

Newsletter

Volume VIII Number 3

May 2001

President: Mary Jane Paez

Treasurer: Donald Zarley

Vice-Pres. & Program: Judy Bogaard

Membership: Ferne Michael

Secretary: Madilyn Allender

Newsletter: Selma Duvick

MAY MEETING

Wednesday, May 23, at 4:00 pm
Crown Point Meeting Room

OUR SPEAKER: RAY PUGH
"HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF
YOUR LIFE"

Now retired, Ray Pugh, former faculty member at Johnston High School, and then on the faculty at Drake University, has been a popular and effective motivational speaker in the Des Moines area over the years.

Meeting Dates for 2001 (programs to be announced)

July 22 – Sunday
August 22 – Wednesday
September 23 – Sunday
October 24 – Wednesday
November 25 – Sunday
No meeting in December

Mark your calendars!



From the President.....

LOOKING AHEAD:

JUNE MEETING

Wednesday, June 27 at 4:00 pm at the
Crown Point Meeting Room

Our speaker will be Martin McGrane, son of the late Bert McGrane, sports reporter for the Des Moines Tribune.

Martin will tell of his experiences and show slide photos of his "Growing Up in Johnston".

June 16th will be here before we know it! That's the day that the Historical Society will be having their Silent Auction during Johnston's Green Days. It will also be a time for the community to get better acquainted with us and with our Simpson House and Barn project.

We need to have a good showing of items for the Auction. If you know of anyone who would like to donate, let Margaret Pennington know. (See Silent Auction,

below, on page 5.) And we will have an entry in the Green Days parade as well.

A number of things have kept us busy lately. A presentation of the Simpson House and Barn project was given to the Johnston Rotary Club. There was a lot of interest shown. We are working to get the house and barn off the tax-assessment rolls.

Refining the budget numbers for the project is taking some time as well as effort. Once the final figures are known, we will begin a money-raising campaign. July 1st is fast approaching, and that's the date that the transfer of the Simpson House to the Society becomes a reality.

This project will take the cooperation and support of everyone! Let us know what you are willing to do.

Mary Jane Paez



March Meeting The History of Camp Dodge

Jerry Gorden, Director of the Gold Star Museum at Camp Dodge spoke to the Historical Society about the history of the Camp, and brought for display maps of the area, and some large photos of the encampment at various stages of development and use.

The land for Camp Dodge was purchased by the State of Iowa from local farmers in 1907, and consisted, at first, of 78 acres. It was used by the state as a camp ground and rifle range until the coming of WWI.

The United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917. In June of 1917 the U.S.

Government selected the camp area as the site for a mobilization center for the U.S. Army. No doubt the existence of the Inter-urban Railroad through this valley was one of the advantages of the location, as well as the good road (Beaver Road) connecting the camp to the resources of the city of Des Moines

During the following months the Camp, named after General Grenville Dodge, rapidly developed into a small city, with barracks replacing tents. It is hard to imagine the speed with which construction took place. By the end of July, 1917, 30 barracks were in place, and eventually 1200 to 2000 buildings were constructed, with enough space for 40,000 troops, 14,000 officers and 15,000 horses and mules. The figures are astounding.

Infrastructure was also necessary, and a water plant, a steam heating plant, a sewer system, and a lighting plant were built. There were roads to be paved (12.5 miles), dirt roads to be put in. An extension of 58th Street in Des Moines was constructed north to the camp, and paved with brick. Later, it was named Merle Hay Road in memory of the first Iowan to be killed in combat in WWI.

The extent of the camp in acreage also increased, from 570 acres in 1917 to more than 2000 by the end of that year. And additional land was leased. The final construction contract for Camp Dodge was completed on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918.

The 88th Infantry division was formed and trained here; in August, 1918 they were deployed to Europe. The Camp also was the site of a large Remount Station, which was devoted to the purchase and rough breaking of horses and mules.

Contemporary photos show some of the buildings intended for recreation. There were eight YMCA buildings, a Knights of Columbus Hall, and a YWCA Hostess Hall, among others. An organization of local women was formed and known as the "Mothers of Camp Dodge". Dances and other social activities were closely supervised to "uphold a high moral tone".

There are at least three notable events connected with the history of Camp Dodge. One of them was the "Human Statue of Liberty", in which about 18,000 troops posed on the Camp grounds in formation to form a living replica of the Statue of Liberty. It was high summer in Iowa in July of 1918, and as the troops massed and posed while a photographer on a tower took their picture, many of the men, dressed in wool uniforms, fainted from the heat.

The photo was intended for publicity for the sale of War bonds, but was never used. Among those somewhere in the photo is undoubtedly a young Lt. Omar Bradley, of WWII fame.

A shameful event that shocked and stirred local opinion was the hanging, in July of 1918, of three African-American soldiers who were accused and convicted of rape.

The accused were three of some 3000 recruits from the deep South who had been sent to Camp Dodge to form a black unit, the 366th Infantry. This was a very public hanging, and all units were required to witness the event.

In the late summer and fall of 1918 a virulent flu epidemic, so extensive that it was called a pandemic, swept the world, and in October it came to Camp Dodge; the camp was quarantined.

In November of 1999, the Des Moines Register ran a series of articles by reporter Frank Santiago about the Camp Dodge flu epidemic. He investigated the course of the epidemic and its consequences. The Military at the camp, he found, by refusing to give out information about the extent of the illness and deaths among camp personnel encouraged rumors. The official record of deaths at the Camp was 702, but undoubtedly there were more, perhaps up to 1000. At least 10,000 were hospitalized.

But rumors were that the death toll was so overwhelming that many bodies were buried in a common grave at a location near the Valley View cemetery. Jerry Gorden reports that the rumors are unfounded, and that evidence for such a common grave does not exist. But there are those who are convinced that it did happen and that evidence is there.

Another story connected with the epidemic was that there were medical experiments on members of the Black unit who were ill and in the 500-bed camp hospital at Herrold. Another story held that some 50 of these were buried on the Camp grounds. This story is also unfounded.

After the armistice in November of 1918, the Camp was closed down to all but a few Iowa National Guard units. In 1922 a giant auction was held, and the wooden barracks and other property were sold.

During World War II Camp Dodge was an induction station, and many local WWII veterans say that they reported to Camp Dodge when they "joined the Army".

There are several local landmarks connected with Camp Dodge. The limestone fencing along Beaver Drive, and the stone

guardhouse, which enhances the entry to the Camp were built as a WPA project during the depression years of the 1930's .

The cement water tower has dominated the high point along Beaver Drive, and across the road is the Camp Dodge Pool. It was built in 1920-21, and at one time was the largest filtered outdoor pool in the world. The pool and bathhouse are on the National Register of Historic Places. The old rifle range is under Saylorville Lake.

Camp Dodge is currently the headquarters for the Iowa Army/Air National Guard, and is a training site. The National Maintenance Training Center has recently been completed along N.W. 70 Ave. Other camp facilities include the Iowa Military Academy-Officer Training School, the Gold Star Museum and the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy,

Also located at Camp Dodge are the State Highway Patrol School, State Emergency Operations Center, and the Iowa Communications Network. A few years ago the large STARC Armory was built across the ridge, overlooking Saylorville Lake.

At this time Camp Dodge, an active Iowa National Guard Post, encompasses 4500 acres, space needed for training areas. There have been restoration projects for wetlands, and for prairie within its borders.

The Society thanks Jerry Gorden for an excellent presentation; he invites anyone who is interested in the history of Camp Dodge, and the military history of the country, and the State of Iowa, to visit the Gold Star Museum, on the grounds of Camp Dodge.

The Museum is open 1:30 to 5:00 pm Tuesday through Friday all year, and 1 to 4 pm on the first and third Saturdays of the

month, from May through September. Call 515-252-4531

At the Business meeting:

- Ray Schleih's will continue as the agent for the Society with the IRS.
- A phone committee will be formed to call members for meetings, etc. Pat Wallerstedt is in charge.
- Treasurer Don Zarley has put some of our accumulated funds in a CD.



ANNUAL MEETING:

Minutes of the Annual Meeting, held on Tuesday, April 24, 2001: a brief summary.

The nominating committee recommended that the officers of the Society remain the same for the upcoming year.

Officers are: President: Mary Jane Paez
Secretary: Madilyn Allender
Treasurer: Donald Zarley

The motion to accept this slate passed.

- Donald Duvick was nominated and elected, filling the position on the Board being vacated by Ray Schleih's.
- Board members are: Ferne Michael, Margaret Pennington and Donald Duvick.
- Ferne Michael continues as membership chair.
- Motion made to grant Lifetime Membership to Laverne and Shirley Simpson. Motion passed.
- Fund raising for moving and renovation of the Simpson House will begin with the Silent Auction to be held during Green Days. (See announcement below).
- Kenneth Rittgers will consult with contractors involved with moving house and barn. The Society will need the help

of all members, both in assistance with the move and renovation, and in the financing of the project.

- Bob Thomas announced that Jerry Gorden, currently Director at the Gold Star Museum, will, on his retirement, work with our archives and cataloging.



Welcome to New Members

The Johnston (Station) Historical Society is happy to welcome the following new members:

Ruth Liddy

Des Moines, Iowa

Robert and Marilyn Bauman Finney

Des Moines, Iowa

Richard Moss

Granger, Iowa

Irma Stubbs

Des Moines, Iowa

Barbara Dowd

Grimes, Iowa

Shirley Monahan

Grimes, Iowa

Laverne and Shirley Simpson were voted Life Memberships in the Johnston (Station) Historical Society at the Annual Meeting. Congratulations!



Gifts to the Society

Many thanks to the following for their contributions to the JSHS:

Ruth Dougherty, Santa Monica, CA

Louis Friestad, Johnston, IA

We have also received some photos and other Johnston memorabilia from Clyde Winters of Des Moines.

Do you have photos and memorabilia of Johnston to contribute?



SILENT AUCTION

Our fund raising Silent Auction will take place during Johnston's Green Days Celebration on Saturday, June 16, at Crown Point Center.

Margaret Pennington, our "auctioneer", asks that you put aside items you no longer want or need that someone else might want, and either call her, at **279-5321**, or bring your contributions to Crown Point on the day before, Friday, June 15.

Margaret says that she has already received some very nice contributions, but many are needed for a successful auction!

And be sure to come and bid!



Johnston All-School Reunion

You're Invited!

The All-school reunion is scheduled for this coming September, on the weekend of 14th, 15th and 16th.

A group of local Johnston alumni have arranged an opportunity for graduates and former students of the classes in the 1920's, 1930's and 1940's to meet and have a "sit-

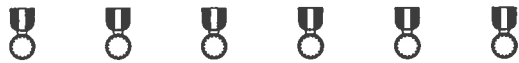
down" dinner together at the time of the reunion.

The dinner will be held at Crown Point in Johnston on Friday, September 14th at 5:00 pm.; the cost is \$10.00 including gratuity.

Crown Point will be open at 2:00 pm that afternoon and also on Saturday the 15th from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm for those who wish to meet with friends and classmates. If you bring memorabilia there will be display space available.

For further details and information, or to send in your reservation and check contact Bob Thomas, 2804 46th Street, Des Moines, IA 50310.

What a great opportunity for Alums and friends to get together!



CIVIL WAR VETERANS

Ferne Michael and Bob Thomas have been working on applications to the Department of Veterans Affairs for headstones for Civil War veterans who are buried in Johnston Cemeteries, and whose graves are not marked.

They have recently received granite markers for four of our local Civil War veterans. (One stone was broken and will be replaced.) The City of Johnston will install the footings for these stones, and will place the markers themselves (Ferne hopes) in time to **honor their service on Memorial Day.** The following Civil War Veterans' graves will be marked:

Robert Schiffer (some of his children spelled it Schiffler) was born in 1843, possibly in Illinois, for he enlisted there in November of 1861, and served with the 45th Illinois Infantry, Co.I. He was discharged in January of 1865, and died in California at the age of 75. He is buried at Ridgedale Cemetery.

Henry Herrold jr. was born in Laporte County, Indiana in December of 1843 and enlisted in the Union Army in September of 1861. He and his three brothers were members of the 9th Indiana Infantry volunteers.

While serving with this unit, he was wounded in the leg by an exploding shell at the Battle of Atlanta in July of 1864. The wound proved to be a disability in his later years.

Near the end of, or just after the Civil War ended, Henry Herrold and his brothers Joseph and William (brother Jonathan had been killed in the Battle of Stones River, TN) moved to Iowa, settling in Jefferson Township, on Beaver Creek. He died at the age of 81 on April 29, 1925, and is buried in Ridgedale Cemetery.

Joshua Boyd was born on December 13, 1836. He served in the Union Army during the Civil War. He died on April 21, 1901 and is buried at Ridgedale Cemetery.

Thomas McDowell was born in Indiana, and was a resident of Polk City when he enlisted in the Iowa 23rd Infantry in August of 1862. He attained the rank of corporal in Co. B.

His unit, a part of Grant's Vicksburg campaign, was down to a remnant after a battle at Black River Bridge, Mississippi. It was sent as reinforcement to Milliken's

Bend, Louisiana, where the Union expected an attack. And on June 7, 1863, a brigade of Texas Infantry did attack the Union positions.

In the hand-to-hand combat that followed, as the Texas Infantry charged over the levee, John Virtue, also of Polk City, and a Texas trooper impaled one another on their bayonets. McDowell came to the aid of his friend, striking the Texan on the head with his rifle, in the process becoming wounded himself. Both Virtue and the Texan were killed. McDowell was sent home with his wounds, but died in Eddyville Iowa on August 26, 1863. He is buried at Ridgedale Cemetery.

Renewals? Yes, Please!

Check your mailing label; if it reads "00 S" or "00 F" you need to renew your membership! Please do continue your membership! We need all of you to help the Society with all of our projects, the Simpson House and Barn and with telling the stories of Johnston. Send \$10 for single and \$12 for family membership to: Johnston (Station) Historical Society, P.O. Box 109, Johnston, IA 50131

The Johnston (Station) Historical Society is an IRS code 501(C) (3) organization.

Below: The "Human Statue of Liberty" photograph, taken at Camp Dodge, Iowa, August, 1918
More than 18,000 soldiers are in the photo.(Photo courtesy of Iowa Gold Star Museum)

