

2026 HIGHLIGHTS

Painting the stage face, which beautifully brought out the subtle wood detailing.

Two Great programs from the Humanities Iowa Speakers' Bureau.

150 Third Graders from the NEW Big Creek Elementary School.

A great crowd for our "Endless Variety of Quilts" display during the festival.

Hosting Kevin Mason's book tour "Hiking the Dagoon Trail."

2026 Lowlight...missing most of the farmers market season because of the heat.

BIG CREEK SCHOOLHOUSE

Report Card

Fall 2026 vol three

We were able to talk this summer with Jim Byrnes, contractor for the 2005-2009 restoration of the Big Creek Schoolhouse.

Phase one of the project was the cupola, which is both taller and higher off the ground than it looks. Byrnes had to begin by building a platform for he and his brother Dan to stand on!

Phase two was inside. As the demo progressed, the building gave clues of the original design; some found wainscoting, a piece of ceiling tin, the outline of the stairs.

Phase three, the exterior. BCHS President Tom Cox was apprehensive when the 2005-2009 restoration began phase three. Was it "Old" Bob Marsh who was hired by the city to remodel the city hall building in the 1960's? No one knew what he left under that vinyl siding and the black plastic windows. Eureka---the original was still there...not in the best shape, but still there. Byrnes went into the narrow passway between schoolhouse and the north lean-to and found windows! Ben Svec of Kelley copied the trim and used hand tools to rebuild it or each window.

Byrnes says he is so grateful for the opportunity to work on the restoration. It is

something he will never forget.

PC Public works had similar anxiety when given the job of removing the north lean-to. The same foray into the passway revealed the original windows were still there.

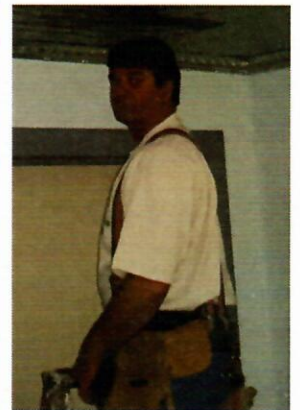


Our favorite window!

Bill Henss was hired to build and repair windows. He somehow found original windows that had been stored under the stage! Some could be repaired. Some would have to be rebuilt. Some of the original glass was usable!

He and his crew, Mike O'Connell, Phil Gustafson plus Erica Simbro, glazier, got to work building windows and trim in Henss' workshop in Des Moines, then installing them.

According to Henss, the schoolhouse windows, being older, have a thinner profile than a Victorian house. Another unusual feature was that the corners were joined with wood dowels. The most unique part of the project though, was the solid walnut used for all aspects of the building.



Jim Byrnes; contractor 2005-2009.

The Community of Polk City owes a debt of gratitude to the City of Polk City for the impressive restoration work that has been done to our beloved landmark during 2025/2026.



Easy to donate through this QR Code.

Or mail a check to:

Big Creek Historical Society
116 S Third St
Polk City, Iowa, 50226

info@polkcityhistory.org
www.polkcityhistory.org

In 2026 we discontinued the outdated membership model most clubs and societies have used in the past. We know most of you don't want to be members of anything else. You're busy.

But we still need your support. Please step up and be a supporter of the Big Creek Historical Society. If we don't do history, who will?

Do you want the museum to be open more often? Please volunteer.



YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT WILL PROVIDE THE DOLLARS WE NEED FOR UPDATES WITHIN THE MUSEUM, OPERATION EXPENSES AND SOME GREAT PROGRAMS

October 25 at 2:00 Ghost Towns of Iowa

Presented by Dave Baker, AKA The 29th State.

Come hear about mining towns, former post offices, forgotten communities that are among the dearly departed...from the Iowa map.

The museum can be open for your tour!

Email us at info@polkcityhistory.org

Coming up in 2027!

March 30, 2027 Iowa's Prohibition and Bootlegging Legacy

Presented by Iowa Author Ann Hanigan Kotz

Step into the shadows of the early 20th Century and discover the bold, rebellious spirit that shaped Iowa's Liquor legacy.

Templeton Rye is only the tip of the iceberg.

TBD

The Railroad Comes and Goes

Journalist Edward Hungerford wrote in his 1917 book, *The Railroad Problem*, that the railroad was a "sensitive and uncertain thing. In early American urbanization a single corporate decision could transform a sleepy crossroads into a booming thriving hub—or turn a thriving city into a ghost town overnight simply by rerouting the tracks."

We don't have Mr. Hungerford but one of our own will present our story of the railroad's literal coming and going in Polk City in the 1870's.

Remember Burma Shave? The Slater Historical Society will be sharing their traveling display.



Annual Events:

Four Season's Festival
Farmers Markets
Light Up Polk City

Photo: Open!