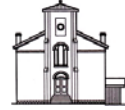




*"Where History Meets on 10<sup>th</sup> Street"*



# Marion Historical Society Newsletter

Including news from *Granger House Museum* and the *Marion Heritage Center*

January 2008

Marion, Iowa

*The Marion Historical Society, Inc., was formed to discover, interpret, and preserve the unique history of the region, and to provide activities for the instruction of citizens, visitors, the community and the surrounding area regarding these historical treasures.*

## **"Communication by Mail" Fresco**

It is exciting to note that the Marion Historical Society is involved in efforts that are currently underway to preserve a Marion treasure. Some of you probably remember visiting the old Marion City Hall and noticing a mural up on the wall of the main lobby. Others whose first memories of the mural are associated with stamps and visits to the building when it was still used for its original purpose as a Post Office, probably also remember that the mural is one of many that were commissioned during the Great Depression by under the Public Works of Art Project. As the new building owner, Farmers State Bank, renovates the old building for private office spaces, efforts are underway to relocate this mural to a more visible public location. This mural, "Communication by Mail," is actually a fresco and, according to art conservator Tony Rajer, one of only three true fresco murals in Iowa. Completed in 1939, the mural by Dan Rhodes is a reflection of not just the postal service but also Marion's railroad history. Intended for public enjoyment and education, the mural has experienced decreasing visibility over the years as the building shifted in function from postal service to city government and now private office space. Representatives of Farmers State Bank, the City of Marion and the Marion Historical Society are currently focused on efforts to move the mural to a location that will provide greater public access and be appropriate to the history and Marion heritage that the mural represents. The Marion Heritage Center is an option under consideration and the Marion Historical Society's Board of Directors recently voted to support the mural preservation effort and to indicate a willingness to accept the mural if it is offered. Wherever "Communication by Mail" finds a home, it will be no small undertaking to move this one-ton plus work of art. It will require community support both in terms of fund raising (estimated to cost \$25,000-\$30,000) and hands on involvement when the actual work of moving and placing the mural takes place. Preserving this part of Marion's past is important and well worth getting excited about! We'll keep you posted on the developments!

## **Something for the Snowy Day**

Don't forget that the Marion Throw isn't just another pretty wall hanging; it's also the perfect cover up on a snowy winter day when you're curled up in a chair with a good book and cup of something warm. If you're missing the lap robe from that cozy picture, we still have some of the unique blankets available for purchase. They come in either navy blue or cranberry, and feature Marion's schools and historic buildings. It can be purchased at the Marion Heritage Center for \$45.00. Considering that this is only January and it looks like this is going to be a long, cold winter, this could be your best investment of the season!

## **Winter's Toll**

This winter's seemingly nonstop series of snow and ice storms have kept things awfully quiet at Granger House and the Heritage Center, causing closures and discouraging visitors. All of which was too bad because some very nice programs were missed. Granger House was gaily decorated as usual and ready for music, a night time tour and holiday luncheon. Although the attendance was sparse, we think that they were great events and will try to repeat them next year when we hope that the weather isn't quite as bad. (It can't be, can it?) Looking back to balmy days in October and November, we had some terrific activities. Halloween at Granger House was well attended and a lot of fun for all. How could it not be with games, scary stories around the campfire and spooky nighttime tours? Over at the Marion Heritage Center, we were busy too. The program on the life of Laura Ingalls Wilder struck a responsive chord with many, as did the two military veterans programs that we presented in conjunction with Veterans Day.

## Looking Forward

While the weather may be keeping things quiet right now, that hasn't stopped us from making plans for the days ahead. Granger House, though closed right now, will reopen for the summer season on May 15<sup>th</sup>. Getting the house and grounds ready for visitors will require a bit of spring cleaning and our small but dedicated crew of volunteers can always use an extra hand (or more) to help. Jay Kacena has agreed to once again honcho the Art Exhibit at the Marion Heritage Center. Jay always does an excellent job organizing this annual exhibit but could also use help in setting up and planning. He will be contacting local artists soon to solicit their participation but if you would like to enter the exhibit or know of someone else who might let us know. Planning has also started for the fall 2008 exhibit. The Exhibit Committee has selected Uptown Marion Businesses of days "long past." (The committee has defined "long past" as early 1960s and before- even though some present found it hard to admit that the 1960s might be considered historic). If you're interested in helping with this exhibit or have any items or information that pertains please let us know!

## Scrapbook Memories

In January 1940 a local newspaper article reported on a checker contest that had been underway since 1855. The Marion Checker Society began meeting over the lunch hour at the Merriam dry good store on Main Street in Marion. The group met every day and interested citizens and transient bystanders were welcome to watch the game or challenge a winner. The group boasted of never losing a game to a spectator. When the dry goods store changed hands the game moved to the back room of Abie Kaiser's shoe shop. Abie was the town checker champion for several years running and was reported to have won games played by telegraph with operators in Chicago and Savanna. As reported in the news article the checker players were so dedicated to their game that when they were called to come take a look at the first airplane flown over Marion from Cedar Rapids, "not a man responded." In 1900 the game once again moved to new quarters in a store owned by Frank Northrup on Eleventh Street and by 1940 the game was being played at Sweet's Garage located at 840 Eleventh Street. Playing in the group at the time of this article were W.J. Turner, a member of over forty years, Nick Michel, J.W. Dukek, Clarence Oxley, Cal Biggs, Earl Beiber and others. They were playing on a checker board made of 20 kinds of inlaid wood that was made by Homer Riddle.

Does anyone out there know what ever happened to the Marion Checker Society or their inlaid checker board?

## New and Renewing Members

*(Since October 2007)*

*The following people have renewed or become new members in the Society since our last newsletter:*

Robert & Alberta Burkhart	Janean & Robert Blake	Rev. Rollin & Loraine Oswald		
Bill & Yvonne Thomas	Jay & Kathy Kacena	Charlie & Pat Kress	Earl & Dora Bohlken	
Sara Fishel	Steve & Joan Ackerman	Bill & Kathleen Huebener	Mitch Cannoy	
Wanda & Mel Campbell	Harold & Beverly Klink	Vicki Hughes	Eula & Neil Wood	
Mel Meggers	Farmers State Bank	Erik & Patricia Miles	Eileen & Dave Van Gorp	
Vick & Pat Klopfenstein	Cheri Dickey	Bonnye & John Fowler	Marilyn & Dayton Sippy	
Evelyn Beadle	Marlyce Murdoch	Bernice Harstad	Joan & Larry Nessel	Chuck & Diane Kent
Sam & Jo Dillon	Claire Fernow	Paul & Ann Rehn	Diana Parks	Jim & Joan Rosche
Leighton & Joyce Ford	Patti Marolf	Doris French	Nancy Beadle	John & Karen Clark-Hansen
Evelyn Hollister	Lynn & Harold Baumert	Morris Grabau	Noma & Wayne Lucas	
Maury & Vivian Barnes	John & Mary Vernon	O.O.P Club	Louise & John Nieland	
Lucille Novotny	Phil & Edith Moorhead	Iowa Popcorn Co.	Patricia Harris	
Brent & Pat Harstad	Vaughn & Lori Klopfenstein	Don & Sharyn Harris	Irwin & Doris Renfer	
Betty Hoffman	David & Ruth Pearson	Glenn & Marjorie Jensen	Scott Draper	
Marilyn Johnson	Onalee & Milton Arnold	Vic & Pat Klopfenstein	Russell & Nancy Hansen	
Karen Taylor	Bob Naujoks & Sharon Reilly	Emil Koval	Howard & Joyce Parks	
Jack & Juanita Hotchkiss	Kim & Susan Ketelsen	Melvin & Judith Koski	Jack & Norma Hicks	
	Allen & Virginia Ross			

*Thank you to all members, donors and sponsors for your valuable support!*

***We couldn't do it without you!***

*The Marion Historical Society Board of Directors and Staff*

*Marjorie Reynolds: President, Vic Klopfenstein: Vice President, Mark Morgan: Secretary, Barb Robison: Treasurer*

*Other Members on the Board of Directors: Jim Rosche, Paul Rehn, Sam Dillon, Granger House Coordinator: Dani Topping, Marion Heritage Center Coordinator & Newsletter Editor: Karen Clark-Hansen, Membership Administration: Eula Wood*

***You may contact us at: P. O. Box 753, Marion, IA 52302-0753, at (319) 377-6672, or 447-6377***

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*Please remember to let us know when you add or change your e-mail address or phone number, for we often let our members know what is happening through these means. Your privacy is respected by the Society: your personal information is used only for internal correspondence. And, as always, thank you for letting us know what you think concerning YOUR Historical Society!*