

Ankeny through the decades...

recalling Ankeny news from the 1940s, 1960s, 1980s*



August 2020

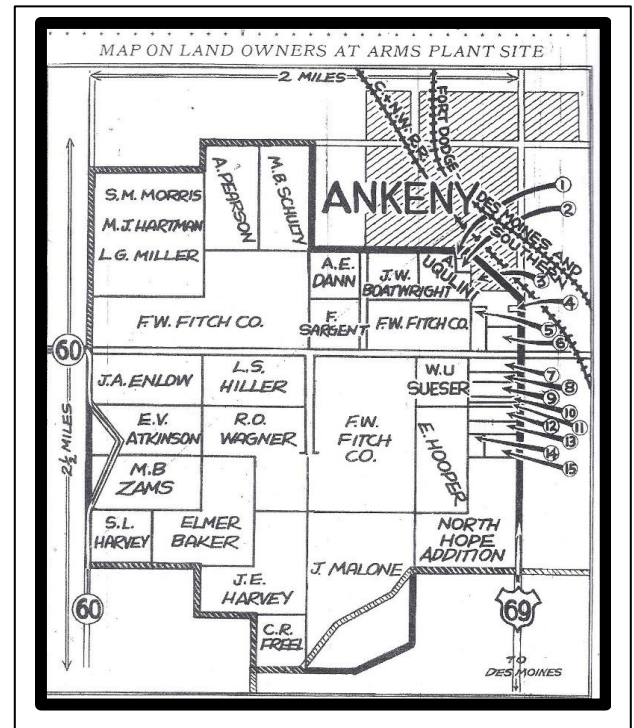
1940s

Land Owners Urged to Leave Plant Site

Owners of the 2,445 acres of farmland southwest of Ankeny conveyed to the government Monday as the site of a 30 million dollar small arms munitions plant, are being urged to vacate the land as soon as possible and warned that construction may start within 10 days. The contract for construction of the plant has not been let, however, but it is understood the war department wants work to begin almost at once. Even if construction work should be delayed, it is pointed out that preliminary work would include the moving of heavy machinery and many men into the area, interfering with normal farm activities. Most the small grain crops will be ready in the next 10 days. Corn crops will be paid for by the government.

Resettlement: Most of the present landowners are expecting to make arrangements themselves for moving to new farms, but the services of the government's resettlement administration, the farm security administration and the rural rehabilitation service will be available to them. The farm bureau is also expected to help in locating new farms and arranging temporary storage of livestock and equipment. Bailey Weber, special attorney with the office of the United States attorney general, and H.W. Mifflin, land appraiser, Tuesday were examining the farmland. Weber and Mifflin are not authorized to make offers on the farms but said they were suggesting that owners submit them, as agents of the secretary of war, a price at which they would sell. Settlements could then be made if the price corresponded to the figure determined by Mifflin.

The plant area is roughly three miles long and two miles wide. About 80 acres are in the corporate limits of the town of Ankeny. Nearly a fourth of the land in the plant area, more than 600 acres is now owned by the F.W. Fitch Co. of Des Moines and is part of a 750-acre model stock and dairy farm operated by the company. The dairy equipment includes a pasteurizing plant and a cold storage locker. The entire farm is tiled for drainage and surrounded by fences. Included in the stock are 30 head of Belgian horses. The remaining land is owned by 30 persons. *Des Moines Tribune, July 8, 1941*



*Wording has been reduced to fit the space in some cases. Additional decades will be covered in future issues. Please become a member of the AAHS or send comments via email at: history@ankenyhistorical.org.



Ankeny Area Historical Society

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1940s

Appreciates Ankeny Times in Normandy: Rico Logli writes home from the Normandy Front telling us that he more than appreciates receiving the home news thru The Ankeny Times. *Ankeny Times, August 4, 1944*



Des Moines Register, August 2, 1941

Ankeny Boy, Hunting With 2 Pals, Killed

A 16-year-old Ankeny boy was killed Saturday evening while hunting with two chums. The boy, Richard Ashton, son of Mr. and Mrs. H.W. Ashton, died in route to Lutheran Hospital. He had been struck in the back of the head with a .22 caliber rifle bullet. Russell Winegardner, 18, and Don Brenneman, 16, farm youths, were with Richard. They were hunting on the Brenneman farm, six miles southeast of Ankeny.

Both Fired at Once. Deputy Sheriffs Arv Melline and John Veen Schoten have not determined which of the youths may have fired the shot which could have ricocheted on brush. Both youths were carrying .22 rifles and both fired at the same time, the deputies said. The Ashton boy, about 30 yards away, was attempting to flush a bluejay, Melline said. Melline said both boys thought Richard was “just playing” when he pitched over on his face. “We didn’t even pay attention for a little bit,” he quoted the boys as saying.

Ran to Farmhouse. When they saw the blood they ran to a nearby farmhouse. The farmer, Paul Deardorff, brought his car to the scene and the Ashton boy was brought to the hospital. He was dead on arrival there. Coroner A.E. Shaw retrieved the bullet. Ballistics tests will be made today which gun fired the shot. Besides his parents, Richard is survived by one sister, Ann, 15. *Des Moines Register, August 18, 1946. Further articles found in the Doris Bunz Scrapbook Collection*

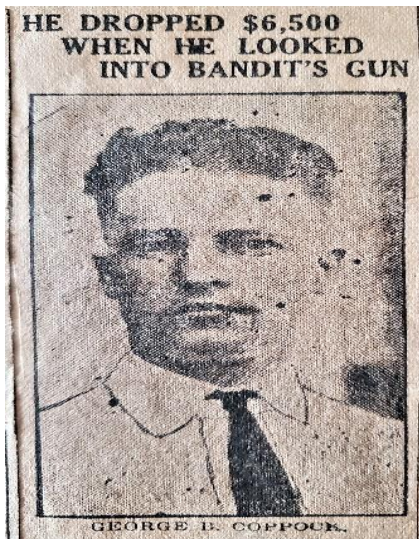
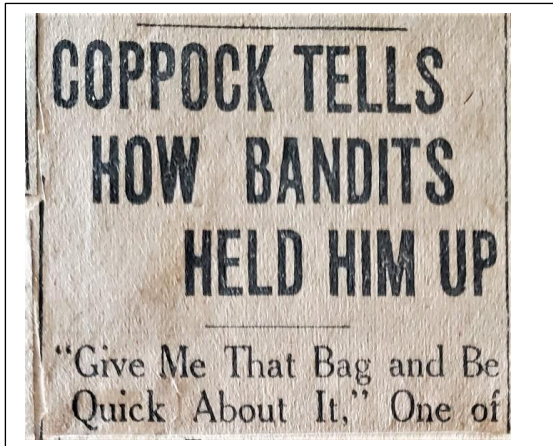
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1920s



Four bank bandits, in a Cadillac automobile, held up a Capital City bank messenger Thursday morning in the heart of the East Side business district, robbed him of \$6,500 in currency, and escaped. Scores of persons witnessed the robbery, but were so dazed that they were unable to make an outcry until after the bandits escaped. The holdup was carried through with such speed and without the slightest stir, the four detectives, all within a half block of the scene, were unaware what had happened until notified by pedestrians. The messenger, George B. Coppock, 26, of Ankeny, left the bank with the money and some checks in a leather handbag at 9:50 He was bound for the Iowa National bank at Sixth and Walnut streets. **Refused to Take Taxicab:** He had been given money for a taxicab, but he said, tired of waiting, he began to walk. He had just passed the alley on the south side of East Locust street between First and Second streets when the Cadillac bearing the bandits turned east on Locust from First street, pulled up alongside the curb and waited for Coppock to approach. As he neared the car two of the bandits leaped out, one pressed a gun against Coppock's side and muttered from the corner of his mouth, "Drop It." Coppock, who declared he was paralyzed by fear, "dropped it."

Tried to Force Him into Car. While one of the bandits tossed the bag into the trunk of the car, the second tried to force Coppock in with them. He held back and the robber leaped on the running board as the driver sped east to Second street and then north. *Des Moines Register, August 11, 1921*

Article found in the Doris Bunz Scrapbook Collection

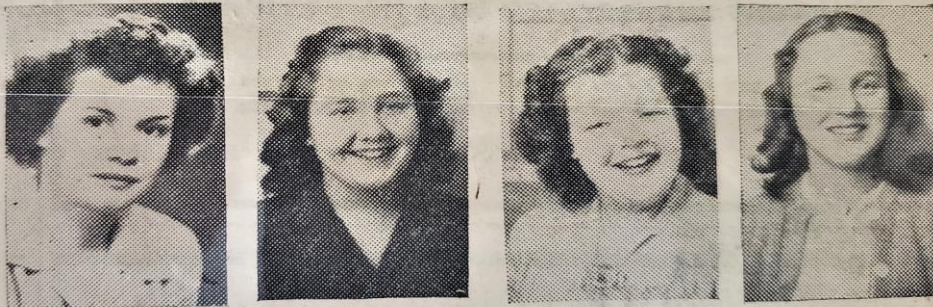
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1947 County Girls Officers

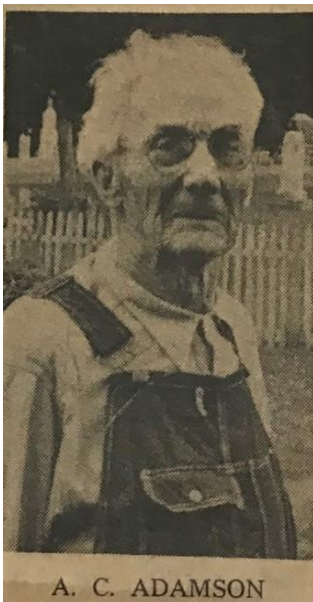


Elected at the annual Rally Day held at the Ankeny High School in Ankeny last June were above County 4-H Girls officers. From left to right President, Carol Jean Younkin, Mitchellville; Vice President, Nancy Eckles Ankeny; Secretary-Treasurer, Jeanine Hirsch, Polk City; and Reporter-Historian, Joyce Johnson, Cumming.

1940s

Article found in the Doris Bunz Scrapbook Collection

1960s



A. C. ADAMSON

Clears Way for Trustee to Give Cemetery Away – Polk County District Judge Wade P. Clarke has cleared the way for old Greenwood Cemetery near Ankeny to be given away. First, Judge Clarke declared A. C. Adamson, as trustee, to be sole owner of the cemetery. Adamson, 78, is believed to be the last remaining member of the Society of Friends of Greenwood. The cemetery was the society's last asset.

After more than 20 years of caring for the cemetery, Adamson has said he has become "too lazy" to continue and has persuaded Douglas Township trustees to take title to the plot and to maintain the cemetery. Having declared Adamson to be the owner of the property, Judge Clarke then authorized him to deed the cemetery to the township trustees.

Any cemetery funds left over from grants, assessments and donations also are to be turned over to the township, Judge Clark ruled. The society, Adamson said, was a Quaker organization formed in the 1800's. It acquired the first part of the cemetery land in 1865 and with two further additions, eventually had a tract of about 2 ½ acres. The society ceased to exist about 20 years ago. *Des Moines Register, August 10, 1961*

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1960s



This House Nearly 100 Years Old –

Mrs. J. A. Peters of Ankeny stands in a doorway of the home in which she has lived 68 years. Its central part is nearly 100 years old. The home, on S.E. 14th Street at south edge of Ankeny, is to be torn down to make room for housing development. *Ankeny Press Citizen* – August 25, 1960.

Hot Time for Firemen During Drill - Ankeny firemen had a good work out on Sunday as the former home of Mrs. Mary Peters was deliberately set afire and destroyed. Some 14 Ankeny firemen, the Bloomfield and Saylor Township fire departments took part in the drill. The fire was set shortly after 1 p.m. on Sunday and the local department was called from the station. Ankeny chief, Charles Mynatt, said that the fire was under control in about six minutes after the fire fighting equipment arrived. The local department took 8 mm movies of the entire drill and films will be studied when developed. Chief Mynatt said that he hoped a lot would be learned from the films.



Chief Mynatt said that the drill was a big success and a good lesson for those participating. He went on to thank all those who had a part in making it possible. Chief Mynatt, and Mayor Norris Adams, both commented on the good behavior of the large crowd who were on hand to witness the drill. (*Today's location for this setting is the SE corner of SE 8th Street and Ankeny Blvd.*) *Ankeny Press Citizen* – August 10, 1961.

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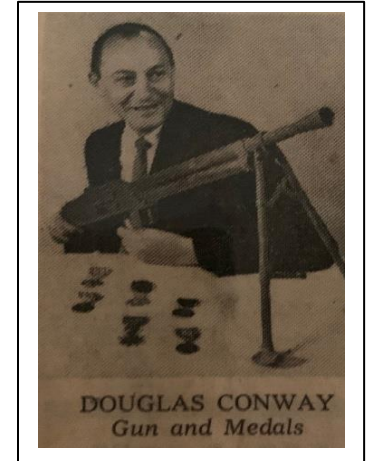
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1960s

Douglas Conways Return from Vacation in Europe – Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Conway returned last month from a five-week tour of Europe. They made the trip by air, and the last leg of their journey, from New York to Glasgow, Scotland, was by Scandinavian Jet Airlines, which took them only five and one-half hours. A rented car awaited them in Glasgow, which they used to travel throughout Scotland. Holland was the next stop for the Conways where they saw many dikes, windmills and famous wooden shoes. In the town of Salet, they visited another family who had a part in hiding Mr. Conway during the war. Because of their help to Mr. Conway, the German soldiers riddled their home with machine gun fire leaving it in shambles. All were taken to a concentration camp, including a 60 year old mother.

According to Mr. Conway, the mother was the oldest prisoner in a European concentration camp. She had received 11 medals including one from former President Eisenhower. She had one for being the oldest prisoner in a concentration camp, one for being the family with the most prisoners in a camp, one for resistance work and others. One of highlights of the trip for Mr. Conway was his return to Belgium. During World War II Conway, then an officer in the United States Air Force, was shot down on his return from a bombing mission at Frankfurt. He landed in the small Belgian village of Vodelee where the underground hid him for about six months. The villagers risked their own lives to bring him food and water during his hiding. They visited the cave in which Mr. Conway lived for four months in hiding. *Ankeny Press Citizen* – August 1, 1961.



The following article was captured from the column of Gordon Gammack, in the Des Moines Tribune – August 5, 1961. Ever since World War II, Douglas Conway, Des Moines investment broker, had had a strong desire to return to Belgium. He wanted to revisit the Ardennes Forest, where, as a member of a B-17 bomber crew, he had parachuted when his plane was shot down in March, 1944; **where he had hidden in a cave from the Germans for five months**, and where he had buried a machine gun he had found. Also, he wanted to look up Mme. Louise Tondelli, who had hidden him in her home. “It was a moving experience, visiting with Madame Tondelli.” Conway said. “I didn’t know until she told me last month what a terrible price she had paid for helping me. “She told me that after I left my hiding place in her home, Belgian traitors told the Germans what she had done. “The Germans sent her and 10 of her children and grandchildren to a concentration camp. Two of her sons died in the gas chamber. She was a widow, 60 years old at the time.” “She insisted that I bring the medals home with me.” Conway related. “I couldn’t find the words to thank her as I wanted to for all she had done.” Conway also brought home with him the machine gun he had buried. He had found it in the forest just after being shot down and didn’t want it to fall into German hands. “I had buried it near the cave where I hid,” the Des Moines broker recalled. “I thought I could find the exact place and dig it up, but I guess my memory wasn’t as sharp as I thought. But some Belgians came to my rescue with a mine detector, and finally we found it.”

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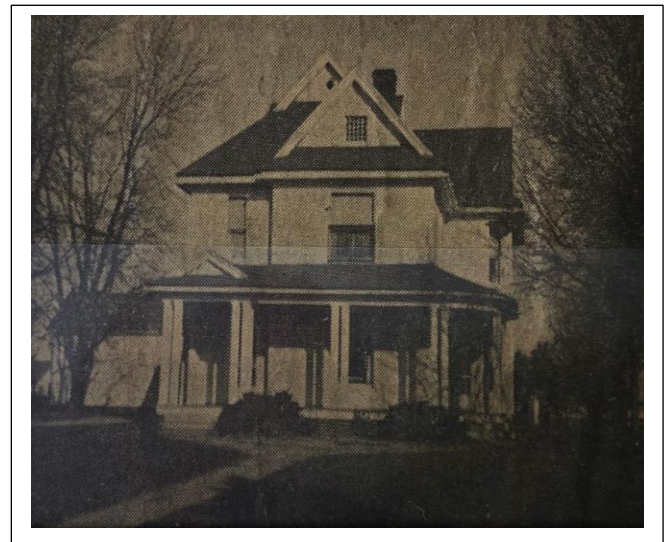
1960s

Takes Care of Three Gardens – Ed

Hommer of 105 Maple St., gets up early in the morning to take care of three gardens, two in the country and a “sample” garden at home. Of course, Ed says he has to get up early to wind the clock anyway.

The largest garden which Ed says is “70 steps long and 40 steps wide” is planted periodically to have fresh vegetables over a long period of time. Quantities are large, as an example, there are 700 onion sets. Just for novelty there are black sweet corn, the same kind of corn grow by the Indians 1,000 years ago. Of course, Mr. and Mrs. Hommer can’t eat all of this nor even can it all, but gardening has been a hobby for many years. Much of the produce is sold about town, some even sold before it is planted.

The possums get at the sweet corn which Mr. Hommer would be happy to share if they would take an ear and eat it. But after a few bites they reach for another ear and another so they had to be trapped. Ed and his wife, Emma, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last year. Retired, Mr. Hommer says he gardens because he likes to. He figures his profits from selling produce would average about \$1 a day if he didn’t count his labor. *Ankeny Press Citizen – August 1, 1968.*



A Monument to Handcraft - This is the Henry Wagner home as it appears today. Described in an early Ankeny paper as “a monument to handcraft” the house was built in 1894 on the corner of Third and Walnut (where the offices of Drs. Nielsen, Gray, and Carlson are now located). In 1931 it was moved one mile north and a half mile west of Ankeny. The Duane Johnson family now lives in the house. *Ankeny Press Citizen – August 8, 1968*

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Builders break tradition, plan 2 home shows in '89. The Home Builders Association of Greater Des Moines will host two home shows next year: one in Clive in the spring and the other in Ankeny next fall. It will be the first time Ankeny has been host of the show, an annual showcase for area home builders, landscapers and designers, said Sherry Failor, the association's executive vice president. And, it will be the first time in the event's 13-year history that two shows will be held in one year. "The public's demand for housing is up and there's so many good developments that we decided to hold two shows next year," said Failor. Developments selected for next year's shows were Iowa Realty Co.'s Country Club in Clive and Larry Handley and Dennis Albaugh's Country Club Court in Ankeny.

Boon to Ankeny. The decision to hold the annual event in Ankeny is a boon to the community, said city officials. "There's so much development going on here ... this just puts the frosting on the cake," said Shirley McClain, president of the Ankeny Chamber of Commerce. Said Mayor Ollie Weigel, "It's very prestigious for any community to get. We're certainly very pleased about it." *Des Moines Register, August 15, 1988*



Power-plant plan that turns few on. Ankeny's plans for a hydroelectric power plant on the Saylorville Dam still are alive, but they certainly are not kicking. "The outlook is not good," Ankeny City Engineer Jay Schreiner said today, since no buyers have offered to purchase power from the proposed \$14.6 million plant. The city has contacted about 30 businesses and cities in central Iowa and surrounding states since May. Plans call for Ankeny to find investors and consumers to finance the plant, which could produce up to 20.3 million kilowatt hours a year. The energy would be sold to private companies or consumers. A study showed that profits might be marginal, but Ankeny officials believe the city could earn enough revenue to bolster property tax receipts. But there is little likelihood that will happen at this point, Schreiner said. One of several things would have to happen before businesses will consider the operation as an attractive investment, he said. The price tag would have to drop, or commercial lending rates would "have to drop at least 5 points from where they are now," he said. One other factor could change the situation, but the possibility is remote. There could be enough public demand that the plant be built for the community good, regardless of cost, Schreiner said. But the price of gasoline has remained moderate with no recent energy crises, and consumers are cutting back on other energy needs. "Gasoline needs to be about \$2.50 a gallon, but it's not. That's why the hydro plan doesn't look so good," Schreiner said, pointing out that there is no urgent need for extra energy at this time. *Des Moines Register, August 27, 1982*

Des Moines Register, August 7, 1985

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A tight schedule is no handicap in women's work to help others. This is the story of Gwynne Burke. Gwynne Burke is a woman from Ankeny who is a wife, a mother and a homemaker. That makes Burke a very busy woman. Gwynne Burke likes to sing. In fact, Burke is so good at singing she is a professional gospel singer. And being a professional, she is on the road a considerable amount of the time. Such a schedule leaves little time to spare. But, Burke has found the time to help thousands of people through her caring and her music.



Currently, Burke is volunteering her time and talents as vice chair-woman for the Governor's Very Special Art Festival, held at this year's Iowa State Fair. The festival, sponsored in part by Variety Club of Iowa, centers on the artistic talents of a number of Iowans who happen to be handicapped. And Burke happens to be one of them. Burke had polio as a child and she now walks with a limp. "I was quite, quite crippled as a child and the emotional difficulties I suffered were as bad as the physical," she said. Burke is also in the final stages of recording her third gospel album and when on tour, all her songs contain sign language for the deaf and hard of hearing.

She's also involved with a musical designed for handicapped actors and actresses, which was created by Burke and some Friends about four years ago. The production was tagged as such a success that a large grant has been donated to take it on national tour beginning next spring. In 1983, Camp Fire Councils throughout the United States were fortunate enough to have Burke lend them her singing and writing talents by her recording a national jingle. Writing the jingle was simply a favor to a friend who needed an interesting public service announcement for the Heart of the Hawkeye Council of Camp Fire. However, it gained so much attention that the national headquarters bought the copyright. "I guess because of my own handicap, I really feel the need to help the public understand handicapped people – they're real people. Some people have such awful misconceptions about the handicapped. Maybe they can't add and subtract, or they don't speak as clearly as 'normal people,' but some of their creative talents are amazing," Burke said. I'd like to see 'normal people' top some of their work." *Des Moines Register, August 14, 1985*

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Farmer says this summer's dry weather has made crop conditions, farming "rough." Norman Albaugh has one word to describe this summer. "Rough," said the 58-year-old farmer. "It's been a dry one." Albaugh and his son, Steve, 35, who farm 1, 900 acres of corn and soybeans just northeast of Ankeny, say last week's ¾-inch rainfall gave their crops a breather from the summer drought. But the soil sucked up the moisture like a sponge, Albaugh said, and at least an inch of rain for the next month will be needed for a healthy harvest. The forecast for August, released last week by state climatologist Pal Waite, predicts just that: slightly more than 4 inches of rain this month, accompanied by slightly below-normal temperatures. "It should be one of the coolest August in 10 years," Waite said. He said temperatures this month should average around 72 degrees, about a degree below normal. Northern Polk County is one of the driest areas in the state, Waite said. *Des Moines Register, August 7, 1985*

1983...As Years Go, It Was Pretty Good (August excerpts)

- Limestone chip dust creates new Ordnance Road complaint.
- Despite weather threats and realities, Celebration in Brass, though shortened, was enjoyed by a large crowd.
- City and state law officers investigate murder of 17-year-old Lora Grey.
- Four Seasons seeks re-zoning for doubling expansion to the north.
- School board discusses snafu of tutor teacher deductions due but not paid to IPERS for several years.
- Steven Despotovich opens law practice in Ankeny.
- Child's World day care center opens in Ankeny.
- Cicero's Restaurant opens on East First at Delaware.
- 1983 Corn Fest covers downtown's main street. Robert Ryan crowned Corn King. 13 and under honors earned by Chad Kolousek.
- Colo man arrested after firing shots at Ankeny residence.
- Revised school alcohol-drug rules proposal would cover punishment, rehabilitation, education and early intervention.
- Community Ed Council initiates project to collect new and used materials for projects in Iowa's sister state of Yucatan in Mexico.

Des Moines Register, Virginia Linticum collection at AAHS.

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Clapper's ready to mow down Cyclone foes. In a way, Ted Clapper of Ankeny has already experienced one aspect of the Great American Dream. He's been his own boss. Even though the Iowa State football player is just 22 and hasn't yet obtained his college degree, he's been the co-owner of his own business. Clapper and a partner formed Cyclone Mowing and Landscaping two summers ago, contracting for industrial jobs in the Ankeny-Des Moines area. "We just sold the business two days before football practice began this month," said Clapper, a 6-foot, 5-inch, 274-pound offensive guard who will be starting for the fourth season. "My partner was on the road during the summer, so I did all the mowing. But the nice thing about being your own boss is that you can always take time off to stay in condition for football." Clapper said the equipment the business had included "three push-mowers, two big weed-eaters, a 12-horsepower rider, a big tractor, a disk, a blade and a harrow." *Des Moines Register, August 26, 1982*

Thanks to all of you – our Ankeny Area Historical Society members who have supported the museum and its activities over the years. The museum has been closed during the pandemic, but we continue to create Ankeny Through the Decades each month, publish the quarterly newsletter, and keep the website up to date, so we can stay in contact with you. We hope, after all this passes, you will come visit the museum again! We plan to have new displays – including the Ankeny Championships display – ready for you! Until then, stay safe ... and keep in touch!