



# Johnston (Station) Historical Society

*Discovering and Preserving Johnston History, for Tomorrow*

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## From the President...

The progress made by the Johnston (Station) Historical Society (JSHS) since I first joined its Board of Directors in 2017 has been significant. The physical heart of JSHS, the 1902 Simpson House, has been enhanced by cladding all the wooden windows, solving its basement dampness issues, fixing the front door, installing a garden irrigation system and adding security cameras and alarm systems. JSHS financial reserves needed for the expected replacement of the two furnaces has been significantly expanded. We added a high school student advisory board member.

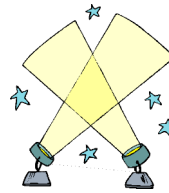


We started the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) STEPS certification program. We have completed 16 of those 18 three level history museum best practices certifications. We have just finished a complete inventory of all JSHS archives and have made significant progress on making that inventory, including its pictures and documents available to the public on-line. All of our Simpson House exhibits have been refreshed and redesigned.

These were all team efforts by the Board, the officers, volunteers, interns and donors. The challenges ahead of JSHS include building the member and volunteer ranks, reinstating regular community and member events as the pandemic wanes, completing the archive digitization and on-line access initiatives and continuing to expand the JSHS collection.

My maximum 6-year Board tenure is over on December 31, but I hope to be able to continue to be a part of JSHS's continued progress as a volunteer. This director term limit is a recommended best practice for non-profit organizations, as it keeps their leadership fresh and encourages members to become a new director. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to help preserve and present our local history.

**John Brown, President**



## Volunteer Spotlight

### Ferne Michael

By Mary Jane Paez

If she said it once, she said it a hundred times... "All I want is a museum!" She had bulldog tenacity in reaching that goal. In addition to the generous donation that she and Lloyd sent in, she also paid Society dues for her relatives to be a part of the project. She contributed memorials for any family or friend who passed away. Her monetary support was only part of her contribution. Although she couldn't physically do the work needed to accomplish the task, she made sure that Lloyd pitched in where he could.

When we worked on completing the barn before the house, she repeated her favorite refrain.

Once the barn was completed, the house could be worked on to become a museum. Ferne was very proud of her heritage of being a descendant of Ezekiel and Mary Hunt, the first settlers to arrive in the area in September, 1846. She made sure that the Hunt family history was saved.

Over the years, Ferne collected and preserved many documents and artifacts that related to Johnston's history. She must have had a room dedicated to warehousing this history.

We are so grateful for her forward thinking and dedication to the preservation of our history.

## Johnston History on the City of Johnston and JSHS Websites

The City has added short descriptions of the 4 pioneer Johnston cemeteries at:  
[www.cityofjohnston.com/1078/Cemeteries](http://www.cityofjohnston.com/1078/Cemeteries)

This expands the Johnston on-line historical summaries at: [www.cityofjohnston.com/972/History-of-Johnston-Businesses](http://www.cityofjohnston.com/972/History-of-Johnston-Businesses)

and on the JSHS website at:  
[www.johnstoniowahistorical.org/history/johnston-history.htm](http://www.johnstoniowahistorical.org/history/johnston-history.htm)

# Trestle Trail Bridge in Johnston is Replaced

The Trestle Trail Bridge, located north of Interstate 80 near Merle Hay Road, collapsed near its center in early 2019, after ice jams formed against the bridge.



The bridge is part of the Trestle to Trestle Trail that runs along the former Inter-Urban rail line from Johnston to Des Moines. It is a crucial link for Johnston, into the growing Central Iowa recreational trail network. During the last 3 years, walkers or bikers on the 3.75-mile Trestle to Trestle trail have had to use the vehicle bridge on Beaver Avenue to cross Beaver Creek.



The Trestle to Trestle Trail opened in 2007, providing a crossing point beneath Interstate Highway 35/80. It connects with the Inter-Urban and Neal Smith trails near Euclid Avenue, providing access to downtown Des Moines.

The new bridge has been under construction since February of 2022.

The new concrete and steel bridge cost about \$2 million. The cities of Johnston and Des Moines, Metropolitan Planning Organization, Polk County, Polk County Conservation, FEMA, and the state of



Iowa obtained the money for the construction of the new bridge.

The bridge has three support pillars, replacing the 20 wooden supports of the old Des Moines and Central Iowa interurban railroad bridge. Flood water and debris, including ice and logs, can now flow under the new bridge. The new bridge is 12-feet-wide; 4 feet wider than the old bridge, and is 23 feet above the creek bed.

The new bridge formally opened on Thursday, September 15. Johnston Mayor Paula Dierenfeld thanked the attendees for their patience as the City and its partners built a new bridge that is “truly amazing.”

The bridge architects made the new bridge “more than just a replacement of the old bridge.” The new bridge has stone pillars on its sides, which were built to resemble the City of Johnston welcome signs and the steel guardrail designs resemble the wooden trestles that supported the old railroad bridge.

Watch the Bike Iowa video at:  
<https://youtube/C213xP7IHQs>



## Johnston Community Historical Exhibits

JSHS was recently invited to use an empty display case at the City of Johnston Library. The JSHS Board decided to have an exhibit created on the interurban railroad that ran through Johnston until the early 1980s. Using pictures in our archives, and additional pictures of the railway taken in 1958 by Ron Sims, along with a few railroad artifacts, the exhibit was installed.



## Holiday Open House

More than 40 people joined us for our annual 1902 Simpson House holiday event December 3rd. It included coffee, cocoa and cookies.



Volunteers gave tours of the house to our many guests. Our guests enjoyed the revamped exhibits and holiday decorations.



## Ferne Michael Obituary

Ferne Ruth Michael died at Josephine Caring Community of Stanwood, WA on August 8, 2022. Ferne was an outspoken charter member of the Johnston Historical Society. She was a long-time employee of Des Moines Public Schools, serving as a secretary. Ferne was born to Paul and Margaret Bice (Murray) on September 17, 1923. She graduated from Johnston High School in 1942 – later inducted into their Alumni Hall of Fame as a Dragon Basketball Player. After high school Ferne worked as a secretary until the beginning of the war when she enlisted in the US Navy as part of the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). While serving with the WAVES Ferne achieved that rank of Specialist Third Class and played on the US Navy Women's Basketball Team. Ferne created an extensive history of the Johnston area and donated many documents, photos and artifacts to JSHS. She was preceded in death by her loving husband of more than seventy years, Lloyd Michael, her daughter Marcia McPherrin and her grandson Michael McPherrin.



Lloyd Eugene Michael died on May 12, 2016. Lloyd was born on December 17, 1924 - he was the second son in what would become a family of twelve children. He graduated from North High School in 1943 before enlisting in the United States Marine Corps. During World War II Lloyd fought in the Battle of Tarawa and was part of the liberation of Guam. During one landing his group had to swim to shore - Lloyd was able to help another Marine make it ashore when he struggled to swim. The World War II Uniforms of both Ferne and Lloyd Michael are on display at the JSHS 1902 Simpson House Museum.

**Annual Meeting** - The next member meeting will be the annual meeting on Sunday, April 9 at 2:00p.m.

## 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.



## Support JSHS

In addition to member dues, Johnston Station Historical Society's mission is supported by additional contributions from members, special project grants, and donations of artifacts, documents and photos that relate to our mission. As a Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3) organization, monetary gifts, along with the value of donated artifacts, documents and photos, can be deductible from income taxable by the state and federal governments.

Your donation to the Johnston Historical Society goes directly to support its mission. As an all-volunteer organization, we have no paid staff. Unlike some charities with staff expenses, your contributions go entirely toward the 1902 Simpson House museum and our local history preservation and presentation initiatives, like our recently installed historical markers at Ridgedale Cemetery, Stage Coach Stop at NW Beaver Drive and 66th and Ray Schleihs Park on NW 55<sup>th</sup> Ave.

A benefit of membership is occasional free use of the 1902 Simpson House. The first floor meeting space can accommodate up to 20 people and is handicapped accessible. Contact us for details. [JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com](mailto:JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com)

## Obituaries

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

<u>Name</u>	<u>Death date</u>	<u>Class of</u>
Ferne Michael	8-08-2022	1942
Charles Davis	2-1-2022	1968
Richard "Dick" Irving	11-24-2022	1961
Kathleen Herrick Cinnamon	6-14-2022	1972
Mark Eagle	10-1-2021	1978
Judy Waddell Ludwig	11-8-2022	1960
JoAnn Slorah	11-10-2022	1961
Michael Horton	11-11-2022	1955
Charles "Chip" Eagle	11-23-2022	1977
Lynnea Young	8-12-2021	1976-80 JHS Music Teacher



**Johnston Historical Society**  
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Website: [JohnstonIowaHistorical.org](http://JohnstonIowaHistorical.org)  
Visit our website for new developments

Also see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzEi2UBPRog> for a presentation on the relocation and the restoration of the Simpson House and barn in 2001-2008.

## Thank you to donors!

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

Andrea Kallhoff November \$40  
Vivian Zimmerman October \$30

These generous donations are a crucial part of completing our mission of preserving and presenting Johnston history.

## Have you given us your e-mail?

The quarterly member newsletter is sent to all members who have given us their e-mail address. If you get future newsletter in the regular mail, and regularly use e-mail, please consider sending us your email address to:

[JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com](mailto:JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com)

E-mailing helps us manage the cost of postage and volunteer time needed to provide our newsletters.

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

## Make a Gift of a JSHS 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.



## Board Members and Officers

The Johnston Historical Society is very fortunate to have a group of board members and officers with valuable knowledge, talents and experience. That includes, in addition to an interest in local history, expertise in city government, information technology, accounting, insurance, business operations and law.

Board members: Tom Leffler, Mary Jane Paez, Al Tokheim. A.J. Simpson and John Brown.

### Officers

John Brown ..... President and Archivist  
Mary Jane Paez ..... Vice President  
A.J. Simpson ..... Secretary  
Al Tokheim ..... Treasurer and Information Technology/Communications Officer

## OUR VISION STATEMENT:

*Discovering and Preserving Johnston History Today, for Tomorrow.*