



# JOHNSTON Historical SOCIETY

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Pres Bob Otto  
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# NEWSLETTER

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**TIME &** 4:00 P.M. March 27, 1996  
**PLACE** Crown Point Conference Room off Pioneer Parkway.  
**PROGRAM** Our Speaker will be Margaret Sharp who is Finance Director for the City, She will discuss the recent acquisitions of the various cemeteries in Johnston. She Solicits the Historical Societies input. She is formulating plans and policies. The City sells plots in the various cemeteries (Lawson-Kinsey, McClain & Ridgedale) She needs help in determining who is buried in the various cemeteries. The meeting should be very productive.

## OTHER HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

Our society is mailing our newsletter to other societies in our area. Some of them are Ankeny, Polk County, Poweshiek County and Urbandale. The editor receives the Jasper County newsletter in addition.

They are being preserved for the members use. One recent article shows the Ankeny Society is asking their City Council for some of their Hotel-Motel money. Because the annual dues barely cover mailing, we are always looking for new sources of revenue to further the objects of the Society.

## FAMILY FARMS

Soon the last old family farm will succumb to development. I guess it takes just more than ten acres to constitute a "farm". A. T. (Theodore) Rittgers died in November 1995 at the age of 90. He would have been 91 <sup>Feb</sup> April the 13th, 1996. His grandfather came to Polk County of live in 1853, he had been out and looked at the place in 1852 (the year the sale of land in Polk County was sold by the

government in Iowa City. The land was first sold to a Kogar. Only 37 acres remained in the Rittgers Name (Except 5 acres across the street in the name of Mary Ann (Rittgers) Roberts (too little to be a farm)). The A.T. Rittgers farm had passed to Theodore thru several people before Theodore ultimately inherited it from his Grandfather, J.B. Rittgers the settler who came to Johnston in 1853.

An article in "The Des Moines Register" Thursday, March 29, 1996 on page 1A and continued on page 2A lists the oldest family farms in 9 districts in Iowa. The oldest in our district was at Monroe (formerly Tool's Point) in Jasper County about 30 miles east of Johnston. About 30 miles west, near Dexter, Iowa in Dallas County is a family farm which has been in the same family since May 8, 1854. Eastern Iowa was of course settled before western Iowa.

A. T. Rittgers was a charter member of this Society.

#### **IOWA'S SESQUICENTENNIAL**

Iowa has an exhibit in the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. Part of that exhibit will move to the "Capital Grounds" in Des Moines from the 22nd of August, 1996 for about 4 days. The exhibit is called "Folklife Festival" and is a showing of the different cultures in Iowa (i.e. French, Irish, Welch, German, Dutch, Scandinavian and others) This will be free on the capitol grounds and should be of great interest to our members.

#### **NATIVE IOWANS**

Native Iowans include Herbert Hoover, Johnny Carson, John Wayne, Andy Williams (who lived at Wall Lake IA and 2931 Kingman Blvd in Des Moines, IA.), Tom Arnold, Simon Estes, and Donna Reed. Judge Dillon who was both on the Iowa Supreme Court and the United States Supreme Court was an Iowan and the author of the "Dillon Rule" which governs cities and towns.

#### **WHO BUILT THE FIRST BRIDGE OVER BEAVER CREEK?**

The army required Newcomb to build the first bridge over Four Mile Creek near University and Thomas Mitchell to build a bridge for the army to pass over Clear Creek near Mitchellville. Were the Hunt's or McRae's required to build a bridge over Beaver Creek? If not, who did? We know from the floods that Beaver Creek would have been an obstacle for the army in times of heavy weather.

**DONT FORGET TO SEE DISPLAYS AT CITY HALL, THANKS BOB OTTO**