



# RED OAK ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

THE *Heart* OF SOUTHWEST IOWA

By the Red Oak Heritage Foundation

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## RED OAK ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

1988 Red Oak Graduate Kirk Webb

Image by Toni Webb

Kirk Webb, aka Skinny Webb, was born in 1969 and grew up in Red Oak, Iowa. Since then, he has made a career out of playing music. He graduated from Red Oak High School in 1988. Skinny got his nickname from fellow ROHS alumnus Kevin Smith while playing a show in 1990 with “Code Blue”, a band in which he and Kevin both played.

Skinny has been interested in guitar since birth as is chronicled by photos that his Mother took of him strumming a Roy Rogers toy guitar at age one. However, he really began playing and taking lessons at age five. Soon after he started playing in church with his Mom and at family jam sessions with his Grandfather and uncle. Throughout his Red Oak school years he was known for playing guitar. In fifth grade he took his guitar to Mrs. Timmerman’s class and played Queen’s “Another One Bites the Dust” in front of his fellow classmates.

The performance was received with great reviews by fellow students and Skinny was hooked. By age 10 he was playing guitar live at bluegrass and country music festivals. At 14 he discovered rock and roll and joined a Red Oak band called TKO with local piano player and schoolmate Greg Brower. They played school dances, parties and anywhere that would have them around the Red Oak area. Those starting years solidified his love for performing.

After High School, Skinny started playing in bands around the Omaha area and eventually joined a touring rock band playing guitar. The band, Shy Gypsy, toured all over the Midwest and Western US and was an experience of a lifetime that gave Skinny his first taste of life as a professional musician. When he wasn’t ‘on the road’ he took university classes to study music and classical guitar and eventually obtained a music degree. He also obtained a degree in Forestry in 1997 from ISU and moved to Texas to work in the forest industry and play music on the East Texas and Louisiana blues/country circuit.

After playing the southern music scene for 3 years he moved back to the Omaha area and played in numerous 80’s style music bands while also operating Prairie Wind Recording Studios. The studio was a popular place for Omaha and Des Moines area roots/american music bands and Skinny acted as a producer/engineer and session musician on over 25 albums while the studio was in operation. One of the albums was Skinny’s own band called Skinny and the Bootleggers. This band released a bluegrass music album with fellow Red Oak locals’ Phil Lamb and Terry Ray and became quite popular in the southwest Iowa area at festivals and other events.

In 2010, Skinny moved to the Kansas City area and has been a hired musician for numerous bands on the KC scene for the past 13 years. In 2020 Skinny met his wife Toni in Omaha and moved back to the area. He started playing with a band called the High Heel Band formerly known as High Heel and the Sneakers.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED

he regularly plays in 12 different bands throughout the mid-west.

Over the years of touring and owning his recording studio Skinny has had the opportunity to work with many notable people in the music industry. He has worked with such great bands and musicians as Los Lobos, Black Oak Arkansas, Ron Wikso(Steve Miller Band, David Lee Roth), Matt Bissonette(Elton John), Hank Redd(Stevie Wonder), Connie Valens(sister of Ritchie Valens), George Hamilton, Rick Derringer, and Wally Minko(Toni Braxton) to name a few. He has played guitar and mandolin on over 50 albums and opened for many touring bands including Quiet Riot, Humble Pie, 38 Special, Sawyer Brown, and many others.

In 2021 he was inducted into the Iowa Music Hall of Fame as a solo artist.

Skinny currently maintains a busy tour schedule with 125 to 150 shows per year and records extensively with other artists as well as for his own projects.

'Into the Gray' a band from Kansas City is one his main projects. This band has released two albums in which Skinny co-wrote and produced all the songs. He also has a solo project under the name 'Skinny Webb' which is an eclectic mix of instrumental rock, jazz, country, blues in which he plays everything from blazing guitars solos to mellow fingerpicking acoustic guitar. A new album will be released this winter.

Skinny saw the importance of having a plan B in the insecure world of show business. He became a Geographic Information Systems Programmer/Developer years ago and works remotely on various GIS projects. This job allows an incredible amount of flexibility to travel and work in music, working from home, hotel rooms or wherever music takes him.

Through all of the travel, Skinny still comes back to Red Oak often to play shows and give back to the music community. He has been a regular performer at a local establishment called the FiveOne8 over the last few years and even played Red Oak's RAGBRAI celebration this past summer with the band Into the Gray.

## RED OAK BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

### VALLEY ESTATE AND TAG SALES

### SHARON BRADLEY



Image by Sharon Bradley

Written by: Sharon Bradley

Sharon grew up in Red Oak and she along with her husband owned and operated Bradley Livestock Auction for several years and raised four children here. During that time, she also had an antique and gift store downtown Red Oak and was active in the Chamber and many community organizations. The Bradley family moved to Scottsdale, Arizona in 1986 and all four of her children also moved there after college. The last 16 years in Arizona, she worked for a REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust) as the West Regional Director, managing medical properties in seven states. Previous to that she worked as a marketing manager for a company in San Francisco and managed retail stores in Phoenix. During her years in the Phoenix area, she was a member of CREW (Commercial Women in Real Estate) in Phoenix, on the Scottsdale Historical Board and a member of the Ho Ho Kam Chapter of Questers.

In 2008, when visiting her family here with her sister, they looked at the house owned by the Bruce Van Druff family and decided they would buy it so they would have a place to come back to during the summers and eventually retire here. Each year since 2008 they have held a family reunion over Junction Days at the house on Prospect until it got too big and now hold it at Chautauqua Park. In 2018, Sharon retired

from her Corporate job and moved back to Red Oak. She opened her business, Valley Antiques shortly after moving back, expanded and changed locations three times. Her son Jeff moved back, as well as her sister Sandra, brother Reed and her daughter Julie, who bought a home here and lives here part of the year. Currently she does business as Valley Estate and Tag Sales and conducts Estate Sales throughout Southwest Iowa.

Sharon currently serves on the City Council and is a past president of the Chamber of Commerce in Red Oak. She is a member of Questers in Red Oak, an organization that studies history and historical preservation, Co-chair of the annual Cemetery Walk, a member of Altrusa, serves on the Hospital Auxillary Board, a member of Ambassadors, past chairman of the board of adjustment for the City, past member of the historical preservation commission for the City, currently serving on the Montgomery County Development Corp. board, co-chair of the Women's Committee for the Red Oak Country Club, teaches beginners bridge once each week and a member of the

Downtown Urban Renewal board. Sharon is a member of the First Christian Church in Red Oak.

One event that I have co-chaired and with the Court of Honor, we are very proud of is our annual Evergreen Cemetery Walk over the Junction Days Weekend. We choose historical figures from Red Oak that have been buried in our beautiful cemetery in Red Oak and depict those and their stories with actors that play the role in first person. It has been very well attended and draws classmates and visitors from all over. The money raised goes towards the tuckpointing and restoration of the entrances at the cemetery.

Red Oak has always been "Home" and I always knew I would return along with many others that have returned to enjoy small town living.

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL FORGE INTERSHIP PROGRAM

Written by: Hailey Runyon, RN, BSN  
Education Program Coordinator  
Acute Stroke Program Coordinator  
Montgomery County Memorial Hospital + Clinics



Montgomery County  
Memorial Hospital

MCMH + Clinics is thrilled to be one of the first organizations to partner with the Red Oak Community School District's FORGE internship program, a dynamic work-based learning program designed to empower students as they explore their future career paths. This collaboration aims to provide a well-rounded continuum of educational experiences, infusing opportunities for career exploration and preparation into the high school curriculum. MCMH currently has 8 students in various departments throughout the organization, including Community Relations, Dietary Services, Fiscal Services, Rehabilitation/Personal Training, Nursing, Lab, and Administrative Services. Some students have multiple interests and will be interning in multiple departments throughout their time with MCMH.

The work-based learning program will enable students to gain hands-on experience in various settings throughout the organization, allowing them to witness first-hand the vital roles that working professionals play in our community. By engaging with the dedicated staff at MCMH, students will develop practical skills that

will prepare them for successful careers, whether in clinical or non-clinical roles.

At the heart of this initiative is our commitment to active learning. The program is designed to immerse students in real-life experiences that foster critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving—key components of the Iowa Core Universal Constructs. These constructs are essential for success in today's evolving world, and MCMH is excited to help students build a strong foundation for their future.

Through this partnership, students will not only explore various career options but also gain confidence in their abilities and aspirations. At MCMH, we believe that by providing these enriching opportunities, we are strengthening community relationships and fostering stronger community ties in our next generation of leaders.

As we embark on this journey together, we look forward to witnessing the growth and development of our students, and we are committed to supporting them every step of the way.



# MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SCHOOL

Written by: Dave Mcfarland

At the closing bell of 1846, Iowa became a state and with that came many issues. One main concern was education. Early schools were locally organized and conducted strictly as a local undertaking. In 1858, the Iowa Legislature enacted a formal education plan; a plan based on townships. Each township was to govern its schools. The basic organization was a school would be established for each four sections (a section being 1 square mile). Ideally student would have less than two miles to school important, if you were walking to and from school. I have been told that it was always up-hill (both ways) and there was always at least a foot of snow on the ground regardless of the time of year. Population density often became an issue in certain areas. I have read there were instances where children from one family might make up the entire student body of a country school. It was an amazing system that used peer teaching, even before it was invented, older children help teach the younger ones and helped create goals.

In 1872, Iowa refined its system allowing for sub districts, based more on population and communities. The district would be governed by boards of trustees. Often these one room schools became centers for communities, places to gather and socialize, meeting places for government and even churches. The first county fair in Montgomery County was held at the Frankfort country school.

Country schools were very different from the education system we now know. Formal education for teachers often required little more than a high school education. Teaching was more about ability than classroom hours. Many times men outnumbered women in teaching. In the early days, married women were sometimes considered too worldly to teach young children. Even more unfairly, men were often paid twenty-five percent more. These things are hard to imagine when you study some of the outstanding female teachers from history.

In 1901, there were over 12,000 country schools in Iowa. By 1972, they were a thing of the past. As a footnote here, I personally have met people connected



Photo by Dave Mcfarland

to education, who are still looking for evidence and data to prove that a country school education was inferior to a town based education. I fear there are too many individuals out there, who have excelled in life and in their endeavors to dispel that rumor.

A little more local, the Pittsburg #8 Country School has just moved to the Montgomery County History Center and going to be getting a face lift. #8 has had an interesting life. There seems to be no formal record of its actual opening date only a record of a business meeting held in it in 1871. The records do tell of its history that the school was built of Northern Yellow Pine. The trees were cut in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The logs were rafted down the Mississippi River to the city of Burlington. There the logs were sawn and milled into lumber. The lumber was then shipped to Red Oak on the brand new Burlington, Missouri Rail Road. From Red Oak the lumber travel by horse and wagon three miles south to where it was assembled into a school. Sadly the first location was at the bottom of a hill prone to flooding, so it had to be moved up the hill. It would be one of the last one-room country schools to operate in the County. But life was not over, it would move to the Fairgrounds in Red Oak for a number of years and now one more move to the top of another hill at the History Center.

Another footnote here, I had several family members, who attended the Pittsburg School and in conversations I have met several people, who went there. I hope more will come to visit old times.



# RED OAK ARTS DESTINATION

## STUDYING OUR PAST, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Written by: Samantha Williams

Located at 2nd and Coolbaugh, Red Oak's most recent mural was completed July 2024 by the Red Oak Arts Destination group. Titled, "Studying Our Past, Looking to the Future", the artwork was designed to show the past, present and a hopeful future.

The first calendar image, starting from the left, pays a homage to the indigenous people in the area and the year Thomas D. Murphy and Edmond Osborn formed the publishing company. The second calendar is a depiction of the Thomas D. Murphy Company being the "Birthplace of the Art Calendar" and the artwork

"Hard Lesson" by Frederic Stanley. The third calendar represents today and looking towards the future. The fourth calendar represents a freedom to explore and enjoy the Iowa landscape, and the fifth calendar reflects a common metaphor of transformation that a butterfly's life cycle represents.

Other images found in the mural such as the steam locomotive represents how it was part of the early development in the area. The changing oak leaves and acorns represent the passage of time, and the sweeping curve at the lower edge mimics the rolling hills and leads to the state flower, the prairie rose.



"Studying Our Past, Looking to the Future" mural on 2nd and Coolbaugh in Red Oak, IA

Photo by Phillip Lamb

## LATINO CENTER MURAL

Written by: Jim Hoskinson

Conceived by Dawn Oropeza in 2006, recently repainted by her, her sons and members of her non-profit "Al Exito". The mural is in honor of Becky Gambs, who helped start Christ's Cupboard, still serving the community 25 years later. Symbolism includes the Mexican origin of corn, the Monarch butterfly, the Bald eagle of the United States and Golden eagle of Mexico.



Latin Center Mural located on North 4th and East Reed Street,  
[www.redoakiowa.com/murals/](http://www.redoakiowa.com/murals/)



# RED OAK CHAMBER & INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Written by: Elaine Carlson

Executive Director of the Red Oak Chamber & Industry Association



As the planning of Chamber Holiday events are in the works, one of the dates so many look forward to is the sale of Cold Cash! This year, \$25,000 of Cold Cash will be sold at the Red Oak Chamber office on Saturday, November 2nd from 8 am until we sell out! The public will be able to purchase \$100 worth of Cold Cash for only \$80 with a limit of \$300 per household. The City of Red Oak continues to support this program with their investment of \$5,000 to make up the 20% discount. We appreciate the City's commitment for their continued support of this successful program. One distinct difference between Cold Cash & Red Oak Bucks is the expiration date. Cold Cash certificates will be valid from November 2nd, 2024 through January 31st, 2025, giving purchasers three months to spend them. The Red Oak Bucks do not have an expiration date. Red Oak Bucks and Cold Cash are available for purchase by the public. The Cold Cash program continues to be a successful program that keeps those dollars local during the holiday season.

"I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas in Red Oak, Iowa" is our theme this year and we have so much going on throughout the season! The Holiday Extravaganza, aka Ladies Night Out event, has sold out two weeks prior to the event and we are expecting this year to be no different. Also on the schedule are lighting of the Community Christmas Tree, horse drawn carriage rides, hot cocoa with Santa on the evening of November 29th. The next morning for Small Business Saturday, we will offer free rides on the lighted fire truck with our Southwest Iowa Squadron of Heroes, Christmas crafts for families, and Christmas Bingo. In the afternoon, families may enjoy a matinee at the Red Oak Grand Theatre of the free showing of "A Dog Named Christmas." All of these great events will take place in our festive downtown Red Oak that weekend. events offered by other organizations and businesses again this year. We have planned for and are looking forward to a holiday season for all to participate and enjoy!

This is also the time of year when we are working on ROCIA Membership & Sponsorship Renewals for the

next year. As we receive confirmation of those renewals, it helps us to then put together the overall budget and event budgets for 2025. Collectively, Red Oak Chamber and Industry Association members can achieve more than one business or individual can do alone. Their partnership impacts our community, area tourism, small business growth, education, and many other areas for our region. We value our relationship with our investors and recognize it would be impossible to accomplish all that the Chamber does throughout the year if it were not for their continued support and investment.

Our Chamber is the only entity that markets Red Oak. We strive to market not only our member businesses and organizations but our community as a whole. We promote our own events and programs but also promote community events as well. If you haven't done so yet, please check out our website [www.redoakiowa.com](http://www.redoakiowa.com), 'like' our @RedOakChamberandIndustryAssociation and @RedOakJunctionDays Facebook Pages, and follow us on Instagram to keep up on the latest greatest news and information!

Until next time!

Elaine Carlson

## BUILDING TRADES PROGRAMS

Red Oak Alum, Ryan Beeson has served on the Red Oak Chamber & Industry Association for three years now. He is the Chamber Board President and also serves on the Finance Committee and co-chairs the Building Trades Housing Committee. So many exciting and progressive things have happened under his leadership as well as our past and present Board Directors. Ryan shares the Chamber's newest initiative below.

Last fall it was decided the Red Oak Chamber and Industry Association in conjunction with

## BUILDING TRADES PROGRAMS CONTINUED

Southwestern Community College and Red Oak Community School District will be bringing back the building trades programs at ROCHS for the 2024/2025 school year. A housing committee was established with the following volunteers: Randy Orme and Ryan Beeson, co-chairs; Jeff Soe, John O'Neal, Bryant Blay, Nathan Perrien, and Ron Lorenz. ROCIA is the "owner" of the project and is responsible for obtaining the lot for the building trades home to be built on as well as determining the building plans for the home to be constructed. A lot at 2907 N. 4th Street was purchased By ROCIA in the Woodland Hills subdivision for the 1,402 square foot, three bedroom, two bath home to be built on. SWCC will be the general contractor of the project and has hired an instructor, Joe Nenneman, to lead the building trades program consisting of 7 Red Oak students this fall. ROCIA is very excited to not only be offering new housing to the Red Oak community, but also allowing the area students an opportunity to learn and find an interest in the trades area. If anyone is interested in more details of the to be constructed home, please stop by the chamber office to view the blueprints of the home.



Photo by Red Oak Chamber & Industry Association



Image provided by Red Oak Chamber & Industry Association

## RED OAK MIDDLE SCHOOL 1917 LOFTS

Written by: Larry Brandstetter

As alumni you attended classes at the school located at 4th and Corning Street. Some of you called it Red Oak High School, some Red Oak Junior High, some Red Oak Middle School, and even some Red Oak Junior College. This was your home away from home every day.

Starting this November, 25 families will call the new 1917 Lofts "home".

In 2019 the building was closed and the Middle School moved to the newly renovated Red Oak High School, which is now Red Oak HS/JH. The school board sold the building to a Kansas company who had plans to turn it into 2 and 3 bedroom apartments. It has taken much longer than originally planned due to many issues including Covid, but the renovation is almost complete.

The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places which lead the design group to work with Red Oak architectural



Photo by 1917 Lofts

firm Ally Poyner Macchietto to bring the building back to its original 1917 look. Part of that "original" look are new windows that replicate those installed when the building was new.

Parts of each apartment will include memories of the space as a classroom. It may



# RED OAK MIDDLE SCHOOL 1917 LOFTS CONTINUED

be parts of the blackboard that will remain, or the cubbies where band students kept their instruments or the original book shelves. Some lockers still inhabit the halls. All of the wood floors have been polished along with classroom woodwork.

The iconic gym and auditorium were not included in the renovation. They will live on with your memories of practices, rehearsals, games played and performances. The

building of your memories will live on, just repurposed into homes for a new community of friends.

If interested in living in this new housing opportunity or learning more details, call Beacon Management at 641-277-4027 or go to their web page, “1917 Lofts Apartments” or FB page at “1917 Red Oak Apartments”.



Red Oak Middle School Classroom Before Renovation  
Photo provided by 1917 Lofts



Red Oak Middle School Classroom After Renovation  
Photo by 1917 Lofts



Third Floor Apartments Layout  
Image by 1917 Lofts



# RED OAK ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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Illustration by Red Oak Artist Carroll Danbom

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