

The Ankeny Family of Des Moines, Iowa Interred in Woodland Cemetery



The Ankenys were prominent and influential early Iowans. They lived adventurous, interesting, and successful lives as settlers, gold miners, physicians, attorneys, civil war officers, business developers, elected officials, suffragists, city founders, and much more.

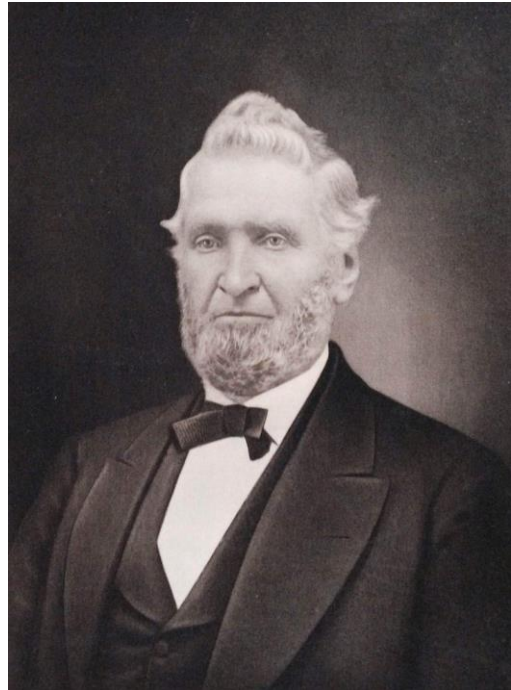
Joseph Ankeny summoned his family to Iowa where they prospered. Joseph and many members of his family are interred in Woodland Cemetery in Des Moines, Iowa. Their stories are told here to commemorate the 175th anniversary of Woodland Cemetery.

Prepared by Karla Wright
(Fifth Great Granddaughter of Dewalt Ankeny)

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Say Hello to Joseph

The Patriarch of the Iowa Ankeny Family, Joseph Ankeny, first visited Iowa in 1854 and made plans to make Iowa his home and the home of his family. The Civil War interrupted his plans to move to Iowa. In 1867 he brought his wife Harriet and youngest daughter Harriet Louise to Iowa. He built a home on the corner of Tenth and Locust in Des Moines in 1871. This new home became the center of warm-hearted hospitality, political meetings and business transactions. In 1873 Joseph and Harriet celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at this home with a grand party with numerous elaborate gifts and many descendants and guests including Iowa Governor Carpenter.



Joseph was born in 1802 in Somerset County, Pennsylvania to American Revolution Patriot Peter Ankeny and Rosina Bonnet. Joseph married Harriet Susanna Giese and they had four sons (John Fletcher, Peter Dewalt, Henry Giese, and Rollin Valentine) born to them in Somerset, Pennsylvania. Joseph Ankeny served as Lieutenant Colonel in the Pennsylvania State Militia. The very adventurous and industrious Joseph moved his family to Millersburg, Ohio in 1831. In Ohio he was a successful merchant and fruit grower. Joseph and Harriet had four daughters (Susan Fletcher, Rosina Bonnet, Mary Ellen and Harriet Louise) born to them in Ohio. Their youngest daughter, Harriet Louise, never married and became known as the “devoted daughter” of Joseph and Harriet within the social and political circles of Des Moines, Iowa.



Joseph Ankeny died on May 9, 1876. He is buried in Woodland Cemetery, Des Moines, Iowa. FindAGrave Memorial #35927166, Block: 14 Section: Lot: 00162.



“He was a man of most positive character, strong in his convictions, his opinions, however, being the result of careful consideration His was a splendid record of a self-made man, honorable in every relation in life.”

Meet John Fletcher Ankeny

Best Known as the Founder of Ankeny, Iowa

John Fletcher Ankeny is best known as the founder of Ankeny, Iowa but he was so much more. He also founded the town of Ankona, Florida on the Atlantic coast. He served as Des Moines Mayor Pro Tem and in the Illinois State House during the Civil War. He was a physician, a California gold miner and the father of four beautiful, accomplished and DAR member daughters.



John Fletcher Ankeny was born in Somerset, Pennsylvania on May 6, 1824 to Joseph and Harriet Susanna Giese Ankeny. He was their first child. He received his middle name, Fletcher, from the family who helped raise his mother, Harriet Susanna Giese, after her own mother died when she was a child. When he was seven years old he moved to Millersburg, Ohio with his parents and three brothers in 1831. John Fletcher Ankeny received formal education at a medical college in Cincinnati, Ohio. He practiced medicine and was the postmaster in Kenton, Ohio. His adventurous spirit took him and his brother, Henry Giese Ankeny, to California during the Gold Rush. While in California John Fletcher Ankeny was a physician but also became a Clerk in the first legislature in California. He also sailed to Hawaii where he learned about growing "pines" (pineapples).

His father, Joseph, was a major influence in John's life. When Joseph summoned his son back to Ohio to find a wife, marry and settle down -- John did so. Sarah Hager "Sally" Wolgamot married John on February 7, 1856 in Millersburg, Ohio. They moved to land in Illinois and established residency and a farm. John's brother Rollin and his family also moved to Illinois. While living in Illinois, John and "Sally" had four daughters. John Fletcher was a huge supporter of Abraham Lincoln and participated in Lincoln's presidential campaign while at the same time ran for political office himself. He became a member of the Illinois Legislature from Stephenson County, Illinois in 1860. John's father, Joseph, purchased land in Iowa and after the Civil War the Ankeny family made big plans to move to Iowa.

John moved his family to Des Moines, Iowa in 1869. He quickly was elected to the Des Moines City Council. His business and political connections led him to

invest, along with Mr. Fred Hubbell in the Minnesota Narrow Gauge Railway that would traverse from Des Moines northward in 1875. His business instincts propelled him to buy land along that route, knowing that towns prospered where the railroads existed. There he built a post office, boarding room and a house. The land was platted under the name Ankeny. The town was named Ankeny. Although John built a house there, he and his family never lived in Ankeny. They continued to live in the growing and thriving business community of Des Moines. The narrow gauge rail company he founded with Mr. Hubbell ceased to exist when the standard gauge railroads became the norm. John Fletcher turned his sites to other ventures.

A letter from John Fletcher to his oldest daughter, Florence, dated May 30, 1880, describes his life out in the wild southwest near Silver City. The letter is a revealing look into the heart and mind of John Fletcher. His letter states "I have not come across what I am hunting for".

John returned to Iowa and then quickly turned his attention to Florida. He was determined to establish a pineapple plantation in Florida and he did. He bought land and established a town and named it Ankona. Many members of John's immediate and extended family visited and moved to Florida. John and his wife, Sally, continued to maintain a residence in Des Moines. They lived in a home on Sycamore Street which later was named East Grand Avenue. The home was located just a few blocks from the new Iowa State Capitol. John's oldest daughter, Florence, was the first female employee at the capitol and she worked her way up to the position of Assistant Law Librarian.

John Fletcher died in Florida on April 9, 1886 at the age of 61. He is buried in Woodland Cemetery in Des Moines, Iowa. FindAGrave Memorial #35927186 Block: 14 Section: Lot: 00162.



General Rollin Valentine Ankeny

A Renaissance Man

General Rollin Ankeny served in the Civil War, studied medicine, was Polk County Coroner, surveyed land across the nation, was appointed by the Iowa Governor as Commissioner for the Chicago World Exhibition, and much more.

Rollin Valentine Ankeny was born in Somerset County, Pennsylvania to Joseph and Harriet Ankeny on May 22, 1830. He moved to Millersburg, Ohio with his parents and three older brothers when he was just an infant. He worked on his father's farm and in his store. He acquired his primary education in a log school house and was a student throughout his life. His reading, experience, observations and



contact with the world made him a well informed man. He studied medicine with Dr. James S. Irvine and he married Dr. Irvine's daughter, Sarah, in 1853. Sarah and Rollin moved to a 320 acre farm in Stephenson County, Illinois that his father owned. At the outbreak of the Civil War they had three children, Irvine Sample born in 1854, Harriet Louise born in 1856 and Joseph "Josie" born in 1859.

Rollin became an active and decorated military leader for the Union. He assisted in recruiting Company A of the Eleventh Illinois Volunteer Infantry. He was instrumental in procuring clothing and needed supplies. He was assigned duty as division quartermaster and was recognized as staff officer. He raised seven more companies of volunteers. He fought with the 46th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment. He was named captain of Company B. He was lauded by his superiors for his topographical maps of battlegrounds. Ankeny was named first lieutenant of Company B, 46th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment. He fought with the regiment, was wounded at the Battle of Fort Donelson and the Battle of Shiloh and again while on the skirmish line at the White House. He participated in the battles of Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Corinth, the second battle of Corinth, the campaign into Mississippi and the campaign of Vicksburg. His superiors utilized his skills in drawing topographical maps of battlegrounds. When the 142nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment was raised in June 1864 he was named its colonel. When the war ended, he was

brevetted a brigadier general. Colonel Ankeny was brevetted brigadier general by President Andrew Johnson.

During the war, in December of 1861 Rollin and Sarah suffered the death of their little two year old boy, Joseph. Two more children were born. Rollin Valentine was born in 1865 and Mary Bonnet was born in 1870.

Rollin joined his parents and siblings and moved to Iowa. He purchased a large 640 acre plot of land north of Des Moines. He went into the lumber business in Winterset, Iowa. He suffered the death of his wife Sarah in 1879, his son Irvine in 1886 and his daughter Harriet in 1889.

Rollin served as a U.S. marshal. He was a land surveyor in Florida and Oregon. He was part of a failed enterprise in the Black Hills of South Dakota and had a job with the US Department of the Interior. He was Overseer of the Poor in Des Moines and Coroner of Polk County. He was connected with the Masonic fraternity and Temple Commandery of Des Moines. He was a charter member of the Des Moines Lodge of Knights of Pythias and of the first Grand Army post ever organized -- Crocker post. He attended the Christian Church. He was a member of the Sons of the American Revolution and the Union Veterans Union society.

In one of his last assignments, he was appointed by the Governor of Iowa to be Commissioner of the Centennial Exposition in Chicago to raise money and organize plans of action to represent Iowa.

During his last days he lived with his elderly mother and his sister, Harriet Louise, at their 920 Locust Street home in Des Moines. Rollin died from pneumonia in Des Moines on Christmas Eve in 1901.

Rollin Valentine Ankeny is buried in Woodland Cemetery, Des Moines, Iowa. FindAGrave Memorial #17655505 Block 14, Lot 162



Harriet Louise Ankeny

Iowa's Devoted Daughter

Miss Harriet Louise Ankeny was born in Millersburg, Ohio on November 20, 1844 to Joseph and Harriet Susanna Giese Ankeny. She was their fourth daughter and eighth and last child. She was much younger than her older siblings and so she grew up much like an only child. She had a most happy childhood living in the large brick house amid flower gardens and orchards in Millersburg, Ohio. She had a troupe of loyal friends and played at housekeeping with her dolls. She danced and sang as a child and enjoyed music her whole life. She attended the Hudson Female Seminary.



Harriet Louise never married. She was a constant and devoted companion to her parents until their



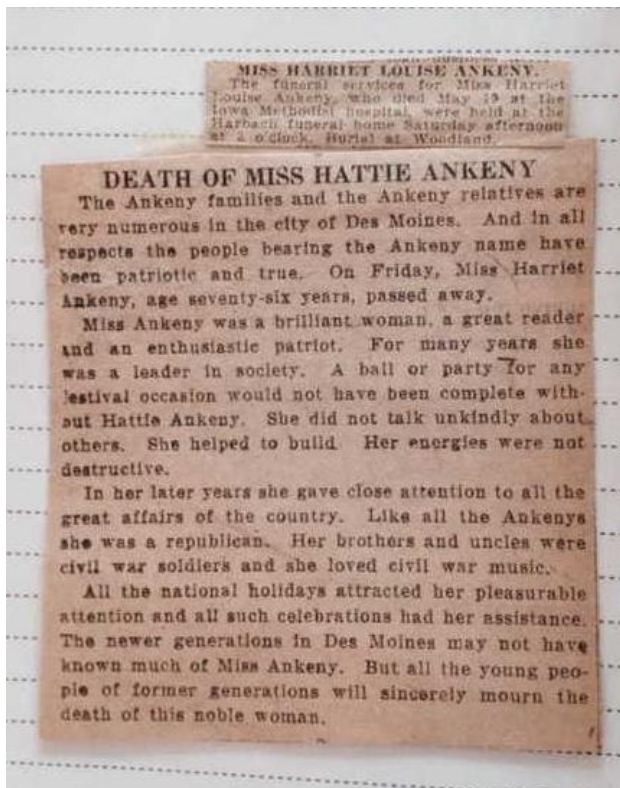
death. Harriet Louise moved with her

parents to Des Moines, Iowa in November of 1867 when she was 23 years old and was forever a "**devoted and loyal daughter to Iowa**" and "developed into an industrious, generous, unselfish woman, possessing a sensitive nature, a high spirit, yet a timid manner". (Quotes from the book, Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens by Mr. Johnson Brigham, 1918.) While building their new home in Des Moines at 920 Locust Street (corner of 10th and Locust) they lived with Harriet's sister, Susan Fletcher Ankeny Barcroft, and her attorney husband Mr. Russell Barcroft and their children. Harriet's father, Joseph, died in 1876 and Harriet lived with

her mother until her mother's death in 1897 at the age of 96. After her mother's death, Harriet Louise spent three years in the east and returned to Des Moines to renew her allegiance to the city.

Harriet Louise was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. In 1907 she was a delegate from the Abigail Adams Chapter of Des Moines to the national convention of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington. In May of 1910 she was one of the delegates from the Des Moines Woman's Club to the general biennial federation of clubs in Cincinnati. She traveled extensively in the U.S. including a trip to the Pacific coast and abroad to Europe in 1911. In her senior years she lived in the home of her niece, Mrs. Florence Ankeny Russell (oldest daughter of her brother John Fletcher Ankeny) at 824 East Grand Avenue in Des Moines. This home was just down the street and within walking distance to the new State of Iowa Capitol building. She also lived within the home of the Getchell family on 9th Street in Des Moines. (Rachel Ankeny was the wife of Charles Getchell. Rachel descended from the adopted son of Dewalt Ankeny and that line spelled their last name with an extra E Ankeny. This also prevented Rachel from joining the DAR. Rachel and Harriet Louise were not related by blood but considered each other as "family". The Ankeny line is also interred in Woodland Cemetery.)

Harriet was well known in the best social circles of Des Moines. During Harriet's lifetime she witnessed the tremendous expansion of the United States westward and the growth of the city of Des Moines. She endured the hardships and worries of the Civil War. She witnessed the woman's suffrage movement. In 1920, women had the first opportunity to vote for president and she lived just long enough to see the swearing in of the first president with women's votes in 1921. She lived during World War I. The advent of the telephone, electricity and automobile were all experienced throughout the lifetime of Miss Harriet Louise Ankeny from 1844 to 1921.



Miss Harriet Louise Ankeny died on May 19,



1921 in Des Moines. She is buried with her family in the Woodland Cemetery in Des Moines, Iowa. FindAGrave #35927175 Block: 14 Section: Lot 00162

Daughters of John Fletcher Ankeny and Rollin Valentine Ankeny Interred in Woodland Cemetery

Florence Ankeny Russell

Florence Ankeny was the first daughter of John Fletcher Ankeny. She married George Peter Russell and they had one son Fletcher Ankeny Russell. George Russell died as a young man and left Florence as a young widow with a toddler. After her husband died, Florence moved into the John Fletcher Ankeny home on Grand just blocks from the State Capitol. Florence secured a job as a “paper folder” at the State Capitol and worked her way up to "Assistant Law Librarian". She was one of the first paid female employees for the State of Iowa. She lived down the street from the Capitol at 824 East Grand Avenue. Florence and her son, Fletcher, spent time in Ankona, Florida where her father had bought land and established a pineapple plantation. Fletcher continued to live in both Iowa and Florida. Florence is buried in Woodland Cemetery in the Hunter family burial plots. FindAGrave #175266031 Block 15 Lot 292 See QR Code at burial site for Florence Ankeny Russell or view video at <https://vimeo.com/536565980>.



Susan Ankeny Brown

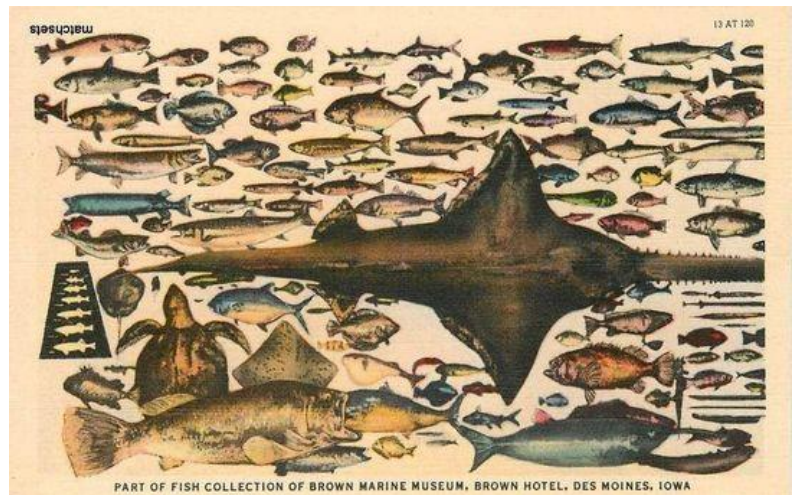
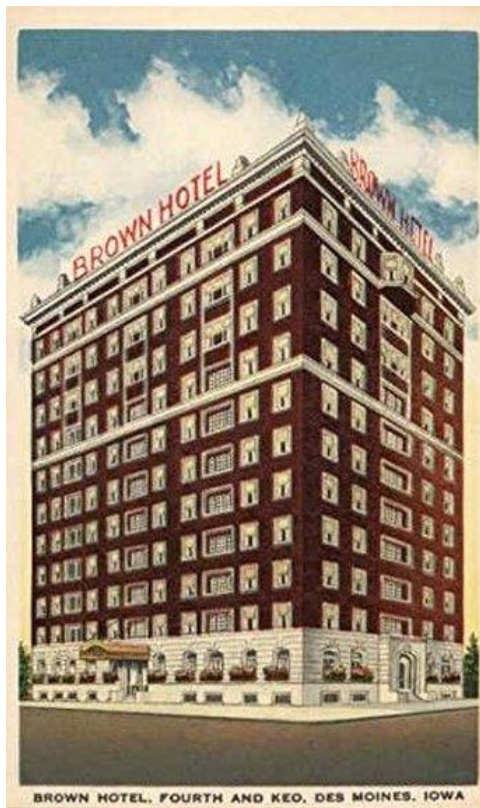
Susan Ankeny was the fourth daughter of John Fletcher Ankeny. She married Mr. Ernest Warren Brown. Mr. Brown was a very successful and prominent businessman in Des Moines. Mr. and Mrs. Brown traveled the world and started a collection of marine specimens of museum quality. This collection was displayed in the Brown Hotel which they owned and operated. They lived on the top floor. They had two sons. One lived to adulthood and married Greta Weitz. They too traveled the world and were leaders within Des Moines. Susan Ankeny Brown and Greta Weitz Brown were active in women’s clubs, the arts, and social circles.



Susan is buried in Woodland Cemetery FindAGrave#27984951 Block: 10 Section: Lot 00197 See QR Code at burial site for Susan Ankeny Brown or view video at <https://vimeo.com/536563678>



The Historic Brown Hotel, Des Moines



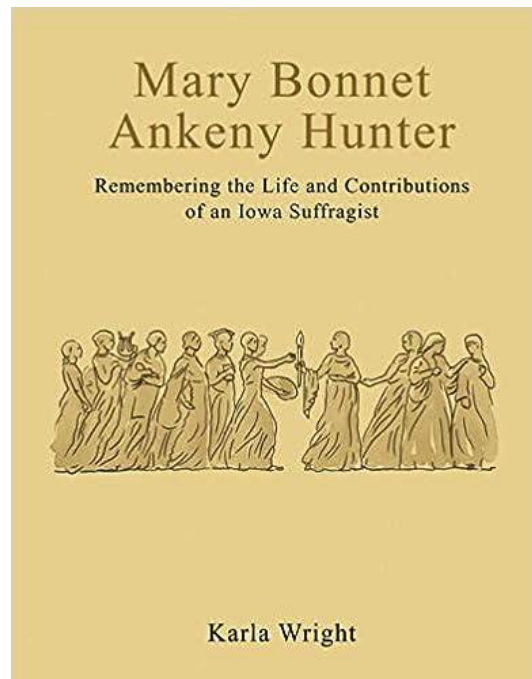
You can hear Robert Brown and his wife Greta tell about their lives, the Brown Hotel, their Ankeny ancestors and the history of Des Moines, Iowa in an enlightening interview at:

<https://archive.org/details/AnkenyBrownHotelChangesInDesMoinesAndTheBrownFamily> as part of the Oral History Collection at the Des Moines Public Library.

Mary Bonnet Ankeny Hunter

Mary Bonnet Ankeny was the fifth child of Rollin Valentine Ankeny. She was only nine years old when her mother died. She married Frederick Heaton Hunter. The Hunter family was a pioneer suffrage family. Mr. Hunter was an entrepreneur and invested and worked within farming, the rice growing business, the insurance business and lastly as a garage owner and manager. They had three children. [Mary Bonnet Ankeny](#) Hunter was a leader in the suffrage movement. She joined the Unity Circle of the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines. The church was active in the 1908 Boone suffrage parade. Mary Hunter was a member of the Iowa and Polk County League of Women Voters. Mary Hunter served as Secretary and then President for over thirteen years of the Iowa Suffrage Memorial. Mary Hunter is recognized in the [Iowa Women's Archives at the University of Iowa Library](#) . Mary Bonnet was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution but later in life she resigned to reflect her adamant views against war and fervent belief in world peace. She shared these convictions with her friend, Carrie Chapman Catt.

Correspondence between Ankeny-Hunter and Catt has been transcribed by Karla Wright and published in the biography book about Mary, "Mary Bonnet Ankeny Hunter - The Life and Contributions of an Iowa Suffragist" and its "Appendix". The myriad editorials, speeches, letters, position papers and written records are saved in these books to preserve her legacy as she preserved the legacy of the Iowa suffrage movement and leaders. Mary's dedication to the cause of Americanization, World Peace and Suffrage as well as information about her life and family are recorded in these books. The Iowa



Suffrage Memorial at the Iowa State Capitol was dedicated in 1936 by Hunter and Catt. Little Nancy Bristow (Hunter's niece) pulled the cord to open the curtain to unveil the bas relief artwork. Ankeny-Hunter commissioned Iowa artist Nellie Walker to create the bas relief. The monument represents the early suffrage leaders passing the torch to the next generation. The memorial is located outside the Secretary of State's Office in the Iowa State Capitol.

It is incredibly important to recognize Mary Ankeny Hunter for her dedicated work to preserve the history of the suffrage movement in Iowa.



Mary Bonnet Ankeny Hunter died October 12, 1954 at the age of 84, in New London, Connecticut while visiting her daughter.

The cremains of Mary Bonnet Ankeny Hunter are buried in Woodland Cemetery. Although no visual headstone exists to show the burial, cemetery records confirm her cremated remains are buried next to her husband, mother-in-law and father in law, and her daughter. FindAGrave Memorial #141658668 Block 14 Lot 234 See QR Code at burial site of Mary Bonnet Ankeny Hunter or view video at: <https://vimeo.com/536435445>



www.Ankeny.Weebly.com