

Cedar County Historical Society

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In this issue:

Captain McElrea	2
Old Fashion Christmas	3
What's New at the Museum	
Elmer Hinkhouse; WWI	4
The Townsend Preserve	5

Cedar County Trivia:

- * October 1943 the coal bins at the West Branch School caught fire; taking the WBFD and 35 citizens 7.5 hours to extinguish.
- * November 1992 after 17 days of clouds and wet weather the sun came out in Lowden.
- * December 1915 The Mechanicsville Pioneer Press reported that Grinnell College had an increase in Spanish class enrollment.

COMING EVENTS

Documentary of the Sultana

April 2015

Memphis, TN

Day and time to be announced.

Tipton 175th Anniversary Celebration

July 2-5, 2015

Events to be announced.



WHAT AM I?



A: Pastry Cutter

NEWSLETTER

THANK YOU

As the holiday season comes to a close and we prepare to start a new year we would like to thank everyone who makes what we do at the Cedar County Historical Society possible. Thank you to our generous donors whose donations and bequests fund our projects and fill our museum sites with interesting snapshots of a younger Cedar County. Thank you to our valuable members for your continued support that allows us to be the organization we are today. Thank you to our volunteers for your donation of time and spirit to help us keep our projects moving forward. Without all of your support we could not be the historical society we are today and offer the connection to the past for our future generations.

Bless you all in the New Year.



**Captain William George McElrea
Co. A, 5th Iowa Volunteer Infantry
Co. I, 5th Iowa Consolidated Cavalry**

Captain William George McElrea

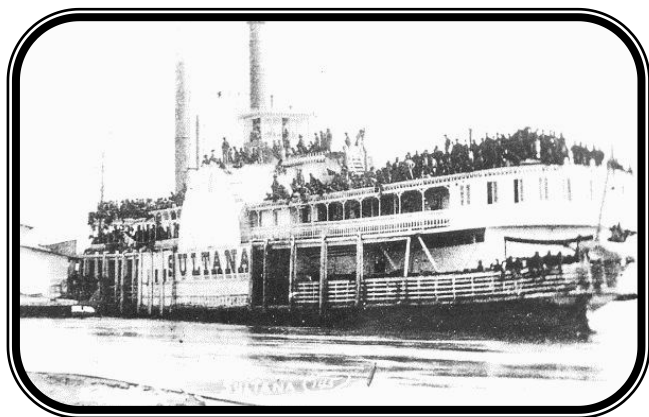
This year we are concluding the 150th Anniversary Commemoration of the Civil War. We have had a number of exhibits in the Historical Society Museum that have honored the veterans of Cedar County who served in the Civil War. Currently we have on display artifacts once belonging to Captain William George McElrea and we are sharing his harrowing experience on the *SS Sultana*. A documentary about the fateful events of the *SS Sultana* disaster will be premiering in Memphis, Tennessee, April this year.

William George McElrea was born May 9, 1829 in Baltimore, MD. He married Sarah Jane Dilts May 22, 1865 in Cass Township, Cedar County, Iowa; together they had eight children. On November 25, 1915 William McElrea passed and is buried at the Lincoln Cemetery, Marion County, Iowa.

The Mississippi River drew McElrea to the Midwest where he worked as a steam boatman between the ports of Dubuque, Iowa and New Orleans, Louisiana. He had settled in Tipton when he enlisted as a seventh corporal, company A, 5th Iowa Infantry on July 24, 1861. Under the pen name Coon Creek, McElrea, would send letters to the editor of the Tipton Advertiser detailing the events and experiences of the war.

After the 5th Iowa Infantry disbanded McElrea joined the 5th Iowa Cavalry in August, 1864. During a skirmish by Memphis, Tennessee, on December 25, 1864, McElrea was taken captive by the Confederates and became a prisoner of war at the Libby Prison in Richmond, VA with hundreds of Union soldiers. Later he was transferred to the Andersonville Prison Camp in Georgia where he faced starvation and horrid living conditions.

In April of 1865 McElrea and 2,100 other Union soldiers were released and boarded the *SS Sultana* at Vicksburg, Mississippi. At Memphis, Tennessee a large portion of the cargo overloading the *SS Sultana* was unloaded causing an imbalance that led to the taking on of water which caused the boilers to explode. The *SS Sultana* was split into two sections and succumbed to the Mississippi River. Of her passengers hundreds were instantly killed. McElrea was injured but managed to survive 72 hours floating down stream clinging to a piece of wood.



Old Fashioned Christmas Program

The Old Fashion Christmas Program held on December 7, 2014 in the South Bethel Church had several attendees who enjoyed the musical program and the completely renovated church interior. The Community Band accompanied a Christmas carol sing along to conclude the program. Thank you to all who attended and performed at our first annual Old Fashioned Christmas.

Performers for our Old Fashion Christmas included: Kristen Charette, Tipton High School Singers, Kayla and Mackenzie Walter, Jayne Erickson, Greg Brown and Melinda Stonebraker, Zoe Stonebraker, Jane Osborn, Chris McKinney, and The Community Band (Kristen Charette, Renee Mente, Becky Young, Sylvia Ferguson, Jane Moen, Christopher McKinney, Joan Wethington, Judy Rouse, Paul Frederiksen, Mary Barnum)



WHAT'S NEW AT THE MUSEUM



Marbles

A child's game; not any more. Check out the marble exhibit on loan from Tom Mackey resident of Tipton and a long time marble collector. His collection includes a wide variety of marbles with fascinating colors and patterns.



19th Century Cradle

This unique cradle was built in 1854 from the same wood used to build the South Bethel Church by Henry Rice. It is thought he constructed this piece for his beloved nieces and nephews. The cradle has since been used in the South Bethel Church to lay the Christmas Christ Child. This piece has been in the Johnston family for several generations and comes to us through the generous donation of Nancy Johnston Houst.



2014 Annual Meeting

The Cedar County Historical Society Annual Meeting was held December 6, 2014 at St. Mary's Hall, Tipton. The treasurer's, membership, and available committee reports were given during the meeting. The Board of Directors and Officers were voted on for 2015. Kris Clark, Bruce Barnhart, and Wayne Nebergall are directors of the board. Following is the list of elected officers: Mike Bixler, President; Shirley Geadelmann, Vice President; Sandra Harmel, Recording Secretary; Mike Boyle, Treasurer; Charline Thumm, Membership Secretary; Pat Bingham, Corresponding Secretary.

The business meeting was followed by a program presented by Frank Juarez, Davenport, and Darwin Gillespie, Port Byron. They shared their fascinating experience on an excavation vacation assisting with an archeological dig at Montpelier, VA, the estate of President James Madison. They were able to use their expertise in metal detecting to help locate metal objects that could be used to determine the location of buildings that stood when President Madison resided there. It is the goal of the Montpelier Foundation to restore the grounds to President Madison's time. In their program Frank and Darwin shared their role in the project, the importance of different types of objects and what can be learned from them, and the process they used to locate metal objects at the dig site. For more information on excavation vacations at Montpelier please visit www.montpelier.org.

SGT. Elmer Dodd Hinkhouse WWI

2014 marks the 100 year anniversary of the beginning of World War I also called the Great War. It was another two years before the United States joined the Allied Forces. People and organizations around the world are commemorating this world altering event and remembering those who fought so bravely.

One of Cedar County's World War I heroes is Sergeant Elmer Dodd Hinkhouse, a founding director of the Cedar County Historical Society, in 1958. Sergeant Hinkhouse served in Company A 334 Machine Gun Unit BN 87th Division.

Elmer Hinkhouse was born to Rev. John and Amy Hinkhouse in May 1890; he had three brothers and sisters. Later he married Freda and they had two children; Ruth and John.



Sergeant Elmer Dodd Hinkhouse
Co. A 334 M G BN 87th Div WWI

Items of Sergeant Elmer Dodd Hinkhouse from WWI on display at the Historical Society Museum courtesy Kris Clark. Items include a gas mask, helmet, trench art, photos, and much more.



The Road to Nowhere

It has gone by many names this road that seems to be no more. Some knew it as the Geiger Road, others the Bradshaw Road and still others will know it as The Townsend Road. This road was once an important connection for some of the settling farmers of Cedar County including, the Geiger Family, the Bradshaw Family and the Denney Family to name a few. The picture on the right, below was taken in what is now the Townsend Wildlife Area and is owned and maintained by the Cedar County Conservation Board. Though the actual road is no longer there it is easy to see its path as you look through the trees. Each year nature takes back a little more and the undergrowth thickens but the trees are still parted, showing the way. The area is accessible to the public off of County Road Y-14 and hunting is permitted. The Townsend Wildlife Area allows for the opportunity to connect with nature and Cedar County's past but does not have any modern facilities. To learn more about the Townsend Wildlife Area please visit www.cedarccb.org.

This is the first of three segments that will look at some of the early families of Cedar County, all of whom were connected by the Townsend Road.

The Geigers

Jacob Geiger emigrated to the United States with his parents from Germany when he was eight years old and settled in Pennsylvania. Jacob attended school in Ohio and Pennsylvania. He then left his tanning job and moved to Springfield Township in 1852, making it his permanent residence in 1853. On February 23, 1854 he acquired 320 acres from the Government.

On February 23, 1854, Jacob Geiger married Elizabeth Lichtenwalter and they had eight children; Annie, William, Abel, Ruth, Anna, Alice, Henrietta, and Jacob. Jacob became a second teacher in the Springfield township and instilled a love of learning in his children. His son William later became a teacher for the Springfield Township as well. The first church services were held in the schoolhouse built by Jacob and the Lutheran Church was formed in 1867 with Jacob as one of the first Elders. Later his son served as the Superintendent for the Sabbath School.

In 1878 Jacob was a Greenback candidate for Congress opposing Honorable Hiram Price. He remained active with the Greenback and later the Peoples Party at the county, district, and state levels.

Below: Image from Springfield Township, Cedar County Plat Map. The Geiger Farm located in section 21 outlined in yellow on the left side. The Bradshaw farm outlined in yellow on the right side. The road is highlighted in red.

Right: The road as seen today on the Townsend Preserve. Photo compliments of Bill Muhs.



Effective **February 1, 2015** The State Historical Society of Iowa Research Centers in Des Moines and Iowa City will have new hours.

Open Thursday, Friday, Saturday 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM

Retrievals of state archives, photograph & manuscript collections

Thursday & Friday 9:45 AM; 1:00 PM; 2:15 PM; 3:30 PM

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2014

HISTORICAL MUSEUM
and Prairie Village
1094 Hwy 38 N.

Mailing address
P O Box 254
TIPTON, IA 52772

AGRICULTURAL
MUSEUM, west of Tipton
at the Cedar County Fair
Grounds

Open
Tuesday and Thursday
10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Saturday
10:00 AM to 2:00PM

Telephone:
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To join the Cedar County Historical Society annual dues are \$22.00, plus \$3.00 if you want the Annual Review mailed to your address. Dues may be paid at the Historical Museum, 1094 Highway 38 N., Tipton. Or be mailed to: Attn: Charline Thumm, CCHS Membership P.O. Box 254, Tipton, IA 52772



Now Open

Tri-County Heritage & Genealogy Museum

820 5th St, Durant
Next to the Post Office

Hours
Wednesday 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM
Saturday 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM
Or by Appointment; Call
(563) 785-4451

Extra Extra Extra

Do you have an idea or suggestion for the newsletter? Please send your contributions to:

Tanya@
cedarcounthistoricalsociety.com

Please put "CCHS Newsletter" in the subject line.

All suggestions and feedback are welcome. Because of available space all contributions may not be immediately utilized.

CCHS 2014 Sustaining Members

1. Barnhart's Custom Services, LLC ***
2. Liberty Trust & Savings Banks ***
3. Open Prairie Chapter DAR ***
4. Lynch's Plumbing, Inc. **
5. Bridge Bank, Mechanicsville *
6. Clarence Nursing Home, Inc. *
7. City of Tipton, *
8. Hames LLC. West Branch, *
9. Images in Ink *
10. Jenkins Const./Sheds/Siding *
11. Keller's Home Furnishings *
12. Layers of Life, Dr. A. Flora DC *
13. Olsen's Appliance-Hardware *
14. Tipton Greenhouse & Florist *
15. Red Bird Construction *

Cedar County Historical Society owes special thanks to our sustaining members for their help in allowing us to continue to save and protect the history of Cedar County. Please remember to thank these businesses and professionals for their contributions. Each * represents a contribution of \$50 to the Society annually. To become a sustaining member please contact Membership Secretary, Charline Thumm, at PO Box 254, Tipton, IA 52772

We're on the Web!

http://
cedarcounthistoricalsociety.webs.com/