

JOHNSTON (STATION) HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O.Box 109 Johnston, Iowa 50131
6161 Northglenn Drive - Johnston Commons Park

Volume XV No. 6	Published bi-monthly	November 2007
Email address: info@johnstonhistoricalsociety.org		Telephone: (515) 331-0687
JSHS is a 501(C)(3) organization	Web Site: www.johnstonhistoricalsociety.org	Treasurer: Robert Thomas
President: Mary Jane Paez	Vice President/Programs: Judy Bogaard	
Membership: Garland Seibert		Secretary/Newsletter: Marlys Seibert

President's Column

November, 2007

This is the last newsletter for this year so it seems appropriate to look back on our accomplishments.

First, our Craft and Bake Sale was a success. We netted over \$600. Thanks to all who donated money and/or baked goods. It was a little cool in the barn loft but everyone enjoyed the day.

The museum is beautiful with its fresh coats of paint. Sherwin Williams Paint has donated the paint for our project. Dick Tarlton and his son are working on crafting permanent storm windows to complete the project. We are recycling the glass from the aluminum storm windows to fit into the wooden storms. Russ Slauson has the cellar door complete. We are so fortunate to have these dedicated members.

In looking through an old hard drive in my computer, I found pictures that were taken during the preparation for the move of the house and barn, renovations to both structures and some of the help that we received from Johnston High School students, Pioneer Hi-Bred employees and inmates from Newton and Mitchellville. These pictures will be presented at the next meeting to show where we have been and what we have accomplished. We have accomplished a lot!

I went to the Johnston Post Office today and was proud to see the "History of the Johnston Postal System" poster that we created, just inside the door. We are one year away from a sesquicentennial year celebration of postal service in this area. John McClain was the first Postmaster in 1858.

On November 26th, at the Johnston School Board meeting, we will be presenting another framed tribute to our relatively new school superintendent. Clay Guthmiller is our 16th superintendent. The first one, Martin Albers, was hired in 1915. All sixteen superintendents are pictured with their dates of service in the composite we will give to Mr. Guthmiller. Anyone wishing to participate in the presentation should come to the Administration Building on Merle Hay Road at 7:00 p.m.

We recently joined the Johnston Chamber of Commerce. Sunny Duvick offered to attend the meetings on our behalf. She will interact with business members and create an awareness of who we are and what we do. Hopefully, we will get more businesses represented in our "business" display room in the museum. This is a time of year to express thankfulness. I can truly say that we can all be grateful for all the hard work of our volunteers. After looking through the old photographs of our past renovations, I am thankful that we have progressed to another level of work.

Happy Holidays!

On October 16, 1986, Northern Polk County News reporter Jeanne Hansen wrote: ["As Johnston oldtimers watched the demolition of the Pioneer shop building at 5800 Merle Hay Rd. this week, they recalled memories of the building when it was known as Rainbow Gardens where big name bands played for dancing every Saturday night in the late 20's. The building was erected as a Pontiac sales and service garage* in 1928 by Paul P. Alley. Mr. Alley had a garage between the Iltis Lumber Yard and the Johnston Barber Shop on Merle Hay Rd. but the facility was just too small. "When I build," Mr. Alley told his employee Houston Robinette, "I'm going to have a building at least 100 feet long." And that's just what he built - a 100 by 67 ½ foot brick building. Dances were held there for several years" ... "In 1934 Houston Robinette took over the business from Mr. Alley and his partner, Harry Seibert. The depression of the 30's wiped him, Mr. Alley, out", Mr. Robinette said. He said that the large number of repossessions really caused the business failure. When Mr. Robinette took over the garage he became a Chevrolet dealer and continued selling Chevrolets until he retired and sold the building in 1957, Ray Hunt, who was an early partner in the garage with Robinette left to work for the County. He had done a lot of maintenance work on County road equipment, liked the work and decided to go to work for them full time. Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc. bought the building in 1957 and leased it to Bob Anderson who operated Anderson's D-X station there for a number of years. More recently the building has housed Pioneer's shop and maintenance facility."]

* Alley/Seibert sold Oakland and Pontiac motor cars.

Upcoming dates to remember:

Open House on December 9, 2007, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

There is no regular meeting in December

January 27, 2008, is the next Regular meeting at 4:00 p.m. (Sunday)

February 27, 2008 is the Regular meeting at 4:00 p.m. (Wednesday)

There is always a wish that we will receive more news on members, information regarding family histories, even obituaries of persons with a connection to Johnston Station and to Johnston. With a group effort we now have firm evidence of what can be accomplished. That proof is the beautiful House and much-utilized Barn. Hopefully in the New Year 2008 we will be able to convert to the Historical Society's own Internet carrier and we trust that those of you have a connection to the Internet will enjoy the new web site. This past year has gone by rapidly. Perhaps our perennial flower display was the prettiest of any around. Our entire site is a touch of country in the midst of so much busy hustle and bustle and something to be very proud to be a part of. The Public Library, Johnston High School, Johnston City Hall and Crown Point Center all have displays of what we are all about. Come visit soon!!

A Walk Through The Museum:

The first impressive feature about the Simpson House from the outdoors is the beauty of the new decking on the wrap-around porch. (Not to overlook the new siding and paint however). It gives a feeling of "WELCOME"! Inside there are so many things - the front door opens into a homey space with a rocking chair, a handmade afghan of white gracing its arm rests. The backdrop here is the wonderful staircase -and what child hasn't imagined making a grand entry down such stairs?

In the sitting room there is the old pump organ manufactured by the Western Cottage Organ Company of Chicago and dated July 31, 1893. There is also the Mathushek Piano - massive, displaying huge carved legs with claw feet. Known as a 'square grand', it is a historical instrument that most likely was from the 1870-71 and popular before piano technology advanced into the modern pianos played today. A special item here is a quilt-top pieced especially for us and displayed on a wooden quilt frame found in the Simpson House. The frame was modified so the quilt top would be available for visitors to add their stitches to it.

The "School Room" is a favorite display with photos of graduates from the first class in 1920 up to the present - perhaps missing a few of the later groups but still a treasure. Here is where one will find the information regarding former students and staff, records of some of their achievements, and regretfully, the obituaries of those who have left this world. This room is truly a treasure!

Throughout the house you will find items that are reminders of a time past. There are unusual things such as a Meerschaum pipe - by definition Meerschaum is a German word describing a soft mineral literally meaning 'sea foam' and this ornately carved pipe is truly unique. There is a wooden coat rack hand made by a skilled craftsman who also had a hand in building the beautiful stairway at the E.T.Meredith mansion on Meredith Drive. There are several old-time vacuum cleaners as well as treadle sewing machines and early electric ones. These didn't perform all the 'magic tricks' some of the electronic ones of today perform but the women of yesterday did a wonderful job constructing clothing, household furnishing, and so on with this machines. They accomplished a great deal of detail in design during the process. Mending was not the only task performed!

Rag rugs, braided and woven, add a touch of warmth to several areas. These were serviceable floor covering, often reversible, and very often made in a hit-and-miss pattern. Waste not, want not, you know!

While one cannot possibly list all there is to see, you can get the idea that much has been accomplished in a relatively brief span of time. Be certain to stop in at your convenience. The phone number, email, and web site can be found on the front page of this newsletter.

ATTENTION: Web site address: www.johnstonhistoricalsociety.org
New email address: info@johnstonhistoricalsociety.org

If you would like to receive your newsletter via email, please let us know. Thank You!