



JOHNSTON
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Johnston (Station) Historical Society

Discovering and Preserving Johnston History, for Tomorrow

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Fall 2021

From the President...

We are using the lessons and history from the past and the technology of the present and the future to better preserve Johnston history. Our digitization project includes imaging documents almost 200 years old and putting an exact searchable image "in the cloud" for public access.

We are also utilizing other "best practices" from the Iowa Museum Association, the Association of State and Local History, and the state's Iowa History Network.

We also restarted the Central Iowa historical museum group. Those city affiliated historical museums now meet quarterly to share what works (and what does not work) in our common efforts to preserve and present local history.

Our computer enhancements required that we use a new e-mail address and phone number.

E-mail: JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

Phone number: (515) 608-5730

Future board meetings will be the 4th Thursday of each month at 6:30, in person at the Simpson house.

The 1902 Simpson house will continue to be open for tours by appointment, until the pandemic passes. All COVID-19 limitations for Simpson House visitors have been eliminated, but face masks and hand sanitizer are still provided.

Thanks for your support of local history!

John Brown, President

In Memoriam

Bob Thomas 1923 - 2021

We are sad to hear that Bob Thomas has passed away. He was the backbone of the Simpson House and Barn Project from 2002 until 2006. His leadership in the project was a great asset in the success of the move.

Volunteer Spotlight

A description of the volunteer support of JSHS would not be near complete without mentioning all the support given by Lois Waggoner. She has been a JSHS member since 1999 and has served as a Director (2014-2016 and again from 2019 to the present), President, Treasurer, Vice President and Assistant Archivist.



Lois Waggoner

She is a great example of how we can maximize the effect of member dues and other donations to preserve and protect local history, as our ongoing volunteer support allows JSHS to operate with no paid staff. Many non-profits struggle and even die under the weight of the burden of maintaining a paid staff.

Lois does so many things every week for JSHS that we just couldn't list them all, but they range from processing mail and donations, helping with the newsletter, paying bills, giving tours of the 1902 Simpson House and meeting with a furnace technician, irrigation company and utilities.

Saturday, December 4, 2021

Holiday Open House

Santa Claus will be coming to the Johnston Library at 2:30 on Saturday, December 4 and has asked us to have the 1902 Simpson House open during his visit. Please drop by between 2:30 and 4:30 for a tour of the decorated house museum. Enjoy cookies and cocoa with friends.



Just a reminder...

A benefit of membership is occasional use of the 1902 Simpson House for meetings and special events. The first floor meeting space can accommodate up to 20 people. Contact us for more details. JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

175TH Anniversary of the First European descent settlers in Johnston

75th Anniversary - Johnston Lions Club & 175TH Anniversary - State of Iowa

Mayor Paula Dierenfeld, Johnston City Counsel officials, JSBS members, Lions Club members and guests met at the Lions Club house on September 25th to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Johnston Lions Club and the 175th anniversary of the arrival of the first European descent settlers in the Johnston area. The event included a presentation by Board member Mary Jane Paez of those first Johnston area settlers and the history of our Lions club. A Historic Sites of Johnston map, a children's coloring contest form and a book about those early settlers and the Lions club were distributed to the guests.

As explained in the article below, a history of Johnston; however short, could not leave out the role of the Johnston Lion's Club.

Johnston Lions Club Serving the Community Since 1945

Twenty-four years before the City of Johnston was incorporated, the Johnston Lions Club was chartered. The guys were coming back from victory in Europe and the Pacific in 1945. Their elation with winning the war gave them enthusiasm to work on improving the community and the school district. Johnston Station, as it was known then, was guided by the Webster and Jefferson Township Boards and more importantly, by the Polk County Board of Supervisors. Bennett Dewey of Johnston represented all of northwest Polk County. He had held that office for many years and he was also a charter member of the Lions Club. Dewey saw the opportunity to help Johnston Station even more with a 38 men-strong volunteer service organization. The members were the "movers and shakers" of the community. They were also self-sufficient and independent. With Dewey's "behind the scenes" leadership, things that needed to get done, got done.

One story of interest is how the Johnston Lions Club got a club house. It was unheard of for any Lions Club to have its own club house. In 1946, Dewey bought the land where the present club house stands. There was also a small building on the lot. Dewey sold the lot to the Lions Club at cost with a no-interest loan. Each member bought shares at \$10 per share. Stock certificates were valued from \$10 to \$100. As fund raising was accomplished with BBQ dinners, dances at the Bauman Barn (now the Simpson Barn), and other events, the certificates were redeemed, and the members were paid back. The members worked on remodeling the building to become the first club house. This building served the community as a home for church services, scout meetings, garden club meetings, even for City Council meetings after the city was incorporated. This building was replaced in 1989 with a grand building that continues to serve the community.

In honor of serving the community for 75 years, the Johnston Lions Club is donating \$50,000 over a 5 year period to enhance the planned picnic shelter at Johnston Commons Park. The shelter will be built in the Spring of 2022.

Ezekiel and Mary Hunt Family

Our commemoration of the 175th anniversary of our state and the arrival of the first European descent settlers in the Johnston area would not be complete without a mention of the Hunt family. While JSBS has a very extensive document and photo collection on the Hunt family, we have tried to summarize it here.

Ezekiel Hunt was born in Kentucky in 1797; the son of a Revolutionary War veteran. He and his wife, Mary; along with their 12 children, came to the Johnston area in 1846, and settled on the ridge that is now topped by Beaver Drive, near the current pallet companies. They helped start the settlements of Huntsville and Ridgedale. Huntsville grew to include a blacksmith shop, grocery store, post office and a sawmill. They created the Hunt family burial grounds, which is now Ridgedale Cemetery.

JSBS, working with the City, recently purchased and installed a historical marker at the Ridgedale Cemetery describing those early settlers and the death of their son, Daniel Hunt, in 1847.



Mary Jane Paez Presentation



Lions Club Proclamation
Mayor & Tom Leffler



Lions Club Proclamation
Mayor & Phil Horn



175th Commemoration
Proclamation
Mayor & John Brown

New Stagecoach Stop Historical Marker

JSHS has worked with the City of Johnston to design, purchase and install a historical marker at the site of the 1850s stagecoach stop beside the recreational trail at the intersection of NW Beaver Dr. and NW 66th Ave.

JB Rittgers arrived in Iowa, from Ohio in 1853. They built a house across Beaver Drive to the north, before building the old station house. JB had 23 children from two wives, the youngest of which was Andrew Johnson Rittgers, grandfather of our Mary Ann Roberts.

Mary Ann Roberts was the 4th Mayor of Johnston. She was also a former JSJS Board member and Vice President. Mayor Roberts is standing near the location of the well, used to water the stagecoach horses, along the circular drive that still exists. The stagecoach line ran from Fort Des Moines to Fort Dodge. The current house was built 96 years ago, before Mary Ann was born.

That house stands in the approximate location of the original house used for the stagecoach stop and shares a portion of the original foundation.

At right: *Top* - Mary Ann by the new historical marker. *Bottom* - 1853 Stagecoach Stop



Membership Dues Reminder

Individual and family JSJS member dues are only \$20 a year. All members get the quarterly newsletter, invitations to JSJS events and can use the 1902 Simpson House for small meetings and events. Members also get the satisfaction of helping to preserve and present Johnston history.



Johnston Historical Society now has PayPal available for the convenience of member and donors, JSJS now accepts PayPal when paying annual membership dues or making gifts to help preserve Johnston History. When using PayPal, It is as simple as using our email address as a payment destination.

JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com
or scan the following QR code

Enter the desired payment amount, add a note telling us what it is for and you are done. It is that simple.

1902 Simpson House Video

A short video tour of the house that was posted on the State Local History network site in 2018 can be viewed at:

<https://www.facebook.com/lowaHistory/videos/925822240920506/>

Our Mission Statement:

The purpose of the Johnston (Station) Historical Society is to bring people together who are interested in the history and preservation of the Johnston area, which includes the early settlements of Johnston Station, Beaver Creek Settlement, Ridgedale, Huntsville, Herrold and Dodge City. To this goal, we work to get the community engaged and involved in Johnston's rich history by providing a museum and events to the public.



Have you given us your e-mail?

The quarterly member newsletter is sent by e-mail to all members who have given us their e-mail address. If you get this newsletter in the regular mail, and regularly use e-mail, please consider sending us your email address to: **JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com**, to help us manage the costs and volunteer time needed to provide the newsletters.

Also, please send us any e-mail address, home address or phone number changes.

Make a Gift of a JSJS Membership

Please consider making a holiday gift of a Johnston (Station) Historical Society membership to family members or friends who would enjoy receiving our newsletter and the other member benefits. The membership form is on our website - JohnstonIowaHistorical.org

Request for Volunteers and Volunteer Opportunities

Many of us support local causes by donating our time, but we need to fit those volunteer commitments into what may be a rather busy or ever-changing schedule. We may have business, employment, children or grandchildren time commitments and, if retired, may not spend the entire year in Iowa.

The Johnston Station Historical Society has been blessed with many extremely dedicated volunteers in the last 27 years, but it still has many small and larger opportunities for anyone interested in helping to preserve and present local history. Those opportunities range from ongoing commitments, like serving for up to 6 years as a Board member, to one-off assistance, like the man who recently rebuilt the rotted bottom of a Simpson house storm window. Volunteers can pick and choose how and when they want to volunteer, and the extent of any time commitment.

Volunteers support the key activities of JSHS, such as when 6 volunteers helped 145 visitors tour the Simpson House during the August Johnston Commons Sundaes in the Park event.

Examples of JSHS volunteer opportunities:

- Helping with 1902 Simpson house tours
- Helping to update Simpson house exhibits
- Helping with refreshments at the annual events, like Sundaes in the Park in August and the holiday open house in December.
- Helping to maintain the beautiful Simpson House flower gardens
- Imaging historical documents and photos in the JSHS collection.
- Completing small handyman projects at the Simpson house
- Creating a new JSHS house museum sign
- Serving as a member of the Board of Directors
- Serving as a JSHS officer, like Secretary, Treasurer, Archivist or as one of their assistants.

We will find an opportunity for you that uses your skills and fits your schedule.

Please e-mail us a note at:

johnstonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

if you are interested in being a JSHS volunteer.

Thank You to Donors

In addition to membership dues, JSHS has received donations from:

- State Historic Society of Iowa, Inc.
- Jon Findley
- John and Michele Brown
- Steve Sutton
- Phillip and Alisha Horn
- Greg Sweeney

In addition to donations of money and time, JSHS needs some used tools to maintain the 1902 Simpson House Museum, including an electric drill and a circular saw.

Board Members and Officers

Board members: Tom Leffler, Al Tokheim.

A.J. Simpson, Lois Waggoner, Mary Jane Paez and John Brown.

Student Advisory member: Lily Simpson

Officers:

John Brown.....President and Archivist
Lois Waggoner Vice President
& Assistant Archivist

A.J. SimpsonSecretary
Al Tokheim Treasurer & Information Technology

Obituaries

Obituaries are compiled by Nancy Budrevich. If you know of others, please contact Nancy at JSHS. Contact information below.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Death date</u>	<u>Class of</u>
Janet Adams Gross	9-6-2021	1955
James E. Thomas Jr	7-27-2014	1940
Howard Hunt	8/31/2019	Former Resident & JSHS Member
James Mahoney	4/7/2020	JHS Teacher & and Coach
Linda Krueger	5/5/2021	1974
Rebecca Hastings	6/11/2021	1978
Connor O'Brien	7/3/2021	2013
Robert Finney	8/5/2021	JSHS Member
Betty "Jean" Mott	8/24/2021	Resident & JSHS Member
Karla Hansen	8/25/2021	1971
David Hanna	9/3/2021	1961
Timothy Reams	9/19/2021	1972



Johnston Historical Society

6161 Northglenn Drive

Johnston, IA 50131 515-608-5730

Email: JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

Website: JohnstonIowaHistorical.org

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