
IOWA TOPICS 2020 - 2021

Theme: “Communication in History: The Key to Understanding”

PEOPLE

Alexander Clark

Clark, a prominent Iowa Civil Rights leader, submitted a petition to the Iowa General Assembly (1855) calling on the legislature to overturn the law that prohibited the migration of free African Americans into the state of Iowa.

- [PSS: Alexander Clark’s Petition to Allow Migration of “Free Negroes” into Iowa, 1855](#)

Arthur Collins and Collins Radio Co.

Collins was a radio engineer and entrepreneur. He first gained national recognition as a teenager for significant advances in radio communication. He later founded his own radio engineering and manufacturing company in 1933, Collins Radio Co.

- [PSS: “Arthur Collins: Radio Wizard”](#)

David Nicholas and the Fax Machine

Nicholas developed a filler and synchronization sequence for data-compressing Huffman codes—a process to more efficiently convert text into digital information for the fax machine.

- [Iowa State University: Inventor of the Encoding Process Essential to Fax Machines](#)
- [PSS: Iowa’s Connection to the World](#)

Steve Bales and Apollo 11

On the Apollo 11 mission, Bales was the flight commander for the lunar module at Mission Control in Houston. He was responsible for knowing the computer error codes in order to allow the Apollo 11 lunar lander to complete its descent to the moon surface.

Women of Collins Radio (Cedar Rapids) and Apollo 11/Collins Radio and NASA

Women from Collins Radio were recognized by NASA in 1969 for their work on the communications equipment used for the Apollo 11 mission. Many women worked on NASA equipment through various missions.

Martha Callanan and Mary Jane Coggeshall & Iowa Women’s Suffrage and Iowa Suffrage Newspaper

Iowa Woman’s Suffrage Association monthly newspaper the Woman’s Standard, Iowa’s main suffrage newspaper, was founded by Martha Callanan. Coggeshall was the first editor.

- [PSS: Women’s Suffrage](#)

Earl May and Henry Field

Rival radio station and seed company owners of Shenandoah, Iowa. Provided valuable agricultural information through programming on farming, gardening, and domestic chores.

Jack Trice

Trice was the first African-American athlete to compete at Iowa State. In a letter, he described the significance of him playing in the game, and what he would face during the contest. During the football game against the University of Minnesota, Trice sustained severe injuries that later led to his death.

- [PSS: Iowa: Leader in Civil Rights and Equality](#)

John Robinson Pierce

John Robinson Pierce was an American engineer and author. Pierce was born in Des Moines, Iowa, and he worked extensively in the fields of radio communication, microwave technology, computer music, psychoacoustics and science fiction.

- [PSS: Biography of John Robinson Pierce](#)

John Vincent Atanasoff and the First Computer

John Vincent Atanasoff and Clifford Berry are credited with inventing the first computer at Iowa State College in 1930 - 1942.

- [PSS: The Invention of the Electronic Digital Computer](#)

J.N. "Ding" Darling, Political Cartoons

Beginning in 1917, Darling's cartoons were syndicated by the New York Tribune and eventually were carried by as many as 150 newspapers. Darling is perhaps best known for his cartoon of Jan. 7, 1919, "The Long, Long Trail," drawn at the time of Teddy Roosevelt's death.

- [University of Iowa, Iowa Digital Library: Editorial Cartoons of J.N. "Ding" Darling](#)

Emir Abdelkader and How French Colonialism Created an Arab Hero in Iowa

Iowa is the only state in the U.S. that has a town named after an Arab Muslim hero. In 1846, the founder of Elkader chose to name this settlement after Abdelkader, who led the fight against the French colonial conquest of what is now Algeria. His humane treatment of prisoners was a precursor to the Geneva Convention on Human Rights, and he is celebrated worldwide for saving thousands of Christians in Damascus. The Abdelkader Education Project (AEP) is sponsoring special monetary awards for students and teachers as part of Iowa National History Day. For details, please visit:

- [Abdelkader: How French Colonialism Created an Arab Hero in Iowa](#)

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

PLACES/PROJECTS

Air Mail Service

The Iowa City Municipal Airport captured the attention of the U.S. Post Office while laying out their first air mail route. On January 8, 1920, Iowa City became the only stop during the very first air mail flight from Chicago to Omaha. The use of the air mail service played a prominent role in opening up communication across the country.

Iowa State Bystander, John Thompson and James B. Morris

Iowa's longest lasting African American newspaper published by John Thompson and James B. Morris in Des Moines on June 8, 1894.

- [Chronicling America](#), The Bystander (free access)
- [Newspapers.com](#), The Bystander
- *The Iowa Bystander* (available on microfilm at the State Historical Society of Iowa)

Meskwaki Code Talkers - Tama County, Iowa

Eight Sac and Fox Native American men, all members of Company H in the 186th Infantry, used their Meskwaki language to be "code talkers" during World War II. The communication network of code talkers would broadcast information by short wave radio to their fellow Meskwaki soldiers who would translate it into English for the commanding officer.

- [PSS: Meskwaki Code Talkers, February 26, 1921](#)

Rural Free Mail Delivery

Rural Free Delivery (RFD), service begun in the United States in 1896 to deliver mail directly to farm families. Before RFD, rural inhabitants had to pick up mail themselves at sometimes distant post offices or pay private express companies for delivery.