



Volume 46, Issue 3

Winter 2020

FORWARD TO 2021: PREPARATIONS BEGIN FOR REUNION

Plans for the 2021 Reunion started the moment the 2020 Reunion was cancelled. The Old Threshers board is excited to be able to present the same entertainment line-up for 2021 that was offered in 2020. The featured items remain the same as well.

Work around the grounds continued through the fall. When 2021 arrives, we will be ready to welcome everyone with open arms and beautiful grounds.

No one can predict what the future will bring, but thanks to the dedicated volunteers and supporters of this Association, Old Threshers will be here in 2021 to host the variety of events the community has come to expect.

*See you in
2021!*

DRAINAGE PROJECT COMPLETE EAST OF HERITAGE MUSEUMS

There may not have been a 2020 Reunion, but that doesn't mean there wasn't any activity around Labor Day. Following the 2019 Reunion, work had started on improving the drainage between the Heritage Museums. That work was completed in 2020 as drainage tile was laid east of the museums and dirt hauled in to flatten out the area. It has since been seeded and is looking great. Leveling out this area will give Old Threshers more usable ground for displays or other attractions.

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Dirt work was also done in the Campground at the southwest corner, just north of the Log Village (photos below) Leveling this area out will allow more flat ground for campers.



Dear Friends of Old Threshers,



Terry McWilliams, CEO

As 2020 comes to an end, what can we say about 2020 other than, WOW! When this past year is written in the history books, it will fall under the chapter title of “Skip It!”

As I look back over the past year here at Old Threshers, I know that we all have many things to be thankful for this Holiday Season, even after this hard year.

My amazing staff! I asked them each day to stay positive even as we cancelled another event that they had been working hard on for long periods of time. I’m often asked “How long does it take for you and the staff to plan a Reunion?” It is a year and one half’s worth of work just for the Old Threshes Reunion. On average the staff works on 20 to 25 different events on our grounds over the year and this year we held only 4 events.

The Old Threshers Board of Directors! The board came together multiple times this past year to make some of the toughest decisions they have ever had to make during my time here. They made the right decision each and every time, putting our Old Threshes Family safety first.

The volunteers at Old Threshers are always here for us! We were able to get volunteer help this year on some of our projects on grounds. The Halloween volunteers stepped up on the new Escape Room venture. The Festival of Lights volunteers are working harder than ever as the numbers are growing each night to see the lights.

Thank You to those who supported Old Threshers this year with their donations in our time of need. The ones who donated their 2020 admissions, 2020 camping rates, and booth fees to the association. Thank you for those folks that carried their monies forward to the 2021 Old Threshers Reunion.

The 110 Club was created by Lennis and Sandy Moore as a funding source for Old Threshers! The 110 club letter may have looked a bit different in 2020. The 110 Club support was still there this year and even at a higher level than normal. Thank you!

The projects and events that were able to happen this year were all ones that I’m proud to say are positive changes for the association. Projects like the gift shop and office remodel, the work in the log village, grounds work in the campgrounds, and east of the carousel. The spring announcement of Country Music Alive After Five Event, the new Escape Rooms selling out all but one time slot and the Mount Pleasant Festival of Lights which is growing each and every night.

We all send out our thoughts and prayers to our friends and family of Old Threshers who may have lost someone this past year. Each and every one of them has made a vital impact on all of us here at Old Threshers. They will be missed but their special memories at Old Threshers will remain.

I wish you all a safe and Happy Holiday Season. I promise you that we are doing everything we can to make sure we can, and will, Gather Again in 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry McWilliams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LORRIE
MORGAN

THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER 2ND

Old Threshers
MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA

MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS REUNION
MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA SEPT 2ND - 6TH

2021
Reunion
Entertainment

KLDJ
Stage

CARLY PEARCE

FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER 3RD

Old Threshers
MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA

MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS REUNION
MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA SEPT 2ND - 6TH

Your 5-day
wristband includes
the cost of general
admission to all four
nights of country
music!

CRAIG
MORGAN

SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 4TH

Old Threshers
MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA

MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS REUNION
MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA SEPT 2ND - 6TH

TICKETS WILL
GO BACK
ON SALE IN
EARLY 2021!

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 5TH

RODNEY
ATKINS

KNX. **AR** TN.

Old Threshers
MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA

MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS REUNION
MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA SEPT 2ND - 6TH

FEATURED FOR 2021



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



Suffolk Punch



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

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS BREAKING ATTENDANCE RECORDS

In this social distancing, pandemic world we live in, the Mt. Pleasant Festival of Lights has given everyone something to do that doesn't require them to be around crowds. Well, at least no one but the people in their car.

The 2020 Festival of Lights has attracted people from all around the tri-state area. Kids of all ages are enjoying the 120 displays. Thank you to the 160 sponsors who make this event possible.

The highest attendance in 2019 was on Saturday, December 14th with 460 cars. That record was shattered in late November, just a few days into the 2020 season. On Saturday, December 12th of this year, 702 cars carried their passengers through the 1.5 mile light display covering most of the 60-acre campground at Midwest Old Threshers. The busiest night, the Saturday before Christmas, topped out at 820 cars! Thank you to everyone who drove through. We know there were some who went through multiple times.

Santa has had a busy schedule, not only is he getting ready for his long night of work, but he has also made time to see children as they finish their trip through the lights. He, along with his elves, are listening to Christmas wishes and taking notes.

Thanks to the Old Threshers Horse Area for lending Woody to Santa to help pull his sleigh. Chip stayed in the barn. The four-legged duo will make their appearance at the 2021 Reunion showing visitors how to properly harness a horse. And for a few photo opportunities as well!

The lights are open nightly from 5:30-9pm until New Year's Eve. Admission is \$10 for a car, \$25 for a limo, \$30 for a mini-coach and \$60 for a motor coach. Tickets can be bought at the gate, or ahead of time online at www.oldthreshers.com.



Above: Cars line up to enter the campground.



Santa and his elves are checking the list. The Horse Area loaned out Woody to pull Santa's sleigh. (Below) Samantha Peer offers this point of view from horses take a wagon through the lit archway.



The 2020 Festival of Lights features 120 displays laid out along 1.5 miles. Thank you to the 160 sponsors whose generosity makes this event possible. (Left) Foundation Director, Al Husinga gets into the spirit.





Dear Friends of Old Threshers and Christmas Enthusiasts:

Midwest Old Threshers and the Old Threshers Foundation are continuously working on projects to improve the facilities and the experiences offered throughout the year for our visitors, from the museums to the events such as the annual reunion, Haunted Rails and Festival of Lights. Our newest venture is to build a larger Santa's House:

- To accommodate Santa's visitors by waiting inside with a public restroom
- To permanently house and display a 150+piece Christmas Snow Village
- To offer meeting space to small groups throughout the year; and
- To provide storage space (walk-out basement) for Festival of Lights displays.

This 36x56' structure would be built west of the current Santa house and south of the existing Campground Operations Building. It would be climate-controlled and handicap accessible. The lines to see Santa have been consistently long during the holiday season; the waiting line stretches outside behind the parked cars, which has created a dangerous situation. The new building will allow families to wait inside, sheltered from both the winter weather and traffic, while at the same time enjoying the Christmas Snow Village which has been generously donated by Joyce and Paul Dennison.

As with any new construction, this project comes with a price tag . . . in this case \$200,000+. Our goal is to break ground contingent on funds being raised for the project. So far we are over half way there and thank everyone who has already made a contribution! In order to reach our goal, we have applied for a grant from the Enhance Henry County Foundation and are also asking for the community's support with various options

Major Donor Levels:

Santa Level \$50,000 _____ Mrs. Claus Level \$25,000 _____ Elf Level \$15,000 _____

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Level \$10,000 _____ Reindeer Level \$5,000 _____

Christmas Gift Level \$1,000 _____ Other \$ _____

_____ 2-year pledge of \$ _____ in 2020 and 2021

All Donors to the project will have their name displayed on Santa's Nice List inside the building.

Contributions are payable to the Old Threshers Foundation; you will receive a tax receipt letter. These contributions will be recognized on the Foundation's Major Donor List. Required minimum distributions from an IRA need to be payable to Midwest Old Threshers; they will send a tax receipt letter for any contributions in excess of \$250. Both organizations are 501(c)(3) for purposes of charitable contributions. We sincerely hope you will give this project your consideration. We sincerely hope you will give this project your consideration and that the new Santa House will be ready for next year's Festival of Lights. Please feel free to contact us if you need additional information or have any questions. Thank you!

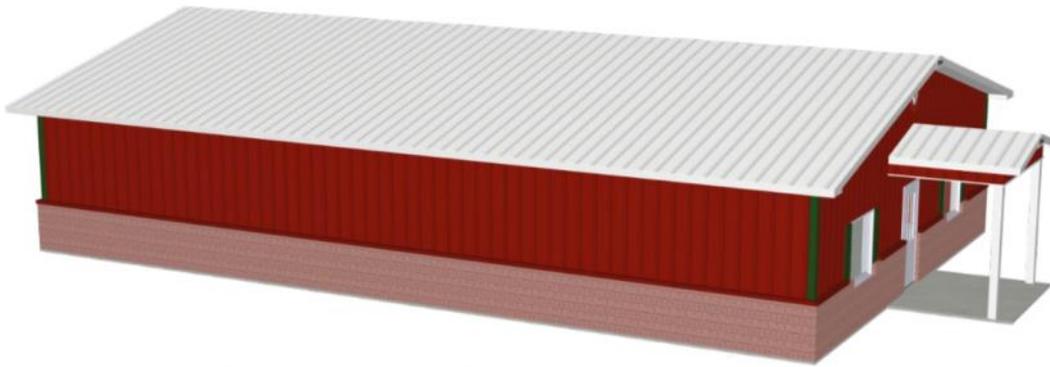
Sincerely,

Steering Committee Co-Chairs

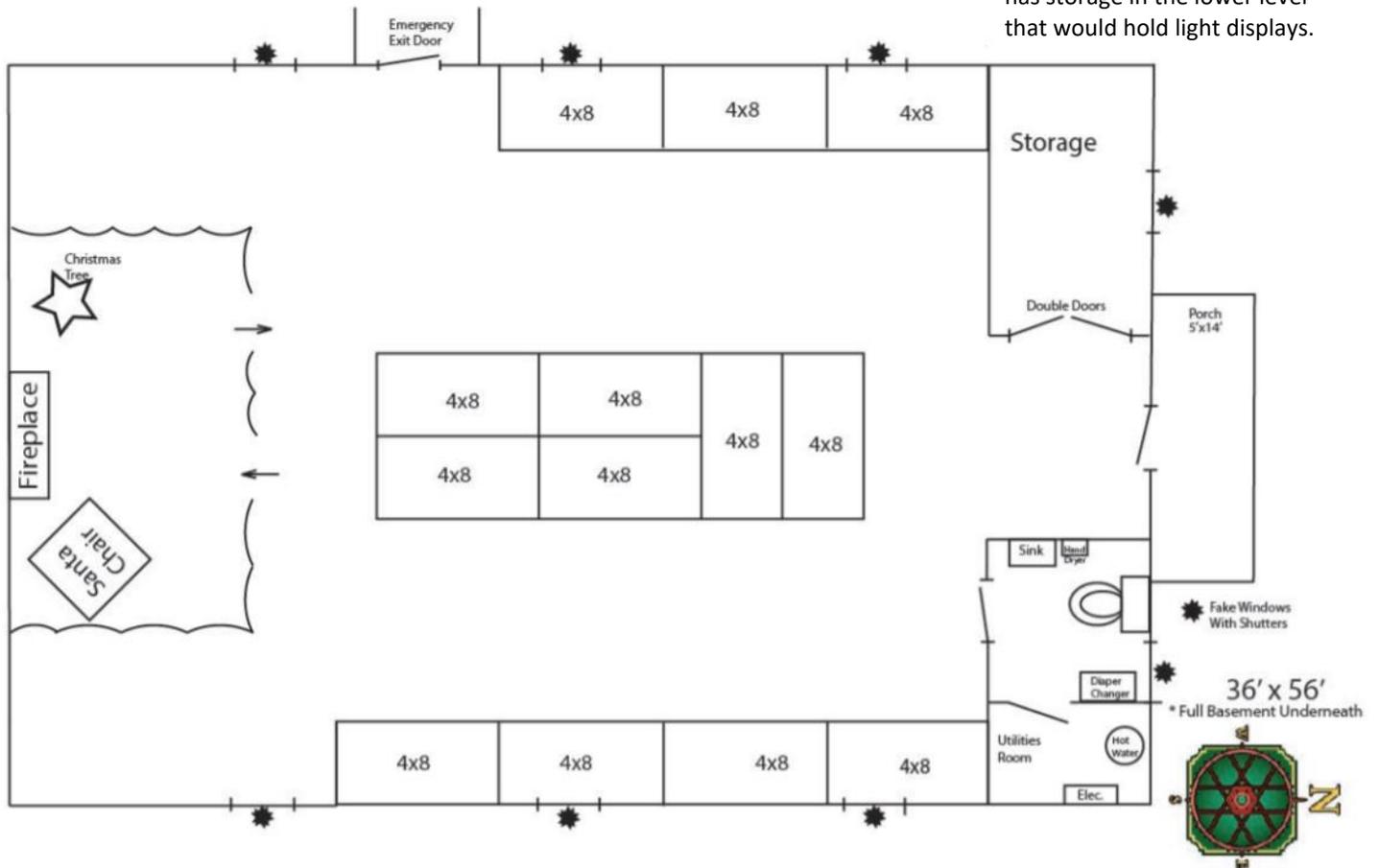
Joyce and Paul Dennison
319-537-1012 or 319-537-1013

Melinda and Al Husinga
515-490-9338 or 515-491-9440

STEERING COMMITTEE RAISING MONEY FOR NEW SANTA HOUSE



Pictured at left is an artist's rendition of the proposed Santa House to be built in the Campground just inside the main gate on Walnut Street. The floor plan is below. The structure would be home to Santa during the Festival of Lights event as well as house a lighted Christmas village. Some of those pieces are shown in the bottom photo. The building has storage in the lower level that would hold light displays.



A LOOK BACK: MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS MILESTONES PT. 2

Editor's Note: This is just a snapshot of the last 20 years of Midwest Old Threshers. It is not meant to be all-encompassing. This is Part 2. Part 1 was published in the Summer 2020 Chaff.

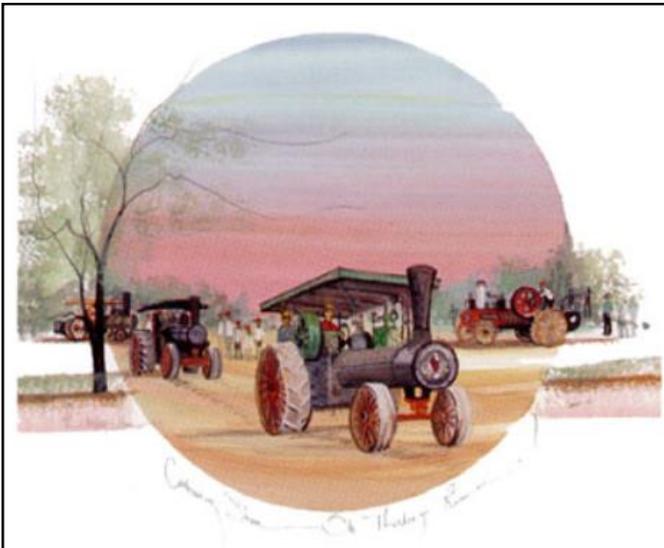
2000

Groundbreaking for the Grace Pierson Carousel Pavilion was a great way to start a new decade following the \$100,000 gift from Richard E. Oetken of Burlington. McMillan Park entered a redesign phase including landscaping, trees and lighting. Midwest Central Railroad sponsored the 3rd Ghost Train. The National Railway Historical Society held its annual meeting on the grounds.



Work began on the 50th Anniversary Yearbook and 12th edition of the Midwest Old Threshers cookbook. P. Buckley Moss created her first commemorative print titled, "Celebrating Steam." Other 50th Anniversary items offered were a set of four buttons, gold belt buckle and matching hat pin and a golden anniversary bear.

Fiddler contest returned to Reunion programming



Threshers hosted the 10th Annual Boy Scout Heritage Camporee. A new campground headquarters building was completed at Gate 13. Three additional Information Booths were built.

Old Threshers received a \$12,000 Historical Resources Development grant from State for Museum roof repair of Museum B. Expanded and newly remodeled Theatre Museum library was dedicated April 8 to Caroline Schaffner. The lighting in Museum A was upgraded.

Trolley Car No. 320 restoration completed and dedicated. This year marked the 5th Summer Festival of Plays. The Threshers Chaff celebrated 27 years of publication. Roberta Callaway recognized for 20th year as Chairman of the Entertainment Committee

2001

- Old Threshers hosted Red Power Roundup in June.
- The racetrack south of the Grandstand was removed



- Richard Oetken was the 50th Anniversary Grand Marshal. The Hazel Grace Pierson Carousel Pavilion was dedicated at the Reunion.
- Marvin Mill constructed and dedicated in Museum B.
- Theatre Museum gets a new roof and front façade
- Gates 3 & 14 Close for Reunion. New roads, new gates, a new look.
- This was the first year for Drive A Tractor.

A LOOK BACK CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

- VIM engine in Stationary Steam was restored.
- Foundation fund began by a generous gift of \$50,000 from the late Ernie Hayes of Mt. Pleasant
- November 1 Development Officer Paul Anderson completed 20 years of service to Old Threshers.

2002

- Old Threshers received the Bussey Doll collection.



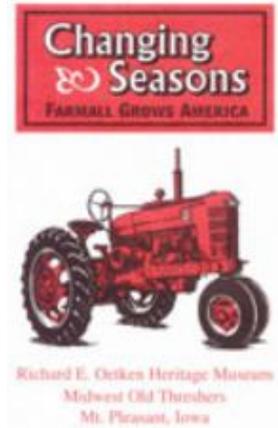
- The Midwest Electric Railway received a maintenance trolley in early May. A new dispatch tower was built near the north end of the Trolley Barn.
- The Midwest Central Railroad's South Station was constructed.
- Maryville Vertical Engine added to Stationary Steam Area.
- The LaCrosse 7-14 HP Rein-driven tractor was donated by Dwight Shellabarger's children.
- WHO Radio Tractor Ride was held in June.
- The Old Threshers boardroom/library was completely remodeled.
- The campground underwent some electrical upgrades.
- The M. Dodds Wood Shop was built in the Log Village.
- This was the first year for the Ghostly Trolley.

2003

- Lennis Moore celebrates 25 years as CEO.
- Billie Turley retires from editor of *Threshers Chaff*.
- Ragbrai comes to Mt. Pleasant. Threshers hosts hundreds of campers.
- 13th Annual Cookbook published.
- New wood chariots were added to carousel.
- New meter room constructed in Museum A.
- Log Village get a new Wood Shop
- Chuck Celsi donated several boxes of manuals and magazines covering many interests.
- Construction begins on the International Harvester Exhibit in Museum A. Museum B roof gets resurfaced
- Wilma Bussey Doll Collection was on display for the first time.

2004

- Red Power Round Up returns in June.
- Iowa Quarter launched at Reunion September 3.
- Corliss engine from Normal, IL added to Stationary Steam Area
- IH Exhibit dedicated.
- Mr. Oetken contributed \$37,000 for construction of a tractor headquarters.
- Midwest Central Railroad purchased an antique steam donkey for its Museum
- Gates 1 & 2 are now W1 & W2. Gate 14 now is M1.
- Second Annual Doll Event held October 2.



2005

- New Richard E Oetken Tractor Headquarters dedicated.
- New Wright Family Events Pavilion ceremony September 1.
- Billboard advertising for OT and museums hits Southeast Iowa.
- Chicagoland Lionel Railroad club at Scout Camporee.
- OT Gift shop gets a new look.



- OT Gunslingers celebrate 25 years.
- 88-year-old Phonograph gets uncrated prior to Reunion.

2006

- In Phase I of the project, Printers' Hall is moved into Museum B. *Threshers Bee* went to press during Reunion.
- Reserved Camping of 118 sites available in campground.
- Theatre gets new sound room
- 14th Edition Cookbook published
- Richard Oetken donated \$100,000- Museum A & B renamed The Richard E. Oetken Heritage Museums
- Paul Anderson recognized for over 40,000 volunteer hours.

Continued on page 10

A LOOK BACK CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

2007

- Board of Directors voted to change Snipe Run back to The North Village.



- OT hosted LPQue BBQ competition
- Karen Timmerman celebrated her 30th year at OT
- Sold the 40/20 Avery to Mark Pedersen of South Dakota
- Miehle Pony press arrived from Hartley, Iowa for Printers' Hall
- Midwest Central & Midwest Electric Railway combined their events into what is now known as Midwest Haunted Rails.



- First year for Thrashers House of Terror

2008

- Donation from Richard Oetken, for a new storage building
- East Parking Lot rented to US Cellular for installation of a cell phone tower
- 15th Annual OT Cookbook published.
- New structure built over Sorghum Mill
- OT changes Country Music Ticket structure – free with gate admission
- Re-flue Stationary Steam Powerhouse Boiler

2009

- Installed a new special burner in the Powerhouse
- Electrical service to the Trolley Barn upgraded
- New speaker system on the Reunion grounds
- Traction Steam Interpretive Exhibit added
- North Village General Store and Post Office get new roofs
- New Shower & Restroom built in North Village

2010

- Fresh paint on Museums A & B. All restrooms. New roof and skylights on Museum A
- Boiler purchased and placed outside for Stationary Steam.
- Traction Steam Exhibit finished and dedicated
- Admission changed to under 10 are free
- New metal roof on Colfax School in campground

2011

- Fresh paint on all nine buildings in McMillan Park.
- Quilt Blocks added to buildings
- New front porch on the gift shop - Museum A.
- New school house in Log Village.



- Wheel Wright Shop new in North Village
- Fresh paint on the Railroad Shop Building
- New roof on the Antique Building in the North Village
- Replace roof, vents, skylights and insulation in Hog Barn
- Paul Anderson passed away
- Stationary Steam Engine added to Printers' Hall
- 2 boilers moved from MP Utilities to the Armory

2012

- New storage building in campground located where for Pleasant Hill Church once was.
- Paul Anderson Welcome Center built
- Richard E Oetken Gas Engine Headquarters built
- School house in Log Village built
- Barb Heaton Pavilion was dedicated
- New roof & paint on trolley barn

A LOOK BACK CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

- Install heat riser fire system in the Antique Car building
- Add 35 additional 30/50 amp service sites in the campground

2013

- New restrooms in Log Village
- Karen Timmerman passed away
- Upgrade trolley track replacement ties & rock on curve
- Mount Pleasant Festival of Lights Begins

2014

- New Traction Steam Headquarters dedicated



- New cement platforms for the trolley area
- Lennis Moore passed away
- Lennis Moore Exhibit Hall named
- New roof on Log Village Barn
- Painted the seats in grandstand
- Painted trolley bunk cars
- Open yellow trolley car repainted green
- Tore down Fire House in North Village
- Parade Marshals – Ed & Lucy Hiller
- Terry McWilliams named CEO

2015

- New Exhibit Rural Fire House and Standard Oil Gas Station Built
- 17th Annual OT Cook Book published
- Additional 30Amp electrical added to campground
- 3rd edition of *The Elusive '54* published
- Brian Iles added to Toby Hall of Fame
- OT joins Mt. Pleasant and Iowa Wesleyan with State Fair Booth

2016

- Steam Powerhouse celebrates 50 years
- Steam Shower Restrooms remodel
- New flues in 110 Case
- Pleasant Lawn School resided

2017

- 110 Case Restoration



- Terrace Drain work in Campground
- Electrical upgrade Campground row O
- Grandstand Roof Painted
- Grandstand Green Seats repainted
- Ground Train Work New axles and tires
- New Lights installed on Northside of the grounds
- Inside of the Pleasant Lawn School Restored
- Parade Marshal- Sherriff Frosty
- Rex Allen Jr's Last Show in the State of Iowa on his retirement tour
- Leroy Van Dyke 17th performance at the Old Threshers Reunion
- Ground Break for Doll & Clothing Museum
- The Bussey Doll Event Postponed due to construction of new doll building
- New EMS Pavilion built named for D.P. Wilson
- Dedication of the Rural Fire House and Standard Gas Station in Museum A
- New foundation under Prairie Gem Church

2018

- Multi-Purpose Building Built. Replaces Swap Tent.



A LOOK BACK CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

- Campground Reservation Building built inside Camper Gate 13



- Electrical upgrade Campground row P and K
- July Dedication of the Glenna Voyles Doll House Est. 2018 Home of the Bussey Doll Collection and Antique Clothing & More
- Tuesday before Reunion 75mph winds hit grounds
- Parade Marshal – Professor Farquar and Polecat Annie
- 50th Year of Miss Sweet Sixteen Contest
- Ball Engine became permanent display in Stationary Steam
- 32hp Reeves Steam Engine gear restoration



- Foundation office renovation began
- November dedication of Old Threshers Campground Operations Building in Honor of Alan and Melinda Huisinga

2019

- New Sidewalk and Driveway added to Armory Storage Building
- 30 Amp Electrical upgrade Campground row J
- New Roof added to Museum B
- Museum A receives New LED Lighting vs florescent fixtures
- Prairie Gem Church receives new siding

- New drainage installed between Museum A & B
- Campground Bathroom 1 upgraded
- New Restroom added to Museum B



- Theatre Museum Drainage Repairs
- 25 Years since MOSTA owned Carousel
- Foundation office renovations complete
- 13th Year of the Threshers House of Terror
- Richard E. Oetken Donates \$100,000 to replace Museum B Roof



- Museum B receives new LED Ceiling Lights and Display Lights
- OT Gift Shop and Office Renovations Start in December

2020

- New gravel road and drainage installed in Campground J Row
- Fill dirt Added to South of M Row in Campground to level up ground
- Gift Shop and Office Remodel Finished
- Fill dirt added east of Museum A to level out grounds.
- 2020 events cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic.



OT FACED PANDEMIC CHALLENGES WITH ESCAPE ROOMS

Like the rest of the world, Old Threshers needed to adapt to the restrictions of a pandemic. It was not feasible to host the 2020 Reunion, but there was hope for the Halloween season. While the Thrashers House of Terror wasn't an option, hope came in the form of four escape rooms.

An escape room is a game in which a team of players work together to discover clues, solve puzzles, and accomplish tasks in one or more rooms in order to progress and accomplish a specific goal in a limited amount of time. The goal is often to escape from the site of the game.

Old Threshers escape Rooms featured four rooms—Evil Under the Big Top, Infection, Zombie Uprising and Stuck in the 80s. Anywhere from four to eight participants were in a room at one time. These participants were from the same family or group of friends. They are given 60 minutes to find clues, work through puzzles and decipher codes that will allow them to unlock the door to the outside.

Only a handful of groups were successful in escaping.



OBITUARIES

Robert Woodall

Robert D. "Bob" Woodall, 91, of New London, died August 31, at his home. He was born December 17, 1928 in Terre Haute, Illinois to Harry Allen "Jack" and Alma Jane Martin Woodall. On October 1, 1948 he married Ferneitta McCannon at the Open Bible Church in Burlington.

Bob drove a truck for Benner Tea/Aldi for 27 years, worked ten years as a custodian at New London Schools, and retired after 18 years for WalMart.

He was a member of New London Christian Church, Travelin' Tigers Camping Club, Des Moines County Riding Club, Baltimore Township Riding Club, New London Fire Department, Police Reserve and Henry County Rescue Squad. Bob and his wife volunteered many years at Midwest Old Threshers and for the New London Annual Sixth Grade Campout. Halloween was his favorite holiday and he dressed as "Bob the Builder". He enjoyed working on lawn mowers and old cars and there wasn't anything he couldn't fix. He and Ferneitta traveled to all lower 48 states plus Canada and Mexico. He truly loved his children and grandchildren.

Besides his wife of New London, he is survived by daughters Jane (Rick) Salmon of West Burlington and Bonnie (Steve) Vogeler of Mt. Pleasant, son Rod (Pam) Woodall of Burlington; ten grandchildren; thirteen great-grandchildren; five great-great-grandchildren; and several step-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents; four brothers; three sisters; and a brother and sister in infancy.

Memorials in his honor have been established for New London Rescue Unit, New London Child Care Center and EveryStep Hospice. Online condolences may be left at www.elliottfuneralchapel.com.

Gary Van Vark

Gary Lee Van Vark passed away on September 20, at the Hospice of Pella Comfort House in Pella at the age of 83 years. Gary was born on July 14, 1937, in rural Pella, Iowa. He was the first of four sons born to Louis and Hattie (Vander Werff) Van Vark. Gary received a country school education at Silver Grove Country

School, Richland and Rose Hill and graduated from Pella High School with the Class of 1956. During high school Gary played the tuba with the high school band and was active with the Future Farmers of America.

His first employment was with Vanden Berg Electric in Pella. In 1959 Gary enlisted with the Air National Guard of Iowa and served until his discharge in 1965. Gary became the first facilities manager for the Pella Community Hospital and later served in the same capacity for Skiff Memorial Hospital in Newton, Iowa. Gary became a co-owner with Jim Nelson of Wanders, Inc., worked with Pella Ideal Supply and for Menninga Electric in Pella until his retirement in 2002.

Gary enjoyed spending time with his father, Louis, and brothers, Stan and Roland restoring steam engines and participating in Red Rock Threshers Club. Gary was a volunteer and exhibitor at Midwest Old Threshers. He often indicated he retired too early, however, found enjoyment in pursuing his hobbies, his pick-ups and cars. He and his friend Darrell Boot restored many tractors and pick-ups and received many awards.

Gary was also an active volunteer in the Pella Community. He served as a Reserve Police Officer, on the Tulip Time Steering Committee for the Pella Historical Society, was a miller and guide at the Vermeer Windmill, and served with the Pella Community Ambulance Service, both as a First Aid Instructor and with the formation of the current service. Presently, Gary was a member of the Planning & Zoning Commission for the City of Pella and a member of the Red Rock Threshers Club. Gary served as a faithful member of First Church, was a Cadet Counselor for 10 years, and had a fond appreciation for the playing of the organ.

He leaves two brothers and their wives: Roland John and Ruby Van Vark, Harlan Louis and Bobbie Van Vark all of Pella, a sister-in-law, Linda (Stanley Van Vark) and her husband, Ken Lindblom of Marshalltown, Iowa; the following nephews and nieces: Brian Van Vark, Susan Vander Pol, Retta Kelley, Shaun Van Vark, Beth Schut, Ben Van Vark, Brady Van Vark; and many cousins. Gary

was preceded in death by his parents, Louis and Hattie Van Vark; his brother Stanley Eugene Van Vark; and a nephew, Lowell Van Vark.

John Daly

John Joseph "Jack" Daly (94) of Burlington passed away in Oak View Nursing and Rehabilitation Center on September 26.

Jack was born on March 22, 1926, in Burlington and never lived anywhere else, other than during his time in the service. He was the 6th of 7 children born to Rose and Michael W. Daly.

Jack graduated from Burlington High School and served proudly in the U.S. Army during World War II in the Philippines and South Korea. After returning home, he began working as a machinist for the Burlington Northern Railroad, helping to maintain the Mississippi River train trestle bridge. He married the girl across the street, Marlene Lindner, on September 8, 1962, and they spent 58 happy years together and had four children: John, Joseph, Jane, and James.

Jack was a tinkerer and it was known by his friends and children that he could fix just about anything. His passion was antique automobiles and he could almost always be found in the garage playing with one of several cars that he owned. He was a member of the Blackhawk Auto Restorers in Burlington as well as the Southeast Iowa Antique Car Club in Mt. Pleasant where he displayed many of his collection at the Old Threshers Reunion over the years. A highlight for him was when his 1909 Sears Motorbuggy was the feature car at the Old Threshers Reunion in 2017. He was a member of St. John's Catholic Church parish his entire life.

He was preceded in death by his Parents, Michael and Rose, and by his siblings; William, Margaret, Martha, Catherine, Elizabeth, and Thomas. He is survived by his wife, Marlene, whose side he never left, his children; John (Amy), Joseph, Jane (Kyle) Olson, and James (Mandy), six grandchildren; Reece, Michael, Allisha, Matthew, McKenna, and Gabriel, two great-grandchildren; Gavin and Luka, and numerous nieces,

OBITUARIES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

nephews, great nieces, and great nephews, almost enough to start a small town, all of whom will miss his gentle nature and storytelling prowess.

A memorial has been established for the Antique Car Club.

Howard Smith

Howard Nelson Smith, 90, passed away October 3, at his home. Howard was born January 29, 1930 in Blakesburg, IA to Lawrence and Edna (Derby) Smith. He married Shirley Anne Wilson October 2, 1954 in Ottumwa, IA. They celebrated 60 years of marriage before she passed away April 27, 2015. Howard served in the Army during the Korean War conflict. He farmed for over 60 years.

Howard was well known in the community for his draft horses and antique tractors which were often seen at local parades and shows. He volunteered at the draft horse area of Midwest Old Threshers for over 30 years and was instrumental in the addition of "horse power" at the Western Illinois Threshers reunion. He loved to watch wrestling (high school and college) and was a big fan of old country music.

For years he was known as Santa Claus because he would help anyone in any way he possibly could. He was generous to a fault.

Later in life, he spent summers playing with his great grandchildren; Colt, Kamber, and Karrigan, and winters in Donna, TX, where his favorite pastime was going to music jams and making friends. He could often be found in the Green Acres Recreation Hall playing cards or participating in one of their charity auctions. His family was able to join him last January to celebrate his 90th birthday.

Howard will be greatly missed by those surviving him including his daughter Vicki Riegel of Birmingham, IA and his sons, Jim (Laurie) Smith of Fountain Hills, AZ and Doug (Dianne) of Fairfield, IA, four grandchildren; Jason Riegel, Cassia Riegel, Kelsey Smith, and Michael Smith. He is also survived by two brothers Marlin (Mary) Smith of Fairfield, IA, and Lowell (Mary) Smith of Ankeny, IA, and a sister Rosemary Watson of Oklahoma, OK.

He was preceded in death by his wife Shirley, siblings Winfred, Wayne, and Betty, and son-in-law Bruce Riegel.

Fred Vantiger

Fred Joseph Vantiger, 78, passed away in the arms of his wife on October 4, on the farm near Yarmouth that he was so proud of.

He entered this life, the third child of Ben and Angela Fedler Vantiger on January 24, 1942, in Lee County at Sacred Heart Hospital in Fort Madison. Ben moved the family to the Mt. Union area in 1945 with the help of Uncle Joe, where the land was more fertile and room to grow. Since he was old enough to handle a team of horses or steer an F-20, Fred found his passion in farming. He began farming along with his brothers, raising crops, livestock and hauling grain for hire.

Fred graduated from Yarmouth High School in 1960 and married his high school sweetheart, Anita Wilkerson, on November 5, 1960, at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Dodgeville, IA. They took a honeymoon trip to Florida in their '56 Oldsmobile spending only \$160. They returned to the farm to begin a family and remained there for nearly 60 years. He became a respected and outstanding farmer in the Yarmouth area. His rows were straight, the corn was tall, and the farm was pristinely mowed. He continued farming until his death with the help of his son Mike.

He used his knowledge of cars and mechanics during the farm crisis and started selling cars on the farm to supplement income. "Fast Freddie" obtained a car dealer's license in 1980. He later moved the business to Danville in 1984 and started Country Cars II. For several years he held an Ag Day at the shop to celebrate agriculture and support scholarships for local students pursuing agricultural studies in college. He loved going to farm and car auctions with Anita, and he could predict the value of whatever was being sold from the data base in his mind.

He was always supporting the Yarmouth Community in which he lived. In the late 1970s he started a Recreation Center in the Old Yarmouth General

Store for the community to gather. He was co-owner of the Yarmouth Cafe with other local farmers for a time, in an attempt to keep it going. He was a member of the Mt. Union Coop and Des Moines County Farm Bureau.

Aside from cheerleading in high school with Anita and his best friend, Charles "Butch" Tonkinson, he developed a passion for singing. He began singing in Barbershop, the church choir, family weddings; and he and Anita became a fixture singing and entertaining at the Golden Slipper Saloon in the North Village at Old Threshers for over 50 years. His daughter Julie and granddaughters now carry on the tradition. Early on he drove the campground trains with his father-in-law "Toad" Wilkerson and enjoyed camping. He enjoyed helping his son Dean exhibit gas engines and parading the Wilkerson Family Ford Tractor. Fred and Anita were recognized as Outstanding Old Thresher volunteers in 2006.

Fred enjoyed traveling out west with Anita on many adventures to Arizona and Wyoming to visit friends and "adopted" family. In 1997 Fred had a spiritual calling to participate in the Mormon Trail Reenactment. He returned home to pick up Anita, and they rode into Salt Lake City, Utah.

What Fred enjoyed most was when family crowded his home for holiday gatherings and special events.

He is survived by those he dearly loved and completed his life: His wife Anita; Children: Dean (Juanita Phipps) Vantiger, Mike (Sandy) Vantiger, Julie (John) Hicks; Grandchildren: Lisa (Jon) Wolf, Cody (Katlyn) Vantiger, Jonna, Joslyn, and Jacey Hicks, Alayna and Lyndi Vantiger; great-grandchildren; Owen, Noah and Luka. Brother James (Georgianna) Vantiger and sister Wilma (Larry) Anderson and sister-in-law Frieda Vantiger.

His great-grandson Theo Wolf, brother Robert Vantiger, and parents preceded him in death.

Memorials in Fred's honor will be accepted for a special project in the North Village at Old Threshers, The Danville FFA program and St. Mary's Church, Dodgeville.

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Kent Harpman

Kent Harpman, 80, of Montezuma passed away October 14, at his home in Montezuma.

Kent Edward Harpman was born on October 3, 1940 in Victoria, Illinois to George and Mary Elizabeth Larson Harpman. Kent attended and graduated from Williamsfield High School in 1958. Kent married Linda Kimler on October 26, 1962 at the Williamsfield Methodist Church. To this union one daughter was born, Charissa. He held several jobs before becoming a car salesman at Shottenkirk in Fort Madison. He received many top salesman awards and was definitely a people person. Kent loved traveling and won many trip awards. He loved music, horses, trail riding, camping, fishing, hunting, playing the guitar, and never missed one of his grandson's ballgames. He and his partner of 20 years, Charlene Whipple, volunteered for many years at Old Threshers in Mt. Pleasant where they met. Kent and Charlene enjoyed dancing at the Malcom Legion and the Moose Lodge in Newton. Kent was a member of the Newton Moose Lodge #923, the Malcom American Legion and the Lockridge Saddle Club.

Kent is preceded in death by his parents, George and Mary Harpman, and his first wife Linda Harpman and his sister, Linda Rottinghaus.

He is survived by his life partner, Charlene Whipple of Montezuma; his daughters, Charissa (Eugene) Scapecchi of Farmington, IL., Marlene (Eric) Johnson of Grinnell, and Marilee Albin of West Hollywood, CA; his grandchildren, Nicolas Scapecchi (Fiance Alli Sprague), and Parker, Cole and Kinnick Johnson; his brother Terry (JoAnn) Harpman of Galesburg, IL along with several other relatives and friends.

James "Choo Choo" Whetsler

James J. "Choo-Choo" Whetsler, 77, of Rome, IA, died November 19, at the Henry County Health Center in Mt. Pleasant.

James was born November 1, 1943 in Newport, Washington. He was the son of William A. and Marguerite (Van

Valkenburg) Whetsler. Jim grew up in the community of Priest River, Idaho, where he attended school. Jim entered the United States Navy on November 18, 1960 in Spokane, WA. He served on the USS Helena and was discharged on March 18, 1963 at the US Naval Command, Portsmouth, NH. On May 29, 1979 in Mt. Pleasant, Jim was united in marriage to Maria J. Harrison.

Jim was nick-named "Choo-Choo" as his vocation and hobbies involved the railroad. He started as a C&NW locomotive fireman on the Wisconsin Division and was certified as a locomotive engineer with the C&NW Railway on April 22, 1968. Later he moved to Nebraska. Jim worked for the Great Plains Railroad for the relocation of 2 diesel locomotives and operated them as locomotive engineer. As a locomotive engineer, he ran engines at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant in Middletown. Jim worked for the Building and Leasing International, Inc. in Kansas City for the delivery and restoration of the Mark Twain Zephyr for the Saudi Arabia Railways. In his later years, Jim was a nightwatchman for Amtrak at the Mt. Pleasant Depot.

Throughout his life, "Choo-Choo's" love of steam power and trains remained a constant, even when he held jobs at Sheets Motors where he inspected new Ford Blue Bird Buses, the Mt. Pleasant Utilities in the Generating Plant, as a Security Guard at the Wal-Mart Distribution Center, and as a Summer Caretaker at Forest Home Cemetery.

Choo-Choo was involved with the relocation and operations of stationary steam engines for the Midwest Old Threshers (MOSTA) museums, the Midwest Central Railway, and the Midwest Electric Railway on the MOSTA grounds. He helped out at the Sears Sawmill. On August 29, 2008, Choo-Choo was recognized with the MOSTA Volunteer Award for the many hours of dedicated volunteer support of the association's projects and programs. He loved history and when he heard "volunteer," he was off to help, participating with the smaller railroads and steam/gas engine shows during the

year. Jim was a member of the local volunteer community's Rome Skunk River Navy. He spent his last years watching and photographing train engines.

Those thankful for sharing in Jim's life include his wife of over 40 years, Maria of Rome; several nieces and nephews and their families and a host of surrogate "kids" who began their longtime friendships as they participated with Choo-Choo in his many interests.

Jim's parents and 2 brothers – Dell and William Whetsler precede him in death.

Memorials may be directed to the family for organizations to be decided upon later.

Wesley Barton

Wesley Dale Barton, 88, went home to his Lord on December 12. He was surrounded by his loving family at the home he had built in Mt. Pleasant. The son of JF & Marie Barton, he was born June 15, 1932, on the family farm in Mt. Pleasant. Growing up on a farm, he learned the value of hard work and helping family and neighbors. He attended the country school through 8th grade walking or riding his pony, Mickey. He then attended Mt. Pleasant High School graduating in 1950. Two years later in October 1952 he enlisted into the U.S. Army serving in Korea from May 1953 to September 1954.

In 1956, he married Geraldine (Gerry) Auge in Fort Madison, Iowa. Their love story spanned 64 years. They made their first home in Cedar Rapids and in 1959 they returned to Mt. Pleasant where he worked as a foreman for H. Eugene Smith Construction. His unparalleled work ethic and entrepreneurial mindset led him to start his own construction business in 1966, Wesley Barton Construction. The company started out predominantly building homes, but his love of concrete work led to specializing in that area. He grew the company for 35 years and he employed many who made it their life career working for him. In the early 2000's, his son Mike took over the operation and became the owner of

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OBITUARIES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

Wesley Barton Construction that is still in business today.

In addition to many business ventures, he also put his time and heart into his community. In 1994, Wes, H. Eugene Smith, Jim Kinney & Sons, and Jean C. Wiley formed, BKSLLC to focus on local projects. Along with the help of many others in the community the Rec Center in Mt. Pleasant was built, one of Wes's proudest achievements. Wes was a member of First Baptist Church, a lifelong member of the VFW, American Legion, and Lambirth Cemetery board. He was also a member of the Southeast Iowa Builders.

Wes quietly gave and served others, helped many in need, and set an amazing example by which to live by to all who knew him. He loved Old Threshers and was honored to receive a Volunteer of the Year award. In 2011 he and Gerry were blessed to be Grand Marshalls of the Harvest Parade.

Wes would tell you he was blessed in many ways even as he endured medical challenges most of his life. His gifts were many, but the best gift of all was his

seven children. Wes, fondly known by many as "Red", loved endlessly and never knew a stranger. Wes and Gerry spent many wonderful winters in Arizona where he easily formed many bonds with people in their development. He made people feel instantly at home with his kindness, wonderful sense of humor, and easy-going personality. He was a true patriarch of the family he led with love, kindness, and strength. The Family has grown to 14 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren and to them all he was affectionately known as "Pa". As grandchildren arrived, they became the most important thing in his life. He showered them with love, taught them to drive vehicles in the fields, and spent endless hours of play at their home or at the warehouse riding go carts, golf carts, or anything with a motor and wheels.

Wes's love for the Lord showed through his kindness and grace towards all. In his teens he asked the Lord to come into his heart and was later baptized in Cedar Creek. He often said that without Him the Lord, he could not have made it to the age of 88.

Wes is survived by his wife Gerry and 6 children, Jim Barton, Mike (Lyndel) Barton, Kathy (Mike) McAlister, Phil (Karen) Barton, Pete Barton, & Missy (Jeff) Sitar. And grandchildren Matthew and Ryan (Jim), Blaire and Gabe (Mike), Amanda and Brooke (Kathy), Weston, Whitney, and Willow (Richard), Ashley (Pete), Sam and Max (Phil), Marie and JC (Missy). Also, 15 great grandchildren: Morgan, Reece, and Alek (Blaire), Cole and Mac (Gabe), Flynn and Emery (Amanda), Elle (Matthew), Walker and Avery (Whitney), Audri, Marley, Charlotte, Michael, and Chloe (Ashley). Wes was preceded in death by his parents JF and Marie, his son Richard, grandson Cale Barton and his sisters Wanda Wesely & Eloise Moyle.

In lieu of flowers, memorials in his honor will go to Midwest Old Threshers and Muscular Dystrophy Association in Iowa. The family would welcome any personal notes, memories or stories you have about Wes. Emails can be sent to wes.barton@cutters.com or via voicemail at 312-725-3495.

From all of us, to all of you!



Terry Grant Alan Kat Julie

Lea Kirsten Gregg Jeff

