

# Ames Tribune

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LOCAL

## Ames dedicates airport to Black aviator pioneer in Juneteenth celebrations



**Teresa Kay Albertson**

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Ames is expanding Juneteenth celebrations Saturday by re-dedicating the city's airport to the James Herman Banning Ames Municipal Airport.

Banning, who moved to Ames in 1919 to attend Iowa State College, was the first Black American citizen to receive his pilot's license from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Banning and mechanic Thomas C. Allen were the first African Americans to complete a transcontinental flight. Banning developed his love for flying while living in Ames and named his plane "Miss Ames" after the city. He moved to Los Angeles in 1929. He died in a plane crash in San Diego in February 1933 while flying as a passenger.

Banning's great-nephew Christopher A. Hart will speak at the ceremony Saturday, sharing information about Banning and his legacy in aviation.

The celebration will be held at 10 a.m. at the front entrance of the airport, 2520 Airport Drive.

The ceremony will be followed by a reception in the airport terminal with light refreshments.

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### A push to honor a local legend

The Ames City Council's efforts to rename the airport was championed by council member Gloria Betcher.

"I think that it is about time that Ames recognizes some of our more impressive residents of color in a substantial way," Betcher said during a city council discussion in September of last year. "This is one step in the right direction."

However, council member Tim Gartin, the lone nay vote on the renaming, could never come to terms with the council's process for renaming the municipal facility.

In November of last year, Gartin said he did not object to naming the airport after Banning, but was unsure of the selection process. He expressed concern that the council may have only considered Banning's name and not other options.

"We talk extensively about the importance about doing things in a way that's inclusive in this community," Gartin said in November. "But we didn't really have a chance to consider (other names) because the process was, from the very beginning, only looking at one candidate."

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Ames' push for further input garnered three other names, Gartin said, including Neta Snook Southern, Hartley A. "Hap" Westbrook and Frederick Douglass Patterson. All had connections to Ames and aviation.

Gartin said he hoped his dissension to the airport renaming would help the council consider a more inclusive process in the future.

"I think it's important that we try to avoid a process that is limited to just one name and that we would give a full consideration to the others," Gartin said.

Following the Banning Dedication Ceremony Saturday, participants are invited to attend the NAACP's second annual Juneteenth Celebration from noon to 4:30 p.m. at Bandshell Park, which includes live music, food trucks, arts and crafts, games, face painting, and more. City of Ames Police, Fire, Water, and Ames Parks and Recreation departments will participate in the event. A presentation of a play about Banning will begin at 2:30 p.m. at the Durham Bandshell stage. All events are free and open to the public.

*Teresa Kay Albertson covers politics, crime, courts and local government in Ames and central Iowa for the Ames Tribune and Des Moines Register. Reach her on Twitter @TeresaAlberts11 and at talbertson@registermedia.com, 515-419-6098.*

