

JOHNSTON Historical SOCIETY

(Station) P.O. Box 109, Johnston, IA 50131-0109

President Mary Ann Roberts
Secy-Treas. Ray Schliehs

NEWSLETTER

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JANUARY MEETING

Time: 4:00 PM January 22, 1997

Place: Johnston City Hall

Program: Video : Valley Junction - The First 100 Years

Discussion: Remembering and Recording
Family Stories

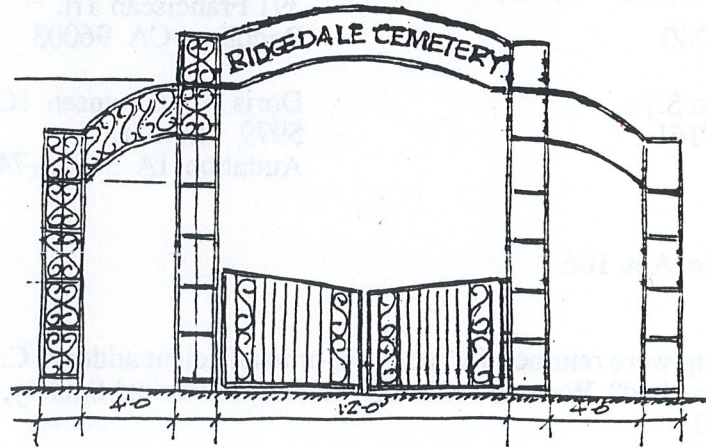
The Valley Junction video project is an example of how the history of an area may be recorded and presented.

Family stories can be the "seasoning" which bring a genealogical record, or the history of an area, to life.

Please note location of the meeting: Johnston City Hall

Cemetery Resoration

The new gate and entrance sign has been erected at Ridgedale Cemetery on Beaver Drive. Thanks to the city for funding the sign, and putting it in place, to Mary Jane Paez for her help in moving the project to completion, and to Ken and Patty Wallerstedt for the research and design.



Drawing of New Gate and Sign at Ridgedale Cemetery

A similar gate and sign are planned for the Valley View Cemetery. If any of our members have knowledge of the design of the original gate, which has been destroyed, please contact Mary Jane Paez, or Ken and Patty Wallerstedt or Johnston (Station) Historical Society, P.O. Box 109 Johnston, IA 50131. This is a McClain family cemetery, and funds for sign replacement will need to come from donations.

IRS Status

The Johnston (Station) Historical Society has been granted tax-deductible status under the IRS code 501 (c) (3), tax ID no. 42-1424702. This means that contributions over and above membership dues are tax-deductible. Many thanks are due to Don Denman for preparation of the necessary documents.

Historical Displays

The glass cases in the corridor at City Hall have featured a number of displays, put together by Bob Otto, of photographs and information on Johnston history. The latest of these presents some of Johnston's earliest settlers, a bit of their history, and contemporary descendants. Bob also plans a photo exhibit of historic Johnston homes. Look for these the next time you visit City Hall or the Library.

Membership

Joined the Society last fall:

Don R. Denman
4825 71st St.
Urbandale, IA 50322

New members who have responded to a recent membership solicitation;

Walter D. & Marianne Olmstead
2272 Green Hills Way
Vista, CA 92084

Don M. & Rilma L. Rice
4013 6th Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50313-3430

Mrs. Marvin E. Besch (Pauline A.)
4941 125th Ave. S.E.
Bellevue, WA 98006

Ted Miller
903 Vine RR 2 Box 69
Dallas Center, IA 50063

James E. & Gloria L. Thomas Jr.
5536 Verbena
San Antonio, TX 78240

Francis M. Badgley (Marion E.)
391 Franciscan Trl.
Redding, CA 96003

Dwight K. Stall (Jean S.)
3301 US Alt. 19 N #161
Dunedin, FL 34698

Doris N. Seimensen (Charles H.)
5979 Main St.
Audubon, IA 50025-7462

Delores M. Myers
6914 Greendale Circle, Apt. 106
Johnston, IA 50131

Letters to the following were returned for incorrect or insufficient address. Can you tell us where these people can be reached? Write to Johnston (Station) Historical Society, P.O. Box 109, Johnston, Iowa 50131

Jean (Wigton) Heldenbrand
Dorothy (Williamson) Ebert
Maxine (Haifley) Ellis
Albert Manderson
Betty (Stirts) Leonard
Doris (Clark) Emerson
Violet (Orlich) Robinson

Steve Orlich
Pensacola, F

Mary Helen Straker
Dawson, IA

Helen Tuffs
Bondurant, IA

Muriel Ross
Lawrenceburg, TN

Jean Landgren
Wilmar, MN

Richard E. & Linda Hyde
Johnston, IA

Harry & Mary Davis
Johnston, IA

Agnes Walker
Madrid, IA

George & Jo Ann Young
Grant City, MO

Radomir & Delores Vignovich
Ahwahnee, FL

Russell & Wanda Slauson
Grimes, IA

Roger Wigton
Des Moines, IA

Charles & Ann Cerar Mayernick
Pueblo, CO

William & Shirlee Herrold
Des Moines, IA

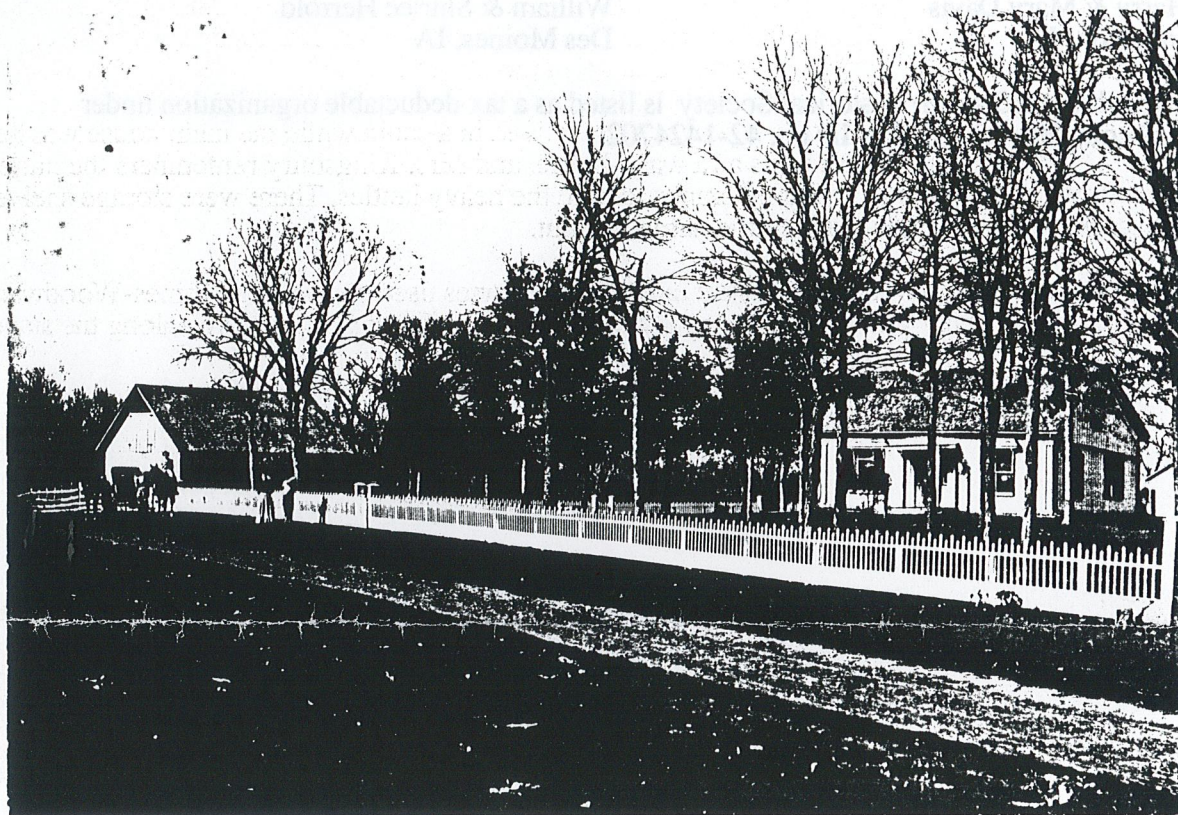
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Elliott House

As you drive along Northwest Beaver Drive, about a mile before you reach the Long Bridge, look for three concrete barriers along the north side of the road, which block access to some unused lanes leading through the brush and trees toward the shore of Saylorville Lake. One of these, before the Saylorville Dam was constructed, led to Elliott's Ford, an established route across the Des Moines River used by horses and wagons, and the Fort Dodge- Keokuk Stage Line.

The other drives led to a farm home, one of the oldest houses in Polk County still in use, and constructed by one of the early settlers in the area, Abraham Elliott. He came to the area in 1853, and built the house in 1857. The Elliott family lived there until 1889, when they sold out to Mr. & Mrs. Samuel S. Harvey.

Recently, the house and farm-stead were described by Mavis Cunningham Kingsbury, who is a grand-daughter to Samuel Harvey; she grew up just down the road, and spent many hours in the home with her grandparents.



The Elliott House, about 1902, when the Harvey Family owned it. Note the picket fence; a brick walkway led from the gate to the front door. Also note the narrow road in front of the house, what is now Northwest Beaver Drive. In earlier times it was called the Old Ridge Road, and the Fort Dodge Road.

The house itself was constructed by a cabinet and casket maker from Polk City and built from native walnut cut from the adjoining timberland and processed at lumber mills in Polk City. There were no nails in the frame-work; it was mortised and pegged. The floors were nailed to the hand-hewn floor joists with square nails. The exterior was finished with vertical walnut boards and battens. There were attractive scrolls and detailing over the windows and the front entryway.

Inside, the front door opened to a wide hall, leading to a large room, the dining room, at the rear, and featuring a wide open walnut staircase. Upstairs were two small low-ceilinged bedrooms, and a small railed balcony. (Mavis Kingsbury recalls that she and her sisters used this as a stage balcony, playing to the audience on the floor below). On the main floor were also a bedroom, a living room, kitchen and a pantry and entry room. The paneling was all black walnut. Seven large stone fireplaces heated the house; as a young housewife and mother of two small girls, Mrs. Harvey did not want to cope with this method of heating, and soon a huge wood-burning furnace was installed in the basement.

Another change which the Harveys made was to paint the house. Mrs. Kingsbury says that "Grandma did not like that ugly brown exterior, and had the house painted white".

Other features of the farmstead were a woodhouse, where wood and cobs were stored, and where all of the tools -- saws and whetstone- were kept.. Of course there was an out-house, and toward the rear an ice house, constructed on a grade, held large pieces of ice cut from the Des Moines river, covered with sawdust to provide ice well into the summer heat.

When the Elliotts first moved to the property, they lived in a cabin while the main house was being built. The Harvey family used this as a wash-house, and Mrs. Kingsbury remembers the huge stone fireplace, with large swinging cranes to hold the heavy kettles. There were storage shelves, and large cupboards, also made of the native walnut.

The barn to the north-west of the house once housed horses used on the Des Moines-Woodward Stage Line. For many years saddle-bags used to hold the mail that was delivered along the stage routes were stored in the attic of the house.

Mr. & Mrs. Harvey died in 1948, he at the age of 92; she was 90. The house was left to one of their daughters, who was not interested in keeping it, and it was sold to Mr. & Mrs. Frank Lawson of Des Moines, along with 6 acres of land. Mrs. Lawson was interested in antiques, and many of the old furnishings of the house stayed with it. The Lawsons cleaned the wood-shed of huge piles of chips, and converted it to a garage.

In 1975 the Army Corps of Engineers claimed the property as a part of the Saylorville Lake project, and the Elliott house was sold once more, and moved south-east along N.W. Beaver Drive, to its present location in Merwood Knolls. Mavis Kingsbury was able to retrieve some of the old family mementos at the sale-- among them a spinning wheel.

The house has gone through some further renovations and remodeling; the addition of a dormer added more room to the second floor. The exterior has been covered to provide better insulation, but still in the vertical siding with board and battens.

Currently owned by Don Christensen, the Elliott House, one of the oldest houses in Polk County still in use, remains a graceful reminder of early settlement in the Johnston area.

(Information from Mavis Cunningham Kingsbury, the Des Moines Register, and the late Charles Roberts)