



A Publication of the Kossuth County Genealogical Society

c/o Algona Public Library
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Volume II, Fall Issue
September, 2008

Country Schools

In March of this year, Gerald Soderberg gave a presentation to our KCGS monthly meeting regarding country schools. We enjoyed it so much that we asked Gerald if we could include his report in our newsletter. Gerald used information taken from "A Brief History of Iowa's One-Room Schools" by William H. Drier, Professor of Education, Emeritus at UNI as well as his memories and those of his wife, Beryl.

The most common picture of the Iowa country school is a white wood-frame building sitting alone on about one acre of land, beside a dirt road. In Iowa it was common to call these schools "Country Schools," but those who attended them generally identified them by their township number—Gerald's country school was Plainview #8, Burt Township and Beryl's was Hebron #3 in Hebron Township in Kossuth County.

The country school did not begin in Iowa but came along with the early settlers from the eastern regions of the United States. The start of the country school can be attributed to Thomas Jefferson. In 1779, Jefferson, then a member of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia, introduced a "Bill for the Diffusion of Knowledge." Education was to be free for three years and at private expense thereafter.

Jefferson's ideas were implemented in his authorship of the Northwest Ordinance of 1785 which organized newly acquired territory north of the Ohio River west to the Mississippi River. Six-mile by six-mile townships were surveyed and each of the 36-square-mile sections were numbered for identification. Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary for good government and happiness of mankind, schools and means of education shall forever be encouraged. These principles were extended to the Louisiana Purchase territory from which Iowa became a state in 1846.



The first school in Iowa was a country school located near the Mississippi River where it was joined by the Des Moines River from the west. The first school was established in 1830 and several more were added in the following years. It wasn't until 1858 that the country schools were converted to free schools.

Horace Mann was the first superintendent of schools in the nation and was a dominant influence on public education. While his idea of a state Board of Education was rejected, the concept of using property tax to fund the schools and the longer school year were accepted. The locally funded school district, under local control, would remain the basis of Iowa's educational system for nearly a century.

The country schools were built on skids so the schools could be easily moved. They were to be within two miles of the children's homes so they could easily walk to school. Many of the families had large families so they would have help with the farming. School was held in the

winter or summer time when they were not needed for helping on the farm. Later that schedule changed from fall to late spring.

The largest number in Iowa was in 1901 when there were 12,623 one-room schools. At that time there were over 200 in Kossuth County. Another factor in the reduction of rural schools was consolidation. In 1895 Buffalo Center in Winnebago County, was the first consolidated school in the nation. Country schools in that area were closed and the kids were taken to Buffalo Center by horse and buggy, and other areas followed as the years went by. They are still consolidating to this day. After World War II the farms started getting bigger and the families were smaller so there wasn't a need for so many country schools.

The country school contributed to the Iowa educational system in many ways. It was first and foremost the primary school system from 1830-1945 for most Iowans. It produced quality people in all walks of life. Iowa was known as a top educational state.

For years McGuffey's Readers taught civil responsibility, moral values, and religious commitment. The schools reduced illiteracy in Iowa to the lowest level in the nation by 1890, a position that the state was to hold for years to come.

Indirectly the schools also helped Americanize the immigrants who came to Iowa. Prior to 1900 most were farm workers whose children attended one-room schools and who not only learned English and American customs there, but also brought these back home for their parents. Many lessons were taught a second time at a kitchen table after the dinner dishes had been washed and put away in the evening. Many times the teacher was a girl that only went through 8th grade. Some went through a Normal Training course. One well known County Superintendent was William Shirley. His job was to surprise visit all of the country school in Kossuth County to see how well the teachers were conducting their schools.

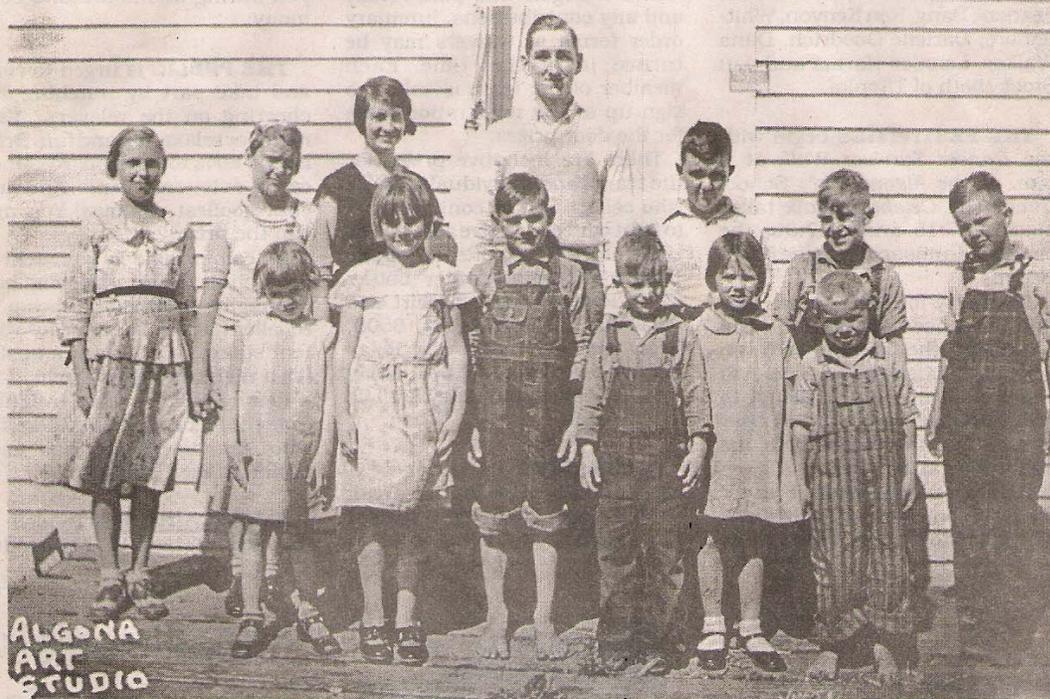
The country school days started with a pledge to the Flag. In nice weather everyone gathered around the flag pole or if the weather was bad we pledged the Flag in the schoolhouse. The day started at 9 a.m. and let out at 4 p.m. We had two 15 minutes recesses, one in the morning and one in the afternoon and an hour off at noon. We also had prayers and a Bible verse every morning, or some reading from a story book. We also had some singing to calm the kids down before starting out classes. The kids helped with some of the chores around school such as carrying in a pail of water, getting fuel for the stove, dusting the erasers, and whatever the teacher wanted us to do. Some of the games we played were: Softball, Red Rover, Anti Over, Pump Pump Pull Away, Fox & Goose in the winter time, Tag, Ice Cream & Lemonade, etc.



We also had basket socials, Christmas programs, and a picnic on the closing day of school at the end of the year. These were all entertainment for our families and helped raise extra money for the school.

Gerald got interested in the history of country schools in 1997 when their neighbor's daughter, Helen Hamilton, was asked by William Sherman to represent Kossuth County in locating as many country schools as she could. He wanted to know the location, name, and anything she could find out about them. If they were still standing, what they were being used for or where they were moved, etc.

We were asked if we would like to help locate them and take pictures if we could. In 1998, Sherman gathered all the information from the 99 counties and published a book entitled, "Iowa's Country Schools, Landmarks of Learning."



LuVerne school, then and then

Although slightly out of focus, the top photo captures the smiles of the LuVerne Township District 4 students as they posed in the school yard in 1918. The four children in the foreground, left to right, are Dorothy Gregory, John Ruger (with head bowed), Amour Mullin and unknown girl (far right). The four students in the middle row are Alzada Mullin, Gertrude Stoddard, Della Stoddard (both in sailor blouses), and unknown girl in white pinafore). In the back row are unknown boy, Floyd Gregory and Harold Worby. John Ruger, the lad holding his head,

grew up to become the teacher in the bottom photo of the 1932 class at LuVerne Township District 5 school. Shown front row, left to right: Mavis Johnson, Lela Fett, Alfred Fett, William Hardcopf, Vira Fett and Willard Fett. Back row, Elaine Blake, Alberta France, Ruth Neal, Ruger, Kenneth Marty, Junior Hardcopf and Melvin Marty. The photos were loaned to us by John Ruger, now of Fenton. He taught country school for five years under county superintendent William Shirley.

— M.S.M.

News clipping photos from the collection of Dorothy Climer.

Early School Days

By
Pat Klemm

Schools in Iowa were first organized as private and subscription schools in 1872 when The Iowa Legislature set rules governing how schools were to be organized. There would now be independent town districts as well as independent township schools. Each school would have eight grades and be

taught by one teacher and governed by a three-member board that would oversee the district. The teachers in each district were required to have at least an eighth grade diploma and their pay was dependent upon the money the parents of pupils would provide. At that time school was in session only when the children were not needed for planting or harvesting of crops or other necessary farm work.

School days in Kossuth County had their beginnings in the summer of 1857 according to Ben Reed's *History of Kossuth County*. However, according to another source, the very first school site was in Union township in 1856, the site of what is now "Gopher College." In a 1913 copy of the Kossuth County atlas there were a total of 210 country schoolhouses listed but there were also a number of



Country school

Known as "Farrow School," this classic schoolhouse was located two miles north and three miles east of Bancroft. According to Mary Hellman of Bancroft who sent us the pictures, 14 of the 15 children of John and Maude Farrow attended this school. "Shirley Farrow Lappe of Algona was the only one to start out in Lakota school when this school closed," Hellman writes. The photo above was taken during the 1935-'36 school year. Shown left to right, first row: Merle Pankuk, Lawrence Farrow, Junior Govern, Milton Farrow and Earl Vokoun. Standing: Delores Govern, Merwyn Roberson, Gretchen Rippenrop, teacher Lorne Trenary, Mary Hellman, Donald Farrow and Mary Jean Johnson.
— M.S.M.



independent town schools as well.

The first accounts of education in Kossuth County mentions that a Miss Flavia Fleming, from the Humboldt area taught in the unfinished town hall in Algona, Miss Andalusia Cogley, taught in the Irvington hall and Miss Mary Clark taught in the cabin home of Greshington S. Jones in what is now Riverdale township. "Gopher College" was a dug-out by the Black Cat near the Robert Moore cabin and it is noted that Jonathan Callender was the teacher.

However, Algona did not become an independent school district until 1872 when as mentioned above it became a state law. The town hall was used as a school until 1867 when a new building was erected. That new building was constructed at a cost of \$3,200 and made with hand-hewn timbers, by Jas. Henderson. It was the first schoolhouse built for the Algona Independent School District. In 1885 it was moved to the corner of Dodge and Nebraska streets and has been used as a public library, a meeting hall for the G. A. R. and the Hagg-Turner American Legion Post. It now houses the Kossuth County Historical Museum.

“In March of 1872 a board of six directors was elected. The directors then chose H. M. Taft, president; J. E. Stacy, secretary; other directors were John G. Smith, J. B. Winkel, Jas. L. Paine, and F. C. Wilson. M. W. Stough was chosen treasurer to complete the list of necessary officers. The first teachers in the independent district were A.M. Horton, principal, Elizabeth M. Reed, Emma Paine, and Sarah A. Blair.”



In the early years every district that had a school was under control of a local board of directors and there was no county superintendent. Each board consisted of a president, secretary and treasurer. They determined who was qualified to teach. The applicants were expected to have knowledge of orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and history of the United States. They did not need a teaching certificate as those laws were enacted later. The teachers were paid from a teacher's fund with the wages set by the directors. Everyone was expected to pay, if they did not pay the amount they were assessed, their property could be sold to satisfy the debt. It was noted

in one account that male teachers in Algona were paid \$5.91 per week and female teachers were paid \$3.56 per week in the year of 1863.

Today as school districts merge due to declining enrollments education has come almost full circle from the days when country school were merging into larger school districts. However today's teachers are required to have more education and in some cases technology such as online classrooms via the internet and TV courses have replaced the “in person” classroom experience.

Teachers Tell Tales At Reunion



The thirty-four teachers who attended the reunion in Union Township recently are shown above. Front row, left to right, Vernice Nelson Cash, Estella Angus Dittmer, Dorothy Long Scott, Myrtle Hanna, Eva Holding Boettcher, Darlene Volentine Rutledge, Agatha Hansen. Row two: Hattie Bahling Brown, Irene Mitchell Bjuström, Carol Jackman Jensen, Mary Tjaden Long, Neva Albright, Mary Fraser, Mabel Reimers Seely, Helen Johnson Webb, Clara Shilts Roscoe, Frances Eason, Catherine Schulz Harris, Marjorie Cruikshank Bode, Mildred Elmore Boeckholt. Third row: Margaret Dodds Albright, Helen McMahon Long, Lois Fraser Dau, Florence Black Kain, Veda Dutton McArthur, Chester Schoby, Beulah Carlyle Dahl, Dorothy Hanna, Ellen Steussy Raney, Glen Jenkinson, Dorothy Reid Vigdahl, Lois Gardner Camp, Helena Weisbrod Dodds, Gladys Schneider DeBolt.

Thanks to Donna Hanson for sharing this news clipping.

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**NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT**

As summer slips into fall, my thoughts always turn to school. It has been many years since I graduated myself but this time of year I fondly recall the smell of new crayons and the excitement of using a freshly sharpened pencil on a crisp fresh tablet.

Although I never attended country school myself, I did have an opportunity to visit an operating one room school in South Dakota in the 1960s. My family was visiting relatives who had a daughter about my age and so I accompanied her to school for a half a day. It fascinated me since it was so different from what I was used to—it had multiple classes in one room, students of varying ages and only one teacher. At the time I did not appreciate the skill it took to cover all of the material needed to educate children from ages 5 through 14 or so. Looking back, I am so impressed at the level of education children received through the country school system and the talent of the teachers who guided them. I hope you enjoy this issue on country schools.

I want to take a moment to alert you to speakers we will be hosting at our meetings in October and November.

Jan Leaneagh Fausnaugh recently contributed several copies of her book, *“Memories, A Collection of Stories and Letters from 1941 through 1954,”* to KCGS and to the Algona Public Library. As I read Jan’s recollections of her experiences growing up in the Algona area, my own memories came flooding back. She is truly a gifted writer. Jan will be returning to Algona in October and has consented to give a

presentation at our meeting on October 13th entitled “Our Lives, Our Stories—WRITE ON!” Jan will encourage us with tips and suggestions on how to write down our stories so they won’t be lost. I am so excited about Jan’s presentation and I heartily suggest that you both read Jan’s book and come in October to hear her speak. You won’t regret it!

In November one of our members, Robbie Decker, will be demonstrating how to use internet sites for genealogy research. Robbie will be working live on the internet as he does his presentation. Come prepared to ask questions and learn how to utilize the unlimited resources available on the internet. That meeting will be held on November 10th. As always, our meetings are held in Room D of the Algona Public Library beginning at 7 p.m.

Be sure to mark these two meeting dates on your calendar and invite your friends—the more, the merrier!

We do not hold meetings during the month of December as the holidays seem to fill everyone’s time. The winter newsletter will be issued then, however, so if you have articles, ideas or interesting websites you’d like to share with others, please let us know.

Be sure to check out the details about the 1896 Kossuth County plat book that is now being offered for sale by KCGS. This book is now available in black and white in a more manageable size than the original. In addition, it now has an index. Purchase information is included in this newsletter.

Until next time, I wish you a safe and abundant harvest season.

ONLY AN 8TH GRADE EDUCATION

Remember when grandparents and great-grandparents stated that they only had an 8th grade education? Well, check this out. Could any of us have passed the 8th grade in 1895? This is the eighth-grade final exam from 1895 in Salina, Kansas, USA . It was taken from the original document on file at the Smokey Valley Genealogical Society and Library in Salina, and reprinted by the Salina Journal. *(Thanks to Kenton Immerfall for submitting this interesting article to KCGS).*

Grammar (Time one hour)

1. Give nine rules for the use of capital letters.
2. Name the parts of speech and define those that have no modifications.
3. Define verse, stanza and paragraph
4. What are the principal parts of a verb? Give principal parts of 'lie' play, and run'
5. Define case; illustrate each case.
6. What is punctuation? Give rules for principal marks of punctuation.
- 7-10. Write a composition of about 150 words and show therein that you understand the practical use of the rules of grammar.

Arithmetic (Time 1 hour 15 minutes)

1. Name and define the Fundamental Rules of Arithmetic.
2. A wagon box is 2 ft. deep, 10 feet long and 3 ft. wide. How many bushels of wheat will it hold?
3. If a load of wheat weighs 3,942 lbs., what is it worth at 50cts/bushel, deducting 1,050 lbs. for tare?
4. District No 33 has a valuation of \$35,000. What is the necessary levy to carry on a school seven months at \$50 per month, and have \$104 for incidentals?
5. Find the cost of 6,720 lbs. coal at \$6.00 per ton.
6. Find the interest of \$512.60 for 8 months and 18 days at 7 percent.
7. What is the cost of 40 boards 12 inches wide and 16 ft. long at \$20 per metre?
8. Find bank discount on \$300 for 90 days (no grace) at 10 percent.
9. What is the cost of a square farm at \$15 per acre, the distance of which is 640 rods?
10. Write a Bank Check, a Promissory Note, and a Receipt.

U.S. History (Time, 45 minutes)

1. Give the epochs into which U.S. History is divided.
2. Give an account of the discovery of America by Columbus.
3. Relate the causes and results of the Revolutionary War.
4. Show the territorial growth of the United States.
5. Tell what you can of the history of Kansas.
6. Describe three of the most prominent battles of the Rebellion.
7. Who were the following: Morse, Whitney, Fulton, Bell, Lincoln, Penn, and Howe?
8. Name events connected with the following dates: 1607, 1620, 1800, 1849, 1865.



Orthography (Time, one hour)

1. What is meant by the following: alphabet, phonetic, orthography, etymology, syllabication
2. What are elementary sounds? How classified?
3. What are the following, and give examples of each: trigraph, subvocals, diphthong, cognate letters, linguals.

4. Give four substitutes for caret 'u.'
5. Give two rules for spelling words with final 'e.' Name two exceptions under each rule.
6. Give two uses of silent letters in spelling. Illustrate each.
7. Define the following prefixes and use in connection with a word: bi, dis, mis, pre, semi, post, non, inter, mono, sup.
8. Mark diacritically and divide into syllables the following, and name the sign that indicates the sound: card, ball, mercy, sir, odd, cell, rise, blood, are, last.
9. Use the following correctly in sentences: cite, site, sight, fane, fain, feign, vane, vain, vein, raze, raise, rays.
10. Write 10 words frequently mispronounced and indicate pronunciation by use of diacritical marks and by syllabication.

Geography (Time, one hour)

1. What is climate? Upon what does climate depend?
2. How do you account for the extremes of climate in Kansas?
3. Of what use are rivers? Of what use is the ocean?
4. Describe the mountains of North America
5. Name and describe the following: Monrovia, Odessa, Denver, Manitoba, Hecla, Yukon, St. Helena, Juan Fernandez, Aspinwall and Orinoco
6. Name and locate the principal trade centers of the U.S.
7. Name all the republics of Europe and give the capital of each.
8. Why is the Atlantic Coast colder than the Pacific in the same latitude?
9. Describe the process by which the water of the ocean returns to the sources of rivers.
10. Describe the movements of the earth. Give the inclination of the earth.

Notice that the 8th grade exam took **FIVE HOURS** to complete. Gives the saying 'he only had an 8th grade education' a whole new meaning, doesn't it? Also shows you how poor our education system has become!

* * * * *

Rules for Teachers 1872

1. Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys.
2. Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the day's session.
3. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to the individual tastes of pupils.
4. Men teachers may take one evening each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they go to church regularly.
5. After 10 hours in school, the teacher may spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.
6. Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed.
7. Every teacher should lay aside from each day a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society.
8. Any teacher who smokes or uses liquor in any form, frequents pool halls, or gets shaved in a barbershop will give reason to suspect his worth, intention, integrity and honesty.
9. The teacher who performs his labor faithfully and without fault for five years will be given and increase of \$0.25 per week in his pay, providing the Board of Education approves.



WEBSITES OF INTEREST

If you have railroad workers in your family tree, the Chicago & North Western Historical Society website might be of interest to you. Go to: www.cnwhs.org

www.paperofrecord.com –Newspapers on line. Not many local titles and the OCR search results are not as good, but it is free and hopefully will continue to grow.

www.iowaheritage.org – Contains scans of plat maps, news articles, photos, etc. For local info, just search the word “Kossuth.”

Be sure to check them out!



Meeting Calendar

October 13, 2008
 Presenter: Jan Leaneagh
 Fausnaugh
 Our Lives, Our Stories—
 WRITE ON!

November 10, 2008
 Presenter: Robbie Decker
 Live demonstration of
 Genealogy Internet sites

7 p.m. in Room D of the
 Algona Public Library

(No meeting in December)

*Hope to see you
 there*

FOR SALE

**KOSSUTH COUNTY, IOWA
 Death Record #1 - 1880-1897**

**KOSSUTH COUNTY, IOWA
 Death Record #2 – 1897-1919**

*Transcribed from notes taken
 from original record*



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 PLAT BOOK**
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 contact Jean Kramer at
jkramer1976@hotmail.com
 or KCGS by mail

Can You Help?

We recently found a source who has preserved over 23 years of obituaries, marriage/anniversary and birth and miscellaneous articles from the Algona newspapers. They have consented to let us copy the 70+ books they have put together. However the cost of copying the information and covering them will amount to approximately \$1,000. We want to get this material on the shelves of our genealogy room as soon as possible. Your financial assistance would be greatly appreciated. All funds can be sent to the same address shown on the membership flyer at the end of this newsletter.

Thank you for your support.

Update: We now have copied all of the obits, almost all of the marriage/anniversary books and have a start on the books of miscellaneous articles. Your monetary gifts will help us finish this project soon and get these materials on our shelves.

Recent Additions to the Genealogy Room:

Family Histories:

The Raduege/Radig/Radick Family of WI, IA & CA
The Family of Michael August Krause 1823-1898

Clippings:

Kossuth County Clippings—Births, baptisms, etc.
for 1984-86

Kossuth County Obits -- 1992 and 1997

Biography/History:

Memories-A Collection of Stories & Letters
from 1941-1954

Plat Books:

Farm & Home Plat & Directory - 2005 –
Kossuth County

Do you have items to donate to KCGS?

Please consider KCGS if you have any of the following:

High school yearbooks from any high school located in Kossuth County
Community centennial/anniversary books
Church centennial/anniversary books
Family histories
Plat Books
Biographies of Kossuth County residents



Queries

As a member of the KCGS, you are entitled to submit queries for publication in the newsletter free of charge. If you are not a member of the KCGS, there is a \$5.00 charge per query.

How to Submit a Query

- Type or print your query, double-spaced on 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Please limit your query to 50 words or less.
- Ask questions. What specific information are you searching for?
- Don't abbreviate. Our queries editor will make the correct abbreviations.
- Read your query. Are the names, places and dates correct? Are they legible to a person not familiar with the information? Can the maiden names be easily identified?
- Did you remember to include your name and address?

Mail your queries, along with the correct monies in the form of check or money order, to:

Kossuth County Genealogical Society
Attn: Query Editor
Kossuth County Library
210 N. Phillips Street
Algona, IA 50511

Or members may email their request to kossgensoc@hotmail.com
Be sure to put "Newsletter Query" in the subject line.

Queries are printed as space permits, usually only one query per person per issue of the newsletter. The KCGS reserves the right to edit and/or reject material submitted for publication. Thank You!

KOSSUTH COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

The Kossuth County Genealogical Society was incorporated in June of 2007 and is a chapter of the Iowa Genealogical Society. The goal of our members is to archive the family records of Kossuth County, Iowa, and make them available to the general public. We collect and maintain genealogy material which is stored in the genealogy room at the Algona Public Library. We do research and answer queries regarding Kossuth County and its residents. We hold regular monthly meetings with a variety of programs and guest speakers and hold workshops. The society also publishes a newsletter several times throughout the year. To submit items for publication in newsletter, please e-mail to kossgensoc@hotmail.com including "newsletter" in the subject line or mail items to KCGS, c/o Algona Public Library, 210 North Phillips Street, Algona, IA 50511.

MEMBERSHIP:

Membership dues are \$10 per year and run from March 1 to the last day of February. Membership includes subscription to the newsletter (one per membership). **In addition to membership dues, the society welcomes any donations, both of money and/or genealogical materials.**

MEETINGS:

The Society meets in Room D of the Algona Public Library at 7:00 p.m. the **second Monday** of each month except December unless otherwise notified. The annual meeting is held each March.

RESEARCH CHARGES:

The Society charges a minimum of \$5 for one-half hour of research and \$10 per hour thereafter, plus copying costs and postage. Your research requests can be mailed to KCGS at the address listed on the front of the newsletter or can be submitted via email to Nancy Yeoman at ncyeoman3@hotmail.com. When the materials requested have been located, a bill will be sent to you and upon payment receipt, the materials will be mailed to you. As a member of KCGS, you are entitled to submit queries for publication in the newsletter free of charge. If you are not a member of KCGS, there is a \$5 charge per query. (See the section "How to Submit a Query" in this newsletter).



Application for Membership:

Send this application and \$10 annual dues to Kossuth County Genealogical Society, c/o Letty Henriksen, P.O. Box 16, Lone Rock, IA 50559. **Donations are also welcome.**

Name: _____ Amount \$ _____

Address: _____ Year: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Check #: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____ Date Received: _____

Surnames Researching: _____ () New () Renewal