



JOHNSTON Historical SOCIETY

(Station) P.O. Box 109, Johnston, IA 50131-0109

President Mary Ann Roberts

Secy-Treas. Ray Schliehs

NEWSLETTER

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March Meeting

Time: 4:00 p.m. March 26, 1997

Place: Crown Point Conference Room, Pioneer Parkway

Program: Houses of Interest Around Johnston

Slides by Barbara Zorn, and

Commentary by Ray Schliehs

Ray and Barbara have put together an interesting selection of houses in the Johnston vicinity, both old and new, whose history and special characteristics deserve our attention. (See the accompanying history of the Elliott House.)

Notice of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Johnston (Station) Historical Society will be held at Crown Point Conference Room on Tuesday, April 29th at 4:00 P.M. Elections of officers for the coming year will be held, and other business of the Society will be transacted. Members are urged to attend.

History of Johnston Station

Some years ago a brief history of Johnston was put together by Bob Otto and others, and placed in the library. Members of the Johnston (Station) Historical Society have been given the assignment to up-date and enlarge this history, adding new and old stories of the early settlers, those who came later, business, schools, churches, people who founded them, anything which has to do with the history and growth of the community.

This committee, headed by Bob Thomas, is asking for help in gathering together those facts and stories which may or may not have been told-- from letters, old documents, histories of organizations, and those which older folk remember, or younger folk remember having been told. Pictures are invaluable-- and can be easily copied and returned.

If you are willing to assist in this project, or have information you think is of interest , please get in touch with Bob Thomas, or the Society (addresses below)

Examples of possible subjects are:

Early Johnston pioneer families
Old and new business ventures
Johnston School history
Camp Dodge history

Saylorville Lake and gorge
Johnston Chamber of Commerce
Service clubs-- Garden Club, Rotary,
Kiwanis, Lions, Jaycees, etc.

Sports Leagues
History of the churches:
St. James Lutheran Church
Johnston Evangelical Free Church
St. Paul's Presbyterian Church
Youth Homes of Mid-America-
formerly the YMCA Boy's Home

Johnston Public Library
Pioneer Hi-Bred and growth to Pioneer
Hi-Bred Internat'l
Fruitland-Brennan Improvement League
Johnston Historical Society

And any others you may think of!!
If we don't write our history, it may be lost.

Write to: Johnston (Station) Historical Society, P.O. Box 109, Johnston, Iowa 50131-109
Phone: Bob Thomas at 515-277-3882
E-Mail: Bob Thomas RLT 50310@ aol.com.

Sesquicentennial Tree Project

The State of Iowa just finished celebrating its 150th anniversary. Johnston can claim the same distinction. In 1846 Ezekiel and Mary Hunt came to this area to settle. The Johnston Tree Board recently applied for, and have been notified that they will receive a State matching grant of \$1000 to plant trees in celebration of Arbor Day.

To celebrate, at the same time, the 150th anniversary of the settlement of the area, seemed appropriate. And so this spring 15 trees will be planted on city and school property, each tree designating a decade of progress and growth in the history of Johnston, from the 1846 settlement by the Hunts, through 1850's, 1860's, etc. through to 1990. The Johnston (Station) Historical Society will be instrumental in identifying crucial and/or interesting events marking each decade, and such information will be available on site.

Trees to be planted are: Serviceberry, American Hornbeam, Swamp White Oak, "Greenspire" Linden, Ginko, Kentucky Coffeetree, Hackberry, Red Oak, Black Alder, 'Autumn Purple' Ash, 'Prairiefire' Crabapple, European Larch, Norway Spruce, Black Hills Spruce and Blue Spruce.

Donations of planting labor and matching funds are solicited from the Johnston service organizations, as well as support for this "Johnston Pride" project. Call Mary Jane Paez if you are interested in helping.

Membership

Membership Chairman Ferne Michael has been doing an outstanding job contacting prospective members! We are sending this newsletter out to 87 households, and are up-dating our records. We ask that if there are errors to contact Ray Schleih's at our P.O. Box 109 Johnston IA 50131 address.

We welcome the following new members:

Susan Nystrom
Urbandale, IA

Barton & Virginia Schlenker
Johnston, IA

Mark E. & Lori McAllister
Johnston, IA

Margaret A. Sharp
Johnston, IA

Ruth B. Stone
Seattle, WA

Rachel Susan Canon
Woodland Hills, CA

Steve Orlich
Pensacola, F

Mary Helen Straker
Dawson, IA

Helen Tuffs
Bondurant, IA

Muriel Ross
Lawrenceburg, TN

Jean Landgren
Wilmar, MN

Richard E. & Linda Hyde
Johnston, IA

Harry & Mary Davis
Johnston, IA

Agnes Walker
Madrid, IA

George & Jo Ann Young
Grant City, MO

Radomir & Delores Vignovich
Ahwahnee, FL

Russell & Wanda Slauson
Grimes, IA

Roger Wigton
Des Moines, IA

Charles & Ann Cerar Mayernick
Pueblo, CO

William & Shirlee Herrold
Des Moines, IA

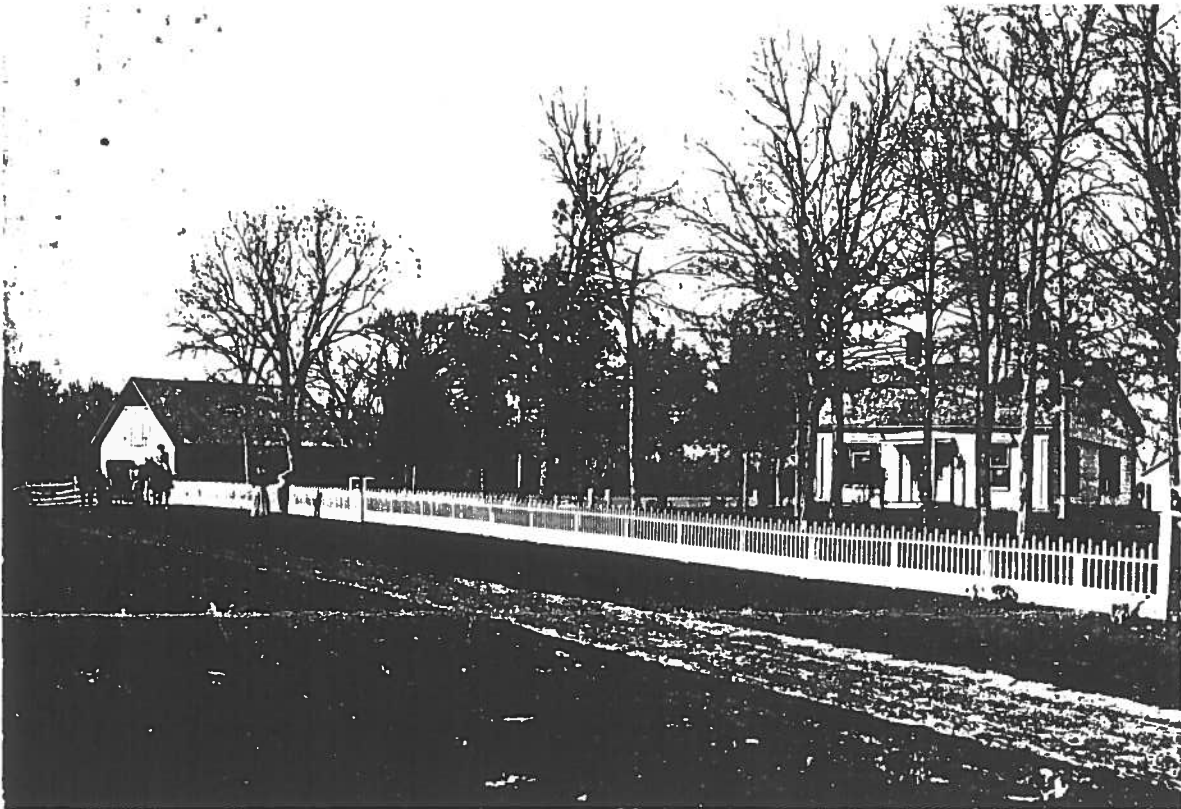
The Johnston(Station) Historical Society is listed as a tax deductible organization under IRS code 501 (c) (3). Tax ID no. 42-1424702.

Elliott House

As you drive along Northwest Beaver Drive, about a mile before you reach the Long Bridge, look for three concrete barriers along the north side of the road, which block access to some unused lanes leading through the brush and trees toward the shore of Saylorville Lake. One of these, before the Saylorville Dam was constructed, led to Elliott's Ford, an established route across the Des Moines River used by horses and wagons, and the Fort Dodge- Keokuk Stage Line.

The other drives led to a farm home, one of the oldest houses in Polk County still in use, and constructed by one of the early settlers in the area, Abraham Elliott. He came to the area in 1853, and built the house in 1857. The Elliott family lived there until 1889, when they sold out to Mr. & Mrs. Samuel S. Harvey.

Recently, the house and farm-stead were described by Mavis Cunningham Kingsbury, who is a grand-daughter to Samuel Harvey; she grew up just down the road, and spent many hours in the home with her grandparents.



The Elliott House, about 1902, when the Harvey Family owned it. Note the picket fence; a brick walkway led from the gate to the front door. Also note the narrow road in front of the house, what is now Northwest Beaver Drive. In earlier times it was called the Old Ridge Road, and the Fort Dodge Road.

The house itself was constructed by a cabinet and casket maker from Polk City and built from native walnut cut from the adjoining timberland and processed at lumber mills in Polk City. There were no nails in the frame-work; it was mortised and pegged. The floors were nailed to the hand-hewn floor joists with square nails. The exterior was finished with vertical walnut boards and battens. There were attractive scrolls and detailing over the windows and the front entryway.

Inside, the front door opened to a wide hall, leading to a large room, the dining room, at the rear, and featuring a wide open walnut staircase. Upstairs were two small low-ceilinged bedrooms, and a small railed balcony. (Mavis Kingsbury recalls that she and her sisters used this as a stage balcony, playing to the audience on the floor below). On the main floor were also a bedroom, a living room, kitchen and a pantry and entry room. The paneling was all black walnut. Seven large stone fireplaces heated the house; as a young housewife and mother of two small girls, Mrs. Harvey did not want to cope with this method of heating, and soon a huge wood-burning furnace was installed in the basement.

Another change which the Harveys made was to paint the house. Mrs. Kingsbury says that "Grandma did not like that ugly brown exterior, and had the house painted white".

Other features of the farmstead were a woodhouse, where wood and cobs were stored, and where all of the tools -- saws and whetstone- were kept.. Of course there was an out-house, and toward the rear an ice house, constructed on a grade, held large pieces of ice cut from the Des Moines river, covered with sawdust to provide ice well into the summer heat.

When the Elliotts first moved to the property, they lived in a cabin while the main house was being built. The Harvey family used this as a wash-house, and Mrs. Kingsbury remembers the huge stone fireplace, with large swinging cranes to hold the heavy kettles. There were storage shelves, and large cupboards, also made of the native walnut.

The barn to the north-west of the house once housed horses used on the Des Moines-Woodward Stage Line. For many years saddle-bags used to hold the mail that was delivered along the stage routes were stored in the attic of the house.

Mr. & Mrs. Harvey died in 1948, he at the age of 92; she was 90. The house was left to one of their daughters, who was not interested in keeping it, and it was sold to Mr. & Mrs. Frank Lawson of Des Moines, along with 6 acres of land. Mrs. Lawson was interested in antiques, and many of the old furnishings of the house stayed with it. The Lawsons cleaned the wood-shed of huge piles of chips, and converted it to a garage.

In 1975 the Army Corps of Engineers claimed the property as a part of the Saylorville Lake project, and the Elliott house was sold once more, and moved south-east along N.W. Beaver Drive, to its present location in Merwood Knolls. Mavis Kingsbury was able to retrieve some of the old family mementos at the sale-- among them a spinning wheel.

The house has gone through some further renovations and remodeling; the addition of a dormer added more room to the second floor. The exterior has been covered to provide better insulation, but still in the vertical siding with board and battens.

Currently owned by Don Christensen, the Elliott House, one of the oldest houses in Polk County still in use, remains a graceful reminder of early settlement in the Johnston area.

(Information from Mavis Cunningham Kingsbury, the Des Moines Register, and the late Charles Roberts)