

## This Christmas, become a member of the Belle Plaine Historical Society!



The Belle Plaine Historical Society was founded in 1976 by a group of foresighted community members who were instrumental in the restoration of the Hooper-Bowler-Hillstrom House.

Over the course of many years, special projects and fund raisers helped sustain the Historical Society and the exhibits. Today as a not for profit organization the society relies solely on donations and membership dues to continue to our endeavors to preserve the community's rich heritage.

**New Members joining before  
January 1st, 2018 pay Half Price!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Yearly Membership Dues:

Single/\$20.00/year. **\$10.00 if before 1/1/19.**

Family/50.00/year. **\$25.00 if before 1/1/19.**

**Send this form along with yearly dues to:**

*Belle Plaine Historical Society*

*411 N Chestnut St., Belle Plaine, MN 56011*

# Traditions

*Come and celebrate  
the Spirit of the Season...*



**Thursday, December 6, 2018**

6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

**Belle Plaine Historic  
Hooper-Bowler-Hillstrom House**

Court Square  
Belle Plaine, Minnesota

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*The Belle Plaine Historical Society wishes to  
thank all the community organizations and  
businesses that make this holiday event possible!*

## 6:00 to 6:30 p.m.

Belle Plaine Community Choir performing  
at the Historic Episcopal Church

## 7:00 p.m. Around the Tree

-Welcome to all Visitors

-Lighting of the Tree

*-Bring an ornament from home to hang on the tree!*

-Join in singing Christmas Carols

## 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

-Horse and Wagon Rides

-Warming Fire in the yard of the Historical House

-Stroll through the lower level of the Historical House

-Music Entertainment in the parlor by Curtis & Loretta

-Visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus in the Red Barn

-Visiting Reindeer outside near the Red Barn

-Refreshments and Door Prizes

### **2018 Honorary Tree Lighters:**

Leo “Sonny” and Gloria Albrecht met in 1947 on Gloria’s grandfather, Jay Gould’s, travelling circus, and married in 1953. Leo was a skilled stage builder, magician, dog and pony trainer, and MC, while Gloria’s performing talents were on display as a gifted aerialist and singer. The circus life took the happy couple all across United States until 1959, at which time they settled in Belle Plaine to raise their 6 children, Michael, Theresa, Thomas, Dale, Mary and Joseph.

Leo began a career with Keup Motors as Service Manager, and held that position for 35 years. After his retirement from Keup’s, he went on to drive school bus for the next 20 years. Through his working years, Leo served as: City Councilman, Park Board (overseeing the skating rink), Grand Knight’s of Columbus, Fire Chief, Building Committee Chairman (Police Station), and President of the Belle Plaine Historical Society. He wrote and published, “The History of Belle Plaine - 150 Years” and “The History of Belle Plaine in Pictures”. He generously donated all of the proceeds to the Belle Plaine Historical Society.

Gloria was active in many civic projects. As a member of Our Lady of the Prairie Catholic Church, she was Song Leader and Lector and served on the Liturgical Committee. She founded the Ladies Auxilary (Fire Department) where she lent her service for more than 30 years. Each year during the annual BBQ Days celebration, Gloria created numerous hand painted signs and banners for the Queen Coronation, various booths and activities. Together, Leo and Gloria directed the BBQ Days Poolside Shows, organizing, performing, scriptwriting, along with contracting talent.

### **Historic Hooper-Bowler-Hillstrom House**

was built in 1871 by **Sanford A. Hooper**, a local businessman and promoter of the town. In 1886 it conveyed to **Samuel Bowler**, a founder of the State Bank of Belle Plaine and lumber-yard owner. Bowler added a new kitchen, buttry and a five-hole, two story outhouse that is connected to the house via a skyway. He also added a copper-lined bathtub. When the Bowlers moved to Denver, Colorado in 1901, the clapboard frame house was sold to **Alfred Hillstrom** whose family lived in the house until it was purchased in 1975 by the Belle Plaine Historical Society. Current furnishing include three periods-1850's and 1860's, Victorian and early 1900's.

### **Historical Episcopalian Church**

In 1867 a New York architect sent the plans for a new church in Belle Plaine to Bishop Whipple. The church was built in 1868 on land contributed by Territorial Judge Andrew G. Chatfield, founder of Belle Plaine. The congregation organized in 1871, when the Parochial Report to the Diocese showed 16 families with a total of 70 members. In the 1860's and 1870's immigrants were coming to the Minnesota River Valley in large numbers from Germany, Ireland and Czechoslovakia. These Lutheran and Roman Catholics brought their own clergy and formed ethnic churches having no need for an English-speaking Episcopal Church. The congregation slowly dwindled and disbanded in the 1950's.