

Threshers Chaff

Midwest Old Threshers Association
Mount Pleasant, Iowa

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Spring 2023

RARE BUFFALO PITTS MAKES ITS WAY TO THRESHERS

Facebook Marketplace doesn't seem like an obvious place to find a steam engine. But that's exactly where 19-year-old Grant Smithburg found his.

A victim of a barn fire, the rare 20 HP Buffalo-Pitts was trucked from Illinois to Iowa earlier this year and is now at Midwest Old Threshers.

Grant is still trying to put the pieces of history together as he researches his new restoration project. He says it's likely one of one and was used mostly on a saw mill. Information about its previous owners are reportedly coming his way soon. In the meantime he and his dad will put a game plan together and hope to get started on the project maybe as early as this fall. The two steam engine enthusiasts have a 25 HP Nichols & Shepard they exhibit and took part in this spring's OT Steam School with their 16 HP Russell.

The Buffalo-Pitts Co. started as a thresher manufacturer in the 1830s. They produced their first traction steam engine in 1882 and eventually branched into the gas tractor market in 1910. The company did not find success in the commercial tractor business and went into receivership in 1914. In 1916, they merged with Kelly-Springfield to form the Buffalo-Springfield Roller Co.



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Dear Friends of Old Threshers,



**Terry McWilliams, CEO
Midwest Old Threshers**

For me, spring time at Old Threshers is an exciting time, is a nervous time, is a stressful time, and a time seeing the work come to life. The grass greens up, the tulips are popping up, the leaves are returning, and the squirrels are digging up their buried treasures in all the flower beds. Then there is the first sniff in the air of cut grass, or the first steam engine being fired up for school tours that fills the air with that familiar smell. All of that means we are off to the races once again here at Old Threshers for another great year of events and programs.

As I look back over the past cold winter months, I realize that we had another great winter season. Santa's House and the Festival of Lights once again lit up the faces of hundreds and hundreds of children of all ages, young and old, from southeast Iowa and beyond. I hope, no I know, that the hard work put in by many to make that event happen in those very cold nights did have a positive impact on many. There were many smaller indoor projects checked off the To Do List and new ideas added in their place. The staff went full steam ahead on this year's plans - huge camping reservation numbers, new marketing ideas and plans with over 180,000 pieces of mail. Five-day admission sales were, and still are, sailing out the door. Reserved concert tickets were over 85% gone within the first two weeks of the entertainment announcement. Busy, busy winter months.

Now the seasonal project list and grounds events have already sprung into action and don't look like they will be slowing down. There have been events on our grounds already - a big birthday party, Steam School, National Railway Historical Society day with trolleys, a doll gathering, a tour group visiting the museum, a church tour program of the two churches on grounds and of course school tours with over 900 kids attending this year. The grounds have already changed up some as well with more gravel parking area in the campgrounds by the entrance, dirt work on the north side of the grounds, grass seeding, fencing has been moved, trolley track work has begun north of the trolley barn and lots grass mowing already. Oh yeah most of that was just April!

In April though, it was not all good for Old Threshers, the Mount Pleasant Community and surrounding area as Iowa Wesleyan University announced that they would be closing the University doors on May 31, 2023, after 181 years of higher education. Iowa Wesleyan is and will always be the first co-educational institute west of the Mississippi River and part of our history here at Old Threshers. That announcement has an extremely huge impact on this association as we have come accustomed to the help from 350 to 400 students each year for all of our programs and events throughout the year, including the Old Threshers Reunion.

Now more than ever, in the history of Old Threshers, in my opinion, we need to find more of the true volunteer - those who help for the benefit of the community and others, in order to help offset that missing IWU student help this year. Your help will have an impact on the association. This hurdle, I promise, will not slow us down on events and projects that are in the works for the year.

"It is Time to Grow!" As this year moves forward, the new home base location for the Sweet 16 program will go through some changes and updates to meet that program's growing need for space. The restoration work on our trolley car 381 continues, new LED lights on grounds will be going up, the car building will be getting a face lift on the upper level over the summer months, the addition of new artifacts to the museum and the stationary steam area with a new engine. We will host many more events and tour groups this season, with a tour group visiting from Douglas, Isle of Man, an island between Ireland and the United Kingdom, (I had to look it up,) being host site for a Sinclair Tractor's private corporate event with as estimated attendance of 10 to 15,000 people, just to highlight a few. There will be more to come as year progresses.

I hope to see all of you, Aug. 31st to Sept. 4th, 2023, at the Old Threshers Reunion.

Think Positive, Be Positive and Positive Things Will Happen! Attitude is Everything!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry".

MOSTA AWARDED DESTINATION IOWA FUNDS

The Midwest Old Threshers Association has been awarded money from the Destination Iowa Grant. This state-funded pool of money was awarded to 46 projects around Iowa totaling \$115 million.

Destination Iowa is designed to bolster the quality of life in Iowa's communities and attract visitors and new residents to the state. These funds are to be used to help communities move forward on "transformational, shovel-ready attractions."

Together with financial support from the OT Foundation, and the Washington County Riverboat Foundation, the combined money will be used for the Campground & Transportation Development Program. This \$1.3 million-dollar improvement project includes developing 30, 30-amp campsites and 70, 50-amp, full-service, hard surface camping sites in the South 40 area of the Campground.

A portion of these monies will also be used for the Trolley 1779 restoration project, and to purchase another Milan trolley car.

The GOMACO Company, who is restoring 1779, have the shell of a Milan car just like what the Midwest Electric Railway has now. They will build out the mechanical systems and complete the finish carpentry for OT.



Pictured is the Milan Italy Car No. 1945. The car was built in 1927 and was brought to the Midwest Electric Railway in 2002.

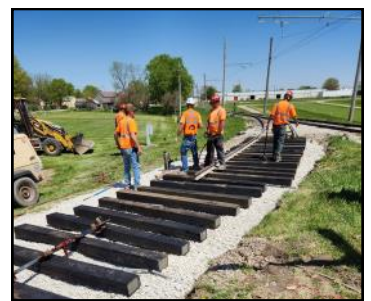


At right is a map that shows the south end of the OT Campground. The Campground Development Program will offer 70, 50 AMP, full hook-up campsites in this area.

MIDWEST ELECTRIC RAILWAY GETS NEW TRACK

A track crew from Brandt Construction of Milan, Ill., worked to lay new ballast and ties north of the Trolley Barn recently. They also installed a new switch. The improvements will also improve drainage just outside the Trolley Barn doors.

MERA volunteers have been busy this spring hosting school tours, the CJ Niles trolley group and the trolley school. There are several work days coming up. If you are interested in becoming a MERA volunteer contact the OT office 319-385-8937.



**2023
MERA
Workdays**

July 8
Aug 19 & 26
Sept 30
Oct 7



FEATURED FOR 2023

2023 Featured Antique Truck

1955 Chevrolet 3100 Truck

Owned by: Dean Soenksen of Cedar Rapids



2023 Featured Tractor

1938 Allis Chalmers WC

Owned by: Dolores Poulter Wilson of Mt. Pleasant

2023 Featured Garden Tractor

1965 Allis Chalmers B-12

Owned by: Jacob & Lauren Putthoff of Peculiar, MO



2023 Featured Traction Steam Engine

1902 14HP Robinsion

Owned by: Scott Wiley of Marion

2023 Featured Antique Car

1969 Plymouth Barracuda

Owned by: Sydney Hedgepeth of Minnetonka, MN



2023 Featured Antique Gas Engine

7-15 HP Master Workman

Owned by: Paul Gorrell of Burlington

HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY TO SHAY #9

Westside Lumber Shay #9 made its first appearance at Midwest Central Railroad just prior to the 1966 Reunion. The 1923, side-g geared logging locomotive came from Tuolumne, CA. Built by the Lima Locomotive Works of Lima, Ohio, this workhorse of an engine was celebrated with cake as volunteers wished it a happy 100th in April.



TRACK WORK SEASON FOR MIDWEST CENTRAL RAILROAD

Sunny skies and warmer days signal the beginning of track work season for both the Midwest Electric Railway and the Midwest Central Railroad. The grade and approach to the North Village is being changed to make it easier for trains to reach the North Station.

MCRR volunteers are working on several projects including building a new frame for one of the coaches, continuing work on the 1906, 2-6-0

Baldwin Locomotive, the #2, and maintenance on 1891, 2-6-0 Baldwin Locomotive, the #6.

Like other areas of the Reunion, the Midwest Central is looking for volunteers. There are open positions for Junior and Senior Conductors. If this sounds like something that interests you, contact Head Conductor Ryan Johnson at RYAN.JOHNSONMCRR@gmail.com.



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THE MIDWEST CENTRAL RAILROAD IS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEER CONDUCTORS FOR THE 2023 OPERATING SEASON

WE WILL TRAIN EVERYONE, NO PRIOR EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

CONDUCTORS DUTIES INCLUDE:
GREETING PASSENGERS, COLLECTING TICKETS, ASSISTING PASSENGERS, AND ENSURING A SAFE RIDE

JUNIOR CONDUCTOR: 12+
SENIOR CONDUCTOR: 16+

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT ASSISTANT HEAD CONDUCTOR RYAN JOHNSON
RYAN.JOHNSONMCRR@gmail.com





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STEAM SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS ENJOYED PERFECT WEATHER

A group of more than 20 people participated in the 2023 Midwest Old Threshers Steam School. After a day of classroom learning, students started the next day hands on learning how to steam up and operate several different traction steam engines as well as the Herschell-Spillman steam engine that operates the rare Norman & Evans carousel. Thank you to all the volunteers who offer their time and talents for this very important weekend. We look forward to the new engineers returning for the Reunion.



VENDORS GATHERED FOR THE GREATER IOWA SWAP MEET

Great weather and delicious pancakes welcomed visitors to the 2023 Greater Iowa Swap Meet and Flea Market over Memorial weekend.

Vender spaces under the Wright Family Pavilion sold out quickly as warmer spring weather brought on the flea market, garage sale season. More space for vendors to sell their treasures was available throughout McMillan Park.

New to the event was a group of rock collectors who set up under the Grandstand.



OLD THRESHERS REUNION
Aug. 31 - Sept. 4, 2023 * Mount Pleasant, Iowa

MORE HOMES NEEDED FOR IN-HOME STAY PROGRAM

Midwest Old Threshers is in need of more homes for the In-Home Stay Program. If you have an easily accessible home and would like to host visitors to the Old Threshers Reunion, please contact the program’s coordinator, Lori Shoultz at 309-791-7689. The current list has been exhausted and many visitors are still looking for a place to stay for the 2023 Reunion..



SPRING PROJECTS BLOOM AROUND OLD THRESHERS

As soon as temperatures warmed up in Southeast Iowa, things started to get checked off the To Do List. Thank you to those volunteers who grabbed dust rags and brooms and helped clear the Heritage Museums of the layer of winter dust that had settled on the exhibits.

The fresh-looking Heritage Museums hosted more than 900 students who attended the 2023 School Tour Program.

New LED lights will replace the old halogen lights around Tractor Headquarters and Tractorland as well as the Horse Demonstration Area.

Spring rains made the grass grow. Mowing is a daily activity around Old Threshers. The Campground is left to its own allowing a good crop of hay which is harvested by Horse Area volunteers.

Everyone is amazed and appreciative of the flowers planted around McMillan Park and hanging from lamp posts. OT Board of Director Rich Seberg and his wife Jeannie grow most of the plants at their house near the grounds and transfer them to the park when the plants are ready. Their green thumbs are evident.

Rich has also planted 50 trees throughout the grounds that will eventually mature and offer shade to visitors.

There are 38 projects on the OT To Do/Accomplish List before the 2023 Reunion. If you are looking for a way to help Old Threshers and would like to volunteer your time and talents, there are opportunities of all shapes and sizes all year long. There is a lot to do before August 31st. Contact the office for more information—319-385-8937.

Do you want to keep our Midwest Heritage alive?

We're looking for Volunteers

Call 319-385-8937 to start volunteering

Tulips greet visitors to McMillan Park just outside the Paul Anderson Welcome Center.



Rich and Jeannie Seberg’s deck is covered in blooms as they nurture the plants that will dress up McMillan Park this summer and during the Reunion.

2023 MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS COUNTRY MUSIC LINE-UP

Midwest
Old Threshers
MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA

**FREE WITH
REUNION
GATE ADMISSION**



THURS., AUG. 31



EASTON CORBIN

FRI., SEPT. 1



JOE NICHOLS

SAT., SEPT. 2



**DYLAN
SCOTT**

SUN., SEPT. 3

**GRANDSTAND OPENS AT 6:30 PM
CONCERT STARTS AT 8:00 PM**

MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS
★ SUMMER ★
★ THEATRE ★

“JITTERING SPOOKS”

BY NEIL & CAROLINE SHAFFNER

PRESENTED BY
MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS

★ THE THEATRE MUSEUM ★

MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS
405 E. THRESHERS ROAD ★ MT. PLEASANT, IOWA

AUGUST 19, 19, 20 & 31

SEPTEMBER 1, 2, 3

OCTOBER 20 & 21

WHAT IS IT? WHERE IS IT?

Can you tell what these things are? And if so, where can one find them during the Old Threshers Reunion?
Answers are on page 12.

A



B



C



D



F



E



OBITUARIES

Terrance Handley

Terry Handley, age 88, died October 31, 2022 in Solon, Iowa.

Terry was born May 7, 1934. in Decorah, Iowa, the son of Sylvester and Blanch (Droll) Handley. He graduated from Montezuma High School in 1952 and then went on to serve a tour in Korea. Terry returned to Montezuma and the family then moved to Hills, Iowa. He farmed for his uncle and worked carpentry. Terry met and later married Margaret Shimitz and together they moved to rural Iowa City. He and his brother Robert started Handley's Holiday Hillside. He was a founding member of Iowa Woodland Owners, Iowa Christmas Tree Growers, Local 1260 and St. Wenceslaus Church.

Terry's family include his wife of 60 years, Margaret; children, Mark, Kevin, Chris (Carolyn Hansen) and Sarah (Tim) Martin; grandchildren, Matt (Becca) Handley, Melissa (Steven) Lakey and Samantha Handley; great grandchildren, Makenna Handley, Fayette Handley, Emberlynn Handley, Bailey Lakey, Aubrey Lakey and Shelby Lakey. Sadly, Terry is preceded in death by his brother, Robert; and parents, Sylvester and Blanch.

Contributions are suggested to the Solon Fire Department or St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church in Iowa City.

Terry started coming to the Reunion in the 70s with his wife and kids, at first showing gas engines and tractors and then steam engines.

Carole Christner

Carole Frances Christner, 79, of Brighton, Iowa passed away from heart complications January 5, at the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics.

Carole was born July 16, 1943, in Cedar Falls, the daughter of Howard William and Frances Margaret (Bragonier) Southall. She was united in marriage to Edward Lee Christner on November 26, 1960, in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, having four children, and later divorcing.

She was the owner of Crooked Creek Trade Company for over 40 years. She was instrumental in starting the Log Village at Old Threshers and the

Rendezvous Mountain Men Encampment at the Iowa State Fair. She researched and authored the Christner Family History Book.

Survivors include her children Richard "Bilbo" Christner of Brighton, Crystle Christner of Washington, and Rodney (Courtney) Christner of Washington, two siblings: Cynthia (Michael) Meyers of Edgewood, and John (Holly) Southall of Cedar Falls, nine grandchildren, one step-grandson, and thirteen great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents, son Randall (Randy) in 1989, husband Edward, and siblings Catherine, Robert, and Tom.

Ruth Buckert

Ruth E. Buckert, 90, of Hamilton, died April 9, at River Hills Village in Keokuk, Iowa.

Ruth was born December 1, 1932, the daughter of Joseph and Mildred (Byers) McBride in Burnside, Illinois. She attended Carthage High School graduating in 1950. On October 1, 1955, she was united in marriage to Fred Buckert in Carthage, Illinois. He preceded her in death in 2016. Ruth was a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Hamilton. She was very active in the Western Illinois Threshers and enjoyed quilt making.

Ruth is survived by her children, Kenny Buckert of Hamilton, Danny (Karen) Buckert of Warsaw, Alan (Lauri) Buckert of Mount Pleasant, Iowa and Richard Buckert of Hamilton; grandchildren, Kyle (Alyssa) Buckert, Kevin (Jenifer) Buckert, Kristin (Gary) Ortmann, Jared (Tori) Buckert, Jeremy (Kaley) Buckert, Amy (Cody Smith) Buckert, Allison Buckert and Austin Buckert; great grandchildren, Luke, Mary and Paul Buckert, Blair and Rylee Buckert, Kennedy and Abel Ortmann and Harrison and Miles Buckert.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Fred; a son, David; daughter, Debbie; and siblings, Vince McBride, Ann Wilkens, Theresa Dye and Mary Piette.

Memorials may be directed to Western Illinois Threshers.

Fred Carlson

Fred Carlson, 60, of Queen City, Missouri (formerly of Seaton, Illinois) died Sunday, April 9, at his home.

Fredric Floyd was born August 13, 1962 in Aledo, Illinois the son of Fred and Therese Adams Carlson. He graduated from Aledo High School. Fred farmed in the Seaton area for many years, later moving to Missouri. He loved the outdoors and hunting. Fred enjoyed collecting antique tractors as well as attending Old Threshers in Mt. Pleasant and Western Illinois Threshers in Hamilton. Fred was on the Seaton Fire Department, serving as Chief for several years and was the Mercer County Emergency Services and Disaster Agency Director.

Survivors include 2 sisters, and nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Memorials may be left for Seaton Fire Department or Western Illinois Threshers

Donald Matthews

Donald W. Mathews, 73, of rural Danville, died May 4th, at the Southeast Iowa Regional Health Center Hospice house.

Born June 19th, 1949, Donald was the son of Ralph E. and Vera I. Stevenson Mathews. Don was a graduate of Danville High School class of 1967. He also attended Burlington Junior College and Iowa State University. Don held those school relationships in very high regard throughout his life. From a young age Donald was deeply rooted in the Danville community. He helped on his parents' farm and eventually took over management when his father passed. Recently the farm has been transferred to its fifth generation. Don was a founding member of the Des Moines County Corn Growers and the Danville Jaycees. Along the way he has been a member on the boards of the Des Moines County Pork Producers, the Des

OBITUARIES CONT. FROM PAGE 13

Moines County Farm Bureau, the Danville Mutual Telephone Company and Jaggar Cemetery. Don started No-till farming in 1979 and spent the rest of his life promoting the benefits of progressive farming. Conservation and providing for the next generation were always his top priority. Don started at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant during the farm crisis and ended up staying for 25 years.

Hobbies largely took over after Don retired. He was a member of both 3 Rivers and Big Creek tractor clubs. He participated with numerous tractorcades and rides of all sizes across Eastern Iowa. Don was an avid presenter at Midwest Old Threshers, cherishing his participation in the parades and daily Cavalcade of Power. He was very much anticipating the 2023 Reunion as Allis Chalmers is the featured tractor. Don was a near constant presence at Danville High School events and was especially devoted to boys and girls basketball. He took great pleasure in sharing his

knowledge with the FFA chapter at school and had been a 4-H member himself. Most importantly Don delighted in the connections and friends he made everywhere he went.

Don and his wife, Cindy, were married in August of 1982 and together they raised Cora (Steve) Beltramea of Fairfield, Jessica (Justin) Boecker of Danville, and David (Alaina) Mathews of Danville. Don and Cindy have four grandchildren.

Memorials have been established at some of Don's favorite places: Danville Station, the FFA chapter or athletic department at school, and Jaggar Cemetery.

Kevin Nickell

Kevin Brent Nickell, 60, of Mount Pleasant, died May 28, at the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics in Iowa City.

Born February 24, 1963, in Missouri, he was the son of James William and Carolyn Ruth Krummel Nickell.

He graduated from Burlington High School in 1981.

Kevin worked at Innovairre for 39 years where he ran the printing press and then later became the Press Room Lead Supervisor.

Kevin was part of Midwest Central Railroad as a conductor/ brakeman in Mt Pleasant. Kevin was a Civil War history buff. He enjoyed golfing at the Mt Pleasant Golf Club. He also enjoyed gambling, playing cards (Pitch), hiking, Geode hunting and baseball. He was an avid St. Louis Cardinals fan. Kevin liked traveling with his son, and they visited many national parks.

Survivors include son, Ben Nickell of Mount Pleasant; sister, DeeAnn (John) Howard of New London; nephew, Matthew (Stephanie) Hicks of New London; and niece, Karrie (Justin) Lox of Kansas City, KS.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Answers to What is it? Where is it? From page 12

A) Sugar Cane being processed at the Sorghum Mill east of Museum B. B) Pulling sled used during tractor pulls in front of the Grandstand. C) Bubbles in the Gas Engine Area. D) Blacksmithing in the North Village E) Front end the Plymouth diesel engine on the Midwest Central Railway. F) Steam Roller Printing east of Printers' Hall.

2023 Calendar of Events

July 4—Community 4th of July Celebration
 July 11-17—Henry County Fair
 August 4-6—Western Illinois Threshers
 August 10-20—Iowa State Fair
 August 16—Reunion Briefing Meeting
 August 19—Campground Opens
 August 30—Harvest Day Parade
 August 31-September 4—2023 Midwest Old Threshers Reunion
 September 13-16—Printers' Fair
 October 5-7, 12-14, 19-21, 26-28—Thrashers House of Terror
 October 13-14, 20-21, 27-28—Midwest Haunted Rails
 November 11—Old Threshers Annual Meeting | Foundation Annual Meeting
 November 18-19—Walk-thru Nights Festival of Lights
 November 22-December 31—Festival of Lights
 November 23-24—Office Closed for Thanksgiving
 December 2-3, 9-10, 16-17—Midwest Central Railroad's North Pole Express
 December 21-January 2—Office Closed

