

Johnston (Station) Historical Society
Post Office Box 109
Johnston, Iowa 50131
www.johnstonhistoricalsociety.com

NEWSLETTER

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President: Mary Jane Paez

Vice-Pres. & Programs: Judy Bogaard

Secretaries: Marlys Seibert & Pat Wallerstedt

Treasurer: Robert Thomas

Membership: Garland Seibert

Newsletter: Selma Duvick

March Meeting

Sunday, March 28

4:00 p.m.

At the Simpson House

(6161 Northglenn Drive,
west of Merle Hay Road)

We're making good progress on
renovations!
Come and See!

The electrical wiring is nearly completed. Finishing the walls is what is holding up the last connections of switches and receptacles. It's nice to have actual light fixtures and plugs in the walls for sawing and air tool stapling.

The plumbing is finished except for the fixture installation. Plumb Supply and Combs Plumbing, a Johnston company, have been invaluable to us with their assistance in getting our fixtures donated or at a reduced cost.

The interior staircase is started and will soon be done. All of the knotty pine walls in the bathrooms are completed. Now we are awaiting news about grants written for funds to complete the barn kitchen, the house kitchen and paint for the house.

We have more good news! The Electric Company of Greater Des Moines, another Johnston business, did the rough wiring in the house. When we contacted them to find the cost for completing wiring in the upstairs and for the basement and kitchen, they replied, "Don't worry about it!" Good news indeed!

The crew began the following day and the house is now lit up! Les Anderson, former owner of the Lamp Shop in Beaverville, offered his services and has completed the

Looking Ahead:

Our annual meeting will be on:

Wednesday, April 28

4:00 pm

At the Simpson House

Other dates:

May 23 (Sunday) meeting

June Green Days

June 23 (Wednesday) meeting

From the President:

The last time I wrote this column was in November. I was gone in January, and I can't believe all that has been accomplished!

Thanks to Russ Slauson, a furnace was installed in the house and barn so that we could continue to work through the winter. Russ completed the ductwork and the ground level of the barn is cozy.

rewiring of our antique light fixtures and the original gas light fixtures. They are all gleaming and gorgeous and ready to install.

We have had good help from court-sentenced Community Service people who have worked faithfully for us. A few have given more than their court-appointed hours because they have a good feeling about our project.

In addition, we have contacted the Iowa Department of Corrections, and with their cooperation 10 minimum- security inmates will assist us by, among other things, installing the cedar paneling in the barn. Following the men's two-week service, women from the women's prison will finish laying the inscribed bricks on the upper patio, and install bricks on a patio under the deck of the barn. The Dept. of Corrections staff were very impressed with our project, and we are fortunate to get their help.

Our barn loft will be used on June 17th during Johnston's Green Days as a movie theater. And the Johnston Lions Club is planning an auction in the barn during Green Days with Tim Busby donating his services as auctioneer. We need donations from members and friends; let us know what you can donate, to be listed in the auction flyer.
Call: Mary Jane Paez (515) 278-1170
Bob Thomas (515) 491-2521
Mary Jane Paez



Displays at City Hall

Once again Ferne Michael has put together informative displays of photographs and information in the cases in the hallway of City Hall.

The current subjects are two pioneer Johnston families: the Betz Family and the Schleih's.

Johannes Betz came to Iowa from Germany in 1853, and Ferne has gathered photos of his family and his story in her display. Many descendants of Johannes and his wife are still resident in the Johnston community

JSHS member Raymond Schleih's parents, Fred and Hazel Schleih's, came to this area in 1919. Ray grew up in Johnston, graduated from Johnston High School, and served as a B-17 pilot during WWII, flying missions over Europe. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his service in the Army Air Force. His story may be found in "Heroes Among Us", memoirs of twelve Iowa WWII veterans, edited by Jane Cox, and available at local bookstores.



Recent JSHS Activities.....

The Lawson Elementary School recently received a grant from the Iowa Arts Council to create murals in school hallways reflecting the history of the community. The Johnston Historical Society provided information and resources to the school and to the artist -in-residence who will help the students in the design and execution of the murals.

First Bank, on 86th Street, contacted the Johnston Historical Society, requesting historical photos of the bank location to be used as decoration in the public areas of the bank.

For many years this tract of land was the site of the Hayden Seibert farm, and Garland and

Marlys Seibert contributed photos of the farm from their family collection to the bank.



CONTRIBUTIONS

Ferne Michael

Windsor Heights, IA

In Memory of:

Walter Olmstead

Gladys Kuefner

Marianne (Surber) Olmstead

Myrtle Van Dyke

Johnston, IA

Harold Bullington

Des Moines, IA

Bricks:

Mary Jane & Alix Paez
Johnston, IA


BILL MARY
& DAVID PAEZ

Raymond Schlenker
Johnston, IA

RAYMOND M
SCHLENKER

Stephanie Reynolds
Des Moines, IA

STEPHANIE
REYNOLDS

Thank you 

Over the past three years, since January of 2001 when the Historical Society voted to accept the offer of Laverne & Shirley Simpson to donate their historic house and barn to the Society, we have received so much help in this project.

Aside from the cash gifts from many members and friends, help has come from a number of businesses and organizations, and we are deeply appreciative of their interest.

The city of Johnston has helped in so many ways, including permitting the siting of the buildings in Johnston Commons.

Others who have given of time, money and in-kind services are no less appreciated, and we'd like to give them recognition and send them our deep gratitude. Following is a summary of these contributions.

Over \$50,000

Pioneer Hi-Bred International
(matching grant & contribution)

The Simpson Family
(donation of house and barn)

\$35,00 and over

Greater Des Moines Convention & Visitors
Bureau (Grant)

\$15,00 and over

Elwell Foundation

\$10,000 and over:

Jordan Motors (pledge 2003-2008)
Bissell House Movers (in kind)

\$5,000 and over:

R.A.C.I. Grant
VGI Design (in kind)
The Electric Company (in kind)
Kevin Moran (in kind, site plan)
Russell Slauson (in kind)
State of Iowa Department of Corrections
(in kind)

\$1000 and over

Combs Plumbing (in kind)
Polk County Community Betterment
Grant
Plumb Supply (in kind)
Johnston Lions Club
MidAmerican Energy
Dept. of Natural Resources Grant
John Deere Credit

\$500 and over

Elview Construction (in kind)
Artistic Waste (in kind)
Bishop Engineering (in kind)
Robert Metcalf (in kind)
Jordison Construction (in kind)

\$300 and over

Mobile Equipment Maintenance & Repair
(in kind, moving windmill)
Allender Butzke Engineers (in kind)
Cub Scout Den 4, Pack 44
Harold Bullington (in kind)

\$100 and under:

Pioneer Sons & Daughters
Polk County Bank
Community State Bank
Commercial Federal Bank
Casey's General Stores
Wolfe Machinery
Big Red Quickprint

In Memoriam

Marianne (Surber) Olmstead

We recently noted the death of Walter Olmstead, and now report the death of his wife, Marianne (Surber) Olmstead in Vista, CA on February 9, 2004.

Marianne was born in Johnston, and was active as a nurse in a number of venues over her adult years. While a student at Johnston High School she was a basketball star. The JSHS extends sympathy to her family and many friends still in this area.

Gladys Kuefner

With the death of Gladys Kuefner on January 22, 2004, we note the passing of an era. Gladys was 95 years old, and the great-grand-daughter of one of Polk County's early settlers. Her great-grandfather, Johan Kuefner came to this area in 1855.

Gladys graduated from Johnston High School, and was employed, among other places, at Pioneer Hi-Bred Corn Company. For a number of years she ran the family farm.

A Charter member of the Johnston Historical Society, Gladys was keenly interested in the history of her family, and of her community, and shared her knowledge with friends and visitors. She loved to tell stories of Johnston's earlier years. She will be missed by many; the JSHS sends sympathy to her friends and family.

Donald H. Zarley

We've lost a good friend, an active advocate, and a generous contributor with the death of Don Zarley on March 18, 2004.

Born when his family lived here in Johnston, Don attended Johnston Schools, Iowa State University and Drake Law School. His success was not only in his profession as a patent attorney, but as a contributor to the larger community in so many ways.

A charter member of the JSHS, he was the spark behind our drive for funds to move and renovate the house and barn. Don took over the job of treasurer when Don Denman could no longer serve, and throughout his association with the JSHS, gave good and wise counsel. We send our sympathy to his many friends and to his wife Marilyn and the rest of his family. We will all miss him.

Many thanks to those of you who have renewed your membership. If you find a renewal slip with this mailing, you need to renew!!

Goodbye to Camp Dodge Pool

Just two years ago another Johnston tradition – the prospect of a summer afternoon at the Camp Dodge Pool – came to a close.

The Iowa National Guard announced in March of 2002 that the pool would not open in the coming summer months. The local association, which had been running the pool and concessions, decided not to renew its contract with the Guard.

Repairs and maintenance costs on a pool the size of Camp Dodge Pool are high, and the Iowa National Guard felt it did not have the resources to operate it. Just painting the inside of the pool with special marine paint runs to \$15,000.

The Camp Dodge Pool was begun in 1918 as a part of the Camp Dodge military training complex, but was not completed until 1921-22. With the war over, the pool was not needed exclusively for military personnel. Running of the facility was turned over to a private group, the Des Moines Playground and Recreation Association, and it was opened to the public.

The planners of the pool must have been folks of vision, for they designed and built one of - if not the, largest outdoor filtered pools in the world. It cost \$50,000 to build. And 2 million gallons of water are required to fill it.

The bathhouse, and the concession stand which was built later in the 1930s, were both put on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995. They are considered fine examples of recreational architecture of the period in which they were built.

After the closing of the pool in 2002, it became obvious that the Johnston

community needed a water recreation facility, and the natural response was, let the City take over the operation of Camp Dodge Pool. But studies showed that this would be a very expensive proposition, as the pool needs extensive repairs.

And adding special amenities to make the pool more attractive to today's users could bring the cost, to more than \$7 million according to one estimate.

In addition, city officials have been presented with other options for an aquatic facility, and at this writing no final decision has been reached as to whether the pool will survive as a recreation facility

Among the traditions surrounding the Camp Dodge Pool is the story of Ronald Reagan, sportscaster for WHO radio, who drove out to the pool from Des Moines in his '36 yellow Nash convertible. It became his favorite place to relax during the summer.

He had been a lifeguard in his hometown of Dixon, Illinois, and according to some, he was an "unofficial" guard at Camp Dodge. Locals who were teenagers at the time recall, "we all jumped from his shoulders and played water tag with him often---".

A somewhat different picture comes from a short piece by Walt Shotwell, former Register reporter, which appeared in the March 14 2002 Des Moines Register.

According to a friend of Reagan's at the time, he "just sort of hung around, reluctant to approach other swimmers...", "didn't get acquainted very well", and he concluded, "This guy's lonely".

In any case, the Nash convertible was, according to local tradition, always parked in the shade of a cluster of white oak trees on the hillside; two of the trees succumbed to drought, but the third is still there, overlooking the big, blue, empty pool.



THE REMAINING "REAGAN OAK"
OVERLOOKING CAMP DODGE POOL, CA 1999