



# MARION HERITAGE CENTER & MUSEUM

News from the Marion Historical Society

June 2022

## “Its Yours!”

Wondering when would be a good time to get more involved in “your” Historical Society? How about 4:00 o’clock on Thursday, June 30th? Following a little break for refreshments after the regular Board of Director’s meeting, that’s the time set for our Annual Membership Meeting.

As we emerge from the two years of COVID and the derecho disaster, we are looking for help. From something as simple as sweeping floors or as challenging as planning exhibits or taking a leadership role. Of course, if you are still not ready to get out again, contributions of cash for current operations or to our Endowment Account are always welcome. *jak*



**9th Annual PANCAKE BREAKFAST**  
**Saturday, June 11 · 7:30 · 11:30 a.m.**  
**Heritage Center, 10th Street & 6th Avenue**

### 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](mailto:marionheritage@marionhistoricalsociety.org)

See our website: [www.marionheritagecenter.org](http://www.marionheritagecenter.org)

[www.facebook.com/MarionHeritageCenter/](https://www.facebook.com/MarionHeritageCenter/)

Mailing address:

P.O. Box 753, Marion, IA 52302-0753



## THE PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Dear Society Friends:

I wonder if you read the Memorial Day Speech reprinted in the Cedar Rapids Gazette's Insight page on Memorial Day? It was the advice given on May 30, 1930 by then-president Herbert Hoover at Gettysburg, naturally the site of another notable president's speech.

Although not using the term “fabric of America” Mr. Hoover referred twice to the “weaving of our destiny.” He said that “the woof and warp of our weaving must be those inspired ideals of unity, of ordered liberty, (and) of equality of opportunity...”

So - what the heck are the woofs and warps of our weaving? I had to look them up: Thank you Mr. Webster! Under warp as it relates to weaving - warp refers to the threads running lengthwise in the loom and crossed by the weft or woof. Cool! Sounds like what we're made of!

What are the threads within the weave of the fabric of Marion? The people? Their principles? What are the woofs? Their accomplishments? Their commitments?

There's more to history than names and dates. Our role in preserving it is a great responsibility.

*jak*

THE  
**McIntyre**  
 FOUNDATION  
*Encourages Your Membership in the  
 Marion Heritage Center and Museum*

## ART BY YOUR FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS : EDITION 21



The return of our Annual Art Show to the Heritage Center Gallery on May 21<sup>st</sup> was a great success! This year's 396 first-day visitors nearly exceeded the entire number who "virtually" attended the event during the on-line display last year.

Opening our exhibit on the day that more than 10,000 people come to town for the Marion Arts Festival in City Square Park has a lot to do with our success, but Art in the Alley, DKW Art Gallery and, this year, an exhibit at the West End Diner contributed to the attraction.

It's not too late if you were unable to attend on the big day! ART by Your Friends and Neighbors is our summer exhibit through July and while much of the artwork is not for sale, quite a bit IS and quite

reasonably priced. On opening day, seven exhibitors sold art including some to be created on commission. The painting pictured here represents a special opportunity: it is the chance to own an original creation by Kathleen Huebener at the attractive price of \$300, which Kathleen pledged to contribute to the Historical Society! It's a chance to have your cake and let us eat it!

As is our tradition, Thanks to our sponsor Hills Bank and Trust Company, we will be awarding a cash prize of \$100 to each of the three top vote-getters in the "people's choice" contest. Please take your time to consider which work you like best and cast your vote. If you are torn between offering, come back again; you can vote for each... and bring a friend.



### Marion Historical Society, Inc. *Board of Directors:*

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

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



*Sponsored in part by:*



*Hotel Motel Grant Fund*

## Voices From The Past: The Popcorn Man

Charlie Carrington wasn't the first popcorn man in Marion's City Square Park, nor was he the last. But he was there through the Depression and World War II, continuing a tradition that began in 1914.

For twenty-two years, every afternoon from April into November, Charlie came to his little white stand, on the NE corner of the park; a shed really, about ten or fifteen feet wide, perhaps five feet deep, room enough only for Charlie, a chair, his popper and his supplies. He put on his green visor and began parceling out yesterday's leftovers, free to kids and squirrels. The squirrels came out of the trees when Charlie tapped on this counter; the kids needed no reminder.

Charlie's wife once said that he popped a ton of corn a year. If this was an accurate measure, we are permitted some estimates. Let's say a five-cent bag of popped corn weighs an ounce. With sixteen bags to a pound, a ton of corn yields thirty-two thousand nickel bags, which turns into \$1,600 in gross sales. Perhaps Charlie did it for love.

It had taken a tragedy for him to get into the popcorn business. Charlie had been a railroad man, working out of Marion on the Milwaukee line. A freight train conductor (or brakeman in some references) and considered "one of the best men on the run," according to the Marion Sentinel.

On December 6, 1930, Charlie was working with other trainman to switch cars in the rail yards in Savannah, Illinois. He may have been standing atop a freight car, but in any event he fell across the tracks as the car began to move. The cars wheels rolled over his legs, severing one. The other leg was amputated at the hospital. He was forty-two years old.

Depressed and frightened about the future, Charlie looked out his hospital window one day and saw a man walk up the icy sidewalk and enter the building. He was a fellow railroad man, and he had come to show Charlie something. Pulling up the trousers, he revealed his two wooden legs. The man had lost his own legs, yet here he was, navigating icy walkways. Charlie was immediately heartened. If he can do it, he thought, so can I.



At soon as he could, Charlie went to the Artificial Limb Company in Council Bluffs and got himself fitted with two artificial legs. He spent three months on crutches and three more on a cane until he could walk without assistance on legs and feet of English willow.

By that time he had purchased the popcorn stand from the estate of Pete Kassler and was operating it under a permit from the town. Kassler had been a blacksmith who suffered an injury that paralyzed his legs. In granting the license to Charlie, Marion's city fathers continued the practice of awarding the permit "to allow a means of a living" to a person with a handicap.

Charlie must have been busiest on summer evenings after the war when the high school band played concerts in the park. Folks arrived before twilight. Some sat on the park's green benches; others brought canvas chairs or spread out blankets on the grass. And they bought popcorn, and the smell of it popping scented the air. A fragrant cloud spread over the park, wafted over the whole business district, enveloping everyone.

Now the high school band took the stage, as many as fifty strong, dressed in white, short-sleeved shirts. Paul Wright, the bandleader, tall and serious, took his place. He studied his musicians for a moment, tapped his baton on his music stand, and raised his arms over his head. The first number would be a Sousa march, a lively opening to the hour-long concert. People stopped talking, hushed their children, and settled back to listen.

In the brief silence before Mr. Wright struck up the band, the concertgoers just might have heard, off to their left, the soft rattle of Charlie's corn pop-popping like a distant drum, tapping out its own cadence, making it own music, working its own magic.

*[This look back at Charlie's popcorn stand was excerpted from the book Mistaken for a King by Marion author/historian Dan Kellams. This volume and several others on Marion's past can be purchased at the Heritage Center.]*

# Hands-on History

What a pleasure it is to report the successful launch of a joint project involving Iowa History students at Marion High School, your Historical Society and the Friends of Oak Shade Cemetery.

Thanks to an enthusiastic interest in Iowa and local history by MHS history teacher, Jonathan Mitchell, the first week-long unit was conducted during the first week of April this year. The project, suggested by Mitchell and developed with input by the Friends' History Committee, is designed to give students hands-on experience in researching the history of actual former residents of Marion.

Here is an outline:

Following a general introduction to the Historical Society and Friends organizations, their functions and resources, students, working in pairs, draw the name of a person buried at Oak Shade Cemetery. The first task "in the field" is to locate the subject's grave - no small challenge in a cemetery with 7,700 graves spread out over 22 acres. Once found, students must document their success with a photo (see photo of Ethan Hangartner and Elliot Dryland) before moving on to the research phase.



That assignment, with the goal of creating a brief biography of the individual, is conducted at internet resources, on the students time in the Heritage Center library and/or with the aid of our many history books including those authored by Judith Hull. Submission of an original biographic sketch completes the unit but extra credit is allowed to students who go on to portray their deceased subject by telling "their own story" in period attire.

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