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# HISTORIAN

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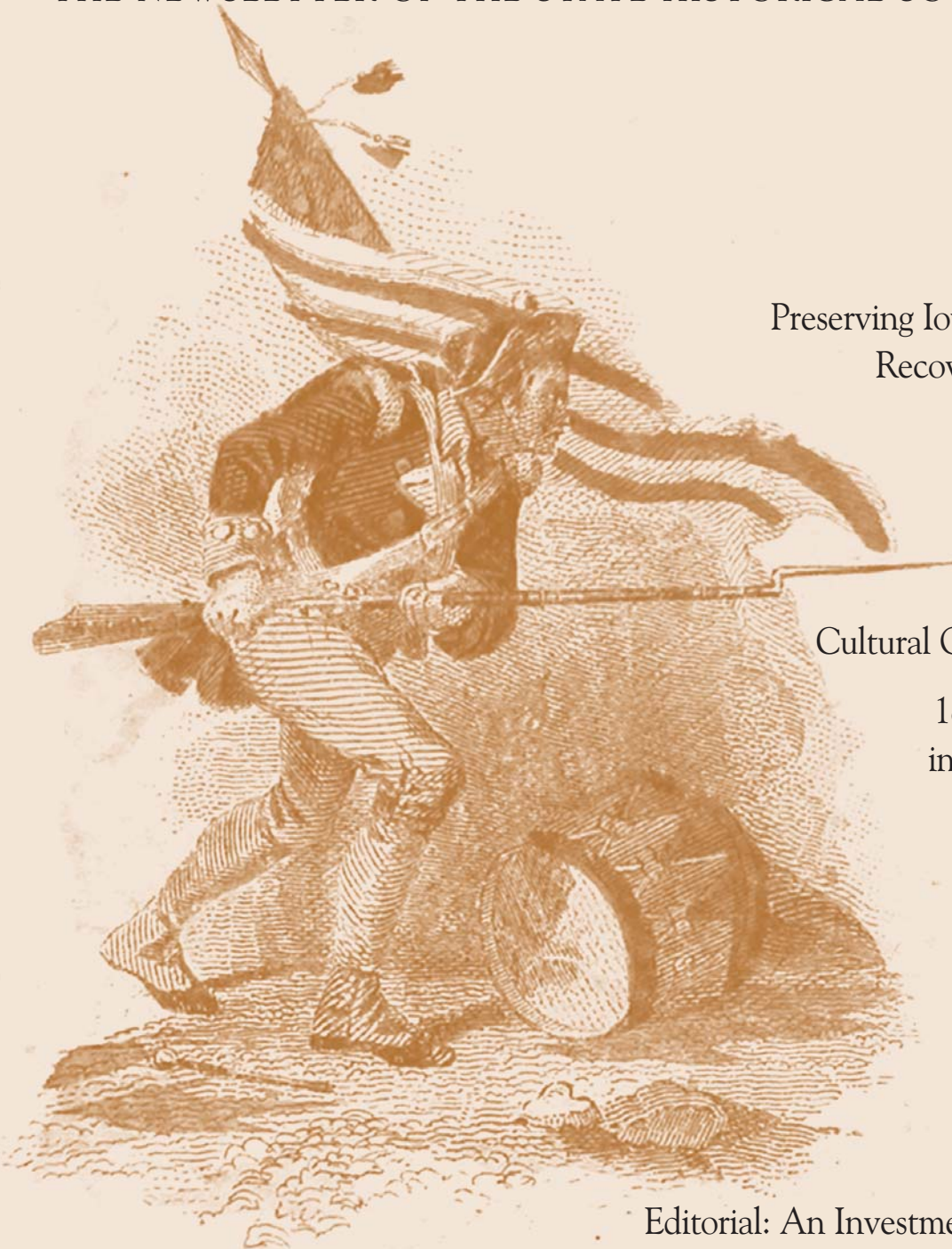
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# PRESERVING IOWA BATTLE FLAGS AND RECOVERING THEIR STORIES

For about 100 years, dozens of Civil War battle flags hung in the first floor rotunda of the Iowa State Capitol. As the flags deteriorated physically, the stories they represented languished, for no documentation accompanied the flags.

In January 2002, staff of the State Historical Society of Iowa's Iowa Battle Flag Preservation Project, assisted by Fonda Thomsen, a nationally recognized flag conservator, removed 25 flags from the Capitol and brought them to the State Historical Building. That was the beginning of an exciting new phase of work for the Battle Flag project staff, as they began to document the condition of each flag, stabilize the flags through conservation and proper storage, and research the history of the units and individuals associated with them. The staff hoped to solve some puzzles relating to the collection. Instead, they encountered more puzzles.

First, the physical condition of the flags had to be stabilized. They were in a severely deteriorated state. Large portions of fabric were missing from many of the flags, and all of them suffer from their years on display.

For example, the 36th Iowa regimental flag was distorted from hanging, with diagonal wrinkles and creases. There were vertical creases and splits. The painted surfaces were shattered. The fabric was weak. The flag was heavily soiled. The fringe had twisted and tangled

strands. An encrustation on the reverse appeared to be insect remains.

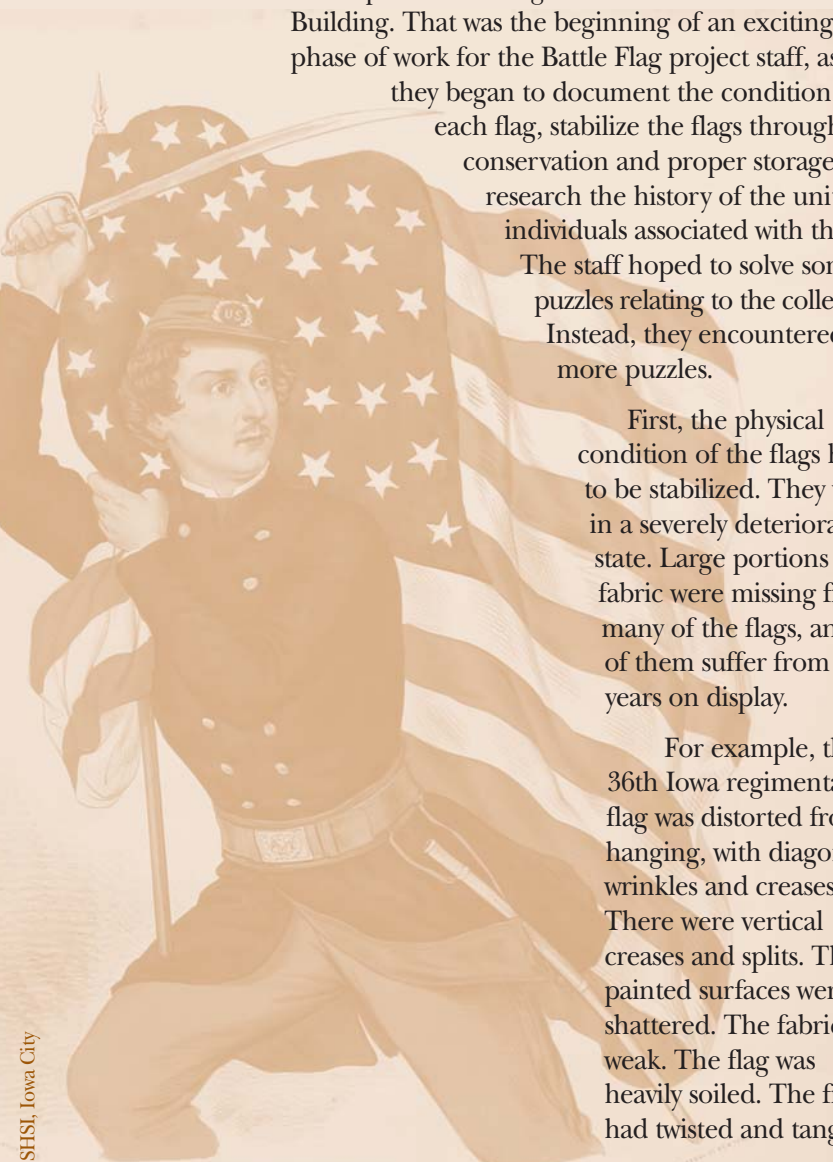
The examination and stabilization of the flags yielded some surprising discoveries. Staff knew, for example, that crude repairs had been made to the flags in the 1890s before the flags were installed in the cases at the Capitol, but now it appears that conservation treatments were also applied after the 1904 Capitol fire and again in the 1920s.

Likewise, the history of each flag's service yields surprising results. Although few records have survived, staff have been able to document how some flags served a unit over time while others were carried by a known soldier during a specific engagement.

A note found among the torn and fragmented remains of a national flag, for example, stated that a Sgt. Jeffrey carried the flag during the battle of Prairie Grove. Further research revealed that it was the flag of Company C, 19th Iowa Infantry. In the cold of early December 1862 the flag accompanied the regiment as it marched more than 100 miles in four days to join the battle at Prairie Grove, Arkansas. Sgt. William R. Jeffrey and three other color guards received wounds that day protecting the flag. After the battle, its torn remains were retired. Years later they were placed in the collection of the State Historical Society.

A flag donated in 1936 as a World War I Red Cross flag from Kossuth County proved to have a more interesting history than its donors suspected. The handmade flag with appliquéd stars had 35 stars, dating it to the Civil War. On the hoist of the flag the words "Sanitary Flag" were hand-lettered in script. The flag's significance began to unfold.

In July 1864 the Northwest Sanitary Commission held a fair in Dubuque to raise money and goods to help care for Union soldiers. To stimulate interest, the commission offered two flags as prizes: one for the most money raised by a county and the other for the most money raised per capita. Kossuth County was small in population and



SHSI, Iowa City

2 THE FLAG OF OUR UNION.

STRIKE... all the best armed, fee squares; STRIKE... for your allies' and your firm; STRIKE... for the Green Graves of your sons; GOD... and your "active land".

# CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS UNITE

Johnson County has long been a hub of arts and cultural activity within the state of Iowa, offering everything from the touring national and international theatrical and musical performances at Hancher Auditorium to local historical sites and museums. Recognizing the scale and variety of what is available in the county, a group of citizens decided to form a new collaborative association: the Johnson County Cultural Alliance (JCCA).



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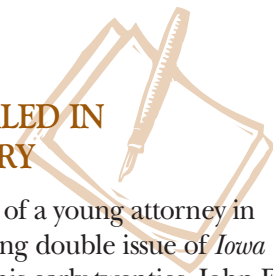
Josh Schamberger of the Iowa City/Coralville Convention and Visitors Bureau joined with Amy Estes of Riverside Theatre and arts advocates John and Sandra Hudson in late 2001 to solicit members for the new alliance. Their primary goal was to get various nonprofit organizations working together to promote cultural tourism, collaborative marketing, and networking in the county.

Response to their call has been impressive. More than 40 people — representing theaters, galleries, museums, historic sites, and civic organizations — attended JCCA's first meeting in February 2002. By the fall, JCCA included more than 55 organizations and had progressed toward its goals. The *Iowa City Press-Citizen* has published two promotional inserts and has committed to doing so quarterly without charge. A new web site — [www.CulturalCorridor.org](http://www.CulturalCorridor.org) — launched jointly by the JCCA and the Cedar Rapids Area Cultural Alliance is a valuable resource for the general public and alliance members alike. The site includes a comprehensive calendar of events and attractions, and users will be able to customize the site according to their main interests (for example, users can request e-mail reminders about upcoming theatrical events or museum exhibits).

With such an enthusiastic and creative group of members, there's no telling how much this new cooperative effort can accomplish. Department of Cultural Affairs Director Anita Walker called it "one of the most impressive success stories related to Imagine Iowa 2010" — the statewide cultural plan for the arts, history, sciences, and humanities that was spearheaded by the Department of Cultural Affairs.

For more information about JCCA, or for suggestions about how to start a similar alliance in your area, contact Josh Schamberger by phone at 319-337-6592 or by e-mail at [joshua@icccvb.org](mailto:joshua@icccvb.org).

## 1850S IOWA REVEALED IN YOUNG MAN'S DIARY



The remarkable diary of a young attorney in 1850s Iowa fills the upcoming double issue of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*. Even in his early twenties, John F. Duncombe was a driving force in politics, land speculation, and railroad promotion in Fort Dodge and the surrounding counties. His business and politics took him across the state, where he complained about the cold, longed for a wife, and lost his horse on the prairie. Through his diary, readers enter a time of stagecoach travel, county seat wars, claim clubs, and "bleeding Kansas."

Duncombe's three-year diary has never before been published. It was painstakingly transcribed by Fort Dodge historian Roger Natte. "Reading this diary of a young professional during Iowa's formative years is like sitting in a cold, drafty law office in the 1850s and hearing the locals rattle on about politics and gossip and intrigue," says editor Ginalie Swaim. "Iowa is still young, and so is Duncombe. His diary presents an incredible reading experience."

*Iowa Heritage Illustrated and The Annals of Iowa are each published quarterly by the State Historical Society of Iowa. To order a single copy of either publication, or to subscribe, call Deb Pedersen at 319-339-3916.*

## READ ABOUT THE EARLY HISTORY OF DUBUQUE IN THE ANNALS OF IOWA

You can read about the early history of Dubuque in the Fall 2002 issue of *The Annals of Iowa*. Historian Timothy R. Mahoney describes the complex interrelationships among three elite groups of early settlers: a genteel society represented by the Langworthy brothers; a male subculture of politics, the law, and Main Street represented by George Wallace Jones; and a Yorkshire immigrant culture represented by Richard Bonson. All contributed to a booster ethos that promoted Dubuque's early economic development. Mahoney shows in fascinating detail how that booster ethos—and the development it spawned—was undermined by the Panic of 1857 that transformed the future of Dubuque and other frontier towns like it.

This issue also contains a review essay on the important new book, *Outside In: African-American History in Iowa, 1838-2000*.



# IT'S ABOUT TIME! *Calendar of Events*

## Jam and Bread

Every Thursday in Jan., Feb., and March 2 – 4:30 p.m.  
Western Historic Trails Center  
3434 Richard Downing Ave., Council Bluffs  
Sample home-baked bread and enjoy the sounds of local musicians as they “jam” the afternoon away.

*\*These events are at the State*

*Historical Building, 600 E. Locust,*

*Des Moines. Unless otherwise noted, all*

*events are free and open to the public.*

*For more information, call 515-281-4011.*

## Living History Sundays\*

Jan. 20, Feb. 17, March 17 Noon – 4 p.m.  
What better way to learn about military service in the Civil War than to talk about it with someone who has been there? Meet the 15th Iowa Civil War Re-enactors, who will be in uniform to drill and interact with the public.

## I'll Make Me A World In Iowa\*

Jan. 24 – 26 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
Join a diverse collaboration of Iowans for this fifth annual event, whose mission is to promote African American arts, history, and culture. Friday, Jan. 24, is Education Day.

## From Dreams to Reality\*

Feb. 4 – 7 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.  
\$1 per student; adults free  
A hands-on exhibit highlighting the contributions of African American scientists, inventors, engineers, and health-care professionals. Call 515-243-7817 for more information and to register.

## An Affair to Remember\*

Feb. 8 Time TBA  
Spend the day learning how to preserve your treasured memories, and then stay for an evening of romance with your sweetheart. Activities include wedding dress preservation, a cake decorating contest, a photo preservation discussion, and a special exhibit of wedding memories.

## Des Moines Public Schools Art Exhibit\*

Feb. 13 – Feb. 27  
Students display their art at the State Historical Building. Youth Art Month opens March 1, with a reception on March 1.

## Southwest Pottery Exhibit\*

Opens March 1, temporary exhibit  
View the art of the Southwest as expressed through pottery designs. Learn the history behind the designs and their significance for southwestern culture.

## Mary Musgrove Exhibit\*

Opens April 24  
The wife of the first director of the State Historical Museum, Jack Musgrove, donated items she and her husband collected. Fossils, southwestern pottery, and other items will be displayed in the Curator's Corner.

## Hot Diggity Dog\*

May 3 Time TBA  
On a stick or in a bun, the hot dog has a delicious history.

*Members enjoy great publications, Museum Store discounts, special events and more!*

**Yes! I'm interested in membership in the State Historical Society of Iowa.**



Complete the form below and mail with your payment to: Membership Program, 600 E. Locust, Des Moines, IA 50319

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment:  Check enclosed

Credit Card:  Visa  MCard

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

- Individual \$40
- Heritage \$100
- Family add \$20
- Advocate \$250
- Conservator \$500
- Patron \$1,000
- Benefactor \$5,000
- Supporter \$10,000

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS TO SHSI BOARD OF TRUSTEES



The State Historical Society Board of Trustees has issued a call for nominations to its twelve-member board. The governor appoints nine members, and every year the members of the Society elect one trustee for a three-year term. Nominations must be postmarked by Friday, March 14. Nominees must be members of the Historical Society, and must be willing and able to attend six meetings per year and to serve on various committees.

To submit a nomination or to receive more information, contact Deirdre Giesler, SHSI, 600 E. Locust, Des Moines, IA 50319; by phone at 515-281-7471; or by e-mail at [Deirdre.Giesler@dca.state.ia.us](mailto:Deirdre.Giesler@dca.state.ia.us).

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To help Iowans comprehend who they are and what they can become, the State Historical Society of Iowa serves as a trustee of Iowa's historical legacy and an advocate for understanding Iowa's past.

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## CREATING A HABITAT FOR THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

What is the commodity of the future? Ideas. People — creative people — are the raw materials for ideas, and companies want to locate and create wealth and jobs in places that are rich in the raw materials for their products: ideas.

Where do creative people live? They choose to live in communities with the resources to fuel their creative minds, communities rich in the arts and culture, authentic neighborhoods, vibrant main streets, and diverse populations.

Today a prosperous economy depends on the creation of an environment that is attractive to creative people who will become magnets for growing companies that will create wealth. Creative economy theorists are quickly raising the stock of history, the arts, and culture. Community leaders are adding the arts and historic preservation to their business vocabulary and acknowledging the role of culture in economic development.

Iowans are making a bold investment in cultural bricks and mortar through the Vision Iowa program and with other public and private funds. The Orpheum Theater in Sioux City, the Mississippi River Museum in Dubuque, and the Figge Art Museum in Davenport are important showpieces that demonstrate a commitment to culture.

A culturally rich environment also has a wonderful array of offerings at street level, available at all hours,

that are affordable, accessible, and interesting. These are not so much destinations for motor coaches and field trips as an environment for people who live in a community.

Commenting recently on Sioux City's revitalized historic Fourth Street, with its pubs, restaurants, coffeehouses, tea rooms, boutiques, and apartments, Mayor Craig Berenstein said that the city council there has recognized that enhancing quality of life — by preserving, protecting, and creating features and factors that cause people to enjoy living in the community — is their main function.

"Cities need a people climate more than they need a business climate," writes economist Richard Florida in his new book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Florida seeks to define and measure the power of communities to attract a creative workforce. His book rides a wave of new research documenting the value of place, the factors technology workers apply to decide where to locate, and the role of the arts and culture in growing economies.

Richard Florida will be coming to Iowa's first Creative Economy Unconference, March 5. Participants will preview the results of the first Iowa Creative Economy Study and explore strategies to make Iowa a leader in the creative economy. This is an event you won't want to miss. For more information on the Unconference, visit [www.culturalaffairs.org](http://www.culturalaffairs.org).

Community  
leaders are  
adding the arts  
and historic  
preservation to  
their business  
vocabulary and  
acknowledging  
the role of culture  
in economic  
development.