

Rummage Sale to benefit WDM Historical Society – May 1 & 2

There will be a rummage sale on May 1st and 2nd at the Bennett School. When you are cleaning out your closets, basements and garages this winter and spring please be sure to set aside useful items. Then call Louise Gately at 229-8757 to arrange for pick-up of your items or call Penny Schiltz at the WDM Historical Society, 225-1286, to arrange to drop off items at Bennett School.

Close to \$900.00 was made on the sale last May from items donated throughout the year—clothing,

knick-knacks, seasonal items, toys, household items, antiques and vintage pieces, small appliances, home décor items, etc. This helps pay for heating and repairs to Bennett School. For the sale we rely on items donated by you, our WDM Historical Society members and their friends and neighbors!”

Since these are donations, a tax letter from the WDMHS is available, upon request, for use in filing your taxes.

A reminder of dates to mark on your calendar!

- **Sunday, February 22, 2009** – Open House at the Jordan House in honor of Black History Month from 2:00 – 5:00 PM.
- **Sunday, March 8, 2009** – Book Fair at Barnes and Noble on University in WDM
- **Thursday, April 23, 2009** - Annual meeting of the

WDMHS at 7:00 PM. All members are encouraged to attend.

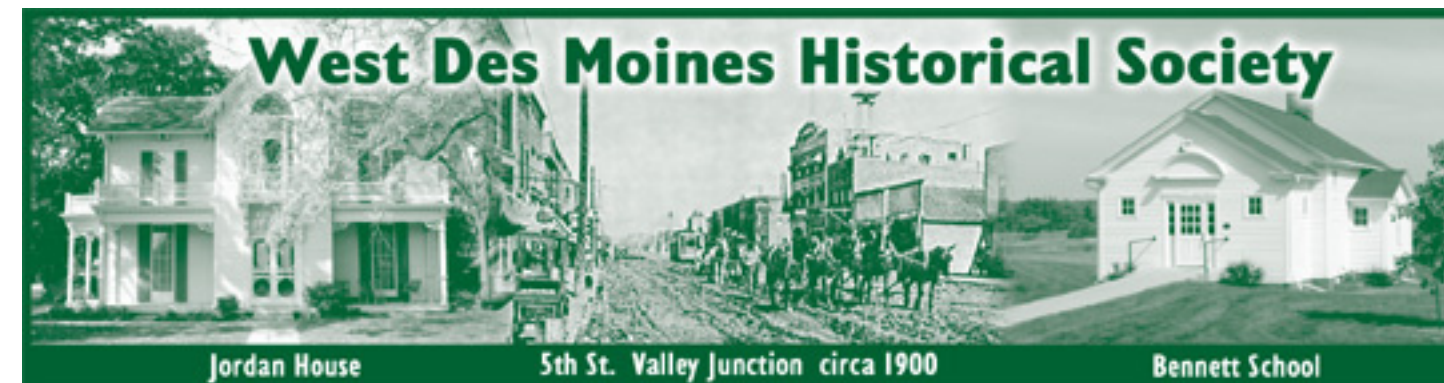
- **Sunday, May 3, 2009 from 2:00-5:00 p.m.** – Open House at the Jordan House to kick off a new open hours season.



WEST DES MOINES
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2001 Fuller Road • West Des Moines, Iowa 50265
515-225-1286

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Winter Newsletter 2009

Letter from the President of the WDM Historical Society

My greetings and best wishes to you in this New Year, here is an update of West Des Moines Historical Society news:

The city sewer project has stopped for the rest of the winter. The area in front of the Jordan House is completed. However, the landscaping will not be done until spring. The second part of the project will resume in the spring. For us at the Jordan House, we now have complete access in all directions. Hurray!

As reported in the last newsletter, we were notified in September that the Nazarene Church was accepting an offer to sell the camp site from the Walnut Creek Community Church. We had until the end of December to exercise our first right of refusal and we thoroughly examined several potential options, but in the final analysis there was only one. On December 11, 2008, we notified the Nazarene Church that we would relinquish our first right of refusal. The Walnut Creek Community Church plans to continue using the site as

a church camp and we are looking forward to having a friendly relationship with our new neighbors.

Our membership renewal is coming up and I encourage you to share your interest in the West Des Moines Historical Society with your friends. Many people are not aware of James Jordan's impact in establishing (Valley Junction) West Des Moines and shaping the history of central Iowa. The WDMHS is pleased and honored to maintain the Jordan House, a stop on the Underground Railroad and Bennett School, a one room school house circa 1940. By having your renewed membership and adding new members, we are able to continue our mission of educating the public about the history of West Des Moines.

I look forward to seeing you at upcoming events sponsored by the West Des Moines Historical Society.

Dorothy Wilson

Black History Open House – Sunday, February 22, 2009

Please join us at Historic Jordan House on Sunday, February 22, 2009 for our annual open house in honor of Black History Month. Jordan House, located at 2001 Fuller Road, will be open free to the public from 2:00 – 5:00 PM. Enjoy refreshments and take a self-guided tour of the house.

YOU will also have a chance to meet and talk with West Des Moines author Mary Kay Shanley. Mary Kay Shanley, has written about the Underground

Railroad in Iowa for *The Iowan* and will talk with visitors about her research. She is also locally known for her book, *Our State Fair - Iowa's Blue Ribbon Story* (Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Foundation, 2000), which chronicles the first 150 years of a great state fair.



WDM Historical Society Receives \$10,000.00 Grant from Prairie Meadows

The West Des Moines Historical Society received a \$10,000.00 grant from Prairie Meadows Race-track and Casino through its 2008 Community Betterment Grant Program.

Grant funds will help to provide new and improved Underground Railroad museum displays. Historic Jordan House, one of the oldest structures and a treasured landmark in Polk County, is on the National Freedom Trail of Underground Railroad sites.

The Prairie Meadows Grants Advisory Committee, comprised of education, religious and business leaders from the greater metro area, review all grant requests and recommends funding levels. "We are extremely pleased and grateful to have received this funding from Prairie Meadows this

year," said Dorothy Wilson, President of the West Des Moines Historical Society. "This grant money will help us create Underground Railroad museum displays that are permanent, interactive, and detailed. We are proud to share the long, proud history of Jordan House and its role as a stop on the Underground Railroad with visitors and this grant will allow us to continue our mission."

Prairie Meadows Community Betterment Grants are allocated to four categories: arts and culture, economic development, education, and human resources.

Since 1996, Prairie Meadows has contributed more than \$399 million to promote education, economic development, agriculture, jobs, and tourism in Iowa.

Barnes and Noble Book Fair — Sunday, March 8, 2009

The West Des Moines Historical Society is grateful to the Barnes and Noble store at 4550 University in West Des Moines for sponsoring a book fair benefiting our organization.

On March 8th, if you present our voucher, a generous 10% to 20% (depending on the total level of sales) of the regular price of your purchase will be donated to the WDM Historical Society. Last year this netted us about \$830 which really helps given our limited budget. Please save the voucher in this newsletter and present it to the cashier when purchasing books. If

Bennett School—"THE" Place to Have a Party!

The Bennett school is a great place for birthday or graduation parties. If you, your family, friends, or neighbors are looking for a unique place to have a child's birthday party, a graduation party, or even a retirement party consider having it at Bennett School, The WDM Historical Society's fully restored 1927-vintage schoolhouse.

Even though the building is a "restored antique", there is a completely equipped modern kitchen including a dishwasher in the downstairs. Gather upstairs at first and then go downstairs for the party and

you forget the voucher, simply mention the WDMHS and we will get credit.

If you have plans in the near future to buy books, March 8th would be a great day to shop and support the WDMHS at the same time. Please invite all your family and friends to shop and mention us when checking out. Members of the WDMHS board will be present at Barnes and Noble from 1 to 4 p.m. with a display of historic artifacts and information about the historical society, so come visit us.

treats—tables and chairs are available and the daylight windows downstairs make it a nice sunny space during the day or early evening. "You can decorate as you like. Many people bring in a caterer, but food can be prepared and the clean-up is easy," according to Wendy Zohrer, who has hosted several events at Bennett School. "The cost to use the school is very reasonable."

Please call Penny Schiltz at 225-1286 for information and to reserve a date for a party at Bennett School.

A Pictorial History of West Des Moines

The near future holds a book about West Des Moines' past

Craig McCue, an Urbandale resident interested in creating books presenting history in pictures, has been working long and hard with numerous groups including members of the West Des Moines Historical Society, the City staff, and students at Valley High School to produce a pictorial history of West Des Moines. The book will be published by Arcadia publishing later this year and will be of great interest to all with strong ties to West Des Moines whether currently living here or not. (Think Christmas or Birthday presents for friends or children who grew up here.) Arcadia received the manuscript in mid to late January, bringing the local effort to an end. The exact availability date is not yet known but you can look at local bookstores this



spring or summer and rest assured that we will announce its publication in the first newsletter to come out after it becomes available.

Interesting questions answered in the book:

How may West Des Moines, formerly Valley Junction, be characterized as a "child of the Rock Island Railroad Company"?

What was the Hawkeye Investment Co. founded in 1890 and where was the Collard farm that they purchased?



The book will be mainly devoted to pictures as opposed to text and a couple of examples are included here to stimulate your interest.

Join the Jordan House Questers

If you like antiques this may be the group for YOU! Are you interested in looking at or collecting antiques, studying history and getting together once a month to do that? Think about joining the Jordan House Questers. Founded in 2006, the Jordan House Questers chapter meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month in the Jordan House front parlor, Bennett Schoolhouse or in member's homes. Once or twice a year the group goes on a field trip.

Past field trips have included Tea at Terrace Hill, a tour of Hoyt Sherman Place and last May, a tour of Woodland Cemetery, led by Gerald LeBlanc, with lunch afterwards in the Sherman Hill area. Plans are also underway for a trip in May with lunch and of course lots of antiques to and from.

During regular meetings, members share information— with one person presenting a topic each month. Some of the topics have been: "Shawnee Corn Dishware", "Vintage Holiday Postcards", "Victorian Jewelry and Cameos", "Cream of Wheat Ads", "Discover the Stories in Quilts", The "Underground Railroad",

"Fascinating Facts about our Presidents (Things they didn't teach you in History class)", "Frankoma Pottery", "The History of Santa Claus", "Ice Cream Molds", and more.

Service is also a part of Jordan House Questers and last December's meeting included a potluck and the decorating of Bennett School for the Historical Society Christmas Open House. The decorations included vintage Christmas tree ornaments from the era of the schoolhouse.

Jordan House Questers are all members of the WDM Historical Society, so if you are interested in joining, you are halfway there! Questers dues are \$20.00 per year and this makes you a member of International Questers, which sends newsletters and gives you the opportunity to participate in the regional and state Questers conference each year.

For information on joining the Jordan House Questers please call Wendy Zohrer, 238-5526.