



JOHNSTON Historical SOCIETY

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

President Mary Ann Roberts
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NEWSLETTER

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July Meeting

Date: Wednesday, July 23, 1997
Time: 4:00 P.M.
Place: Crown Point Meeting Room
Program: A Planning Meeting
Focus on Projects and Ways and Means.

Come and let the JSHS know what your priorities are!

The JSHS meets 6 times a year: January, March, May, July, September and November, on the fourth Wednesday of the month, plus an annual meeting in April. Please note that the next meeting will be on September 24, 1997.

School Furnishings to Historical Society

With the closing, for renovation, of Lawson school during the 1997-98 year, a number of school furnishings became available, and a few pieces have been donated to the JSHS through the former principal of the school, Sue Denny. Lawson School opened (as Johnston Elementary School) in January of 1959, and these desks, chairs, and a card file are representative of the period. They are being stored at Crown Point.

Membership Update

Current membership of the JSHS totals 130. Most recent member is Don M. White of Des Moines.

May Meeting

Members met at the Ankeny Historical Society's house, which the Ankeny group are in process of restoring. The house, of a typical white two-story frame "square" construction, was acquired in 1995 from property on Highway 69, and moved to its present location on S.W. 3rd Street in Ankeny.

According to Jean Jones, Ankeny member who served as host for our group, the house became available at no charge, and the decision to acquire and move it needed to be made in a very few days. Thanks to the energy and dedication of the Society president, board and

The Johnston Tabernacle and the Women's Social Circle

As communities grow and change, residents often begin to see unmet needs, and organize to action. So it was in the fall of 1914 when a small group met to establish a Sunday School in the Johnston Area. Known as the Johnston Union Sunday School, it first met at one of the local one-room schools, the Friar school. The school was located on the north side of N.W. 62nd Ave., (at that time called the "Panora Speedway"), where it then intersected with N.W. 72nd. This is near the current location of the Pioneer Resarch Facility, west of the High School.

Community response was such that the group soon outgrew this space, and with the support of a pastor Joseph Wells, who was a Johnston resident (he lived on Fruitland Drive-- now NW. 57th Ave.) land was given by a T.D. Wilson, and a large wooden building was erected on what is now Merle Hay Road (near the intersection with NW 62nd Ave.) just south of the present location of the Johnston Evangelical Free Church.

This building, known as the Johnston Tabernacle, was a rather primitive structure, with a tar paper exterior, well-ventilated by the many cracks in the wooden floor, lit with kerosene lamps, and heated, when possible, by an old-fashioned pot-bellied stove. Indeed, it was not possible to use the building in cold weather. When the new Johnston Consolidated School building was not completed in time for students to enter in the fall of 1915, the Tabernacle was used, for some weeks, as temporary quarters for students, and those who attended at the time reported that it was a cold and draughty affair- not conducive to learning.

Eventually, the small Sunday School community felt the need for a church organization, and in 1917 the Sunday School property was transferred to the newly organized Federated Church of Johnston.

The Tabernacle continued in use until it became completely inadequate, and in 1920 a brick basement church was constructed. (In 1954 a new church building was built --the present Johnston Evangelical Free Church).



But in the meantime, as the church established itself in the community, an auxiliary formed, and was inaugurated in March of 1917. They were the "Women's Social Circle of the Federated Church of Johnston" (Eighty years old this year!). They met the need of women to socialize and to help support the church— and they met at the Tabernacle. Soon, however, they began to meet at one another's homes. No doubt the Tabernacle was not a pleasant meeting place.

The record books, containing the minutes of this group from February of 1917 through 1938, recently came to light, and they give a picture of the social activities in Johnston in the early years of WWI and after.

Over the years, the activities of the Women's Social Circle, later on known as the "Ladies' Social Circle", and even later as the "Ladies's Aid" focused on ways to make money to support the church. Annual dues were 50 cents, with 10 cents charged for each monthly meeting. They began with quilting, making a quilt to be sold, and quilting for members for which they were paid.

They planned, postponed (when enough items to be sold were not forthcoming) and held bazaars, they gave dinners, sewed for the Red Cross, and gathered together "Missionary" boxes to be sent over-seas (one went to Seoul, Korea). They served lunches at sales; in February of 1918 they collected \$27.20 at "Grigg's Sale", and at the meeting on November 3rd of 1922 "the former president made a motion we would not sell cigars at sales. Motion carried".

When World War I became a reality, they invested in "War Stamps", gave money to the Red Cross, and attended a Food Conservation Lecture in Grimes, where pledge cards were distributed. No doubt the pledge was not to waste food especially in view of shortages in time of war, and perhaps to carry on food preservation at home. A pledge to the operation of the church, and to the pastor's salary were frequent entries in the minutes of the time— and in 1918 they gave money for "half a load of coal, a shovel and a broom" for the Tabernacle.

In 1920 they provided refreshments at the showing of a motion picture at the school building presented by "an Urbandale man". There was a "Market House" where a stall could be rented for sale of home produce. (Sounds like our current "Farmer's Market." Does anyone know where this was?) Thanks were given to "Mrs. Carter for room for a Bake Sale and Rummage Table". This was probably at the the Carter's Store, then located on the southwest corner of Merle Hay Road and N.W. 62nd Ave.

At a meeting on January 26, 1927, they voted to "serve refreshments at the dance to be given in the new garage". On March 3 of the same year "Motion made by Mrs. Gibson that we (Ladies Aid) do not serve at dance. Motion carried". One wonders what the objection was. The "new garage" was undoubtedly the Johnston Station Garage, located on the west side of Merle Hay Road just south of Carter's store, and owned by a Mr. Alley.



Box suppers, Harvest Home Dinners, Socials, both ice cream and others, become a litany in their records, along with menus and shopping lists. As the years passed, more and more entertainment was a part of the meetings-- music, "readings", etc. Occasionally, the society would give a play or skit-- usually a comic take-off, full of school-room stereotypes. And of course time at meetings was given to working on one's own "fancy work".

The "Roll Call" for the Women's Social Circle for 1917 is listed as: Mesdames Winterer, Vada Wilson, Hughes, Denney, Albers, T.D. Wilson, Dewey, Wells, Grayson, Minnie Wilson, Roland, Lansley, Cook, A.J. Rittgers, Harlan, M.D. Rittgers, Harry Harlan, McDonald, Cowgil, and Miss Greyson.

Our history is not only the record of buildings and events, of great occasions and disasters, but of the social "doings" of our forebears, which, though appropriate to their time, in many ways resemble those we carry on today.

*Many thanks to Wanda Slauson for making available the minutes of the Women's Social Circle of the Federated Church of Johnston.

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!T-shirts-T-shirts-T-shirts!

Yes, there are still a few available. Size XL-- (11) , size L -- (3), and size M -- (2). Cost is \$11 for each, plus \$2 for shipping and handling. You may order by sending your check to Johnston (Station) Historical Society, Post Office Box 109, Johnston, Iowa 50131-0109.