



March 2023

# WARREN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Box 256 Indianola, IA 50125

Phone-515-961-8085

(Highway 92 West, 1300 West 2nd, turn north into fair grounds, then turn east)

E-mail- [contact@warrencountyhistory.org](mailto:contact@warrencountyhistory.org)

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### **SOUP SUPPER TRIVIA NIGHT**

Tuesday, March 28  
5:00 pm

### **WCHS BOARD**

Thursday, April 20  
9:30 am

### **LCF MEETING Follows Board**

### **WCHS GENERAL MEETING**

Tuesday, April 25

### **WCHS BOARD**

Thursday, May 18  
9:30 am

### **LCF MEETING Follows Board**

### **WCHS ANNUAL GARAGE SALE**

Saturday, Aug. 26

### **WCHS LOG CABIN FESTIVAL** Saturday, Sept. 23

 Please continue to collect Indianola HYVEE receipts and bring them in to the museum. We have a large glass container near the kitchen where you can place them. We can use gas, pharmacy, grocery or any other HYVEE receipt. It is an easy way to raise funds for WCHS. When Hy Vee asks if you want to have your receipt, say **YES!**

## PROPOSED 2023 WCHS SLATE of OFFICERS

**President: Debbie Larrison**

**1st Vice President: Annette "Toni" Rath**

**2nd Vice President: Open due to the recent death of Kathleen "Kitty" Picken**

**Secretary: Juanita Ott**

**Treasurer: Judy McClymond**

**Trustees: Susan Graeser, Don Sandy, Dwight McCormick, Dan Porter, and Dave Grissom**

A Memorial service will be held in April for Kathleen "Kitty" Picken who passed unexpectedly on Friday, March 3, 2023. We wish her family and friends our deepest sympathy in their loss. The time Kitty spent with WCHS, after moving to Indianola from Chicago, was too brief. Our 2023 Signature Quilt was Kitty's idea.



**JOIN US**

**Tuesday, March 28th**

**5:00 pm**

**SOUP SUPPER**

**Election of Officers**

**FUN!**



**PRIZES!**

**FOOD!**

Amazon Smile has discontinued donating to smaller non-profits. Therefore, you can or longer donate to Warren County Historical Society through the Amazon Smile program. [amazonsmile](https://www.amazon.com/amazonsmile)

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER NOVEMBER 2022

### Hello, Everyone!

Spring is right around the corner; and soon it will be time for Pioneer School days. This event runs four days from 8:30 to 1:30. We can always use some extra volunteers on those days to help demonstrate life as it was and assist in one of the village buildings, or an outside activity.

Starting in June, we will be glad to accept items for our annual fundraising yard sale. No clothes please.

In August we will have a guest speaker; a gentleman coming home from the Civil War. Please come and hear about the time he spent serving his country.

September will be our "50th" Anniversary celebrating the moving and reconstruction of our log cabin at its current location! Log Cabin Festival will be September 23 and was founded to provide financial support for WCHS.

We would be glad to welcome anyone who has some time available to spend preserving and working with our great history. Our hours are: Thursday 9:00-4:00 & Saturdays 9:00- 12:00.

Please join us on Tuesday, March 28 at 5:00 pm for the Soup Supper and Warren County Trivia. Remember to come for a visit anytime. We are always adding new and interesting items.

Deb Larrison  
WCHS President



### TIME TO JOIN OR RENEW YOUR WCHS DUES



## WARREN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Membership Form    New or Renewal

### Your Information

First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Fee    **Single**  \$25                      **Family**  \$30

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## MUSIC WAS HER LIFE

Bertha Legge was born in Indianola, February, 1876 to William and Zerealda (Harden) Legge. Bertha's parents came to Indianola from Indiana in 1856 so were early Warren County pioneers. They farmed for a few years southeast of Indianola. In the early 1860s they moved to a home on East 1st Avenue.

Bertha spent her entire life in Indianola. She studied voice and piano at Simpson College's Conservatory of Music with Dr. Frank E. Barrows, graduating in 1893. Later, she studied with Simpson Professor Alexander Emalie and appeared in several opera and oratorio productions he presented. She was the Gypsy Queen in *Bohemian Girl*, Azucina in *Il Trovatore*, and sang in the chorus of *Crimes of Normandy*. She was a member of one of the most popular quartets in the history of Indianola that included: Arthur Middleton, Mrs. Bertha Sloan Berry, and Dr. L.D. Carpenter. She also performed at several Indianola Chautauqua gatherings.

An Indianola photographer used her as a model, photographing her in operatic costumes, and as a "calendar" girl with a different hat for each month of the year. She was almost as known for her hats as her voice. She sang at over 900 funerals, beginning at 17. She made a recording to be played at her funeral, including two of her own songs sung with Charles Markey. She also requested that one of her former students, J. Berkley Wilson play *Crossing the Bar* and *Going Home* on the organ.

She taught piano and voice lessons to many young people in Indianola. She worked 14 years as bookkeeper and bill collector for Northwestern Bell in Indianola. She was choir director at the Baptist Church for six years, seven years at the Methodist Church and 22 years at the Presbyterian church. She was a charter member of the Indianola Music Club.

She died in 1953 at the age of 79.



Conservatory of Music, Simpson College

Photos of Bertha Legge and Professor Alexander Emalie in the November 25, 1906 Des Moines Register. It was inviting people to the Oratorio of Creation by Haydn to be held at Simpson College.



1849

TUESDAY, MARCH 28th  
 WCHS SOUP SUPPER 5:00 pm  
 WARREN COUNTY  
 TRIVIA NIGHT  
 FOOD, FUN, & PRIZES

Lane Sisters

Squaw Creek

John Parmalee



G W Carver

## History of My Vicinity, Martensdale and Jefferson Township

by Opal Walker, Grade 11, 1924

Martensdale will be remembered by most old settlers by the name of "Yaggie"; as it was called this for many years and not until the year of 1913 did it have its name changed to Martensdale, which it is known by at the present time.

The little village at Martensdale is situated upon a hill in the west central part of Warren County, Iowa, twenty miles from the capital city, Des Moines. And as the saying goes, "a city upon a hill can never be hidden" so it is with this prosperous little village.

Perhaps the settlement of Martensdale was due to its fine location. For when standing in this village, you may get a panoramic view of the most beautiful hills, dales, and rolling prairie of Iowa, speaking for themselves the prosperity of Iowa farms.

Martensdale was first laid into lots in 1913. Gus Reeves being the first man to purchase one. He was also the first man to build a home in Martensdale. He started to build just a small dwelling house not far from the Great Western tracks on October 13, 1913, and moved in on October 18. As you can see by the fast work used in building this house, he was very anxious to get settled in the village, although it was nothing but a hilly pasture at that time. Later in March 1914 he built his carpenter shop on the lot on which it is now situated, about a block and a half east of the C.G.W. railroad tracks, on the south side of the street.

The general merchandise store now occupied by H.H. Himstreet, was the next building to be built in Martensdale. It was built during the winter of 1913. W.E. Shoemaker moved in the store in February 1914.

As the people began to realize more and more what a prosperous village it was getting to be; it grew extensively during the year of 1914.



Lickteig Garage on right.

Frank Lickteig built a garage and later a dwelling house in the west part of town.

A bank was then built on the eastside of the grocery store, with J. S. Stanley acting as cashier, and still holding that position. Artie Dunn was the first man to make a deposit.

Dick Hagens moved into Martensdale and lived in a tent until he could build a house. He then built a barber shop now occupied by I.J. Michael and the hardware store now occupied by G.F. Martens. It was first used as a moving picture house run by W.W. Crawford.

The black smith shop was built and used as a hardware store. Fred Shrieber was proprietor. They also used it to hold church. It is now occupied by G.W. Frazier.

The lumber yard was built in 1915 and was owned by the Neola Elevator Company. The first proprietor was Ira Waechter. Jesse Semler is General Manager.

The Great Western Depot was moved from Conger in 1916. Mr. Spangler was acting as the first depot agent. George Adams holds that position at the present time.

The Lutheran Church was moved from Churchville in 1915 and situated on main street in the west part of town.

The feed mill was built in 1917 and is owned by W.W. Shafer

The meat market was built in 1917 and first owned by John ? ( Felges or Felger) . It is now a grocery store and meat market combined, run by G.H. Perkins.

The hotel was built in 1917 and is owned by Mrs. Cora Bates.



Neola Elevator and Martensdale Lumberyard.  
Walter Beam standing.



They erected a fine modern school building that marked a milestone in the history of Martensdale. It was built in 1920. It contains one of the best gymnasiums in Warren County.

Frank Lickteig, after making such a success in his business, as it steadily increased, decided to build another garage on the opposite side of the street in 1922. This was a great improvement to the town site, as it was a very fine building.

Martensdale was incorporated in 1922. Some of the towns most prominent and honorable men are holding municipal offices.

There was a land sale held and the city park selected in 1921. The woods just east of the C.B. and Q. tracks were selected as the city park. With a small amount of improvements, it could be made one of the most beautiful parks in the surrounding country.

In 1923 electric lights were brought into the village by the "Three Rivers Light and Power Company." This was a great addition to the town. For with the numerous streetlights our delightful little village cannot only be seen in the daytime, but also shine afar at night.

Some of the old settlers at Martensdale are Gus Reeves, J.S. Stanley, Johnathan White and W.H. Beam, his son Charles having the honor of being the first child born in Martensdale.

There are at the present time thirty on dwelling houses, hardware store, restaurant, blacksmith shop, hotel, barber shop, garage, two grocery stores, banks and doctors' offices situated in Martensdale.

This town has grown unusually fast in the past eleven years. Probably due, as I said before, to its location and also because it is a great railroad center with the Rock Island, Burlington and Great Western railroads running through the



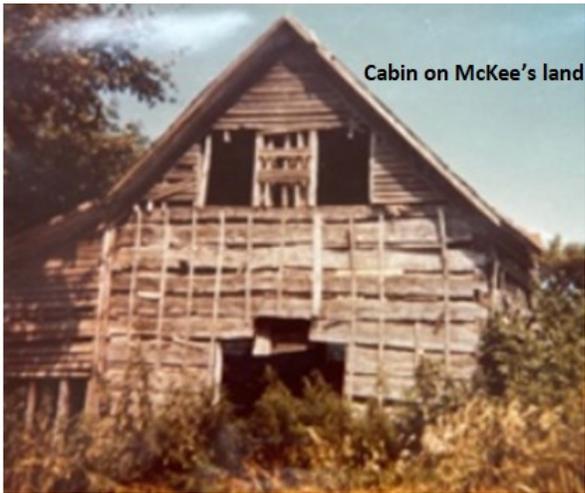
The 2023 LOG CABIN FESTIVAL theme is CELEBRATING WCHS' 50th Anniversary of having our log cabin located in our Heritage Village.

At LCF September 23 the Army of the Southwest, a group of Iowa Civil War Reenactors will camp on our new property west of J Street. There will be drills, battle (cannon booms), and photo and educational opportunities.



## HISTORY OF WARREN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S LOG CABIN

By Earl Barker



In 1972 the Wallace McKee family donated a two story log cabin to the Warren County Historical Society. The cabin was in poor condition, and the society did not have the funds to move it right away. Earl Barker, who was 90 years of age at the time, had a dream of preserving the native cabin and made it his pet project. Money was raised, starting with the first \$100 received from Pauline Baxendale in memory of her husband, Albert. A plan to "sell" the logs helped raise the funds needed.

In Wallace McKee's woods on August 15th, 1973 five members of the Log Cabin Construction Committee pulled the cabin down. They loaded the logs with Harold Threlkeld's hydraulic loader and used Tom Borrall's 15 ton truck

to haul the logs to the Fairview Park site. Miscellaneous lumber and rafters were hauled in Dudley Gilbert's and Karl Schooler's pickups.

On August 20th John Borrall, Tom Borrall, Karl Schooler, Earl Barker, Harold Threlkeld and Charles Beam leveled corner stones for a foundation and laid one log for each side. The work was called off, pending plans for Log Cabin Days. Gib McConnell allowed them to salvage lumber from August 22 to September 3rd from the house he was razing. They also got floor boards, siding, and lumber for the gable ends.

The Warren County Board of Supervisors donated bridge planks from old bridges (3' x 12' x 16') to be used as floor joists. One log was used to tie across the two sides and hold the walls together. Stones were salvaged from the property being readied for construction of Linda's Beauty Shop on South Jefferson. Earl Barker, Fred Peck, Charles Beam and Sterl Conn, using Sterl's truck, loaded stones to the cabin site. Luther Williams and Charles Boatwright tried to discourage this work by the group of "old fellows." John Borrall secured some stones from a road excavation project in White Oak Township and some stones were secured from the foundation of the McConnell house. Some hardware and nails were donated by Pemble Hardware and Hornadays. Fireplace bricks for the fireplace hearth came from James Henry. Other fireplace bricks were donated by Ray Nalin of Carlisle Brick and Tile. They received a 10% discount on mortar mix and sand from the Indianola Building and Supply.

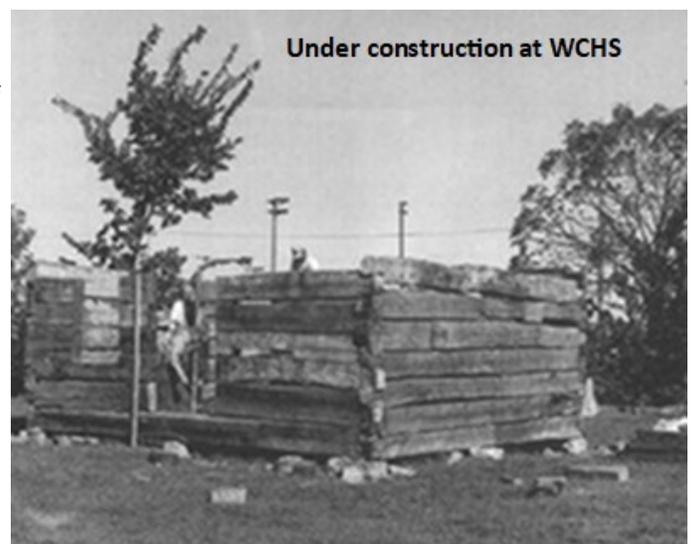
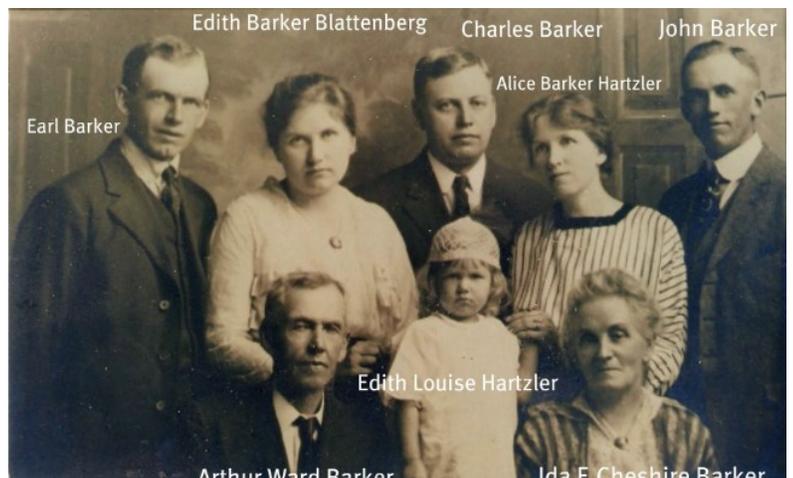
Fourteen men worked 670 hours, including four hours each by Clarence Pickard and Bill. Earl Barker and John Borrall worked 19 eight-hour days. Harold Threlkeld donated his loader and supervised operations, taking many hours from his construction business to see that this project was completed perfectly and in a minimum of time. John Borrall spent many days building the fire place and chimney. This was very much appreciated as plans were to have Marsh Brothers of Carlisle do this work, but they couldn't promise to get it done in a year. John and his helpers got it done so the cabin was completed October 19 at 10:30 A.M.



John S. Borrall built log cabin chimney.

**WAYMAN FAMILY ORIGINAL OWNERS of LOG CABIN** In 1854 the original cabin was built by J. Wayman in Greenfield Township, Warren County, IA.. The Wayman family are buried at North River

Cemetery.



## WCHS PLEASSED TO BE NEW PROPERTY OWNERS

On February 15th Warren County Historical Society finalized the acquisition of Parcel A and Parcel B (red area in diagram on the right) from the City of Indianola.

The Society has hoped to purchase this property for many years, since it is the only way for us to grow and improve.

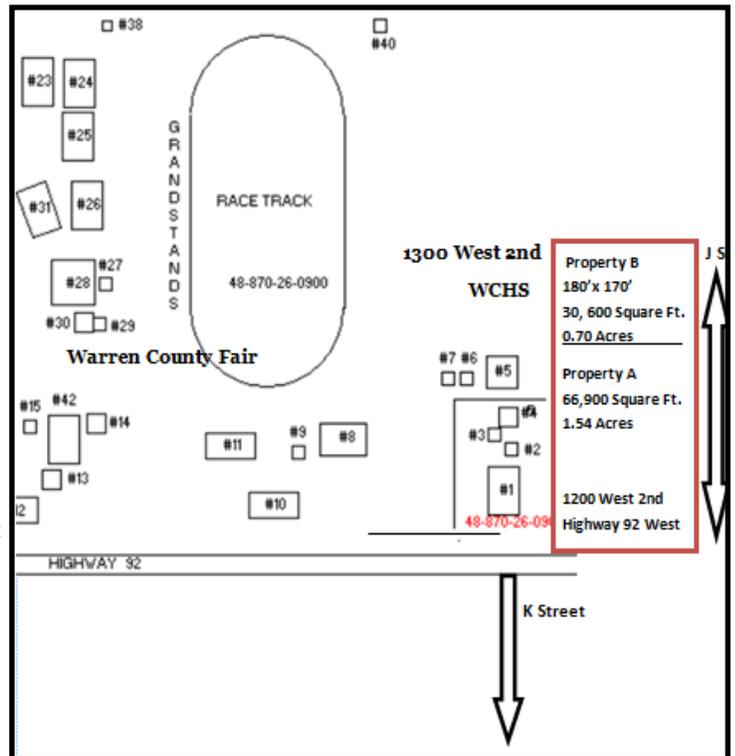
We are thankful that an anonymous angel donor came forward in November allowing us to purchase Property A. In late December we learned that Property B would also be available for sale. Once again, anonymous donors stepped forward to allow this second purchase of Property B to take place.

The quick actions of Debbie Larrison, President, Deb Taylor, Past President, Judy McClymond, Treasurer, the WCHS Board, our generous donors and Steve Hall, made our long term dream a reality. This all happened in less than a three month period of time and has left our minds spinning with amazement.

With the property comes additional expense –additional insurance, mowing/snow removal, etc. Wouldn't you know that the day after purchase, February 16th, we had a big snow. Thank you to Don Sandy, who brought out his snow blower to clear the sidewalk to J Street.

Eventually, we will need to add city sidewalk on J Street and driveway access from J. Then, with goal setting, planning and raising of funds, we will begin to create a plan for the new property, including a drive, parking, green spaces, and building expansion.

We would like to hear your ideas on long range planning for this property, but hope you understand that we need to raise funds before any of this planning can become reality.



## WARREN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEEDS YOUR HELP!



The following list is just a few of the volunteer tasks waiting for someone to do. Some require a short time and some are ongoing. Do you have 2 hours to donate or could you come once a week? We can even provide a task that could be done at your own home.

1. Count donated Hy Vee Receipts
2. Create information signs for exhibits
3. Research genealogy/history questions
4. General property maintenance of exhibit booths (dust/refresh/paint)
5. Alphabetize our probate files (a good job for two people working together)
6. Help with May Indianola 5th Graders Pioneer School
7. Index notebooks and scrapbooks
8. Assist with Log Cabin Festival, Saturday, September 23, 2023
9. Donate and help with Saturday, August 26th Garage Sale
10. Update our website and Facebook page
11. Input information into our computers

## A YOUNG MAN'S STRANGE STORY

### Wilkes-Barre Times, January 20 1903

A young man who lived in Wilkes-Barre for several years as Gordon Fenton, the adopted son of Mrs. K.E. Fenton, and who worked in Jonas Long's Sons' store, has been discovered to be Francis McClurg, an heir to a fortune, and he left a few days ago for Indianola, Iowa to claim a valuable estate. The story is a very unusual one and reads like a novel. The boy was picked up as an abandoned waif, adopted and cared for by Mrs. Fenton and was finally discovered as the heir to a fortune by a strawberry mark on his neck.

Mrs. Fenton, the adopted mother, who figures in the story, is now a resident of Parsons and will be remembered here as Madame De Leon, the well known clairvoyant. She is a woman of education and refinement and one who believes thoroughly in her own supernatural powers.

About 23 years ago Mr. and Mrs. Fenton lost their only child, an infant, and while their sorrow was still fresh a providential incident seemed to bring a little one to take the place of the dead baby. One cold morning a neighbor found on her doorstep a baby boy, emaciated and bearing the marks of neglect. It was discovered to be the adopted child of a Robert Evans and wife, who had recently come from Iowa and who were both exceedingly dissipated. Mrs. Evans having died the child was abandoned at her mother's door. This happened in Taylor, a short distance from Scranton. The family did not want the baby and were about to take him to the poor farm when the Fentons came to the rescue and had him indentured to them. They could find out nothing regarding his parentage except that he was "Francis," a waif.

The child grew up a fine, strong boy, who has never given his foster parents an hour's uneasiness. All these years he has never suspected that he was not their own child and it was only within the past few weeks that such a thought entered his mind. Mr. and Mrs. Fenton were passionately attached to this oldest son, more than six feet tall and athletic to a degree. They have a daughter of 17, and another boy of 15, who have held the big brother in adoring honor, they, too, having no idea that he was not of their own flesh and blood.

Long ago the Fentons forgot incidents of the boy's adoption but one day last week he came in and told Mrs. Fenton that he had learned the true story of his family. The woman who had refused the little, helpless child shelter as he lay on her doorstep that morning, 23 years ago, had traced him out and told him enough of his story and that he was Francis from Indianola, Iowa.

Naturally enough, there was grief in the Fenton Family that night. Finally, Mrs. Fenton suggested that Gordon should write the postmaster at Indianola and the letters came in reply clearing up the mystery. Gordon Fenton is really Francis McClurg, a member of an excellent family in Iowa that has come into wealth through valuable coal property. The mother died at the birth of Francis, leaving three other sons. The father disappeared and the children were scattered, being adopted by relatives or well-to-do friends. The baby was taken by a farmer who soon moved away and all trace of him was lost. He was the Evans, now dead, who fell into evil ways and who abandoned the adopted child.

A freak of fate caused the letter that Gordon wrote to the postmaster to fall into the hands of a Mr. J.W. McColum of Indianola, Iowa who went to the burial of the boy's mother and saw her laid in her grave. He is an old man now and writing to the young man, who will henceforth be "Francis," he said: "you were born September 18, 1877. If you are a McClurg you will have at the base of your throat a little red mark, the McClurgs all have it and the baby Francis bore it when I saw him taken from the arms of his dying mother."

Here is where the traditional strawberry mark comes in. Gordon Fenton has the little red mark at the base of his strong white throat. His foster mother had often noticed it. Today, Gordon Fenton or Francis McClurg is on his way to Iowa to claim an inheritance awaiting him from recently developed coal property and to meet his brothers who are all prosperous men and who have sought the little lost one of their family long and vainly.

**The June 1, 1918 Record Herald and Tribune ad to the right provides part of the rest of this story. Do any of you know additional information about Gordon Fenton/Francis McClurg that you would be willing to share?**

**Lacona And Vicinity . . .**

This information is badly needed to settle the estate of Gordon Fenton. Neighbors of the J. W. McCollam family, Lacona, Iowa, who might know the whereabouts of the McClurg family that lived in Lacona prior to 1880:

Two of the children were Charles and Peter. In about 1905 Gordon Fenton, a son of the McClurgs (who was later adopted by Mrs. Fenton of Scranton, Pennsylvania), returned to Lacona from the east and later married Gertrude McCollam. Relatives of Nichols, Scoles, Thomas, Coles and Starr families may have information about the McClurg family. Mrs. McClurg was buried in the Cochran Cemetery about 1881.

If you know where the McClurg father and children went after their mother's death or any other valuable information concerning them please contact:

**MRS. MILDRED FENTON DRUCKER**  
1325 FOREST AVENUE  
DES MOINES, IOWA