



The Todd House Museum

TABOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

October, 2018 Newsletter
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Society News

Chuck Douglass

When most people think of historical societies, the first thing that comes to mind is the maintenance of museums or historical buildings—and Tabor is no different. We proudly work to keep several buildings and the Todd House residence in good repair and available for viewing by visitors. Another important role of the society concerns the preservation of all manner of historical documents—things like official town records, photographs and family memorabilia. Our society has been working hard over the last several years to catalogue and properly store thousands of artifacts donated to us beginning in the 1960s. Our collection is impressive and contains, among other things, over 1,400 sermons delivered by the Reverend John Todd, comprehensive records of Tabor College (including grade cards) and Tabor town records dating back to the 1850s. We also maintain over 200 family files that contain personal histories, photographs and important documents donated to us for safekeeping which can be used in genealogical research. For those who are interested in studying their family

history, our records can be accessed by contacting the society and providing us with the information you need—at a minimum we require the name of the individual or family and the approximate dates of residency in Tabor or the surrounding areas. We often work with the Fremont County Historical Society in Sidney because they also maintain a large number of family records. We will do one hour of research for you, free of charge, with a modest hourly rate thereafter. Many of our photos and documents are digitized and reside in our computer database making retrieval quick and easy; and our collection is growing all the time!

Have you ever wondered what might become of *your* family history? If so, you might consider a donation of your artifacts, documents or photographs to be entered into our permanent collection. If you do not want to give us the original, we can copy the information and return the originals to you. We are always looking for photos of Tabor and her residents through the years and would be grateful to see what you have. Please contact us with questions or requests.

The Oldest Woman in Iowa

Harry Wilkins

In the year 1831 Andrew Jackson was president of the United States, the first steamboat navigated the upper Missouri River, and Nancy Jane Nees was born in Hendrix County, Indiana. Nancy's June 22nd birth was most certainly a cause for celebration for her parents George and Cynthia, but hardly worthy of historical note. That would change 106 years, seven months and seven days later when Nancy quietly passed away at the Hastings home of her daughter, Martha Jane Benedict; the date was January 29, 1938, and on that Sunday she was the oldest person living in Iowa.

Nancy lived the life of a pioneer woman in every sense of the word, first as a daughter who learned the value of hard work on her parents' 300-acre farm in Indiana and later as a farm wife and mother of eleven children. As a girl she attended school through her 17th year and in 1850, still a teenager, married Levi Hurst. The newlyweds were not destined to stay in Indiana though—by 1853 they decided that cheap land in Iowa was an irresistible opportunity and took off with several other families on a trek to Appanoose County. They purchased a place, settled down and began raising a family. But by the spring of 1865, Levi and Nancy and their six children decided western Iowa was where they needed to be and struck out once again in a covered wagon pulled by oxen. Along the way they stopped at Red Oak to nurse their ailing infant daughter. While there, they were shocked to learn of the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. Sadly, their daughter did not survive and they buried her before moving on to Fremont County, where Levi purchased 40 acres of untilled land for \$1.25 an acre, five miles northeast of Sidney.

The family settled into the daily routine of an Iowa farm family, with Levi taking on the added responsibility of preaching in a nearby

school used by the Christian Church. Tragically, he died in 1876 leaving Nancy to raise her family alone but she kept the family together. Although Nancy owned the homestead her entire life, by 1912 she realized the time had come to move to Tabor to live with her sons, John and Frank and, later, with her daughter, Mrs. Jane Benedict of Hastings. She never gave up her independence, insisting on living in a separate room where she cooked her own meals.

Nancy was remembered by her family and friends as being content with her simple life. She followed closely the growth of the nation and marveled at automobiles and the ever expanding network of good roads yet she regretted one thing: she was never able to fly in an airplane. Still mentally alert at 101, she decided that it was time to cast her first vote for president, which she did in the 1932 election. Thinking of those suffering during the Great Depression, she decided to support Franklin Roosevelt, commenting as she did: "something ought to be done about these times." And if anyone was an expert on time, it would have been Nancy Hurst.



Nancy Jane Hurst in 1932

Did you know?

The Reverend John Todd home, constructed in 1852, was occupied by several generations of the Todd family. John Todd's son Quintus C. Todd kept the home with his wife Hattie and raised six boys and one girl there. His youngest son Walter (1890-1973) who became a civil engineer and was living in Louisville, Kentucky in the 1960s, recalled an unexpected visitor to the home that caused quite a fuss: "My parents and their children lived in the old Todd home at Tabor, Iowa. It was built of hand-hewn timber, sills and joists and is now more than 110 years old. It had two small oval windows in the upper story as lookouts for Indians in the older days. The stone foundation barely extended below the frost level, but the basement had been dug out of silt and clay to a smaller size so the foundation would not be undermined. Yet the basement was deep enough to walk in without getting your head bumped. As cement was unknown 110 years ago, the sides and floor of the basement were dirt. One day my older brother noticed an animal had been digging in the basement wall near the floor level. Thinking it was a rat that had thrown the pile of fresh dirt on the basement floor he set a trap and caught the animal by one paw. It turned out to be a skunk, and soon the house was filed with the unmistakable odor. The following Sunday my 7-year-old sister was sitting in a circle of children at Sunday School. Presently a little girl sitting next to her remarked in a loud whisper: 'Whew, I smell a skunk.' My sister promptly answered: 'Aw, that's nothing. You ought to come over to our house.' Needless to say, friends and neighbors shunned the old Todd home for many days."



Walter Stanley Todd



Quintus C. Todd and wife Hattie, around 1914

Reverend Todd's Words Heard Once Again

During this year's Tabor picnic ministers from the local area were invited to speak at the Congregational Church in a nondenominational service, on June 24th. Organizers of the event asked the historical society if it would be possible to present a sermon by the Reverend John Todd, founder of the church. The society was glad to help, and with over 1,400 of Todd's sermons on file in the archives, there was no shortage of source material. Harry Wilkins selected a Thanksgiving sermon originally delivered by Todd on November 28, 1861, in Tabor, a time when the American Civil War was raging and thousands had already perished.

Highlights from John Todd's sermon:

“Prayers, intercessions and the giving of thanks [should] be made for all men. If we sincerely desire and pray for the good of all, we must be grateful when good is conferred upon all.

[We should be grateful] that patriotism, so essential to national defense, has been so largely developed—that hostility to slavery is on the increase.

That Tabor has not been burned and the horrors of civil strife brought to our homes.

That we have had peace and quiet [contrasted] with the Border States [like Missouri].

That we have had bountiful harvests and favorable weather for securing the fruits of the earth.

[There have been] many mercies to us as individuals . . . pause and reflect on the many temporal and spiritual blessings, religious privileges and education facilities we enjoy.

All things shall work together for good to them who love God. Why then should Christians not be thankful, thankful for all things?”



Tabor Businesses Encourage Buying Locally . . . in 1914!

We're all familiar with modern advertising campaigns aimed at enticing consumers to spend their dollars locally, but it appears the strategy has been around for a long time. An article in the Tabor Beacon on April 28, 1914, made the case that local merchants deserved first consideration when Tabor residents were deciding where to spend.

Excerpts from the article, titled *Everyone Knows*:

“Everyone knows that the merchants of this town must sell reliable goods, or they will not long sell any at all. Everyone knows that the merchants of this town must compete in price with the outside dealer, or their careers will come to a sudden end. Everyone knows this, everyone realizes it, yet much money floats away from this community which should be spent in local stores. Everyone knows that to withdraw this money from our midst is a detriment to every citizen. Everyone knows that our merchants are selling goods as cheaply as they can be purchased elsewhere, and it is but right that they should be given the first consideration. Everyone knows that justice requires that every citizen give the local merchants a fair show—that we keep the money at home, if possible. Everyone knows that such would be the part of justice, of fairness of loyalty to our own. Are we just—or are we not? Again, everyone knows.”

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* RESTAURANT, CONFECTIONER *
* AND BAKERY *
* Short Order and Lunches Served *

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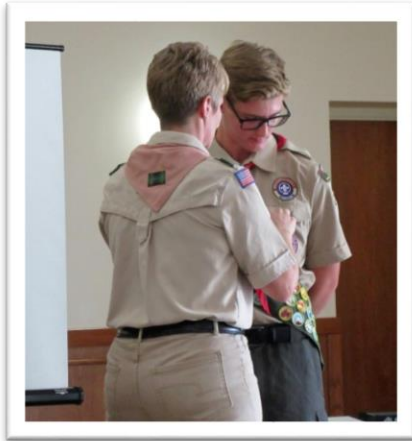
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Keep it Brief!

On August 5, 2018, David Meston was awarded Eagle Scout, pinned on by his mother Jami. David organized scouts from Glenwood's Troop 241 in painting the Todd house last summer. After extensive planning, the project was completed over two weekends, fulfilling the community service requirement for scouting's highest award. Well done David, and thank you!



Jami Meston pinning Eagle on son David



Scouts working on the Todd house, July 1, 2017

The Tabor Historical Society recently received a donation of Viola "Vida" Augusta Matthews' wedding dress from her great-granddaughter who lives in Washington State. Viola was married to John Barbour on July 2, 1884, in Glenwood, Iowa. The Barbour family ran a grocery store in Tabor, beginning in 1882—a fixture in town for many years.

