

Johnston (Station) Historical Society
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NEWSLETTER

Volume XI No. 6

Published Bi-Monthly

November 2004

President: Mary Jane Paez

Vice-Pres. & Programs: Judy Bogaard

Secretary: Marlys Seibert

Treasurer: Robert Thomas

Membership: Garland Seibert

Newsletter: Selma Duvick

November Meeting
Sunday, November 21
4:00 pm
at the Simpson House & Barn

Looking Ahead:.....

There will be no meeting of the JSHS in December. We'll resume meeting in January 2005.

Schedule for 2005:

Sunday, January 23

Wednesday, February 23

Wednesday, March 30

(Easter is on March 27)

Wednesday April 27

Sunday, May 22

Wednesday, June 22

Sunday, July 24

Wednesday, August 24



Sunday, September 25

Wednesday, October 26

Sunday, November 20

No meeting in December

All meetings at the Simpson House, unless otherwise announced.

 If you receive a renewal slip with your Newsletter, PLEASE SEND IT IN WITH YOUR CHECK! THANKS! 

The JSHS is an IRS 501(c) (3) organization

From the President.....

So much has happened since September, it's hard to know where to begin. For one thing, we matched Bob O'Hollearn's challenge grant and he made good on his word with a donation of \$2,500. We also received \$16,800 from the Johnston Chamber of Commerce for us to re-roof the barn. The City added another \$5,000 in order to upgrade the roofing material to a steel roof that looks like asphalt shingles. The material is fire and hail proof and will withstand 120 mph winds. An anonymous donor stepped up and donated funds so that we can re-roof the house at the same time.

With all this happening, we were also working with Wells Fargo Bank to secure funds to finish the barn completely with a façade of cultured limestone. They donated \$7,500 and we have ordered the materials. We have a court sentenced Community Service "volunteer" who is a mason. He will install the façade.

Bob Thomas and Garland Seibert worked with another "volunteer" and a brick pathway was installed from the south stoop of the barn to the new asphalt driveway that the City installed from the parking lot to the portico under the deck.

Still another "volunteer" finished installing the countertop in the house kitchen; the

plumber finished installing the garbage disposal, dishwasher and faucets. Bob T. and I finished painting the kitchen with "Lovely Yellow".

We received a donation from the Barnard family of an 1860's grand piano. It took a "crew" to move it but it had to be done before winter set in. Once we have the parlor finished, we can set the piano up there.

Phone lines have been buried to the house and barn and the barn has a functional phone now. This was necessary in order to activate the alarm system in the barn. The City picked up the tab for this.

The furnace is installed in the basement and we are awaiting the necessary ductwork. Russ Slauson has been a Godsend to this project.

At this point, the house inside needs to be finished with painting, finish the woodwork and redo the floors. Outside, we need to be thinking about residing, gutters, sidewalks, steps and a ramp.

We have made contact with the Dept. of Corrections again and we will see if we can get convict help again. Their work last time was awesome and we made so much progress.

As you can see, we are moving along. We have had out of town members who have stopped by to check the progress. We are so pleased to have them see what has been accomplished. Bob and Garland are the two mainstays of this project, but they need our support and many thanks.

Mary Jane Paez

CONTRIBUTIONS

Dragoon (\$10,000 - 24,900)

Johnston Chamber of Commerce
(for the Barn Roof)

Wagonmaster (\$1000 - 4900)

Eileen M. Robb
Johnston, IA

Robert & Jane O'Hollearn
Granite Bay, CA

Hy-Vee Inc.
West Des Moines, IA

City of Johnston
(for the Barn Roof)

Scout (\$100-999)

Michael & Pamela Wilson
Johnston, IA

Richard & Bettie Franklin
Urbandale, IA

Elnora Masters
Urbandale, IA

BRICKS:

Charles & Jan Hale JANET (WHITE)
Rockwall, TX & CHARLES HALE

Mike & Pam Wilson THE WILSON
Johnston, IA FAMILY

Robert, Jane O'Hollearn THE O'HOLLEARN
Granite City, CA FAMILY

Wells Fargo Bank WELLS FARGO BANK
Des Moines, IA

Welcome to New Members!!

Lee & Marjorie Baker
Des Moines, IA

NEWSLETTER NOTES:

We received a note from Elnora Masters, who lived at Camp Dodge from 1945 to 1979. Elnora smiles when she remembers the big trip from Camp Dodge to Des Moines to visit the doctor, or to shop. She says, " I think I left on the train (the InterUrban) about 7 am and came home at 6 pm. Even used to take the long trip to Perry to visit friends. What fun memories."



One of the inmates from the Newton Release Center who worked on drywall at the Simpson house dropped by this fall after his release, bringing his wife to show her what he had worked on and also, presumably, to see again for himself what he had accomplished.

It was a satisfying moment for Bob Thomas and Garland Seibert as well as for the former inmate.

And we have word that again about 10 inmates from the Center will be coming to work on the house renovation sometime this fall. We hope that these great workers will be with us for at least a week.



The Big Creek Historical Society reports that the City Hall in Polk City is now on the US Department of Interior registry of Historic Places, as of August. Congratulations to Big Creek for their success in this project.

THIRTY YEARS AGO IN JOHNSTON:

Back in November 1974 - 30 years ago - a story in the Johnston Northern Polk County News reporting on the Johnston City Council meeting included a request from the

Central Iowa Regional Library System. The administrator of that system asked that the City begin paying for library service for Johnston residents through a contract with Des Moines or Urbandale.

At that time, citizens from Johnston had to pay individually for a card at either of those libraries.

Ms. Humby, the administrator, discouraged thoughts of building a local library, since she said there were excellent libraries in surrounding communities and Johnston should take advantage of them.

Fortunately for Johnston, Bob Otto did not agree. He formed a Library Committee to study the possibilities. It took some time, but in 1988 the Johnston Library, as a branch of the Urbandale Library, opened in City Hall on Merle Hay Road.

The Johnston Library became independent in 1992, but soon the need for more space led to a drive for a new library building. Ground was broken in April of 2000, with Christie Vilsak, wife of Iowa's Governor, in attendance. The Grand Opening took place in October of 2001.



October, 1974

Children traveling in school buses over the railroad tracks at NW 62nd Ave. " fall off their seats" as the buses negotiate the very rough crossing.

Railroad workers repaired the crossing the next month. Not too many years later the last trains ran the route to Camp Dodge, and the tracks were torn up.





Lawson School Murals

Last year, Society members worked with Lawson School students and teachers to decide on what historical people or events in Johnston's history could be depicted in large murals that would be permanently displayed in the Lawson Halls. A 60' x 5' mural was painted by the students, under the direction of an artist in residence, Dennis Adams.

The scenes depict: John Johnston and the Johnston Station, Camp Dodge and Merle Hay, a stagecoach and J.B. Rittgers, the Lawson brothers, a one room schoolhouse, and the Johnston Consolidated School. Also included are Mr. Tower's horse drawn school bus and the first motorized school bus, Henry A. Wallace, a Native American woman with corn, and outdoor recreation in Johnston.

These choices were based on photos that were available and what appealed to the children involved. The long mural was divided into 7 pictures that are hung throughout the school. For each mural, we put together an explanatory text to be placed on the wall next to it.

The pictures are really stunning. Mrs. Spellman, the art teacher, has been very excited about this project. We were fortunate to be involved with the project and to be able to instill a sense of heritage in our school children.

Mary Jane Paez

Stage Coaches in Iowa

The late Chuck Roberts, in the days when he was writing and publishing this newsletter, picked up interesting bits of history in his search through old records. The following, from 1995, concerns stagecoaches in Iowa. We know a stage route went from Des Moines to Fort Dodge via our "Ridge Road", Northwest Beaver Drive. Chuck writes:

"The stage era in Iowa was from the first run on 1 July, 1847 to the last run on July 1, 1870. At one time the Western Stage Company had 3000 horses, 600 coaches and 1500 employees.

The first stage of the Western Stage Co. 'rolled away from before the City Hotel' in Des Moines on July 1, 1854.

J.S. Clarkson, then editor of the Iowa State Register. wrote in 1872 that the vehicles were 'wagons without springs and with white muslin tops drawn by two horses, arriving with great regularity semi-occasionally'.

On the first day of July 1870 the last of the Des Moines line of stages left the Capitol City. Meantime, it had developed from the two-horse jerkeys of 1854 to the Concord Stage, and 'til the rushing railroad caused the banishment of the stagethe four-horse coach was an important item in Des Moines life.'

Fares varied between the writers I have read; some say the fare to Keokuk or Davenport from Des Moines was \$10. Others have said 10 cents per mile and more, if the passenger was heavy. Also included was the requirement that the passenger was to carry a fence rail in case the stage became bogged down.

Andreas' Historical Atlas of Iowa 1875 shows the back driveway of Mary Ann (Rittgers) Roberts' home (intersection of NW Beaver and NW 66th Avenue) to be a road. That fact coupled with the old well immediately next to the front driveway leads me to believe that the stages pulled up to the residence of Jacob B. Rittgers in the 1850's and 1860's".

How quickly the era of the StageCoach as public transportation came and went.

More School Days

In his book "Iowa Country Schools, Landmarks of Learning" (Mid-Prairie Books, 1998), William Sherman includes a test which applicants for an Iowa teaching certificate were required to take in 1890.

The questions, in various fields of study, reflect the culture, world view and educational philosophy of the times.

Here are a few of the questions to test your knowledge – and we don't have the answers, so you are on your own!!

Geography:

- 1.Name the river basins of North America
2. Describe an all-water route from Liverpool to Constantinople.
3. Name five countries bordering on the Argentine Republic.

Arithmetic:

1. What are two-ninths of 28 bushels, 3 pecks, 7 quarts, 1 pint?
2. Multiply 24.234 by .346, and write the result in words.
3. If 3 be added to both terms of the fraction $\frac{5}{6}$, will the value be increased or diminished, and how much. Explain as you would to a class.

Physiology

- 1.How do you ventilate a school room? What observations will lead you to observe the necessity for better ventilation?
2. What are the great dangers in the use of narcotics and stimulants? Why is the general use of opiates undesirable?

US History

1. Name four distinguished generals who afterward became presidents of the United States. Cite some important measure connected with the administration of each.
2. Comment on the relative position of the United States today among the great powers of the world: wealth, resources, army, navy institutions, manufactures, intelligence of the people.

Grammar

- 1.Conjugate the verb 'fly" in the progressive form of indicative mode, present tense.
2. Of what advantage is an accurate knowledge of the English language to the businessman? Write an application for a position in a bank.

From Mary Jane Paez:

We all owe Sunny Duvick our deepest gratitude. For eight years she has been the editor, reporter and mailroom clerk for our newsletter. She has dug deep to research various stories. If she found errors in previous articles, she has dug deeper until the facts could be sorted out and corrected. Her dedication has been without match. She will continue to be active, but in other roles in the Society. We need a new editor and I am sure that she will help out to ease in a new one. Please let us know if you have an interest.

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