

HISTORY AHS REGION ONE WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Region One is where it all began in Shenandoah, Iowa, that special place where the AHS was founded on July 14, 1946.

Helen Field Fischer hosted “Garden Club of the Air” for 30 minutes each day on the Field family’s radio station KFNF. Mrs. Fischer did not always adore daylilies, but she became enamored once she discovered the beauty of hybrids. Because of Mrs. Fischer’s popular program, daylily enthusiasm soared.

“Round Robins,” whose cumulative gardening letters traveled on “flights” across the country, established bonds of friendship through correspondence. In 1946 the time was ripe for a flower show and the robins were eager.

Mrs. Fischer’s program widely promoted “Operation Hem Show.” On July 13, 1946, visitors saw hundreds of daylilies – all labeled to educate. The show had phenomenal attendance. Travelers brought packed picnic hampers and camp cots to set up dormitory style. This was the first opportunity for many “robins” to meet, but to them it seemed to be on an “old-friend basis.” Flush with success, they officially organized the Midwest Hemerocallis Society on July 14, renamed it the Hemerocallis Society in 1947 (when 5000 people attended the reunion convention in Shenandoah), and permanently designated it the American Hemerocallis Society, Inc., in 1954.

When AHS began the Awards and Honors Program in 1950, it established the Helen Field Fischer Gold Medal for outstanding service. Mrs. Fischer was the first recipient.

From the beginning of AHS, an abiding interest in daylilies drew people together. Today daylily frenzy goes on unabated. “Robins” continue on their “flights,” including the E-mail Robin with over 1,000 members. We still travel to distant places without knowing anyone but through correspondence. When we meet face-to-face, it is as it was in the beginning – on an “old-friend basis.” Friendships are what we remember best; they are the glue of our Society. We owe it all to station KFNF, affectionately nicknamed “Kind Friends Never Fail,” and that special group of “robins” who met for the first time in Shenandoah, Iowa on July 13 - 14, 1946, where it all began.

Kathy Lamb,
Editor, Region One Daylily Pioneer