



**JOHNSTON**  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Johnston (Station) Historical Society

~ Discovering and Preserving Johnston History Today, for Tomorrow ~

Volume 28 • Issue 1

Spring 2020

## COVID-19 Response

The 1902 Simpson House will be closed until further notice. However, we are making history and we will overcome this challenge. Consider writing down how your family got through this experience and sending that to the Johnston Historical Society at [jshs@q.com](mailto:jshs@q.com). You can be part of a Johnston pandemic history collection. Recent events also required this shorter Spring newsletter.

## Parting remarks from Mike Knight

This day comes for everyone at one time or another. I am stepping down as President of the Johnston Historical Society. I have served three years as your Vice President and another four as your President. I have enjoyed every minute of being involved with this great organization. I am involved in so many things that there comes a time when you need to consolidate and slow down.

During my time we have installed our US Flag Pole, equipped it with all night lighting, installed security lighting that provides light for safety, an industrial size dehumidifier that has saved our basement and our stored items, and lastly an irrigation system for our remarkable gardens that will maintain them for years to come.

We have some new Board Members taking over soon and that will mean fresh ideas that will lead the Historical Society into the future. It has been a pleasure.

-Michael B. Knight

### A Big Thank You To Michael Knight!

The Johnston Historical Society members thank Mike Knight, for the many contributions he has made to Johnston history. We appreciate his time and leadership.

## New 2020 Officers Elected

The Board met (by phone) on March 26 and elected the new officers for 2020.

President:..... John Brown  
Vice President ..... Lois Waggoner  
Secretary:..... A.J. Simpson  
Treasurer: ..... Al Tokheim  
Archivist ..... John Brown  
Assistant Archivist: ..... Lois Waggoner  
Information Technology: ..... Al Tokheim

## New Board of Director Members

**David Lindeman.** I have a history of being in and out of Johnston beginning in 1987, when I started working full time for the Iowa National Guard. In 2005, after 23 years in the military I retired, and my wife and I moved to Johnston to continuing raising our family. I have always enjoyed the history behind places and events and have sought out historical sites or locations where I lived or traveled. My time at Camp Dodge just reinforced that in me.

Professionally, I work for Booz Allen Hamilton on an Air Force simulation project being run out of the Des Moines Air Base, located at the Des Moines Airport. I hold a Bachelors Degree in Independent Studies, Masters of Administration, with a grad certificate in Non-Profit Organization. This past summer, I completed my American History certificate with my eyes on teaching someday.

I served on the Johnston City Council and was the Chair of the Johnston 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee. My kids have been involved in the Johnston School District and have been active in Cheerleading, Baseball and Show Choir. I have coached youth sports and was a Cub Scout Den leader.

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## ***New Board of Director Members cont'd***

**Tom Leffler.** Tom is a native of Johnston, graduating from Johnston High School in 1964 before going on to graduate from Iowa State in 1968. He served as a Peace Corps Volunteer (68-70) in the Philippines and worked several years after that at the American Friends Service Committee. In 2013, he retired as senior manager from Pioneer after 38 years, having served in various information management roles including managing teams responsible for Pioneer's financial and business intelligence systems.

Since 1968, he has been an active election-year campaign volunteer and routinely served as precinct caucus chair. In 2014, he was a candidate for the Iowa House, developing a reputation as a door-to-door canvasser and absentee ballot request collector. After the 2014 bid, he and a few other regular Democrats founded the Johnston Area Democrats. He also served as a member of the Polk County Democratic Central Committee until schedule conflicts caused him to step aside.

Tom is active in his community. He was elected to the City Council five times between 1981 and 1999, and represented the city on the Metro Solid Waste Agency. He has been a Lions Club member for over 30 years, serving as treasurer for Johnston's very active club for the past dozen years. He is also treasurer for Dream Catcher, Inc., a non-profit that sponsors the development of affordable housing projects that accommodate those with disabilities. He was recently named treasurer of the newly formed Johnston Arts Council. He's been a member of the STAR\*PAC Central Committee since the mid-1980s and its chairperson since December 2014.

Tom and his wife Judy Anderson live near his childhood home in Johnston, and are proud parents of a son and daughter, three grandchildren and three "chosen" grandchildren. They are patrons of the Johnston Arts Council, the Johnston Partnership for a Healthy Community, Habitat for Humanity, the Des Moines Performing Arts, and Central Iowa Shelter and Services. Tom also mentors a middle school student in the Johnston Youth Mentoring Program of the Johnston Partnership.

## **Congratulations! Johnston Girls Win 1st State Basketball Title!**



On March 6, 2020 at the Wells Fargo Arena the Johnston High School girls basketball team defeated Waukee 69-65 to become Johnston's first Girls State Basketball Champions.

### ***Thank You Marilyn Coonley!***

Marilyn Coonley is stepping down after serving many years on the board. We want to thank her for her work to preserve Johnston's history.

### ***Thank You Matthew Ding!***

Matthew Ding, a Johnston High School senior, serves as student advisory board member. He first volunteered to help prepare exhibits for the City of Johnston's 50th anniversary celebration. He helped research, create, and design an exhibit on the Johnston schools, which we displayed at over 20 locations in the City as part of our city's 50th anniversary commemoration. Through that work, the Board observed that Matthew was extremely hardworking, responsible, creative, and perceptive about not only history, but society in general. His diligence and insight prompted us to create a Student Advisory Board role and appoint him to that position for the first time in the Society's history.

After Johnston's 50th anniversary celebration, Matthew continued to find creative ways to be involved with the society as a board member. He conducted museum tours for classmates, helped run society events, and even climbed on top of the three-story 1902 Simpson House Museum to paint window frames. Matthew will soon leave Johnston for college and we wish him the best in the next chapter of his life.

## Our 2019 Accomplishments Include:

- 50th anniversary committee and events including:
  - Opening of the 25 year time capsule trunk sealed in 1994 – Event at the Simpson Barn in March with over 100 attendees and local TV coverage
  - Resealing of that time capsule at the Johnston 50th Anniversary Gala.
  - Created 10 historical pop-up banners which were displayed at all Johnston schools as well as 10 other city locations during the year.
- Helped a Johnston Eagle Scout candidate create and install 5 historical markers on the Johnston history walk between the 1902 Simpson House and the Simpson Barn.
- Worked with the city to replace the sidewalk from the Simpson barn and the 1902 Simpson House Museum to the parking lot.
- Installed an irrigation system for the 1902 Simpson House Museum flower gardens.
- Guided tours of the Simpson House, on a number of Sundays when the house was open.
- Ordered 2 historical markers to be placed on the new bike trail in front of Rittgers Cemetery and the Rittgers stage coach stop at Beaver Drive and 66th.
- Painted all Simpson House Museum windows.
- Completed several more AASLH Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations program self-certifications. We have now completed more than half of the 18 certifications, to improve our policies and practices and benchmark against national museum standards.

## Plans for 2020:

- Have all the 1902 Simpson house windows clad to eliminate the need for future painting and better preserve the Simpson House museum.
- Continue to work with the City to save the oldest commercial building in Johnston; the 1917 inter-urban railway power station on Johnston Drive.
- Install 2 historical markers, to be placed on the new bike trail in front of Rittgers Cemetery and Rittgers stage coach stop at Beaver Dr. & 66th.
- Continue to solicit donations for the expected replacement of the 2004 furnaces in the Simpson House
- Improve the archives inventory and continue to expand the information available on the website.

## Support Johnston Historical Society.

Thank you for your continued support of the Johnston (Station) Historical Society. We are committed to getting the community engaged and involved in Johnston's rich history by providing a museum and events to the public. We are "Discovering and Preserving Johnston History Today, for Tomorrow." You can help the Johnston Historical Society in many ways; including:

- Continued membership.
- Attending Johnston Historical Society events.
  - Volunteering. We need help the 2nd Sunday each month and for our annual holiday open house.
- Donating any unique Johnston history documents, pictures and artifacts, so that they will be preserved and enjoyed by future generations.
- Donate money to the Johnston Historical Society.

You can contact us anytime at [jshs.com](http://jshs.com). Visit our website at <https://www.johnstoniowahistorical.org/>

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## Thank You to Our Donors!

*We would like to thank all of our supporters who share in our passion for local history. We appreciate the financial support from the following that helps us support our mission.*

Tom Leffler & Judy Anderson

Margaret A. Beck

John & Michele Brown

John Deere Foundation\*

Denny & Candy Elwell Foundation

Farmers Mutual Hail Insurance Company\*

Carol K. Hoots

Wesley Jordon

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Jake Wicks

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Liz Van Zomeren

• *Matching gifts*

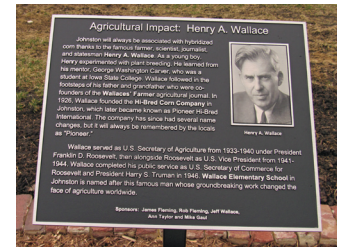
# Eagle Scout Project Creates “Historical Walk of Johnston” Near Museum

As part of the 50-year anniversary celebration activities, the 50-year anniversary committee and Johnston Historical Society worked with Johnston student Jake Wicks, on his Eagle Scout project. His project involved constructing the “Historical Walk of Johnston”. The walk is a series of five signs that tell some of the history of Johnston and highlights people important to our history.



The display is located near the Johnston Historical Museum along the walkway from the museum to the Simpson Barn. Please plan to stop by soon and check out what an outstanding job that Jake did to help enrich and educate his community about the history of Johnston.

He was recognized at the Johnston City Council meeting on January 21, 2020.



## OBITUARIES

Obituaries are compiled by Nancy Budrevich. If anyone knows of others, please let her know. Nancy can be contacted by:

- Mail: 6161 Northglenn Dr., Johnston, IA, 50131
- Email: jshs@q.com
- Phone: 515-331-0687

Over 1,000 Johnston related obituaries are now on file at the museum.

Name	Class of	Date
Rosalie Michael Bradshaw	1937	2/20/2020
Mary Lathrum Warner	1934	3/1/2020
Donna Smith Eaton	1958	2/16/2020
Jean Newlin Crabbs	1961	1/18/2020
Coralea Jensen Meinders	1963	1/22/2020
Jane Trier Paulsen	1969	12/23/2019
Derek M. Jacobson	2011	12/23/2019
Logan P. Dean	2013	12/18/2019
Isabel Hendersen	2017	2/11/2020
Floyd Lancaster	Teacher Math	2/2/2020
Maurine Morris	Office-Admin Asst	1/28/2020
Selma (Sunny) Duvick	JSHS	1/28/2020
<i>Founding Member</i>		

## Selma (Sunny) Duvick

Finally, we mourn the passing of one of the JHS founders, who passed away January 28, 2020, at the age of 93. Sunny and her husband, Don, moved to Johnston in 1951 when he joined Pioneer Hi-Bred Co. He eventually became Senior Vice President of Research. Their three children, Daniel, Randa and Jon were born and raised in Johnston. Sunny served on the Johnston Library Board that started the library. She was a charter member of the Johnston (Station) Historical Society. She and Don made a significant donation to help acquire and move the Simpson house and barn to Johnston Commons. Don served on the Society Board and physically pitched in to prepare the house and barn for the move. They made another significant donation that allowed the Society to complete the museum and to turn the renovated barn over to the community.

**Annual Meeting - April 12th 2:00 pm**

*This will be by phone only.*

Participate by phone by calling 877-663-3373

Use Conference code 924 306 8157#