

MARION HERITAGE CENTER & MUSEUM

News from the Marion Historical Society

April 2021

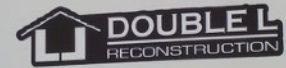


BUILDING REPAIR UPDATE

With our roof repaired and insulation replaced, Lyle Hanson and his crew from *Double L Reconstruction* had time this Winter to help a few of our neighbors with emergency repairs. He'll be back soon to rebuild our chimney, repair a second one and replace the roof

facia and trim. Inside, the suspended ceiling needs to be

replaced, perhaps some sheetrock, and the track lighting and fans rehung. We have our fingers crossed regarding the floor-so far no warping or buckling. With luck and continuing COVID vaccine progress we'll be open again in the Fall.



2021 marks TWENTY years that "**Art by Your Friends and Neighbors**" has been exhibited at the Marion Heritage Center. Over the years, the artistic creations of hundreds of local artists, as well as the work of many former citizen/painters and artisans have adorned the walls and display cases of our gallery. Artists like Maria Gerstman, George Glass and Emma Safely of Springville, to name a few.

Last year, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, on the very day it was to open, the exhibit was closed and moved to the internet. This year, damage caused by the August derecho, yet to be repaired, has dictated the same solution: *Art by Your Friends and Neighbors 2021* can be seen **on line** now, on our new web site.

As in the past, some of the art in this show is for sale. In addition, visitors are invited to cast a vote for their favorite painting, photograph or other entry. The top three vote-getters will earn a \$75 prize from the exhibit sponsor, *Hills Bank and Trust Company*.

Voting to identify the three most popular will end at 5 pm on July 30th, but the art will be available for viewing until the next exhibit opens. **Help recognize our local artists by casting your vote.** Go to [https://](https://www.marionheritagecenter.org)

www.marionheritagecenter.org. And many thanks to Jack and Doreen Zumwalt of *Zum Creative* for the stellar web site design work.

Jay Kacena, President



Mark Seidl's *Directors' Corner*

If you're feeling safer now, fully vaccinated, consider supporting our hard-hit local businesses-- especially those engaged in personal services and food and drink. They add so much to our community! There are a myriad of examples, but recall if you will the many Indians' victories, weddings, anniversaries, graduations, birthdays, and other family events you celebrated at the *O.K. Drive In* and *Todd's Indian House* on Marion Boulevard.



The *O. K. Drive-In* opened in the summer of 1941. Management passed through several hands during the war until 1944 when Fred and Ginnie Todd acquired the property. The end of the war brought the opportunity for many improvements including a larger steak broiler and a bright new look inside, including knotty pine walls and colorful tables and dining room chairs. A fire destroyed the O.K. in 1955 and the Todds took over the lease at the CR airport restaurant while they rebuilt. *Todd's Indian House* came back with plenty of parking and bigger and better than ever, seating 300 for dining plus a lounge and cocktail bar. It operated until 1958 when Fred went into real estate.

Fred Todd was born in Mississippi but grew up in Des Moines where he met Virginia Parker. They married in 1933. Fred travelled and sold electrical appliances for several years before returning to Iowa and settling down in CR. They moved to Marion in 1945 and retired here in 1969. Ginnie passed in 1972; Fred in 1988. They had two sons: Richard and Michael (1943-2017). See family links at Find a Grave memorial # 204740460.



We're grateful to the Todd family for remembering the Heritage Center and donating several pieces of memorabilia after the passing of Fred and Ginnie's grandson in 2017—Brian Michael Todd (1962-2017, Linn-Mar, 1980). Items donated in his memory included photos, a table setting and an *Indian House* sweat shirt Photo L-R; John McCullough, Pat Klopfenstein, Mary Weber and Vic Klopfenstein.

Marion Historical Society Mission

The *Marion Historical Society* is a membership organization that serves to engage the public in the history, traditions, resources and on-going preservation of the Heritage Center museum for the enrichment of the community.

For more information about joining call 319-447-6376.

E-mail to: marionheritage@marionhistoricalsociety.org

See our website: <https://www.marionheritagecenter.org>

www.facebook.com/MarionHeritageCenter/

Mailing address: P.O. Box 753, Marion, IA 52302-0753

If your mail was returned please call us.

CALENDAR



Now Open: On-line 20th Annual *ART by Your Friends & Neighbors* exhibition. Continues through July 30. Remember to vote. **Thanks again to our sponsor:**



April 29, 2021 Board meeting at 2:30 P.M.
No in-person events until further notice due to the derecho repairs and COVID-19.

Sponsored in part by:





Beneficiaries of income from retirement plans like traditional IRAs know that Uncle Sam wants his share when time comes to take it out. Do you know that you can escape that income tax, and satisfy your charitable wishes at the same time? By asking your retirement plan to make your Charitable Contribution directly, as part of your Required Minimum Distribution, you can support your Historical Society with money that

would otherwise be paid in tax! You can direct this contribution to the Society to help pay for current expenses – or to the Endowment fund to help provide income in the future. Call for details.

At last report, that Endowment Fund, which is managed by *Hills Bank & Trust Co.*, had grown to more than \$74,000 – even after contributing \$2500 to the 2020-21 budget. Some of that growth, we know and appreciate, came from government “stimulus payments” received by Society members who had no present need for the money! If that describes YOUR situation – with another \$1400 on the way, please consider a gift to the ENDOWMENT to assure future income for the Heritage Center.

Please consider a gift in some form to the *Marion Historical Society* Endowed Fund. For more information you can contact Executive Director Lynette Brenzel at the Center – 319-447-6376.



We’re grateful to receive funding this year from the Iowa Arts and Culture Emergency Relief Fund and the Capacity Building Grant fund administered by the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, through last year's Federal CARES Act. The grants help support operating costs and will help us prepare to reopen in the Fall.

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

IOWA ARTS COUNCIL PRODUCE IOWA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Marion Historical Society, Inc.

Board of Directors:

- Jay Kacena, President
- Vic Klopfenstein, Vice-president
- Nevin Meredith, Treasurer
- Erik Miles, Secretary
- Vicki Barnes
- Vicki Hughes
- Mark Seidl



Meetings are held the 4th Thursday of each month at 2:30 P.M. at the Heritage Center.

The Historic Marion Peatworks, Part 2

You'll find an amazing piece of forgotten Iowa history on the Grant Wood Trail one mile east of Marion's Waldo's Rock Park—the remains of the Nation's first alternative fuel industry west of the Mississippi River. This article continues the story we began in the January newsletter.



Waldo's Rock Park

The glacial deposits crossed by the Grant Wood Trail east of Waldo's Rock Park act like a giant sponge that slopes to the east toward the Crabapple Creek/Big Creek drainage basin. At several points along the creek wetlands called fens formed 12,000 years ago and peat started accumulating. It continued for millennia. Such was the case at the Marion peat bed.

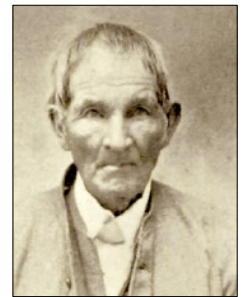
With his son Thomas, **Jonathan Bundy** began extracting peat here in 1866. He used a unique process employing patented cars that moved over a portable trackway, pressing the peat into forms. He left the wet blocks to dry in the sun. A clue about what they did with the peat-fuel comes a mile further down the trail in Paralta where Thomas Bundy opened a limestone quarry. He probably used peat to fire a lime kiln. Burnt lime was the cement used in mortar to construct brick buildings before the invention of Portland cement.

The best record of the Bundy peat operation comes from a report by the second State Geologist, Charles A. White, who visited

three Iowa peat sites in 1867: Marion, Clinton and Muscatine (all Bundy allies). Our first State Geologist, Professor James Hall, who had served a decade before, drew the ire of State legislators with the long delay in reporting his findings and then publishing an "egghead" treatise on geological strata. Legislators wanted to know where Iowa's valuable natural resources (e.g. coal and peat) were located, not see illustrations of fossils!

White didn't disappoint. As he travelled around Iowa he wrote reports of his daily findings by the firelight of his camp, and dispatched them to newspapers the next day for publication. He could have benefited from a good proofreader—he misspelled names and mixed up directions, but his Marion message came through loud and clear—readers were thunderstruck by White's official pronouncement that the Marion peat-site was worth at least \$5000 per acre (that's almost \$100,000/acre in today's \$\$!). Indeed, it was priceless for the promise it held of opening settlement of Iowa and the Northwest.

The Bundy's operated here until 1872, and then the railroad buried them, literally and figuratively. Peat fuel-production was an expensive labor-intensive process, and peat couldn't compete once the railroads consolidated and organized their transcontinental networks to haul wood and coal across the country. They laid their track straight through the middle of the Bundy property, probably using fill from the paha 1/4 mile west to build up the track bed. Jonathan Bundy retired to a farm near Springdale in Cedar County. He died in Mar. 1887 at age 83; Thomas moved to Missouri. He died in Sept. 1888 at age 49. See them at Find a Grave memorial #76089463.



Jonathan Bundy

None of Iowa's early peat operations survived the railroads. Most were quickly forgotten. Peat was rediscovered in the early 1900's in our north. It enjoyed a brief but exciting renaissance after coal miners struck for higher wages one winter. It's fabulous history, but not Marion's.



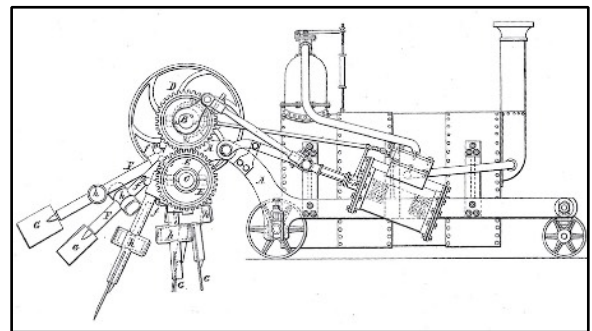
Did you know that before *Uncle Sam* there was *Brother Jonathan*? We've long been fascinated by inventions, particularly those relating to basic infrastructure (e.g. roads, bridges, canals, etc.) and recently stumbled across an intriguing 1858 article from a Rhode Island newspaper crediting "Brother Jonathan" with inventing the jack hammer that was then being used to tunnel through the Alps and also a steam shovel that promised to make it possible to span the Isthmus of Panama. Who was this amazing unidentified inventor, "Brother Jonathan?" It turns out that was the nickname for the United States before "Uncle Sam" came into use.

At the beginning of the Revolutionary War George Washington needed guns, blankets, munitions and pretty much everything else. He relied heavily on **Jonathan Trumbull**, the Governor of Connecticut, for coming up with the needed supplies. Once, when there was nowhere else to turn, Washington was heard to say, "We must consult Brother Jonathan." Trumbull delivered, and thereafter, whenever a seemingly insurmountable obstacle faced the Army, the by-word was, "We must consult Brother Jonathan." Like "John Bull" came to designate England, "Brother Jonathan" came to mean the United States. Pay attention to the various 19th century locomotives, ships, bridges, etc. named "Brother Jonathan." They aren't references to a local monk or a family-member of the architect, but rather, expressions of national pride.

So the newspaper article we found was crediting a U.S. inventor with developing the jackhammer and the steam shovel that would build the Panama

Canal. *One particular American* in this case-- **Stuart Gwynn** (1818-1904), an enigmatic, eccentric and controversial inventor and entrepreneur, who came to this country with his family from Ireland when he was 10 or 11. He was also a convicted bigamist and a cad who denied his wife of many years and children. He knew prisons as well as insane asylums. But he was a genius.

Gwynn's life may best be summed up by Col. LaFayette Baker (1826-1868), the chief investigator for the federal government during the Civil War, who jailed Gwynn at the height of his career and stopped at nothing to try to keep him there: "He is erratic, eccentric, and visionary, and a monomaniac on the subject of inventions. . . always (with) a plan involving large expenditures of money, and never himself in the possession of any means." Ironic that, because Gwynn was responsible for the printing technology that produced "Greenbacks," our first *national* paper currency. He also played an important role in creating several other industries, including those involving paper, pumps, metallurgy, pneumatic tools and peat fuel. Eventually he found the wealth he craved. . . the 1880 U.S. Census records him living in NYC next-door to the family of young Theodore Roosevelt! There's much more to tell, but that's for another day. See Stuart Gwynn at Find a Grave memorial # 35694094.



Gwynn's Steam-Powered Spade (U. S. patent #28,783) was not one of his better ideas.



What did you do when the power went out last summer in the derecho? We want to hear your stories. Write and tell us how long you went without power and how you adjusted. How did you cope without TV, radio and computers? Without A/C, a cell phone or medical equipment? We're especially interested in hearing from rural residents for whom it meant no water for either you or your animals. When did help come? **What are you doing to prepare for the next time?** Send us your accounts—we may use them in an exhibit.

We all try to forget unpleasantness—it's human nature, but that's dangerous after a life-threatening event like we went through. Iowa's fuel/energy supply has been cut off or severely restricted several times in our history and for far longer periods. Please join us in documenting the 2020 Iowa Derecho. Give me a call (319-447-6376) if you have questions or have anything to contribute.

Marion Heritage Center & Museum
590 10th St.
P. O. Box 753
Marion, Iowa 52302-0753