

JOHNSTON (STATION) HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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6161 Northglenn Drive - Johnston Commons Park

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JSHS is a 501(C)(3) organization

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President's Column

January 2009

During the past year, I have written about our accomplishments. We can be very proud of all that has been done. With the beginning of a new year, we can look forward to continuing our hard work, starting new projects and making changes.

One new change will be our new meeting date. To prevent confusion and to make a logical calendar, we will start this year with regular meetings on every 2nd Sunday starting at 4:00 p.m., either at the museum or at the barn (we have to keep some variable). These meetings will follow the regularly scheduled open house that we have, starting at 2:00 p.m. Hopefully visitors would feel free to stay for our meeting and become interested in joining us.

Another change is that the museum will be staffed by volunteers from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. every Tuesday through Saturday to assist visitors. We are trying this for awhile to see how it goes. Before, we had a number of a drop in visitors when someone was working at the museum but who knows how many didn't come because of irregular hours.

I hope you will take a look at the page about the Johnston history book. This is a new project for us that can have lasting effects. It is a good partnering project that can be really exciting.

Elsewhere in the newsletter is an article about the searchable website with newspapers that served Johnston from 1970 to 2007. This project requires that you can get on the internet to search for a name, a date or event that would have been covered by the newspaper. If you need any assistance with this, give us a call or a letter and we will try to help you with this. The museum will have a computer that can be used to log on for the search. The Johnston Public Library also can help.

At our last Society meeting, it was suggested that a permanent flagpole with lighting would be a nice addition to the museum. Presently, we have a flag on a staff that is attached by a holder on the south side of the museum. It is put out whenever someone is in attendance and the museum is open.

It was decided that the issue would be left up to our membership. There is an estimate that this project could cost approximately \$600. If designated donations are received for a permanent lighted flagpole, the project can be accomplished. Otherwise, we will be happy to continue with our flag flying proudly as is.

CONTRIBUTIONS: *Violet Robinson* additional gift with dues

Condolences to: Carroll Broadie & family on the death of his wife, *Lilly*
Barton Schlenker & family on the death of his wife, *Virginia*

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Historical Johnston Newspapers Now Available Online

Earlier this year, the Johnston Historical Society was notified that their matching grant of \$3,463 from the REAP/Historical Resource Development Program of the State Historical Society of Iowa had been approved. This grant was matched and used to microfilm all the newspapers that had served the Johnston community since 1970 through 2007. This would also complete the State Historical Library's collection of microfilms pertaining to Johnston. *The Northern Polk County News*, *West Des Moines Express*, *Johnston News*, *Johnston Advance*, *Johnston Press Citizen* and *The Bullseye* have served the area over the years with news articles about the city, the schools and the people of Johnston.

Working with the Johnston Public Library, the Society sorted through all their bound volumes of newspapers, completing the collection with loose issues that the Society had. Thousands of pages were microfilmed and then digitized. This process led to the creation of a searchable website. A link can be found on the Johnston Public Library website (www.johnstonlibrary.com) or the Johnston Historical Society website (www.johnstonhistoricalsociety.org).

The Johnston Public Library paid for a portion of the project, and the Johnston Public Library Foundation furnished the majority of the matching funds for this grant. The Foundation, a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization with the mission to enhance the Johnston Public Library, used donated funds from the ongoing Friends Book Sale Room, the Johnston Bluegrass Festival and the Johnston Lions Club Book Sale to help make this valuable Johnston historical newspaper website possible.

***Portions of the following article are from an interview with Gladys Kuefner as well as Herbert Kuefner.**

Julius, Dietrich, and Barbara Kuefner's father, *Johann Kuefner*, who was born in Bavaria/Germany and came to Des Moines from Cincinnati, Ohio, and bought a half block on the river front. Here he built a frame house and had every thing ready for his family. Johan returned to Cincinnati and moved his family to Des Moines, arriving on July 4, 1855, after a six week journey by horse-drawn covered wagon. The trip was not without its thrills since the horses ran away three times, turning the wagon over. Dietrich was then 1 ½ years old at the time of this travel from Ohio to Iowa. There were about sixteen huts along the Des Moines riverfront at that

time. Johan had the first bakery in Des Moines, which was located at Second and Walnut. There he baked bread for Union soldiers, as well as for others, including Indians. He had four cookie cutters he used in his bakery. Many Indians came to the bakery to get things and were friendly if left alone.

When the family first settled, there was brush and timber on Walnut Street out to University Avenue. Any of this government land could be bought for a \$1.25 an acre. One man had forty acres of land which he traded for a team of horses. The team that brought my grandfather's family to Des Moines was traded for forty acres of ground near Winterset.

A Mr. Spofield (?) had the first livery barn and Des Moines House (or hotel) located on the river front. Mr. Hossick (?) had a 'hide store on Walnut'. There were no bridges across the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers so ferry boats, charging a 10 or 15 cent toll, allowed people and produce to cross the rivers. The little frame house Dietrich built stood at its original location in Des Moines along the Des Moines River until torn down to build the Post Office, which stands there now. Johann noted that "the first bridge built across the Des Moines River was not strong enough to hold much weight. If they had trotted their horses across the bridge they would have been fined \$10.00. If anyone had a large number of hogs to take across the bridge they were divided in groups of ten or twelve and only one group was taken over the bridge at a time. The first bridge built over the Raccoon River was a covered bridge.

The total livestock owned in Des Moines was four cows and four pigs. The pigs were bought in the spring when small, fed garbage from the Des Moines House, and by the following winter were large enough to butcher. The pasture lands were on the South Side and it was the duty of my grandfather (Dietrich) and his sister to take the cattle back and forth. One night it got a little late and the children got lost so had to sleep in the timber all night. The next morning their parents found them - safe but much frightened. My grandfather's mother made all the candles as they had no lamps or lanterns. At night she would get the tallow ready and pour it into the candle molds. She let these stand overnight and by morning would take out long white candles.

The first school house in Des Moines was a German school, a very small building located where the Coliseum now stands. My grandfather attended this school until age fifteen. The first church was German Lutheran and located beside the school. During his school days Grandfather seems to have been popular as a singer and speaker for he appeared by himself at picnics and on Fourth of July programs.

When Dietrich was fifteen years of age, his father put him on a farm nine miles north west of Des Moines, where he lived in a little log cabin. Later this cabin burned and a better home was built.

- on 54th Avenue and east of 86th Street. "Grandfather took wheat to the mill which stood first where the (Saylorville) dam is now. It was a grist mill run by water power, and ground bran, shorts, and flour. When six or eight bushels of wheat were taken to be ground, they received two hundred pounds of flour plus shorts and bran. It cost the pioneers nothing but a toll taken out in wheat.

When my grandfather (Dietrich) came out into the country, farming methods were rather crude. Grain was sown by hand, walking plows and walking cultivators were used and horses were used on the threshing machine, hand cutters used for grain. They had to measure grain by one-half bushels. A lot of hand work was involved in the threshing of the grain. Sometimes the straw from the stack carrier was so dirty, that my grandfather, who stacked the straw, couldn't see for two or three days. Corn was planted by hand. They had an implement like a four-runner sled which they pulled across the field lengthwise, then crosswise making a checkerboard marking. At every corner of a square three or four kernels of corn were cropped and covered using a hoe. This method of marking was called 'four-marked'."

The stage coach which came into use next after the covered wagon was drawn by four horses and had room for four passengers. These passengers often got sick riding because they had to ride backwards. One day a man drove into Des Moines frozen to death, the horses drawing the stage coach went straight to the post office that was located between Second and Third Streets on Court Avenue. Some time later the horse drawn street car came along. It was drawn by three horses and had room for twelve passengers. The street cars had no closed sides and only a roof for covering (this was an invention of a man named Turner)."

Excerpts from the obituary for Dietrich Kuefner show high regard for this individual. He lived on a farm near McDivitt's Grove until the time of his death. "He was a true and faithful member of the Lutheran Church at Grimes, Iowa, which he helped organize. Last Wednesday September 24, he was taken seriously ill with pneumonia. Thursday he received Holy Communion. He passed quietly away Sunday at 2:40 P.M. September 28, 1930, with all the family at his bedside. He was a kind, loving husband and father. --He lived to the age of 73 years, 1 month and 4 days. Pastor Schoenlein conducted the service at the Lutheran Church in Grimes (St.Peter Lutheran) with songs rendered by a mixed quartette from Woodward, Iowa. Song at home: "Let Me Go" Songs at the church: "Sweetly Resting"; "Lead Kindly Light"; "We Are Going Down The Valley One By One". Song at the cemetery: "Asleep in Jesus". A wagon wheel with a missing spoke was an important part of this funeral service.

Johann Kuefner's family: three children:

A) Julius Kuefner - had a smoke house, with a rail car was his shop.

Julius and his wife raised a family of four children:

Lottie Kuefner (twin) married Walter Kern; Lenora Kuefner (twin) married Arlie Otto

Lucy Kuefner; and Maurine Kuefner(JHS 1938)

B) Barbara Kuefner (Barbara Kuefner Neumann)

C) Dietrich Kuefner was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on 24 August, 1854. Dietrich married Johanna Schoen in Bloomington, Illinois April 20, 1879. Johanna Elizabeth Schoen Kuefner had been born 22 Sept 1862 in Prussia, Germany. Dietrich died 28 Sept, 1930, while Johanna lived until 16 November 1948. Dietrich (1854-1930) (a baker; also smoked meats for other people) and his wife, Johanna E. (1862-1948)

Twelve children (seven girls and five boys)

1. **John Kuefner** 11 Oct 1880 to 22 Oct 1958 married Ida Clements

They lived on 86th Street at the site of the southwest portion of the interchange with I-80/35). Their daughter, Gladys, born in 1909, graduated from Johnston High School in 1926, and lived and farmed there as well as worked for Pioneer and Triple "F" feeds until forced to move due to construction of the I-80/35 interchange. In 1992, she moved to Clive. Gladys died in 2004

2. **Caroline Elizabeth Kuefner** 25 Feb 1882 to 16 August 1939

3. **Fred J. Kuefner** 18 Aug 1883 to 2 Jan 1946 married Esther Herrold

4. **Laura Kuefner** 9 Dec 1885 to 8 Oct 1950

married to Fred Sellner lived and raised their family in Johnston.

(Caroline; Albert Sellner and Alice Sellner Hinckley (twins); Peter Sellner;

Gladys Sellner Grothe; Elsie Sellner; Harold Sellner; Wayne "Beener" Sellner;

Lillian Sellner Fisher Christenson; Walter Sellner)

5. **Christina "Chrissie" Kuefner** 2 Sept 1888 to 7 July 1979 (91 yr)

married to Fred Kern, they farmed on 54th Street.

6. **Gertrude Kuefner** 26 January 1890 to 7 December 1953 married Albert Keller

7. **Albert Kuefner** 14 Mar 1892 to 9 March 1968 married Ethel McHarg

8. **Josephine Kuefner** 26 Oct 1894 to 13 December 1964 married Louis Coulthard

9. **Nettie Kuefner** 21 March 1897 to 28 Aug 1985 married Clarence Carle

10. **Agnes Emma Kuefner** (JHS 1920) 17 July 1899 to 18 April 1977 married Clyde Coulthard

11. **Herbert Herman Kuefner** (JHS 1921) 21 June 1902 (now deceased)

married Grace Rittgers – deceased. remarried to Edith Balch (also deceased)

12. **Arthur Henry Kuefner** 12 May 1906 married Doris Clarke; remarried to Ruby Scrivner

Journey Through Johnston

The Editor of the Johnston Living Magazine is working with the Johnston Historical Society to create a truly unique book with pictures and stories of the history of Johnston. This would be a fundraiser for the Society as well as a worthwhile project to preserve and present our history in a very pleasing manner.

Similar books created by the same publisher have used approximately three hundred pictures on about one hundred and sixty pages. The museum has many pictures but we need more. Do you have a funny or poignant story to tell? Are there pictures of people or events that are of interest that we can scan? All pictures would be returned in their original condition. The history of Johnston is about anything that happened yesterday or before. Everyone who has lived, gone to school or worked in Johnston is a part of our history. This is a great opportunity for us and also for Johnston.

We are personally challenging you all to help us create this book. Contact us by phone, mail or email. We will work with you.

The Johnston Historical Society and Johnston Living magazine bring you

JOURNEY THROUGH Johnston

A PICTORIAL HISTORY BOOK

A picture is worth a thousand words, and today's photos are tomorrow's history. We are seeking your help to tell a story through photographs about our city's rich history and the people whose lives made Johnston the place it is today.

The Johnston Historical Society and Johnston Living magazine will publish "Journey Through Johnston, A Pictorial History Book." This book will capture history from photos taken by or in the possession of the people of Johnston. Your family, business, church, school or community group snapshots will help us see who we are today by reliving who we were yesterday. This book will become a treasured piece of history for future generations, and copies of the photos will be included in the historical society's collection.

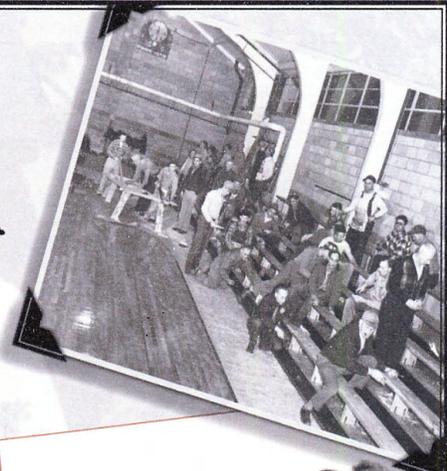
Please look through your photos and find those special gems.

E-mail photos and captions (including names and places) to laci@dmcityview.com or call Mary Jane Paez at 278-1170 or Bob Thomas at 491-2521 to arrange a time to have photos scanned. If you ever lived, worked or went to school in Johnston, you are a part of its unique history. Don't miss this opportunity.

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