



Grinnell Historical Museum

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2008

The Grinnell Historical Museum, 1125 Broad St., is a 10-room, late-Victorian residence open to the public from 2 to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays (Tuesday through Sunday in the summer). The house contains excellent examples of furniture and decor from the turn of the 20th century, arranged to create a feeling of family life at the time. Admission is always free. To contact the museum, call 236-7827 and leave a message.

MUSEUM BOARD

Howard McDonough
President

Phyllis Meredith
Vice President

Michele Parslow
Secretary

Vera Cousins
Treasurer

Frank Heath, Dorrie Lalonde,
Barb Lease, Dorothy Louden,
Betty Moffett, Carol Molison,
Carol Nielsen, Russ Schuchmann,
Mary Schutts, John Whittaker, Julie
Young; Marian Dunham, Byron
Worley (ex officio)

NEWSLETTER

Betty Moffett, Mary Schuchmann;
Contributors: Vera Cousins, Dorrie
Lalonde, Barb Lease, Phyllis Meredith

INSIDE

Taking the show on the road	2
Creating a database	2
Thanks to our donors	3
Painting – and more	4
Annual fund appeal	Insert

S.O.S.

Museum works to "Save Our Stuff"

The Grinnell Historical Museum is on a mission....to "Save Our Stuff." During the spring and summer of 2007, a group of volunteers at the museum decided to focus on the clothing



and textiles collection in an effort to locate, evaluate, and properly preserve the treasures we are responsible for. Interested volunteers began by educating themselves in the following areas: what belongs in the collection; how it should be stored; where it should be stored; and how it should be displayed. Jerome Thompson, curator of the State Historical Society of Iowa, was invited to visit the museum and meet with us regarding our preservation and storage issues. He was very helpful, and we were able to develop a collection management procedure and deaccession policy. Volunteers also attended workshops on historic preservation in Shell Rock and at Living History Farms in Des Moines.

Armed with knowledge of the latest techniques of handling, storing and displaying textiles, volunteers were ready to tackle the attic, closets, drawers, and boxes hiding under beds. We were rewarded with many treasures — from coats and hats to underclothing. While the museum is not yet ready to officially enter clothing into the museum's computer database, we have a better understanding of what is in our large clothing collection. and we are beginning the slow process of ensuring proper storage and discriminating between those items that can be displayed and those that are, unfortunately, in poor condition and not able to be displayed. In the interest of preservation, the museum has also installed solar shades in the south and east windows of the first floor to protect the collections from UV rays, which are the greatest enemy of museum collections. The effort to shield the museum's interior and artifacts from harmful rays is ongoing.

(Continued on next page)

Saving Our Stuff

(Continued from previous page)

With the help of a mini-grant from Grinnell College, the museum has been able to pay for the cost of attending preservation workshops and purchasing archival supplies such as acid-free tissue, boxes, and tags for the proper preservation of textiles, as well as some rare books and bibles. The museum also benefited from Grinnell College's Summer Intern Program in the person of Lindsey Wheeler, our bright and hardworking intern. Lindsey assisted with the clothing collection and related fashion shows, created self-tour guide sheets for each room and entered museum items into the computer database, in addition to other tasks. Lindsey was truly an as-

set, and we wish the summer had been longer! We are very grateful to the college for their continued generosity.

It was such fun to uncover treasures in the clothing collection that we wanted to share them with others and were pleased to be able to do so in two fashion

Taking the show on the road

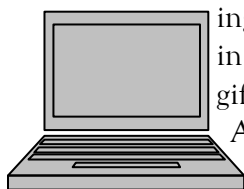
The success of our fashion show led to requests for programs from the Mayflower and Windsor Manor. Barb Lease, Betty Moffett, Carol Molison, Carol Nielsen and our intern Lindsey Wheeler took an abbreviated version of "Stitches in Time" to those locations. One of the items in our traveling show was a flapper's dress made of silky, floating rose and black fabric. It prompted a gentleman at Windsor Manor to say, "There's never been anything as beautiful as a pretty woman in a pretty dress." We hope to bring more programs to such appreciative audiences.

shows in June entitled "Stitches in Time." Various items of the museum's vintage clothing, ranging from wedding dresses to bathing suits, were displayed on specially made forms, and a carefully researched story about each owner accompanied the item. Since June is the "wedding" month at the museum, each fashion show was then followed by an ele-

gant "wedding reception" on the museum lawn, courtesy of board member Dorothy Loudon.

Museum goal: 'what is it' and 'where is it'

Toys! China! Photographs! Uniforms! Donations to the Grinnell Historical Museum in these and other categories have arrived on our doorstep over the past 50 years. Despite everyone's best efforts, however, we have not had a consistent method of keeping track of everything. But that is in the past. Thanks to a generous gift from the Claude W. and Dolly Ahrens Foundation, we now have a 21st century computer system.



Our acquisition of special software for museums (called Past Perfect) is allowing us to at last identify and locate all the museum's treasures.

How does it work? Each item is measured and described, with special attention to distinguishing characteristics, history, and location in the museum. After any damage is noted, the item is photo-

graphed. In addition to the information on the computer, a paper back-up record is generated and a unique bar code is attached to an acid-free label.

For the past several months, Vera Cousins and Dorrie Lalonde have been gradually fine-tuning the cataloging system. The project got a big boost last summer from Lindsey Wheeler, our exceptional 2007 summer intern, who processed many of the items in the kitchen during her time with us.

The benefits? We'll eventually - many years down the road, we fear - know exactly what's in the museum's extraordinary inventory and, what's more, where to find it. In the process, we're discovering some long-hidden gems (for instance, the keys to Benoni Howard's "cabin on the second ridge," immortalized in Ralph Longley's book) and learning more about them. We hope to introduce them to you soon.

Thanks to our donors in 2007

For 50 years, volunteers at the Grinnell Historical Museum have followed the mandate laid down by the museum's founders — to preserve local history for future generations. In 2006 the house underwent a total exterior renovation, restoring it to its original colors. In 2007 we began purchasing solar window shades to protect our collection from damaging UV rays. So far this year, the interior has had extensive plaster repairs and is being painted in Victorian hues, again close to the original colors. Our volunteers are proud to donate their time and energies to this important community resource. However, the museum depends on the generosity of the community to cover a large portion of its operating expenses. We thank you all for your past support and hope you will be able to give generously again. The following individuals and groups made donations in 2007:

Gerald and Sara Adams	Robert and Karen Groves	Morris and Michele Parslow
Harriet and Arnold Adelberg	Dennis and Thomsa Haas	Mary Pearson
Jon Andelson and Karen Stein	Gordon and Jacquetta Halverson	Donald Pederson
Edna Anderson	Elizabeth Hays	Roger and Mitzi Pederson
Phyllis Armstrong	Arthur Heimann	Homer Perry
Roberta Atwell	Arnold and Joan Heimsoth	Emily and John Pfitsch
Joan Baker	Nancy and Brian Heineman	Ed and Karen Phillips
Betty Ann Battey	Nancy Hendrickson	Pi Rho Lambda
Robert and Miriam Baumann	Gene and Kathy Herman	Dorothy and Al Pinder
Esther and Charles Bethel	Historical and Literary Club	Howard and Suzy Raffety
Audrey and John F. Bierman	Leta Hollman	Maynard and Eloise Raffety
Rachel Bly	Chris and Judy Hunter	Rick and Sue Ramsey
Peter and Diane Boeke	Clark and Annie Jensen	Jim and Wendy Ramsey
Warren and Sue Bower	Sally Johnson	Warren and Nancy Reinecke
Harold Brown	Elsie Johnston	Jack and Diane Robertson
Ray and Clara Bulens	Jean Jones	James Sanders
Nancy and Robert Cadmus	David and Kathleen Jones	Kenneth and Phyllis Saunders
Karen Lowell and David Campbell	Dan and Jill Kaiser	Pat and John Saxton
Jon and Jeanmarie Chenette	Avis Kelm	Don and Jeananne Schild
Ken and Phyllis Christiansen	Bette Kersey	Russell and Mary Schuchmann
Gloria Clay	Philip Kintner	Emily and Craig Schultz
Vera and Lloyd Cousins	Dorrie and Jerry Lalonde	Roberta See
James and Joan Cunningham	Dianne and Thomas Latimer	LaForest and Mary Edna Sherman
Jeff and Harriett Dickey-Chasins	Barbara and Leo Lease	Bette Smith
Sue and George Drake	Russelle Leggett	Marci Sortor and Dan Ferro
Drummond Club	H.R. and Rhea Light	Esther Steinert
Mari and Charles Duke	Ben and Emily Ann Loudon	Clifford and Marilyn Strovers
Marie and Al Eisenman	Dorothy and Gordon Loudon	Barbara and Russ Tabbert
Jenny and Luther Erickson	James and Betty Ludden	Les and Kay Tharp
Elizabeth Ernst	Mabel Madill	Jeanette Tisdale
Donovan Evans	Gary and Sally Maring	Lucille Van Dyke
Edwin and Eula Fields	Tom and Connie Marshall	Roger and Val Vetter
Don and Val Gall	Brad and Teresa McCall	Victor and Diane Wilson
Jan and Hugh German	Phil McCune	Gordon and Bonnie Lou Wold
Neill and Becca Goltz	Sue and Howard McDonough	Eleanor Wozny
Ben and Sue Graham	Leroy and Phyllis Meredith	Larry and Jo Wray
Ruth Greenwald	Alex Moffett	Mary Jane Zimmerman
Stan and Gail Greenwald	Carol Molison	
Grinnell College Community	Carol Nielsen	
Grant Program	Bill and Debi Olson	
Virgil and Pat Groth	Russell and Paula Osgood	

HAPPENINGS

New officers

The new president of the museum board is Howard McDonough, who previously was vice president. He succeeds Jeff Garland, who moved to Idaho last fall after serving several years as president. Phyllis Meredith is the new vice president. Continuing in office are Michele Parslow, secretary, and Vera Cousins, treasurer. New board members named within the past year are Frank Heath, Mary Shutts and Julie Young.

Special events

Continuing our effort to bring more people into the museum for activities as well as tours, several programs were held during the past year.

A WEEKEND of presentations of our fashion show, "Stitches in Time," highlighting samples of the museum's vintage clothing

A DEMONSTRATION of Tai Chi by Kun-Hong Lu.

A LOOK at Confederate soldiers during the Civil War presented by Bridgit Brandt.

A DISCUSSION with Ralph Savarese about his book, "Reasonable People: A Memoir of Autism and Adoption."


A READING by Harley McIlrath of his short stories, many of them set in the Grinnell-Newburg area.

MUSIC (vocal and violin) by Sarah Hamilton at the community Jingle Bell Holiday event.

Upkeep is ongoing at museum

In thinking of recent years at the Grinnell Historical Museum, the titles of several television programs come to mind:

EXTREME MAKE-OVER! The 1895 house at 1125 Broad Street is continually being maintained. A new furnace was installed in 2005. The exterior was given a paint job with a new color scheme

 in 2005-2006. In 2007, solar shades were put into place on the south and east windows of the first floor, the attic was insulated, clothing was placed in acid-free boxes, and fire extinguishers were replaced. For 2008, repairing the plaster and painting the interior are the goals. The doors will reopen in

March for you to enjoy the fresh appearance of the rooms.

TRADING SPACES! Some of the rooms have been reorganized. Others have been utilized for different purposes. The smoking room is now displaying medical equipment. The toys have been moved to the McMurrays' bedroom.

DESIGN ON A DIME! The cost of maintenance is expensive. The museum's docents are volunteers dedicated to the preservation of your past. The museum depends on your contributions. Without you, the museum would not be able to continue maintaining the past. Come see your money at work and your history come to life.



Grinnell Historical Museum
1125 Broad Street
Grinnell, Iowa 50112

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED