

Johnston (Station) Historical Society

Volume 23, Issue 3

Newsletter

Fall 2015

From the President

Fall is in the air and the museum has been very busy this summer.

The Garage Sale held in July was successful. The temperature was extremely hot which might have hindered sales on Friday. By Saturday, people began venturing out in the heat and we ended up with the same income as in previous years.

In August, we opened the museum to people attending two different events. It was helpful that the city informed us of the events in advance so that we could accommodate them.

Jan has been instrumental in obtaining two glass display cases from the Gold Star Museum in Camp Dodge. They will be used to display items in the School Room. She coordinated the move, obtaining pricing from a few moving companies. We thank the Gold Star Museum for their generosity in giving us the cases.

Cont. on pg. 2



Annual Chili Supper November 5, 2015

We're looking forward to our annual Chili Supper on Thursday, November 5, 2015. Please plan to join us and bring a friend. The board members will be furnishing the chili, trimmings and desserts. We will begin serving at 5:00 p.m., with a brief program following. Look for us in the lower level of the Simpson Barn.

Donations

Below are the individuals/foundations who have donated to the work of preserving the history of Johnston since the last newsletter. We would like to recognize these individuals:

Jackie Reineke
Gold Star Museum for display cases
Susan Meyers for doll
Dan Wilkinson for antique tools/items

The Board of Directors would like to thank each of you for your generous donation. The Johnston Historical Society could not survive and continue to preserve the valuable history at the museum without you.

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Don't forget to join us for our upcoming Chili Supper in November and stop by anytime to see the changes that have occurred to the museum.

Thank you for your support.

Lois Waggoner, President

Website

Keith Westbrook, our webpage/computer specialist has been an asset to our work at the museum. In the last newsletter, we introduced his two new forms: one titled "Tell us Your Story" and the other a form to submit your name to volunteer at the museum.

We are always looking for someone to give us their story. Perhaps you have lived in Johnston and would like to share your memories. If that's not something you care to write, one of our board members would be happy to meet with you and write it for you. We all have a story to tell and we would like to know yours.

Also, volunteering can be quite rewarding so perhaps you would consider giving a couple hours a week to help at the museum.

Go to www.johnstoniowahistorical.org and check us out.

Garage Sale Results

Our annual Garage Sale was held in July this year on perhaps the warmest weekend of the year. We thank all who so generously donated items for us to sell. We profited by making \$1, 255.83.

Thanks to all board members for their hard work with setting up, pricing items and working those days. Items not sold were donated to other charities in the community.

New Members

New Members since last reported are:

Richard McCarl
Michael Knight
Pauline Osentowski
Fred Schuler

We welcome each of you and thank you for joining the Historical Society. It is only through member dues and donations that we can maintain the rich history of Johnston left in our care. Sign up a new member today.

Board Member Openings

We will be voting to fill three positions to the Board of Directors for the Johnston Historical Society. Please consider running for office or if you know of someone that you think would be interested, please inform one of our current board members so that we can contact them. We will announce those running in our last newsletter of the year.

Signage Update

At the September Board Meeting, members exchanged ideas concerning signage for the museum. A representative from the sign company was present to learn what we want. He answered our questions and concerns. We determined that we would like a sign clearly viewable from the street, two sided with our name, plus days and hours open.

We would like the base to be brick, using the bricks from old Merle Hay Road. We are in need of two things: donations for this projected \$1500 to \$1800 expense and someone that knows and is willing to lay the brick base once we have the plans. This price does not include laying of the base. We plan to have a sketch on display at the Chili Supper in November. Hope to see you there.

Loss of a Johnston Landmark – the Stillwell House

Doug Wehring Remembers



**Stillwell House
Picture taken in 2013**

My family and I moved to Johnston in the summer of 1955 and I entered the 5th grade that fall. Dennis Stillwell was in my class and we got to know each other. By the time we were in junior high, he had become my best friend. His home at 6016 NW 62nd Avenue became an important part of my life.

His mom and dad, Emma Jean and Max, had the kind of home that was warm, inviting and usually fairly low key (except when Dennis and I added some typical teenage excitement). Emma Jean was soft spoken, very kind, and very perceptive. Like most moms she could also let you know what she thought when you've gone somewhat astray.

Both Max and Emma Jean conveyed the caring and interest that kids need, but don't necessarily appreciate until they are much older. Responsibility was practiced and expected. We often got the "if you get in trouble at school, you'll be in trouble at home" message – sometimes we did and we were.

The three story house had a photographic darkroom and huge enlarger in the basement. It also had a large apple orchard outside and soon became a special place to me. Emma Jean and Max had strong values of honest work and integrity. They worked hard; besides working at jobs outside the home, the care of the apple orchard and the large yard took a lot of time. Emma Jean always maintained a large number of flower beds and plantings. The Stillwell's apple stand and Emma Jean working in her flower beds were fixtures of the neighborhood for many years.

As the years went by Dennis eventually moved into the huge bedroom "suite" on the 3rd floor that looked out to the front yard – and the old Johnston school across the street. Among other interests Dennis had a stereo system that we occasionally put to good use by putting speakers in the windows during lunch time to provide music for the kids at school.

Anyone who had been to the house probably had been greeted by Lady, the Stillwell's Irish setter. Lady was as much a part of the family as we were. Of course there were other residents over the years in the apartments the Stillwells maintained in their big house. Like typical kids we didn't pay much attention to them (they were just adults after all).

Dennis and I did manage to grow up, get married and have families; he in the Minneapolis area and me near Council Bluffs. All through the years the Stillwell house still was a gathering place either sitting in the living room or around the kitchen table. Our visits were less frequent but the feeling of "home" was still there. My last gathering around the kitchen table was in 2007 before

we went to visit Emma Jean who was temporarily in a rehab center in Des Moines after having a fall. Those sitting at the table were Dennis' daughter Shannon (our Goddaughter), her husband Brett, Dennis' son Jonathon, his wife Mary Ellen, my wife and me. Dennis was very ill from chemotherapy treatments so he and his wife couldn't make the trip down and of course Max had passed away years before. We shared a meal, enjoying the company and sharing memories but missing the head of the household, Emma Jean. We all went to visit Emma Jean in the care center followed by a stop at Van Dees (still referred to as the Dairy Sweet by us Johnston old timers) for a traditional ice cream treat.

Shortly after Emma Jean returned home from the care center she did move to an assisted living community in the Minneapolis area to be close to Shannon and Jonathon and families. The house remained empty and after Emma Jean's passing in 2013 initial preparations were made to have the home and property sold. That summer, my wife and I met with Shannon and Brett and helped dig up many flowers and ferns that Emma Jean had cared for to transplant them to their home in Minnesota. We also had a last walk through the house to say goodbye. The summer of 2014 we met Shannon and Brett at the Stillwell house one last time before the closing on the sale of the house and property. We walked around the property sharing memories and maybe a few tears. Shannon and Brett dug up a few more plants to take to Minnesota and my wife and I picked out a couple of ferns to take back to our home – a last remembrance of a very special place and the people who lived there.

I haven't been back past 6016 NW 62nd Avenue since the house was demolished. I prefer to remember it as it was.

Doug Wehring, Johnston Class of 1963

We thank Doug for sharing his memories of times spent at the Stillwell house. Many of us Johnston residents were saddened when we witnessed the preparation for what was to come of this longtime Johnston landmark. We saw the removal of trees and eventually the house that had stood all those years when we were in school and long after. It was a stately, but homey looking house. But it was, of course, the people of that house that made it a home and gave those fortunate enough to visit fond memories. The Stillwell's had always been an important part of Johnston. They were in the basic fabric of this community, volunteering in so many ways.

In speaking with Ramona Crowell Ward, she shared that she and husband Dean had lived in the second floor apartment early in their marriage in 1956. She remembers her second daughter was born during that time. Also, Obe and Marilyn Herrick lived in the third floor apartment when their first son was born. The two upper floors housed many teachers over the years.

Interestingly, I am looking at a 1916 photo of the town of Johnston with the first school in the picture. Directly across the street from the school was the house that would become known as the Stillwell house. So I am bothered, even more, realizing the city just destroyed a century old house.

The city of Johnston said they are planning to build an upscale apartment complex on that property. I guess this is progress. We are, after all, left with pleasant memories of what used to be. It's just hard to accept change sometimes.

Deb Robinette Krambeck, Johnston Class of 1963

AN UNFORGETTABLE JOHNSTON MEMORY

To many people growing up in Johnston during the 1940-1950 decades, Johanna Hunt, piano teacher and inspiration for many young people in the Johnston community, will probably remember her as one of those unforgettable mentors that pass through your life.

She will always remain one of the fondest memories and mysteries in my childhood in Johnston, one that I regret not inquiring or asking questions about ... I know she was from Germany ... she had a gift of music appreciation, especially the piano ... and she was an inspiration to all of her piano students! When I think back on those times I realize that her patience was overwhelming! She remains one of those childhood memories that you know was responsible for your love of music, your sensitive awareness of dedicated musicians, and your knowledge of disciplined practice to refine an art!

Johanna was the wife of Clyde Hunt, a blacksmith on Merle Hay Road. Their house and barn was located across from the Raymond Baker home of those decades. Their home was located at the corner of NW 64th Place and Merle Hay Road, across the street from the Lions Club. My house was just two houses away and I walked weekly to my lesson paying 50 cents per lesson, which was later increased to \$1.00. Her front room was filled with a beautiful grand piano, which took up most of the space and I remember only a sofa against the opposite wall. As a child I often wondered how in the world the huge piano was ever moved into that room! (Of course, I never asked!) On the wall in front of the piano was a very large picture frame full of pictures of all her



Music Club 1957

Standing: Richard Sandusky, Susan Tanner, Marcia Findley, Mrs. Hunt, Jean Newlin, Mary Theisen and Ann Lyman (in front of Jean).

Sitting: Michael Tanner, Ray McClung, unknown and Larry Newlin.

students. I could feel her pride when I asked about the pictures and she told me that one day my picture would be there also. Since my mother played the piano, she was insistent that I play also and in the beginning I was excited. I began lessons in about second grade and I remember an incident in about fourth grade when I refused to go to my scheduled lesson. My mother went to Mrs. Hunt and brought her to our house to retrieve me ... a lesson well taught!

Mrs. Hunt formed a music club that met periodically for recitals sometimes in her home ... I would practice, nervous jitters anticipating those special days! Most of the older music students participated in a music contest at Drake University yearly and we prepared two pieces to perform, one piece assigned and another a choice.

Also, the girl's 4-H club music contest was a yearly event at Drake. I remember extra

lessons in order to prepare ... 7:30 lessons before school in the morning ... she would not give up on me because she knew I did not practice as much as I should.

A wild memory of one of the contests at Drake was when I approached the stage and sat down to adjust the piano bench and I almost fell off the stage ... received a Superior rating ... always wondered if it had anything to do with the "piano bench"? Her students would also perform at Johnston School, sometimes at graduations or music concerts.



4-H Music Club Contest 1950's

Karen Dewey, Pat Hunt, Susan Dunn and Pauline Foshe

Mrs. Hunt gave her students much more than the appreciation of music ... she gave us the understanding that you must work hard to achieve a goal. In the small community of Johnston Station, Mrs. Hunt was a teacher,

a mentor, a neighbor, a friend, and the baker of the most delicious German cookies in the world!

by Pauline Foshe-Osentowski

Two Groups Tour Museum

On July 30, Pioneer hosted an employee picnic at the Simpson Barn. We opened our doors during that time so that those who were interested, could tour the museum. We had about 25 people walk through the museum.

Also, on August 9, from 6-8 p.m., the city of Johnston held an Ice Cream Social for the community. It was held between the library and the museum. Some of our board members volunteered to be present to give tours. That event brought 65 interested individuals to our door.

Johnston makes Money Magazine's list of Top Towns

For those who might have missed the article published in the Des Moines Register on August 21, Johnston was named No. 16 on *Money* magazine's 2015 list of "American's Best Places to Live." The magazine ranked the top 50 small towns with populations of 10,000 to 50,000. Johnston made the list for the second time primarily because of its award-winning schools. Its proximity to Saylorville Lake as well as its ample trails and green spaces were highlighted also.

Memorial Patio Brick Laid

Classmates from the class of 1962 placed a brick at the entrance of the Simpson Barn in memory of their classmate, Jon Schuler. Jon passed away on June 5, 2015. Those classmates that participated were Nancy Pontious Budrevich, Jerry Jensen and Keith Westbrook. They were joined by Jon's brother, Fred, who traveled from Virginia for the event. The brick was donated by Jackie Weatherspoon Reineke to honor her fellow classmate, Jon.



Fred sits by brick.

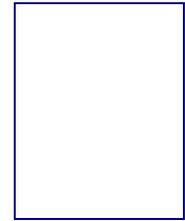
Bricks are still available to be placed at the entrance of the Simpson Barn for \$85. If interested in purchasing one to honor someone you know, contact the museum by calling 515-331-0687 or visit our website at www.johnstoniowahistorical.org.

Obituaries

Obituaries are compiled by Nancy Budrevich. If anyone knows of others, please let Nancy know. Nancy can be contacted by mail: 6161 Northglenn Dr., Johnston, IA, 50131; by email: jshs@q.com; or by phone: 515-331-0687. Over 1,000 Johnston related obituaries are now on file at the museum.

Name	Relationship to Johnston	Date of Death
Randall "Randy" Avis	Class of 1977	7-18-15
Michael R. Dunn	Class of 1981	7-27-15
Harold L. Gandy	Class of 1945	8-02-15
Richard "Dick" Madison	Class of 1964	8-11-15
Dewey T. Carr	Class of 1961	9-17-15
Rebecca Dearborn	Retired Teacher	5-19-15
Monica Waters	Retired Teacher	7-12-15
June Baughman	Resident	4-13-15
Vivian Schleihs	Resident	8-16-15
Andrew J. Blixt	Resident	9-06-15

Johnston (Station) Historical Society
6161 Northglenn Dr
Johnston, IA 50131



Johnston Historical Board Members

Lois Waggoner, President
Deb Krambeck, Secretary
Jan Jensen, Archivist
Alan Lathrum, Membership

Nancy Budrevich, Vice President
Carla Johns, Treasurer
Marilyn Coonley, Membership

Museum phone: 515-331-0687
Website: www.johnstoniowahistorical.org

Mark Your Calendars

Society Events

November 5, 2015 Annual Chili Supper, lower level of the Simpson Barn 5 to 7 p.m.

City Events

May 19-Oct 6, 2015 Johnston Farmers Market each Tuesday 3:30 to 6:30 p.m.
in the City Hall parking lot

Reminder of Winter Hours: The museum will be closed for the winter months between December 1, 2015 and April 1, 2016.