

2000

Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society web site project

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University of Northern Iowa

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Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society web site project

Abstract

A web site for the Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society was developed in consultation with officers and members of the society. The goal is to promote the preservation and dissemination of historical and genealogical information with regard to Poweshiek County, Iowa and its citizens. This paper highlights the process involved and some of the key features of the web site. Recommendations for future additions to the web site are also included.

Poweshiek County Historical & Genealogical Society Web site Project

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

Division of Educational Technology

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By

Shelley Cranston

July, 2000

This Project by: Shelley Cranston

Titled: Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society Web Site Project

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts.

August 7, 2000
Date Approved

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August 7, 2000
Date Approved

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Graduate Faculty Reader

August 14, 2000
Date Approved

Rick Traw

Head, Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction

Abstract

A web site for the Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society was developed in consultation with officers and members of the society. The goal is to promote the preservation and dissemination of historical and genealogical information with regard to Poweshiek County, Iowa and its citizens. This paper highlights the process involved and some of the key features of the web site. Recommendations for future additions to the web site are also included.

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Introduction

This project began in August 1999, when several members of the Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society approached the author. The society has intentions to expand its capabilities and enhance its preservation efforts through the use of technology. Currently, there is not a website highlighting the history of Poweshiek County. Therefore, the society believes there is a need to develop a website to provide a historical overview of Poweshiek County, Iowa. In addition, the society wants to provide more information about the organization and the services it has to offer.

Some of the history to be included in this project will be: a brief history of the State of Iowa; a brief history of Poweshiek County; a brief history of each of the sixteen existing townships; and a listing of family histories available at the society. The website will promote the resources available through the society including census, birth, marriage, death and probate records.

This society is dedicated to preserving the history of Poweshiek County and its citizens as well as assisting others in their research efforts. Staffed by devoted volunteers, the society provides assistance with queries from patrons. Details regarding the query service will also to be included in the website. By advertising these services on the Internet, one would hope the society would receive additional requests and increased interest in becoming a member of the Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society, which currently includes 220 members.

It was also noted that prior to computers and databases, professional and amateur genealogists were subject to a time-consuming ordeal. Researchers spent hours and hours weeding through countless record books, microfilm tapes, and newspaper clippings to locate information on family histories. Often the searcher would hit roadblocks and frustration would set in from not being able to obtain information in a timely manner (Hornblower and August, 1999).

Now times are changing and current literature suggests there is a growing trend for these genealogists to research family histories and genealogy on the Internet. "With more than 2,000 sites, genealogy is one of the fastest growing fields on the Web" (Mojon, 1999, p. 14).

The Internet is now a tool, which can reduce the need for numerous long-distant phone calls or endless trips all across the country to search through cumbersome county archives and libraries. Vinton Cerf, one of the founding fathers of the Internet, once said the Internet would be, "a way of proliferating business, commerce and family" (Mojon, 1999, p. 14). With more resources on the Internet such as websites, newsgroups, and bulletin boards, even an amateur can begin to discover the joy of 'cyber rooting' (searching on-line for information with regards to one's family history). Plus, the Internet has saved countless hours of tedious searches and has helped family trees flourish. "With thousands of professional genealogists, libraries, archives, and societies putting vital records online, you can now tap into your family history with the click of the mouse" (Mannix, 1999, p. 161).

For instance, the Mormon Church, (also known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) is renowned for being a leading organization in researching family histories. In May 2000, a website by the Mormon Church was launched (www.familysearch.org) providing a phenomenal amount of information and resources free to viewers. This web site received so many hits in one day from interested 'cyber-searchers' or 'cyber-rooters' that the website went down from too much traffic (Mojon, 1999). Another popular website, RootsWeb, (www.rootsweb.com) reports receiving approximately 400,000 hits per day, representing roughly twenty to thirty thousand researchers (Hoffman, 1998). With these statistics in mind, there definitely seems to be an interest in on-line research.

Numerous 'how-to' books are being published with regard to searching on-line for genealogy. Crowe (1999), in her book, Genealogy online: Millennium edition, writes, "Genealogists who have faced the challenges and triumphed are online helping others... the computer has changed just about everything in our lives, and the avocation and vocation of genealogical research is no exception" (p. 15).

In her book, Crowe explains, the Mormons have developed a database standard for genealogy files, called GEDCOM (Genealogical Data Communications). These files are ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) files making it easy to either import or export files. The databases are set up specifically to analyze, track and organize information to be shared between genealogist and historians. These databases, in turn, can retrieve information through simple search commands, which increase the efficiency of

the search (Crowe, 1999). Other programs and databases are also found throughout the web. It was noted, however, that they might not be as reliable as the GEDCOM database.

Even though computers and the Internet have helped increase the efficiency of researching family histories, it should also be noted that there could be lots of misinformation being published on-line. “Unfortunately, no one can vouch for the accuracy of this material, and that’s what makes traditional genealogists unhappy. Suddenly a whole lot of misinformation is floating out there on the Net masquerading a fact” (Schulyer, 2000, p. 44). Many individuals publishing information on-line are neglecting to cite the source from which the document was obtained. Schulyer goes on to write, “Other than that small problem, there is a tremendous amount of material out there, and most of it is reasonably accurate” (Schulyer , 2000, p. 44). Citations of resources are necessary for the researcher to be able to cross reference the material. Undocumented materials obtained from on-line searches should be taken with a grain of salt. It is best to use documented materials from reliable sources.

In working on this project, the importance of publishing accurate information on the society’s website has been stressed repeatedly. This society prides itself on the work that they do, and in their painstaking efforts to provide materials, which include citations. Members of the society, therefore, have taken an active role in deciding upon what information will be used in the initial website.

A search and review of historical and genealogical websites was conducted to obtain information on what to include in the website; how to organize the materials; and for ideas for layout and navigation. From the review of several sites, it was discovered that many sites lack a lot of content, while others provided an excellent account of the county's history. A list of likes and dislikes about various sites was compiled and brought to a meeting for the committee to review. From this discussion, it was decided that the society would include the aforementioned components and work with a layout that was easy to navigate for the viewer. It was also decided that several photographs would be included to highlight the various artifacts found in the museum. A picture of the courthouse in Montezuma, Iowa, would also be included. A diagram of the county organization would be used to show the layout of the county townships, with links to the histories of the townships.

From this meeting, the author took the suggestions and began to work on the web site. First, the audience (or viewers of the website) was taken into consideration. From discussions in the committee meetings and by informally surveying fellow genealogists, one concluded that most viewers want to visit and utilize sites that are easy to navigate, have a simplistic, yet appealing layout, and the information is current and accurate. It was also noted that the site should be maintained and updated regularly to encourage repeat visits by the viewers.

Keeping the audience in mind, the next step was to decide upon the main pages which would have links to sub-directories. Navigation charts were used within the FrontPage 2000 program to manipulate various options for the links.

Careful consideration was given to this process as one does not want to bury an important link too deep within the site. The layout structure of the site was designed keeping in mind the principles of consistency, alignment, proximity and repetition. Using these principles promotes unity and ease of navigation within the web site.

Another meeting was held with the committee to explain the navigation system and ideas for the layout design. It was suggested that some links be switched around and to use a more graphically-based title on the Home page. Finally, the specific information to be used in the site was decided upon. This information and suggestions were taken and used in the development of the actual site.

A rough draft of the site was completed and tested using Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Explorer browsers. The site was also tested on different sized computer screens and viewed with different sized fonts to make sure the site was easily viewed on various monitors and view sizes. For the most part, all the text fit within the parameters of the monitor, even in the largest view of font and there were only a few pages that needed extra horizontal scrolling, for instance on the County Map page. After these checks were completed, an FTP (file transfer protocol) program was used to transfer the information onto Tripod, a free web-hosting site.

There are two disadvantages in using the Tripod server. First, in return for hosting the web site free of charge, Tripod inserts advertisements onto the web pages. Second, even though Tripod claims to be FrontPage compatible, the site

does not support all of the FrontPage 2000 components, which have been used in the development of the site. In particular, the query form page will not work while served on Tripod. Therefore, for the time being, a notation was made upon this particular page that the query form option is unavailable and offers an e-mail option in place of the form. It has been decided to proceed with the Tripod host site. When the final web site is completed and approved by the Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society, the web site will be move to another host, which is compatible with FrontPage 2000 and does not contain unsolicited advertisements.

Feedback was solicited by sending the web site URL address for the Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society (<http://scranston.tripod/index.htm>) to fifteen different individuals including: four committee members, four colleagues, three family members, three friends, and a person with web design expertise.

The feedback was taken in to consideration and minor adjustments were made to the web site. These suggestions included: 1) adding an e-mail address for more information; 2) adding an update log to tell the viewer when the page was last updated; 3) putting navigation links at the bottom of the page, so the viewer does not have to scroll up to move on; 4) using a smaller version of the title 'logo' from the home page in the bottom of the page in the shared border for consistency; 5) adding a green line to separate the body of the web site from the shared border; and 6) adding a sentence to cite the photographer. Once these changes were made, it was republished to the web.

The Project

This is an informational and educational web site, designed to promote the history of Poweshiek County, Iowa and its citizens. It has been developed for the Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society to Historical with the intent of publicizing the organization to patrons on the Internet. The society offers many services and would like to expand its capabilities by integrating technology, to perform such tasks as on-line queries and database searches. The development of this web site is just the beginning of the society's plan to embrace technology. The Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society web site can currently be viewed at URL address: <http://scranston.tripod.com/index.htm>. Sample pages of this web site are also available in the Appendix of this paper.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the article *Roots: Networking your family's history*, by Houser (2000), she quoted John Henrik Clarke, highlighting the importance of pursuing this type of project. Clarke stated, "History is a clock that people use to tell their time of day. It is a compass they use to find themselves on the map of human geography. It tells them where they are and what they are" (cited in Houser, 2000, p. 66).

This quotation rings true to the author, especially after being involved in this project. Much insight has been gained from working on this web site. A feel for one's history and the family that came before has been discovered and more clearly understood in the process. There is an internal pride in which one wants to share this history with others. Many long hours went into the development of this web site, but the hours spent were not in vain. This one will be utilized and

adapted to meet the needs of its patrons, promoting a fuller understanding of the history of Poweshiek County and its citizens.

Among the insights, one has learned is that working with FrontPage 2000 for the first time was a mistake. One should carefully evaluate and understand the software program before pursuing a project of this magnitude. The program was filled with undocumented features, commonly known as 'bugs,' which made designing the web site more challenging. While the program has many useful features, not all of them work correctly all of the time and the program has even challenged personnel on FrontPage tech support.

Recommendations for the future of this project include: adding databases containing census records, cemetery burial records, school enrollment records, church membership rolls; church histories, town histories, family histories of those granting permission to be published on the web; more detailed township maps, cemetery burial plats, maps locating extinct towns, and a rotating photo gallery of historical sites and memorabilia related to Poweshiek County.

This project will be an ongoing work in progress to be updated, as more information is made available. A dynamic web site will bring more interest in the Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society and provide a wealth of information to genealogists and historians searching for information about Poweshiek County and its citizens.

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Appendix

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Chief Poweshiek



State of Iowa



Poweshiek County



Early Poweshiek
County Courthouse



Poweshiek County Historical & Genealogical Building

Location:
206 North Mill Street
P.O. Box 280
Montezuma, IA 50171

Phone: (641) 623-3322

E-mail: for more information

Membership: July through June, \$10

Publications: "The Searcher" a quarterly newsletter, is included in your membership. Visit our Publications page to find out more about other available publications.

Welcome to the Poweshiek County Historical & Genealogical Society website. We have developed this site to let you know more about our society and what services we provide. If you need more information, please contact us by phone, mail, or e-mail.

The Poweshiek County Historical & Genealogical Society was organized in 1978. It is dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of historical information about Poweshiek County and its citizens. A museum and library located in Montezuma, the county seat. Volunteers may be available to assist in research. Currently about 220 members belong to the society.

Hours: Monday, Thursday, and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and by appointment (Note: hours may vary during winter months, please call for details.)

Meetings: 2:00 p.m. the fourth Wednesday of the month

Officers, Directors, Committees & Records: Click to find out more about the divisions of our society.

Query Information: Research fees are \$8.00 per hour, plus expenses for copying, postage, etc.

Information found within this website was taken from publications of the Poweshiek County Historical and Genealogical Society.

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Comments or suggestions may be sent to Webmaster Shelley Cragston
Last updated Wednesday, July 12, 2000

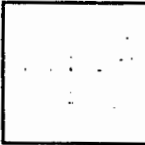
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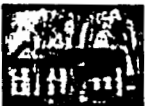
Chief Poweshiek



State of Iowa



Poweshiek County



Early Poweshiek
County Courthouse

Chief Poweshiek



Poweshiek, a chief of the Fox and Sac tribes, lived on the Skunk River. The word Poweshiek means "the roused bear."

Chief Poweshiek was tall, heavily built with rough cast features and was characterized by a disposition of exactness and arrogance.

He was known as the "Peaceful Indian," having signed the Treaty that ended the Black Hawk War. The treaty with the Sacs and Fox in 1832, was known as the "Black Hawk Purchase." This treaty opened the first lands in Iowa for settlement by the whites. In naming newly discovered counties and streams of water, the first settlers of Iowa followed the custom of adopting Native American names.

His village was either in, or not far from the southwest corner of the county which bears his name. Poweshiek and his village consisted of about 40 lodges. They left Iowa in the winter of 1845-46 for the reservation in Kansas.

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Chief Poweshiek



State of Iowa



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Early Poweshiek County Courthouse

Available Resources



Poweshiek County Historical & Genealogical Library

Special Publications:

- 1896 County Atlas (Re-issue) (\$10)
- Grave Records (sold out)
- 1880 Poweshiek County History (sold out)
- 1991 Poweshiek County History (\$60)

Our society also welcomes:

- memberships
- volunteer helpers
- artifacts
- genealogical records and
- financial gifts.

The Poweshiek County Historical & Genealogical Society has the following resources available:

- Two microfilm readers, one capable of printing from microfilm
- Microfilms of various county censuses, newspapers, and school records
- Histories of States, Counties, Towns, especially of Poweshiek County
- Birth Records
- Marriage Records
- Deaths & Probate Records
- Cemetery Records
- Military Records
- Bulletin Exchange
- Family & Church Histories
- Ship Passenger & other References

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Brief History of Poweshiek County, Iowa

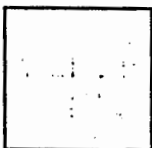
In 1842, a treaty was signed by the US Government and the Sac and Fox Indian tribes, opening up the area now encompassing Poweshiek County to settlement. It was first a part of Keokuk County, later part of Iowa County and then part of Mahaska County before being officially designated Poweshiek County on April 3, 1848. It is named after Chief Poweshiek of the Sac and Fox Tribes. Chief Poweshiek was known as the "Peaceful Indian", having signed the Treaty that ended the Black Hawk War. Iowa officially became a state in 1846.



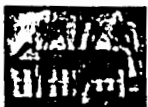
Chief Poweshiek



State of Iowa



Poweshiek County



Early Poweshiek
County Courthouse

The first permanent settlers arrived in May 1843: Richard B. Ogden and his wife in the southern part of the county and Henry Snook and his wife and eight children settled in the northern part. A steady stream of settlers followed. The settlement of the county progressed generally from south to north. The county seat of Montezuma was selected in the southern part of the county because at the time, it was felt the northern portion of the county would not be settled.

The county first had three townships: Sugar Creek, Jackson, and Bear Creek. These were later subdivided and the eventual sixteen townships now in existence were formed, adding: Chester, Deep River, Lincoln, Grant, Jefferson, Scott, Malcom, Warren, Union, Madison, Washington, Pleasant, and Shendan. [Click to go to Townships page.]

Originally, nine schools were designated for each township. Montezuma was designated the county seat in June 1848, and the first courthouse was built in that year. The present courthouse was begun in 1856, and is said to be the second oldest courthouse still in use in Iowa. It has been enlarged in recent years, in the same style, and is currently on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1856, a contingent of Mormon settlers, migrating from Nauvoo, IL to Utah crossed Iowa including Poweshiek County. One of the settlers sons, Job Wellington, Jr. is buried near the present town of Malcom. The settlers traveled pulling handcarts.

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Genealogical Information

The Poweshiek County Historical & Genealogical Society is involved in recording the histories of families in our county. Many family histories are available at the society. For a list of names or query information, see the pages below.

[Surname Index of Family Histories](#)

[Query Information](#)

We have also added a link listing the various cemeteries found in the townships of Poweshiek County. In the future, we hope to have printable maps available within this site.

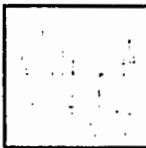
[Cemetery List](#)



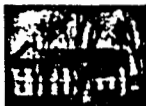
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Poweshiek County Townships

Below is a diagram of how the townships in Poweshiek County are organized. For more information Click on a township.

Chester	Sheridan	Madison	Jefferson
Grant	Malcom	Bear_Creek	Warren
Washington	Pleasant	Scott	Lincoln
Sugar_Creek	Union	Jackson	Deep_River



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Chester	Sheridan	Madison	Jefferson
Grant	Malcom	Bear Creek	Warren
Washington	Pleasant	Scott	Lincoln
Sugar Creek	Union	Jackson	Deep River

Bear Creek Township

Bear Creek Township was originally organized as a precinct rather than a township. It was composed of nine townships: Jefferson, Madison, Sheridan, Chester, Grinnell, Malcom, Bear Creek, Warren and Lincoln. Henry Snook was the first settler in the precinct, in an area which is now Warren Township.

The first permanent settlers in Bear Creek Township were Mr. and Mrs. John Talbott and their thirteen children. Mr. Henry Snook had moved on west shortly after they arrived. Mr. Talbott was the first to officially enter land in the township, and was also the first death, dying February 20, 1849. The second settler was Robert Manatt, who came from Ohio in 1849. William Manatt came from Pennsylvania later in the same year. His homestead is in what is now the heart of the town of Brooklyn. Mr. John Manatt, another branch of the family settled in Warren Township.

The first post office was established in 1849 in the home of Mrs. Mary Talbott, widow of John. Her son Joshua was the first postmaster. The first school was a subscription school and taught in 1854 by Robert Shimer, who had thirty-five students and was paid \$14 per month. The first free public schools were started in 1858.

Early churches were organized in homes: the Baptists in 1859; the Episcopal in 1871; the Presbyterian in 1855; and the Methodists in 1853, although a Methodist mission was started in 1844. The first Catholic Church was built in 1863. The Brethren Church was built in a rural setting in 1880, and the Church of Christ in 1902.

In the 1870s, Brooklyn was the first location in which barbed wire was made, invented by Christian Frederick Schone. Brooklyn was originally known as Greenville.



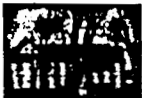
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Early Poweshiek County Courthouse

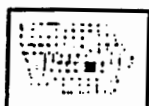
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Photo Gallery

Click on the pictures below to see a larger view of some of the things you can see at the Poweshick County Historical & Genealogical Society or the Poweshick County Court House. Then use your BACK button on your browser to return to the Photo Gallery.



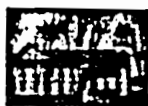
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Early Poweshick County Courthouse



Museum Room



Antique Dresses



Military Flag



Delegation Pins



Quilt of Poweshick Co.



Iowa Memorabilia



Military Uniforms



War Memorial



Poweshick County Courthouse

All photographs were taken by Shelley Cranston.

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The Poweshiek County Historical & Genealogical Society is committed to preserving the history of our county. Therefore, in the future we intend to add additional pages to including:

- History of Schools in our county
- Church Histories
- Cemetery maps (a list of Cemeteries is currently available)
- Newspapers
- Extinct Towns
- Extant Towns
- Military Information
- Possibly family histories if permission is given

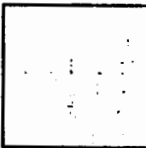
If you have a suggestion for future links you would like to see included on this website please e-mail us.



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Additional Links

The following is a brief list of possible websites that may help you in your genealogical or historical searches.

National:

[National Genealogical Society](#) or (800) 473-0060

[Federation of Genealogical Societies](#) or (512) 336-2731

[Cyndi's List](#) (with links to more than 70,000 sites)

[Ancestry.com](#) (with numerous links including the Social Security Death Index)

[U. S. GenWeb Project](#) (volunteers nationwide provide links to state and county resources)

[RootsWeb](#) (The Internet's oldest genealogy site)

[Broderbund](#) (Provides How-to lists and news for genealogy buffs)

State of Iowa:

[State Historical Society of Iowa](#)

[Iowa Genealogical Society](#)

[Iowa GenWeb Project](#)

[Family History SourceGuide](#) for Iowa (Hosted by the Church of Latter Day Saints)

Poweshiek County Websites:

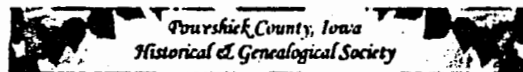
[Poweshiek County, Iowa](#) information

[Poweshiek County, Iowa 1895 Map](#)

[Poweshiek County RootsWeb site](#)

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