 23, 2019.

Francis was born October 19, 1942, in Cedar Valley, Iowa, the son of James C. and E. Agnes (Baker) Driscoll, the fifth of ten children. Francis was raised Catholic later moving to Tipton, IA. He was a 1962 graduate of Tipton High School, lettering in football. In 1964, Francis began serving in the US Army National Guard, headquartered in Iowa City with the 109th Medical Battalion, until his discharge in 1970. On April 12, 1969, Francis married Janet L. Dane at First United Methodist Church in Iowa City. This year they celebrated their 50th Anniversary with a reception and dance.

Francis had a passion for carpentry which he made into a career. He managed Hawkeye Lumber Company in Iowa City for 27 years, retiring in June of 2006 when the branch closed. He then took on small jobs as a residential handyman. His prior employment included Iowa Lumber Company, Iowa City Community Schools, University of Iowa College of Engineering, and Assistant Manager at Lampert Yards. It was a standing joke that every lumber yard he worked for closed!

He regularly attended First United Methodist Church in Iowa City. Francis was a member of the Iowa Lumber Assn., National Homebuilders Assn., Northwestern Lumber Assn., Iowa City Homebuilders, and was a longtime volunteer at the Midwest Old Threshers Campground. As the spouse of a 33-year Johnson County 4-H leader, he supported many Club and County activities. Francis was also an assistant coach for Iowa City Kickers and Little League Baseball.

In 2006, Francis received the Building Material Dealer of the year award from the Iowa Lumber Assn. He also received a volunteer award from the Midwest Old Threshers Campground where he provided carpentry, maintenance, painting and landscaping.

Francis and Janet enjoyed dancing with the Eagles Dance Club, camping, traveling, Iowa wrestling and football, bowling, playing Euchre, and stock car racing. Most important to Francis was his family. He enjoyed attending many events of his children, nieces, nephews and grandchildren. He loved being a Papa to Harper, Kendall and Dane.

Francis is survived by his loving wife, Janet, and their children, Jane Driscoll of Iowa City and Brian (Megan) Driscoll of West Branch; grandchildren, Harper, Kendall and Dane Driscoll; his siblings, Rosemary Sexton of West Branch, Patricia Knoop of Iowa City, Marcella Budreau of West Branch, Regina (George) Schreiber of Solon, Carol Moore of Lawrence, KS, Daniel Driscoll of West Branch, Lorna (Michael) Fletcher of Tipton; sisters in law Barb Driscoll and Mary Jo Dane; brothers in law Bob (Sue) Dane, Bill (Annette) Dane; former in laws Emmy Nolte and Charles Thiede; special nieces and nephews (including great and great-greats!) and his special friends from Mercy Cardiac Rehab.

Francis was preceded in death by his parents, step father Galo Stroppel; his father and mother in law, George and Marjorie Dane; siblings, Margaret Heick, James J. Driscoll; brothers in law, Paul Heick, Roscoe Sexton, Juergen Knoop, Thomas Budreau, and Leonard Moore; nieces Susan Driscoll, Tamra (Budreau) Salm, Jaime (Fletcher) Sheeder, and Amy (Schreiber) Wilson.

Online condolences may be submitted to www.lensingfuneral.com

Memorials may be directed to Mercy Hospital Foundation for Cardiac Rehab (www.mercyiowacity.org/ mercyfoundation,) or the Midwest Old Threshers Foundation FBO the Campground, 405 E. Threshers Rd, Mt. Pleasant. Iowa 52641.

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John Weaver

John N. Weaver, 89, died January 11, 2020 at his home in Des Moines.

John was born November 29, 1930 in New Virginia to Mary Weaver. Graduated from New Virginia High School and worked for Meredith Corporation until his retirement in 1992. John served in the Army during the Korean War and was a member of American Legion Post 274. He was Past Master of Day Light Masonic Lodge.

John was a volunteer for Midwest Old Threshers for several years as coordinator of the carousel. He also helped with school tours and Ghost Trolley.

Survivors include his children: John (Connie) Weaver, Richard "Kirk" Weaver; grandchildren: Karrie (Adam) Phillips, Troy (April) Weaver, Cody (Kristin) Weaver; 8 great grandchildren;

John was preceded in death by his wife, parents, one brother, Gary Thompson and one sister, Geneva Tutwiler.

Memorials may be made to the old Threshers Foundation, Dallas City Fire Department or Blessing Hospice.

Berniece Gerdes

Berniece Evelyn Gerdes, 100, of Burlington, died March 19, 2020, at the Great River Klein Center in West Burlington.

Born February 18, 1920, in Burlington, IA, she was the daughter of Henry and Lillian Lohmann Fromm. On June 5, 1943, she married Robert K Gerdes in Burlington. He died on May 21, 2003.

She graduated from Burlington High School in 1938 and Iowa State (College) University in 1942 with a degree in Home Economics. She taught Home Ec., Health, Girls, P.E. and Music for 2 1/2 years at West Burlington Junior High School.

She married Robert Gerdes in Burlington at her parents’ home on June 5, 1943. Bob received a furlough from his military duty so they could marry but was called back early so their honeymoon was postponed until the summer of 1944. That summer Bob’s unit was sent for training in Cheyenne, Wyoming and Berniece was able to move to Wyoming to spend their summer together. Berniece returned to Burlington to teach until their son was born that following April. He was 8 months old when Bob returned home from WWII in December of 1945. The following years blessed them with four other children. Bob and Berniece lived in Burlington until moving their family to Danville in 1953. Berniece was a substitute teacher for many years in the Danville Community School District and helped her husband in the family owned businesses, Danville True Value and Lumber and the Danville Laundromat.

Berniece loved volunteering at her church including Sunday School Teacher, Girls Guild Leader, and Children’s Choir Director. She was a charter member of the Danville Library Board and enjoyed volunteering at the Library for many years. She was also a member of Faith Baptist Church, a member of P.E.O. Chapter EV, a member of 10 Club, and a member of the Danville Garden Club. She enjoyed being with her grandchildren and watching them in all of their activities. She enjoyed traveling, crocheting and quilting. In later years she enjoyed meeting her new great-grandchildren and her Klein (Apple Trees) family.

Survivors include three sons, Jim (Judy) Gerdes of Fort Madison, Bob (Vicki) Gerdes of Burlington, Tom (Jeanie) Gerdes of Danville; one daughter, Janet (Bob) Hesler of Danville; twelve grandchildren, Jeff Gerdes, Jennifer Cohrt, Sarah Vanway, John Gerdes, Julie Starbuck, Micki Boelens, Eric Gerdes, Kim Sherwood, Jennie Adkins, Rob DeSpain, Sean Hesler, and Chris Hesler; twenty five great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by an infant daughter Karen; her husband Robert; parents; sister, Mildred Schlue; and brother, Gordon Fromm.

Memorials have been established for the Great River Hospice House and the Danville Library.

Dennis Robertson

Dennis R. Robertson, 72, of Burlington, IA, formerly of Mt. Pleasant, passed away March 21, 2020, at the Great River Klein Center in West Burlington.

Born August 3, 1947, in Fort Dodge, IA, Dennis Rudolf was the son of LaVern A. and Doris B. (Hansen) Robertson. He was a graduate of Burnside High School and Peru State College. On September 15, 1990, Dennis married Linda Jo Capps in Lake Geneva, WI.

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Dennis was a buyer in Mt. Pleasant for Motorola, service rep for Motorola State of Iowa out of Des Moines, IA and Infrastructure Cellular out of Arlington Heights, IL and Phoenix, AZ. After his retirement, Dennis became an inhouse engineer for radio station KMCH.

Dennis was a member of the Circle K Club while at Peru State College. He was also a member of the Mt. Pleasant Jaycees, Burlington Kiwanis Club and was active in the Harmony Bible Church in Burlington.

Volunteerism was important to Dennis as he was a video and sound tech at his church. He worked the admission gates and information booths at Midwest Old Threshers as well as participating in the school tours. Dennis remained active as he enjoyed canoeing, tennis, table tennis, traveling and history.

Besides his wife Linda, Dennis survived by two brothers, David Robertson of Manitowoc, WI and Daniel Robertson of Fort Dodge, IA.

Preceding in death were his parents and a brother, Duane Robertson.

Memorials may be directed to the Cradle of Hope Pregnancy Resource Center or the Harmony Bible Church Benevolence Fund in Denny’s memory. On line condolences may be directed to www.olsonpowell.com

Dennis Bedford

Dennis Royal Bedford, 81, of Mt. Union, died April 9, 2020 at his home. He was born August 17, 1938 in Fort Dodge to Gilbert Royal and Annabelle Lee Adams Bedford.

He was a graduate of Harcourt High School and served in communications in the Army during the Vietnam conflict.

He was a self-employed accountant working mainly in the AG industry.

He was a member of Allis Connection Club; collected Allis Chalmers gas engines; loved farm toys and antique gas engines; and enjoyed attending Allis Chalmers shows and Old Threshers every summer.

Survivors include three sons, Wayne (Angela D.) of Grand Rapids, Michigan, Curt (Kelly) of San Antonio, Texas and Ron of Sun City, Arizona; five grandchildren; one great-granddaughter; two brothers, Gene Bedford of Aubrey, Texas and Duane (Cindy) Bedford of Russell, Iowa; and nieces, nephews and cousins. Besides his parents, he was preceded in death by one sister Gwen.

Online condolences may be left at www.elliottfuneralchapel.com.

Robert Wettach


Robert “Bob” Stewart Wettach was born February 15, 1928, the only child of A.M. “Pete” and Ruth Grimes Wettach in Ames, Iowa.

Bob was baptized at Nashua’s “Little Brown Church” and lived in Montrose and Mt. Pleasant. He graduated at Mt. Pleasant High School and attended the Iowa State University until he enlisted in the U.S. Navy as a codes and ciphers specialist at Oahu, Hawaii.

After two years in the Navy, Bob enrolled at Iowa Wesleyan College where he met his future wife. On August 6, 1950, Bob married Betty Elaine Preuss of New London at the New London Methodist Church. Two years later, he graduated from Iowa Wesleyan College. He then attended the College of Medicine at the University of Iowa, received his M.D. Degree in 1956 and followed with a one year internship at Broadlawns County Hospital in Des Moines.

In 1957, the Wettach family returned “home” to Mt. Pleasant and Bob began a very fulfilling career in a profession he enjoyed, in a state and town he loved, among people whom he understood and cared for, and who loved him as well.

Bob set up his family practice office on the east side of the square on the 2nd floor and later built an office on North Main Street by the public library. In 1990, he joined Family Medicine P.C. of Mt. Pleasant as a staff physician. During Bob’s medical career, he delivered 1,500 babies, most of whom were born to mothers in and around Mt. Pleasant.

Bob was committed to helping the community and practiced medicine for 50 years.

Bob was affiliated with the American Academy of Family Physicians (charter fellow), Henry County Medical Society, Iowa Academy of Family Practice (board of directors for 2 years), and Iowa Medical Society. Bob was the Henry County Hospital chief of staff, Iowa Wesleyan College physician, and Henry County Medical Examiner.

Bob volunteered for the Hospital Clinic Service at Castaner, Puerto Rico; Indian Health Clinic, Gallup, New Mexico; and National Health Service Corps, Downieville, California.

Bob supported the community by being on the Mt. Pleasant Community School Board, Iowa Wesleyan College Board of Trustees, Henry County Industrial Development Commission, Boy Scouts of America Scout Master, First United Methodist Church member and counselor (with his wife) for the Jr. High and Sr. High MYF. Bob showed his appreciation to the State of Iowa with the contribution of 57,000 photos taken by his father, A.M. Wettach, well known agricultural photographer, to the Iowa State Historical Society at Iowa City.

Interests have been his grandchildren, fishing in local ponds and lakes, reading, University of Iowa football, and St. Louis Cardinal Baseball.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Betty of 60 years. Survivors include his five children, all residents of Iowa, Dr. Steve (Dr. Mary) Wettach of Mt. Pleasant, Dr. David (Sandy) Wettach of Muscatine, Jeff (Barb) Wettach of Decorah, Leigh Ann (Paul) Huser of Sac City, and Jody Wettach of Urbandale. He is also survived by ten grandchildren, Megan (Beau) Bergmann, Kelsey (Will) Van Hoorn, Lauren (Taylor) Mansfield, Matthew Wettach, Chloe (Jim) Wallace, Taylor Wettach, Paige (Charles) Kane, Sam (Madi) Wettach, Molly (Jeremy) Redmond, and Collin Wettach. Three great-grandchildren Olive Wallace, Alexandra Bergmann and Willow Wallace.

Memorials have been established to the Mt Pleasant First United Methodist Church or Henry County Health Center Foundation and dropped off or mailed to Olson-Powell Memorial Chapel, P.O. Box, 656, Mt. Pleasant, IA, 52641. On-line condolences may be directed to www.olsonpowell.com.
MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS PET POLICY, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2020

ADA SERVICE ANIMALS:
During the Old Threshers Reunion, the only animals allowed on the Reunion Show Grounds are those that align with the ADA’s Service Animal Classification for animals (dogs and miniature horses) that are specifically trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities, On-duty police dogs, trained animals appearing in a scheduled events and or competitions will be allowed. This policy would be effective from Monday prior to show start and ending on Monday, Labor Day at 3pm.

Service animals are working animals, not pets. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as a service animal under the ADA. Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal’s work or the individual’s disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.

PERSONAL PETS:
Old Threshers does allow Personal Pets in the main reunion campgrounds and main grounds volunteer camping areas. Old Threshers asks that all pet owners in the campgrounds keep the animal on a 4 foot leash or shorter, and must pick up and dispose of any and all droppings left by the animal. The pets must stay in the designated camping area and do not go onto the show grounds. This policy would be effective from Monday prior to show start and ending on Monday, Labor Day at 3pm.

See attached map of show grounds area.

Please do not leave pets unattended in vehicles. The authorities will be notified of any animals found in unattended vehicles.

Purpose and Reason for Policy change:
We love our pets as much as anyone; but due to the large crowds of people, large amounts of moving equipment on grounds, and the unpredictable nature of animals, it has proven not to be a good mix. For example, on a more serious note, a little girl was bitten by a dog on the Reunion grounds; and the pet and owners left the scene, which put the young girl through the series of painful rabies shots.
Midwest Old Threshers Reunion: Sept. 3-7
Great Northern Printers’ Fair—September 2020
Thrashers House of Terror—October 8-9, 15-17, 22-24, 29-31
Midwest Haunted Rails—October 16, 17, 23, 24, 30, 31
Old Threshers Annual Meeting—Saturday, November 14th, 10am
Festival of Lights—November 19-21, 25-29/December 2-6, 9-31—5:30-9pm
North Pole Express—Hosted by Midwest Central Railroad—MCRR.org
  - November 28, 29, December 5, 6, 12 & 13

Old Threshers Reunion
Sept. 3-7, 2020
Mount Pleasant, Iowa

Shop Online
shop.oldthreshers.com