



Johnston (Station) Historical Society

Discovering and Preserving Johnston History, for Tomorrow

JOHNSTON
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Fall 2022

From the President...

It was a busy summer. We have completed the inventory of all the artifacts, photos and documents in the Simpson House and Barn, including some hidden items that we have added to our displays. We are now making the Simpson House historical displays more focused on the Johnston area history theme for each room.

While we hoped to have over 100 visitors during the Johnston Commons August 7 Sundaes in the Park event, a driving rain 30 minutes into the event caused it to be closed and limited our visitors to about 40 local history fans. We plan to be open for the October 21 Art in the Barn event and for the December 3 Johnston Library holiday event.

Visit our **Johnston Station Historical Society and Museum** page on Facebook, and now on Instagram, to follow our events. The 1902 Simpson House continues to be open by appointment for personal guided tours.

Thank you for your support in preserving and presenting Johnston area history.

John Brown, President



JSHS Apple Trees

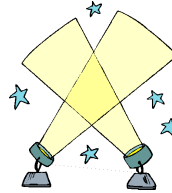
The location of the Simpson House was originally an apple orchard. Last year the City of Johnston planted several apple trees there to honor the original use of the land.

The trees are looking great and already have apples.

1902 Simpson House Video

A short video tour of the house that was posted on the State Local History network site in 2018 can be viewed at:

<https://www.facebook.com/lowaHistory/videos/925822240920506/>



Intern Spotlight

Caroline Christensen

By John Brown



JSHS obtained a Prairie Meadows Community Betterment Grant to pay for part of the inventory and digitization project. The Board then began the search for a suitable summer 2022 intern. The search began and ended with the summer 2021 project volunteer, Caroline Christensen. As one Board

member said after her interview: “She volunteered last summer, she grew up in Johnston, graduated from Johnston High School and she loves history.”

Caroline Christensen became our Summer 2022 intern and has made great progress on that project and on revamping exhibits. She has now returned to the University of Northern Iowa. In addition to her studies there, she is the Director of Public Relations for the UNI Student Government. Her majors are History and Political Communications and her Minors are Public History and Museum Studies. Her expected graduation is May 2024. In addition to her hard work, her creativity and new ideas will benefit JSHS for years to come.

Our Mission Statement:

The purpose of the Johnston (Station) Historical Society is to bring people together who are interested in the history and preservation of the Johnston area, which includes the early settlements of Johnston Station, Beaver Creek Settlement, Ridgedale, Huntsville, Herrold and Dodge City. To this goal, we work to get the community engaged and involved in Johnston’s rich history by providing a museum and events to the public.

Archives Inventory and Digitization Project

Our second summer intern has completed the update of our inventory spreadsheet; noting what artifacts should be retained, need better preservation or should be considered for deaccession (donation or sale).

That artifact list, along with photo and document scanned images, will be loaded into the PastPerfect Online system. That will then be made publicly available on-line using our website or the Johnston Library website.

We thank Prairie Meadows and State Historical Society of Iowa, Inc. for funding this project.

Simpson House Exhibits Update

Our summer 2022 intern has also revised the upstairs exhibits. Those exhibits are now more focused on the themes of those exhibit rooms: City of Johnston and the Interurban railroad, Camp Dodge; Early Settlers, and Pioneer and other local businesses. The current plan is to use the old research room as a Johnston business and church history room and have one room dedicated to just Pioneer Hybrids history. Stop by and see the improved Johnston area history exhibits.

We are also experimenting with a children's area, where they can color, dress up and use their favorite old device, our manual typewriter.

The popular Johnston schools room exhibits will also be revised. A State Historical Society of Iowa Technical Assistance Network historical exhibit professional will be assisting JSHS in better presenting and preserving those artifacts.

Be a Volunteer in 2022

Please consider becoming a Johnston Historical Society volunteer. That service can be as limited or as extensive as you want, to fit your interests and other obligations. Volunteer activities include tours, an update of the artifacts and documents, inventory spreadsheet and PastPerfect Online database, clerical support, 1902 Simpson House museum maintenance and improvements, expanding our online digital information offerings and member and community outreach events.

Contact us at

JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com if you are interested in a volunteer opportunity.

1946 Johnston High School Yearbook Donated

A long-time member, Helen Moss Tufts, recently sent us the student created 1946 Johnston High School yearbook. After a 5-year 1941-1945 hiatus due to the war effort, the 1946 senior class created their own paper yearbook, without pictures. A copy of that yearbook will soon be on-line.



JSHS now has the Johnston High School senior class pictures back to the first 1920 graduating class. We are still looking for the senior class of 1970 picture and will update our class picture collection with post 1994 pictures.

Helen wrote: *Having come to live at Camp Dodge when I was in 6th grade, and joining the class on March 1 (moving day back then), I have great interest in the unbelievable changes in the Johnston area. The school building I came to was a three story building. The basement had a gym, a music room and the Home Economics room. The gym was so small that the center circle overlapped the two free throw circles, so dribbling was often limited to just one dribble. Kindergarten was on the first floor, with grade schoolers on the second floor, Junior and Senior High students were on the third floor. The air conditioning was opening all the windows and letting the dust from Pioneer Hybrid's fields drift across our desks.*

The high school assembly room was rows of desks, with the desk of our wonderful principal, Bernice Scott, located at the rear of the room on a raised platform. That enabled her to see all the good, and forbidden, activity in the room.

Graduating from Johnston High School prepared all of us for college, technical school, raising families and service in the military.

Helen Moss Tufts later graduated from the Broadlawn School of Nursing in 1950 and dedicated her next 40 years to hospital nursing, retiring in 1990.

We believe that 1946 was the first year the Johnston High School teams first used the "Dragons" name. 1947 graduate, Adriena Ansley Lutter, is believed to have first suggested that team name.

New Johnston High School Student Advisory Board Member

Matthew Mikles, a Johnston High School Junior and the new student body President, has joined our Board as a non-voting advisory member. He will bring us insights on how to better serve the Johnston schools and younger history buffs. He is replacing past student advisory board members, who are now at Stanford University and the University of Northern Iowa. Matthew has been our garden maintenance Silver Cord program volunteer for the last year.



This past summer, Matthew volunteered at the Simpson House, working on weeding the gardens and trimming trees.

Fruitland Brennan Improvement League

The residents of the Fruitland (now NW 57th Street) and Brennan (now NW 55th Street) in what is now Johnston first met on November 15, 1915 to create this neighborhood association. It met monthly until the 1970s. The League persuaded the Des Moines & Central Iowa Interurban Electric Railroad to provide electric power to the neighborhood by the end of 1915. The League then built and maintained two small stations. In 1916, they obtained mail service. The League graded those 2 then gravel streets from 57th Street (now Merle Hay Road) to Beaver Drive. In 1964, they helped install street lights there. They often met at the Grayson cabin, whose location is no longer known.

The League had many small committees that tended to running the neighborhood. The monthly meetings included member presentations, pot luck suppers and holiday parties. When the City of Johnston was formed in 1969, it gradually took over much of the ongoing work that had been done by the League. The League then began meeting quarterly. Please let us know if you have more information on this group of dedicated civic volunteers.

Heard Gardens Beech Tree Removal for Intersection Reconstruction.

You may have noticed Johnston Drive looks a little different without the beech tree that once stood near the intersection at Merle Hay Rd. Due to infrastructure improvements (reconstruction of the intersection), the beech tree located in the right of way had to be removed. The intersection reconstruction will help provide better traffic flow as the area's recreation and businesses expand. There are many beech trees located in the area that will remain at the site.

The tree held a rich history in its roots. It was originally planted over 70 years ago by Bill Heard, the owner of Heard Gardens. Heard Gardens was a family business started in 1928 by Clyde and Eunice Heard. Bill started working for his father in 1939, after finishing school at the University of Nebraska. He later took over the business in 1956 and opened his shop on Merle Hay Rd. at 5355 Merle Hay Rd. Bill and his wife Kay and their daughter Carol lived in a house on the property. Bill Heard served as President of the National Landscape Association and as a White House garden consultant. He created and patented the Green Columnar Maple tree. Many of his horticulture books and pictures are now in the JSHS archives.

It was thought that the beech tree was a part of the secret garden Bill planted to add privacy around their family home. Soon this beech tree will have a larger legacy than ever before. This past fall, the city arborist took seeds from the beech tree and began the germination process. They were able to germinate about a dozen seedlings that will be planted once they can survive the outdoor elements. Whenever development takes place, city leadership looks to its team of arborists to save as many trees as possible. The City has full-time staff who specialize in tree removal, replanting, maintenance and general care. Continuing the legacy of Bill Heard, the City of Johnston understands how valuable trees and our rich diverse tree cover are to our land and residents.

SAVE THE DATE: Sat, December 3rd JSHS Holiday Open House



Support JSHS

In addition to member dues, Johnston Station Historical Society's mission is supported by additional contributions from members, special project grants, and donations of artifacts, documents and photos that relate to our mission. As a Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3) organization, monetary gifts, along with the value of donated artifacts, documents and photos, can be deductible from income taxable by the state and federal governments.

Your donation to the Johnston Historical Society goes directly to support its mission. As an all-volunteer organization, we have no paid staff. Unlike some charities with staff expenses, your contributions go entirely toward the 1902 Simpson House museum and our local history preservation and presentation initiatives, like our recently installed historical markers at Ridgedale Cemetery, Stage Coach Stop at NW Beaver Drive and 66th and Ray Schleibs Park on NW 55th Ave.

A benefit of membership is occasional free use of the 1902 Simpson House for meetings and special small events. The first floor meeting space can accommodate up to 20 people. Contact us for details. JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

We now have PayPal

For the convenience of member and donors, JSHS now accepts PayPal when paying annual membership dues or making gifts to help preserve Johnston History. When using PayPal, It is as simple as using our email address as a payment destination.

JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com
or scan the following QR code

Enter the desired payment amount, add a note telling us what it is for and you are done. It is that simple.



Obituaries

Obituaries are compiled by Nancy Budrevich. If you know of others, please contact JSHS. Contact information on this page.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Death date</u>	<u>Class of</u>
Mark Soldat	4-18-2022	1965
Staci Morrison	7-4-2022	1993
John Sharp	7-7-2022	1968
Jeannette Wheeldon Gavigan	7-13-2022	1962
Clarence "Gene" Bass	8-10-2022	1967

Tell Us Your Johnston Story

The Johnston area history that needs to be documented and preserved is not limited to what happened 100 or more years ago. It includes much more recent events and life experiences. It even includes how we and our families have endured the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please send us your Johnston stories to:
JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

or mail them to us at:

6161 Northglenn, Johnston, Iowa 50131.

Have you given us your e-mail?

The quarterly member newsletter is sent to all members who have given us their e-mail address. If you get this newsletter in the regular mail, and regularly use e-mail, please consider sending us your email address to:

JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

E-mailing helps us manage the cost of postage and volunteer time needed to provide our newsletters.

Also, please send us any changes in e-mail address, home address or phone number.

Board Members and Officers

The Johnston Historical Society is very fortunate to have a group of board members and officers with valuable knowledge, talents and experience. That includes, in addition to an interest in local history, expertise in city government, information technology, accounting, insurance, business operations and law.

Board members: Tom Leffler, Mary Jane Paez, Al Tokheim. A.J. Simpson and John Brown.

Officers

John BrownPresident and Archivist
Mary Jane Paez Vice President
A.J. SimpsonSecretary
Al TokheimTreasurer and Information
Technology/Communications Officer



Johnston Historical Society

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