# Historic preservation award celebration May 11

The Decorah Historic Preservation Commission (DHPC) has selected three recipients for its 2022 Historic Preservation Award: Kevin Lee, the Porter House Museum, and Rachelle and Mark Branum. The awards will be presented at the Branum's building at 207 Washington Street on Wednesday, May 11, at 4:15 p.m.

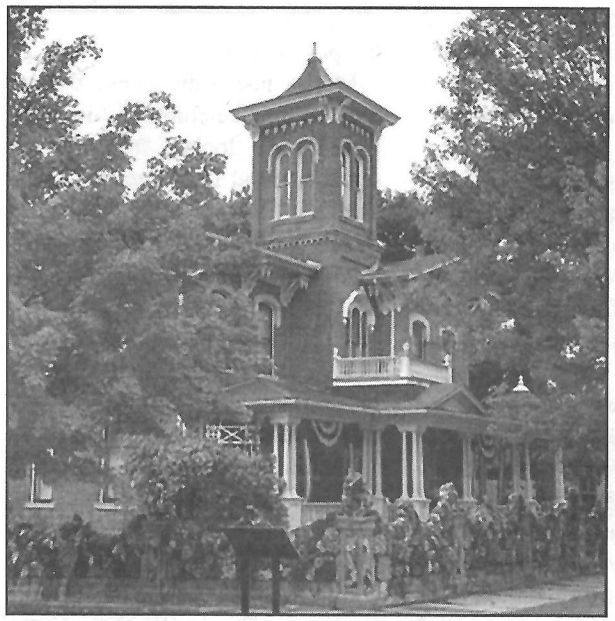
The DHPC will provide light refreshments.

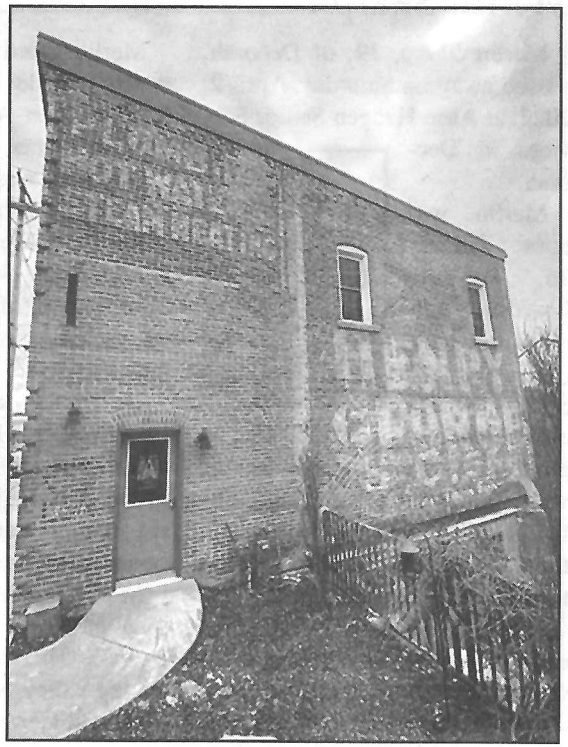
## Kevin Lee

Kevin Lee was named for his wide-ranging historic preservation work. As a trained historic preservation mason, he has been instrumental in the preservation and documenting of many stone and brick buildings and cemeteries in Winneshiek County. Lee has developed a carefully-researched list of 375 masons who have worked in Winneshiek County over the last 150 years.

DHPC Chair Mark Z. Muggli said, "The Weiser Mansion Poultry House behind First Lutheran Church, 604 W. Broadway, is only one of the many buildings that Kevin helped bring back from near collapse." As a member of the Winneshiek County Historic Preservation Commission, Lee also prepared the Boundary Increase amendment that in 2010 brought the Poultry House within the boundaries of the Broadway-Phelps Park Historic District. In 2019, DHPC honored owners Steve and Alice Runde with its historic preservation award for the restoration of the Weiser Mansion Poultry House and Carriage House.

As curator of the "Historic Sites of Decorah and Winneshiek Co., IA" Facebook Group, Lee has facilitated local discussion of historic preservation issues.





Above- The Porter House in fall 2021. Right- A recent photo of the side elevation of 207 Washington Street showing the repointed brickwork, two new limestone window sills and the now more-visible "ghost signs."(submitted photos)

Lee was a key figure in the development of the Winneshiek County Pioneer Cemetery Commission and served as its chair. He continues to train and inspire volunteers in cemetery preservation and is a board member of the State Association for the Preservation of Iowa Cemeteries (SAPIC). He has been an officer of the Freeport Cemetery Association. As current president of the Washington Prairie Association, Lee has major responsibilities for the preservation of the National-Register-listed ongoing attention to this important place."

## Rachelle and Mark Branum

The Branums were commended for their thoughtful, multi-year restoration of the historic building at 207 Washington Street. Careful mortar repointing has preserved the building's original brick and highlighted the 19th century "ghost signs" advertising "Plumbing, Hot Water, Steam Heat" and "Henry George, 5¢ cigar, Better Than Ever."

The careful restoration of the building's Washington Street brick entrance to replace an unsight-

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rie Association, Lee has major responsibilities for the preservation of the National-Register-listed Washington Prairie Methodist Church and Cemetery.

Lee is currently president of the Decorah Genealogy Association where he emphasizes historic preservation issues. He and his wife Carrie live in Freeport in a 1855 remnant of the Young American House that was originally used as a hotel.

## Porter House

DHPC commended the Porter House Museum for its ongoing historically-appropriate restoration and maintenance of the Porter House at 401 W. Broadway. In recent years, the museum has performed restoration maintenance on the front and back porches and some windows, installed solar roof panels, added an indoor climate control system, replastered and painted the front entry stairwell, and cleaned the property's highly-visible stone wall. Volunteers also worked to preserve the house grounds and gardens, including the garden archway and the distinctive rock pool. The museum announced plans to restore the house kitchen to its 1940s condition and to repair the garage windows and woodwork.

DHPC Secretary Judy van der Linden said, "The Porter House is a stellar example of careful, well-researched historic preservation. The house has a central place in Decorah's historic memory, and the Board members and directors should be commended for their

The careful restoration of the building's Washington Street brick entrance, to replace an unsightly concrete block entryway, was especially impressive. The building's badly-deteriorated limestone window sills were all replaced with new Indiana limestone. Various sections of crumbling brick were replaced with historic bricks. The masonry work was done by Ralph Brown of Full House Restoration.

The Branums bought their building in 2010 shortly before Rachelle opened the Clay Studio on the ground floor. She currently teaches classes at ArtHaus and through the Iowa Net High Academy and Choice Charter Schools. Mark is the pharmacist in charge at Donlon Pharmacy, is a pharmacy preceptor for Drake University and the University of Iowa and is a consultant pharmacist for nursing homes in Iowa and Minnesota.

## The Commission

The Decorah Historic Preservation Commission is a state-certified city board established in 2007 to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the recognition, enhancement and perpetuation of sites and districts of historical and cultural significance. The city website lists previous annual DHPC preservation awards at decorahia.org/historic-preservation/awards.

For more information on all of the recipients before the awards ceremony, head to decorahnewspapers.com