

# Johnston (Station) Historical Society

Volume 25, Issue 3

Newsletter

Fall 2017

## From the President

As we enter the fall season, we have made several improvements at the museum. We received bids for the basement water issue. All bids were much higher than we had hoped, so we went with an alternate. With the help of board member, Al Lathrum, we installed a new sump pump and commercial grade dehumidifier. These measures seem to have improved water issues in the basement.

The issue of security lighting will be solved this month. After receiving three estimates and talking with Johnston police, security lighting will be installed on the north and east sides of the museum. A new security light will also be installed on the front porch. All new lights are dusk to dawn.

Due to the bid for the flagpole lights being higher than expected, my wife, Linda, and I have donated the transformer, lights and necessary pieces and have installed the lights.

We are looking forward to members attending the Soup Lunch on Nov. 12. Hope to see you there.

Michael B. Knight, President of the Board



## Fall Soup & Salad Lunch

Mark your calendar for Sunday, November 12, 2017 and plan to join us at noon for our annual Soup and Salad Lunch.

This year we are changing the Soup Supper, once known as the Chili Supper, to a lunch in hopes of getting more people to attend.

As we did last year, we will serve a variety of soups and this year add a variety of salads. And, of course, one must follow with dessert, right? We hope to see many of our members and their guests at this event. The Historical Board does all the cooking, and you are our guests.

We start serving at **noon** in the lower level of the Barn. There will be tours provided at the museum from 1:00 to 3:00 if you would like to participate in one.

There will be a door prize drawing for a gift basket.

## Christmas Event

We are in the planning stages for a first time Christmas event to be held at the museum on Sat., December 16 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. We will open our doors to the public to enjoy some old-time holiday traditions, with activity for children. Refreshments will be served. Once details are determined, this event will be advertised.

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## Flower Beds

Our faithful volunteer “gardener,” Carla Johns, has taken off her garden gloves and resigned from this never-ending job of pulling weeds and watering the beautiful flowers around the museum. Carla, we already missed you on the board, but now, we will miss you tending the flowers. You have done this quietly for many years without fanfare, but instead, for self-satisfaction in helping us at the museum and doing something you loved to do.

We probably haven’t thanked you nearly as often as we should, but knowing you, that was not something you were seeking. A little help from others would have made maintenance a little easier. What many don’t realize, you most often bought the flowers and mulch and donated that along with your labor. You also planted flowers under the windmill and often pulled weeds on the south side of the barn.

From all of us on the board, those who frequent the museum path, and the many photographers who have used the gardens as a backdrop, we thank you for the beautiful landscape you created. You will be missed.

## 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:

Lois Waggoner  
Mike Knight  
Liz VanZomerem  
Rachel Susan Canon  
Judith Sullivan  
Arthur J. Jensen  
Tom Rock  
Class of 1962

The Board of Directors would like to thank each of you for your generous donation.

## Sundae in the Park Results

We opened the museum during the city’s Sundae in the Park event held east of the library Aug. 6. We thank Lois, Nancy, Jan and Marilyn for working the Open House. They reported 103 visitors toured.

## Fire Extinguishers

The Johnston Fire Department came to the museum Sunday, September 10 and showed us how to use the fire extinguishers that are in the museum. They also explained the rules to follow if there is a fire. First, always call 911, and if determined a fire extinguisher can help, to use the PASS rules when attempting to put out the fire:

P = Pull the pin

A = Aim at base of fire

S = Squeeze handle

S = Sweep starting at the bottom of the fire

The firemen who demonstrated the use of a fire extinguisher were Nick Stewart, Tristan Johnson, and Nick Pearson. Thank you, Nancy, for arranging the demo.



## Johnston Schools Past and Present

As the new 2017 school year begins, Johnston opened their doors to the biggest high school in the state of Iowa that boasts a 9 million dollar sports complex, it's interesting to look back at the humble beginnings when Johnston was unincorporated and was an area where everyone knew everybody and many of the fathers worked at Pioneer.

In 1914, pioneers in the area gathered together to establish the Consolidated School District of Webster and Jefferson Townships, which eventually became the Johnston Consolidated School District. The rural schools that consolidated were Valley Independent, Friars Grade School, Ridgedale grade School, Woodlawn Independent and McDivitt School.

In 1915, a new K-8 building was built on land just west of where the last fire station sat on NW 62<sup>nd</sup> Ave and housed 100 students. In 1917 the district was expanded and was then "The Consolidated District of Johnston, Iowa." The school became a K-12 building in 1919 when an addition was made to the building. The newly accredited school received the first state and federal aid totaling about \$1,800. The cost per pupil was estimated to be \$9.64.

Today, the population of the entire school is nearly 7,000 with a total of 8 school buildings: 5 elementary schools, 2 middle schools and one high school. That is quite an increase from the first school in 1915 with 100 students. The first graduation class was in 1920 with 6 graduates. Now, each grade has over 500 students.

The new high school will house grades 10-12, just three grades, and has a student capacity of 1,800 and cost approximately \$81 million to build.

Johnston Consolidated School was the name when I attended. I am very much rooted in this town, having been raised here from a baby and graduating from school in 1963. There are quite a few from my class alone that attended all 13 grades in Johnston. In those days, the only preschool was what you learned at home, and we attended kindergarten every other day. Oh, how times have changed as the population has grown.



During the 1950's, several additions were made to the school. In 1958 the first additional school, Johnston Elementary was build east of Merle Hay Rd. That school is currently known as Lawson Elementary. The picture above is what Johnston School looked like when I attended. The portion of school to right was our gymnasium. The bleachers in the gym were wooden and built by Johnston community volunteers. The floor was also wooden and highly lacquered. As students, we were taught to walk around the perimeter of the gym with our leather shoes so we didn't scratch the finish on the gymnasium floor. Eventually most students wore tennis shoes, so that restriction ended. The center circle on the gym floor had a large "J" in the middle. This portion of the original floor is housed at the Johnston Historical Museum today.

Johnston Schools cont.

I remember pep rallies in the gym on Friday afternoons for that Friday night's game. I loved those because as a cheerleader, I got out of classes early to prepare and lead the rally with my fellow cheerleaders.



The new high school above has retractable walls and courtyards centered in every wing to a 1,200 seat auditorium. Besides the auditorium, which also features a balcony, it has wider hallways, larger classrooms, and a higher seating capacity in the gym, auditorium and the common areas. We had a gymnasium that also served as an auditorium, and acted as a common area for every activity there was, unless, of course it was an outdoor sport. It served as the place for practice and games as well as band practices and concerts. Our courtyards might have been the area we walked outside from the main high school building to the building in back which housed industrial arts, home economics and the biology lab.

Teachers no longer have desks in classrooms of the new school, but rather a collaborative room in each wing for all teachers to gather. This obviously changes the dynamic of the classroom for students, making it more open and collective for conversation. This is difficult for me to imagine a "Mr. Lancaster not sitting on his desk, swinging his foot" or a missing chalkboard behind the desk for the teacher to do sample problems for the class. And where do they place the mischievous student's desk that was once placed beside the teacher's desk for close watch?

There is a multitude of common areas for students to gather together while not in class. The latest technology is everywhere. There is a large touchscreen mounted on the wall and with the tap of a finger, parents, students, or teachers will be able to look at all sorts of photos from the database.

These are just some of the new concepts for the new high school. The school district also just completed a new sports complex west of the new school. As of this writing, Johnston just played their first football game on the turf of the new stadium for a victory win over Southeast Polk. There are colleges that would love to have a sports complex such as this.

Some things remain the same, at least I think: The school colors are still "purple and gold" and the mascot is still the "Dragon."

As I reflect back on my years at Johnston, I am most proud of the good education I received, the lifetime friends I have and the memories of fun times. That of being involved in activities and attending games, sock hops, my favorite teachers: Mrs. Doolittle, Mr. Lancaster, Mr. Herrick and Miss Fowler to name a few. I loved to go to the outdoor skating rink in the summer time behind the school, learned to skate backwards, which I loved, and seeing friends. My first kiss (not telling who) was at the skating rink. I have many fond memories of cheerleading for both football and basketball. The town of Johnston was all about the school. It has remained that way for many years. But now with the enormous growth through the influx of new

Johnston Schools cont.

businesses and housing developments, the sense of community may be lost. The school is only one entity in which to meet people.

With the rapid growth in Johnston, I often feel like a stranger. Then, on occasion, I run into someone I went to school with, and it's "old home week" all over again. There are several graduating classes from Johnston that remain in touch, holding monthly gatherings at a restaurant for breakfast or lunch. We are dwindling in number, but those of us who remain, enjoy seeing one another. That is not likely to happen with classes numbering over 500 in size. I'm wondering what class reunions, if they even exist in the future, will be like.

My wish for students today, traveling through their massively large new state of the art school, first, a good education, but many memorable experiences and friendships to last a lifetime. That's a bond no one can take away.

*Written by Deb (Robinette) Krambeck*

## Poetry Reading

On Sunday, August 13, 2017, we listened to the reading of a poem titled, *The Tall Dark Stranger* by Rita Whitmer. Rita is a local artist and a resident of Grimes. She shared her inspiration behind the writing of her poems. In addition to her latest poem, she read some poetry from her past collection.

Rita was joined by her sister, Barbara Whitmer, who lives in Toronto, and was visiting as they launched the publishing of a new children's book titled *Chato El Gato*. Barbara is an artist and had provided the illustrations for their joint venture. Again, Rita gave the background for the story, then began reading. Barbara explained the process for her beautiful artwork. These two women are very talented and we were most fortunate to spend an afternoon with them.

We thank both of you for an enjoyable afternoon. Refreshments were served.



Rita Whitmer



Rita Whitmer and Barbara Whitmer

## **Johnston High School Baseball Champs**

Seems Johnston has always excelled in the sport of baseball and this year they brought home the trophy for the Class 4A state title. And even better, they beat powerhouse Des Moines Dowling to accomplish that in the championship game played at Principal Park July 29, 2017. Johnston's pitcher, Jack Dreyer threw a shutout, striking out 13 to lead the Dragons to the state win. It was Johnston's fourth title in program history, and their first since 2013. Congratulations to their entire team and coaching staff. You once again made the Johnston community proud.

### **Board Members Needed**

With the end of 2017 just around the corner, we will be voting to fill two positions on the board. Please consider giving a few hours a week to the work at the museum. The December newsletter will have a ballot for you to vote for two positions.

Without the time and devotion spent by each board member, there would not be a museum to preserve the artifacts that tell the history of Johnston. If you have questions or would like to volunteer, call the museum 331-0687 and leave a message.

### **Security Light Update**

Mike Knight obtained bids from various electrical contractors to install security lighting around the museum. Biermann Electric of Johnston has installed two fixtures at the backdoor area, one on the north and one facing east. In addition, a new fixture was installed on the front porch to light that area too. Hopefully this will help deter vandalism.

### **Basement Leak**

As reported in the President's message, Al and Mike have installed a new sump pump and dehumidifier in the basement to replace the current ones that were not working. We know that we still have an issue with the areas that were leaking, but due to a dry summer, we have not had the problems we experienced last year when it rained much of the time. Meantime, we are looking at less expensive ways to stop the leaks, and agreed at our last meeting to install Dri-Lock to those areas that leak as a stop gap measure.

### **Old and New Flag Pole Areas**

President Mike Knight and wife, Linda, donated a bayberry bush and planted it in the area where the old flagpole once stood. The new bush is attractive and adds a nice touch to the landscape.

In addition, Mike installed two flood lights at the base of the new flag pole, wiring as needed. This was necessary to light the flag at night as required by rules governing display of our nations flag.

They also generously gave an attractive metal bench that says "Welcome" to be placed on the front porch. Anchoring it to the porch is needed to prevent theft, so Al and Mike will engineer a way to do that before placing it there. Thank you, Mike and Linda, for your many donations.

## American Association for State and Local History(AASLH)

Johnston Historical Society has officially joined the American Association for State and Local History and enrolled in their Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (StEPs) standards program. The StEPs program was designed specifically for small to mid-sized history organizations, including volunteer run institutions. Using a workbook, an online community, and a three-tiered achievement system with certificates, we will assess and improve our policies and practices, better manage daily operations, and plan for the future. AASLH also provides board and volunteer on-line education for those that preserve and interpret local history.

We have also joined the Iowa Museum Association, which provides education, communication, networking opportunities and advocacy for Iowa's museums. These two organizations will help the Board and other volunteers improve our preservation of Johnston history and better serve our community.

### New Members

New Members since our last newsletter:

Rita Whitmer  
Larry & Elaine Egan

Melody Pontious  
Barbara Zorn

We welcome each of you and thank you for joining the Historical Society. We hope you will want to get involved in the work at the museum.

### Volunteer Opportunities

We are seeking members who are interested in volunteering at the museum in various aspects of the museum work. Perhaps you would be interested in being on the board. As mentioned in a previous article, our faithful gardener is hanging it up, so if you, or a group of people you know would be interested in taking that responsibility on, please call the museum and let us know. Another job could be volunteering during open house time to greet guests and give tours. We work in twos or more to give tours depending on the number of people we anticipate. There is always house cleaning needed such as dusting and sweeping. If interested in volunteering for anything at the museum, call the museum and leave your name, phone number and a brief message.

#### Johnston Museum Open Hours

Second Sunday of each month

1:00-3:00 p.m.

Please call the museum to schedule a personal tour at another time

Museum phone 515-331-0687

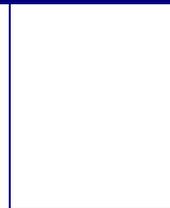
Alternate phone Nancy at 515-255-4030

## 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](mailto:jshs@q.com); or by phone: 515-331-0687. Over 1,000 Johnston related obituaries are now on file at the museum.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Relationship to Johnston</b>	<b>Date of Death</b>
Melba "Jeri" Carpenter Schleimer	Class of 1939	2-9-2013
Mike Meston	Class of 1959	6-26-2017
Patricia Russell Musgrove	Class of 1963	8-31-2017
Mary Carol Smith	Class of 1970	8-15-2017
DeeAnn Miller Ogle	Class of 1973	4-2-2017
Douglas John Clarkson	Class of 1982	7-1-2017
Dawson Kerr	Class of 2015	9-17-2017
Cheryl Lillegraven	Johnston Resident	6-17-2017
MaryLou Forkner-Schroeder	Johnston Resident	6-28-2017
Margaret Hemphill	Johnston Resident	6-29-2017
Dorothy Olson West	Johnston Resident	7-4-2017
Beverly Offenburger Watson	Johnston Resident	7-6-2017
Robert "Bob" Cornwell	Johnston Resident	7-7-2017
Clare Frances Davis	Johnston Resident	7-15-2017
Kinsley Rose Shortell	Johnston Resident	7-20-2017
Jana Grady	Johnston Resident	7-17-2017
Mildred Wicker	Former Johnston Resident	7-26-2017
Dale Martin	Johnston Resident	7-28-2017
Edna Blome	Johnston Resident	7-28-2017
Jerry Cranston	Johnston Resident	7-28-2017
Robert "Bob" Brandsfield	Johnston Resident	8-6-2018
Dorothy Fletcher	Johnston Resident	8-9-2017
Wilma "June" Balch	Former Johnston Resident	8-12-2017
Alex Johnson	Johnston Resident	8-15-2017
Matthew Rita	Johnston Resident	8-21-2017
Ramona McWilliams	Johnston Resident	8-25-2017
Joan Wakeman	Former Johnston Resident	8-27-2017
Mary Wassom	Johnston Resident	8-28-2017
Marilyn Immel	Johnston Resident	8-30-2017
Anne Bisignano	Johnston Resident	9-2-2017
Sister Mary Ruth Morris	Johnston Resident	9-2-2017
Linda Ford Vermie	Johnston Resident	9-11-2017
Ali Hashim	Johnston Student (2022)	8-29-2017

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



### Mark Your Calendars

Sun., Oct. 8, 1:00-3:00 p.m.  
Sun., Nov. 12, noon-3:00 p.m.  
Sun., Nov. 12, 1:00-3:00 p.m.  
Sat., Dec. 16, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Museum Open  
Member Fall Lunch in Barn  
Museum Open  
Christmas Event

### Johnston Historical Board Members

Michael Knight, President  
Deb Krambeck, Secretary  
Jan Jensen, Archivist  
Alan Lathrum, Membership

Marilyn Coonley, Vice President  
Nancy Budrevich, Treasurer  
Elizabeth VanZomeren, Archivist  
John Brown, Membership

Museum phone: 515-331-0687  
Website: [www.johnstoniowahistorical.org](http://www.johnstoniowahistorical.org)