

# Newsletter

Volume VIII Number 4

July 2001

President: Mary Jane Paez  
Vice-Pres. & Program: Judy Bogaard  
Secretary: Madilyn Allender

Treasurer: Donald Zarley  
Membership: Ferne Michael  
Newsletter: Selma Duvick

## July Meeting

Sunday, July 22, 2001

4:00 p.m. at the  
Crown Point Meeting Room

### PROGRAM: THE WAVES

An Historical Video of the  
Activities of the WAVES during World  
War II

Pot-luck Dinner  
Bring a dish to share and table service

## June Meeting:

Martin McGrane, who grew up in Johnston in a farmhouse on the corner of Beaver and NW 57<sup>th</sup> Street (then Fruitland Drive) gave us a wonderful view of Johnston as a boy growing up in the '40s and 50's and '60's as well as some interesting community history. See page 3 for his story,

## From the President.....

Over the years, the Historical Society has had numerous guest speakers telling about growing up in Johnston, working in Johnston, going to school in Johnston. Whether one was born and raised here or came later in life to make Johnston one's home, there is a story to tell.

We have heard about the early families, the native Americans, the school system, the coal mines, the incorporation of Johnston and the history of Pioneer.

Johnston has changed from the "good old days" but history is still being made. It doesn't stop.

Earlier this year, I gave a number of Laura Ingalls Wilder books to my granddaughters. In

## May Meeting:

Ray Pugh's fine motivational talk emphasized steps to keep life in a good balance: the three "T"s, Time, Talk and Touch.

Keep doing what you love, and what is possible. Love what you can do and do it with a positive approach; enjoy being here and be glad you are here. And take time to do all you can. Good advice for all!

reading through her stories it occurred to me that perhaps Laura wanted to tell about her life events because "things change". What child today could imagine life as we lived it, much less as Laura lived it.

It is so important to leave our children and grandchildren with an understanding of our history. This understanding can only come with a description of our loves as we grew up, worked, and raised families. Today's generations cannot imagine life without air conditioning, day care, DVD's, SUV's, laptops and instant replays.

Soon, the Historical Society will be asking all our members to help with the moving of the Simpson house and barn. We want to create a museum for Johnston memorabilia. We will need financial help from everyone but we will also need your help with stories of what Johnston is all about. Start today to jot down some of your tales. Everyone has a tale to tell.

Mary Jane Paez



June business meeting:

Mary Jane reported progress on arrangements for our assuming possession of the Simpson House:

- Transfer of utilities.
- Insurance and contact with mover
- Plans for foundations of house, walls for Barn.
- Site planning and landscaping.
- A budget will be forthcoming.

Don Zarley is making arrangements for a brochure to be designed and printed to present information about our house/barn project to possible financial supporters.

The JSHS will donate funds up to \$100, prorated, for the purchase of flags for the new

elementary school building that is now under construction on 100<sup>th</sup> Street. Other local organizations will also contribute.

Treasurer Don Zarley reports total fund balances of \$6,914.28

Ray Schliehs is arranging for bronze plaques noting the names of the donors, to be installed at the base of the flagpoles, which the JSHS has provided at the Johnston cemeteries.



**GOLD STAR COMMITTEE:**

Juniors from Johnston High School have volunteered to research the names of Johnston High School graduates who were killed in the military service

Don Zarley and the committee hope to have a bronze plaque, honoring these men, installed in the Johnston High School on Veteran's Day in November, or on December 7<sup>th</sup>, Pearl Harbor Day.

Those Gold Star honorees and their graduating class currently known are:

- Donald Jeffrey, 1934
- Jack Edinburn , 1935
- Donald Michael, 1941
- Max Minnick, 1942
- Philip Reese, 1942
- Harlan Daggett, 1948
- Jack Rothwell, 1950

If any of our readers are aware of other graduates who should be so honored, write to Don Zarley, in care of the Society.



# Memorial Day Ceremony

Fifteen members of the JSHS gathered on a rainy Memorial Day, along with members of the Urbandale-Johnston VFW, and national program called Operation Silent Witness. The tree, an "Eisenhower Green Ash" whose seed originated on the Dwight Eisenhower birthplace in Texas, was planted near the trail in Terra Park in Johnston.



## Welcome to New Members

The Johnston (Station) Historical Society welcomes new members:

Ruth Whiting, Johnston IA  
Kerry Bowen, Windsor Heights, IA



### And speaking of Memberships..

If you have not renewed your membership for 2001, this is your last Newsletter. Please note the code at the end of your name on the address label; if it reads 99 or 00 send your \$10 single or \$12 family to the JSHS, P.O. Box 109, Johnston, IA 50131.

(The Johnston Station Historical Society is an IRS code 501 (c) (3) organization)

### THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS:

Thank you to the following for contributions to the JSHS:

Emma Jean Stillwell, Johnston IA

Catherine Brandon, Montrose, CO

Ferne Michael  
In Memory of Esther Peitzman



### The Old Red Barn

Martin McGrane gave us an intriguing look into the history of Johnston, as well as presenting a view of family life in Johnston from the 1940's through the 1960's.

The son of the late Bert McGrane, noted sports writer for the Des Moines Tribune, Martin and his older brother and two sisters grew up on the corner of what was then Fruitland Drive (now NW 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue) and Beaver Road.

The farmstead at 5702 Beaver Road consisted of a big two story square Iowa-style farmhouse, built in about 1920, and garage, barn, chicken house and what they called a picnic house. The McGrane family moved to the farmstead in 1938, before Martin was born, and left in 1969.

At one time they raised chickens, and had a few head of cattle. The family planted, in time, an orchard, and grape vines, as well as shade trees. Beaver Road was dusty gravel, and the view was across green fields to the Des Moines River.

And they had a pony. Actually, the pony belonged to the family of Russ Bill, a farmer who rented, from a Mrs. O'Brien, the land just north of the McGranes, and who lived in the big old white farmhouse on that property (originally the McPherson home, and still there).

Martin's mother, Veronica, was an avid amateur naturalist. She was the one who planted and cared for the vegetable and flower gardens, though the children took their turn at "working in the garden".

And Martin remembers her taking him with him on rambles through the woods of the area, and up on the ridge across from Camp Dodge to look for rare plants and flowers.

His father, Bert, on the other hand, lived for sports, and knew all of the players and sports celebrities of the time. The children had some opportunity to interact with some of these folks. At one time the McGranes had a trap house, for trap shooting, which was constructed by Bob Feller during one of his early off-seasons while playing for the Cleveland Indians. (Feller, of Van Meter, IA was a star pitcher for the Cleveland team from 1936 to 1956.)

But one of Martin's strongest memories is of the red barn across the road from his home. It captured his imagination. It was a barn typical of those built in Ohio or Pennsylvania in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It stood on a foundation of large limestone blocks and had an over-hung hay mow on the down-hill side. The barn was constructed of hand-hewn white oak beams; the main girder was 45 feet long and more than a foot square.

At one time, when the barn was being re-sided, the workman who did the job told Martin's father, Bert McGrane, that he discovered, painted just under the eaves on the north side, the date 1857

The barn was a part of his childhood memory, so Martin could not just continue on when, as he drove past the location in 1971, he noticed that the barn was being dismantled.

He offered to help the two workmen there if they would let him take the large hand-hewn white oak beams. A deal was struck, and Martin went to work for a contractor in Lovington in exchange for the use of his heavy equipment to move the beams into storage.

The main girder proved too heavy to be moved, so it was undoubtedly burned with the rest of the demolished barn. But Martin kept the other beams in storage for a number of years, after which (for he had no plans to use them) he gave them to the Living History Farms in Urbandale.

After attempts to discover who owned this land in 1857 yielded little information, Martin speculated on how the barn was built, who the construction workers might be (farmers, a local craftsman), where they got their materials, and how the barn was actually assembled.

Martin McGrane is a writer and journalist, and he published this story about the barn titled "The Raising of the Red Barn" in the Iowa REC News.

After the McGranes sold the home, it was rented for a few years, then, in dilapidated state, it was burned as training exercise by the fire department. The lot stands empty now, save for foundation remnants, scrub, and a few trees. The old barn site overlooks grave pits on the other side of the road..

## LOOKING AHEAD . . . . .

Mark your calendars! All meetings at the Crown Point Meeting room.

**Wednesday, August 22:** Program to be announced. Meeting will be at 4:00 p.m. at the Crown Point Center

**Sunday, September 23:**

Shirley Miller will speak on genealogy: how to research your family history, sources of information, and use of the Internet in family research.

Shirley is a member of the JSHS, and a past-president of the Iowa Genealogical Society, and other genealogical groups, and of the Pioneer Sons and Daughters.

**Wednesday, October 24:**

Speaker: Jerry Miller, on the Restoration of Terrace Hill. We so enjoyed Jerry's illustrated talk on restoration of our Capitol Building in January. Come and see what he and his group accomplished at Terrace Hill.

**Sunday, November 25:**

To be announced

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## In Memoriam

**Esther Pauline (Seibert) Peitzman**

Esther Peitzman, of Johnston died of a heart ailment on May 14, 2001. Born in Grimes, she was a resident of Johnston for many years.

Esther was employed at Pioneer H-Bred International from 1948 until her retirement. She enjoyed and taught handcrafts, especially china painting, and many of her friends received hand painted gifts.

Esther was a member of the JSHS, and was a regular attendant at meetings as long as her health permitted. She was a fine source of information about the Johnston community and its history. She will be missed.

**Roselyn Bilz Voorhees**

Word has been received of the death of JSHS member Roselyn Bilz Voorhees of Santa Barbara, CA on May 21, 2001.

The JSHS sends sympathy to her friends and family.



## A Fourth of July to Remember

It was the summer of 1851, 150 years ago. Millard Fillmore was president, and Stephen Hempstead was Governor of the new state of Iowa. The state capital was still Iowa City.

And it was a year of historically serious flooding on the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers.

In those times, before the railroads, (they came in 1867) and when roads were not much more than muddy tracks, those early pioneers in Iowa depended on river traffic to bring supplies that were not available from local sources: wheat flour, sugar, tools and utensils, etc,

As the Fourth of July approached in 1851, residents of Des Moines anxiously watched the rivers rise and fall; they were concerned because supplies were low; river traffic was undoubtedly at a standstill because of the danger in negotiating floodwaters.

And so the community, preparing for a big Fourth of July celebration, had to make do with what they could find. From a biography of

Edwin Ruthven Clapp (by Tacitus Hussey, pub. 1906) comes the following story:

“ The Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist churches had planned a Fourth of July picnic to be held in the courthouse square; but when the ladies came to canvass the town for supplies, they could not find wheat flour enough to make the cakes nor the pie crust for the pies. The latter were dispensed with. For the former, sweetened cornmeal was used, and though some may have thought it was sugar wasted, the novelty of the thing caused it to be eaten with a relish by the hungry pioneers. Some of the old boys and girls who attended say it was the jolliest celebration of their lives.”

But the day following the celebration a steamboat, the “Caleb Cope” arrived in Des Moines, full of provisions of all kinds. It had been chartered by four Des Moines business people: among them Hoyt Sherman and J.M. Griffith. They had floated down the Des Moines and Mississippi Rivers to St. Louis in a skiff, at risk of life and limb, and negotiated with Captain Price to bring the steamboat and its cargo up river to the relief of the city.

Back to the Biography of Edwin R. Clapp..:

“After the boat was unloaded, Captain Price invited the inhabitants to go on a little excursion up the river, which was very generally accepted. At the time appointed, a company representing nearly all the prominent people in the village, responded.”

There follows a list of 25 or so names, including Wesley Redhead, Billy Moore, Tom McMullen, Hoyt Sherman, Barlow Granger, Edwin Clapp, and others. Also a number of women - wives, sisters, etc. were included.

Billy Moore, who evidently owned a store, was in the hold of the boat, looking for missing boxes, and had not intended to go along. But

before he was aware of it, the boat was under way, headed upstream, and had reached what was then “Hall’s water mill, now the Center Street Dam”. Captain Price would not consent to dock and let him off. He felt out of place there in his work clothes and shirtsleeves, so he was outfitted in a borrowed jacket, so as not to be ill-dressed for such an occasion. He joined the company who were enjoying “refreshments”.

To quote the Edwin Clapp Biography: “ The lemonade “with a stick in it”, or whatever the refreshments proved to be, was very exhilarating, and some of the gentlemen became quite hilarious. It had a curious effect on Billy Moore, for he took from his pocket one hundred and eighty dollars in gold, and, with the remark, “Boys, I’m going to start a bank,” sowed it on the water with a liberal hand. The sum lies, as a permanent investment somewhere between Thompson’s Bend and the mouth of Beaver Creek, which was as far up as the boat carried the excursionists. The excursion on the Caleb Cope will be remembered as most enjoyable by all the pioneers of that day.”

Later that July the floods subsided, but left in their wake washed-out bridges, impassable roads and trails, destroyed crops and buildings, lost livestock, and general hardship and misery for the citizens of the new state..

And thus was founded the first bank in what was to become the city of Johnston!

Biography of Edwin Ruthven Clapp, a Pioneer of Des Moines by Tacitus Hussey. Published 1906 The Register and Leader Co. Des Moines. (Courtesy of Ray Schleihs.)



## About the Simpson House:

We are still researching some of the history of the Bauman/Garlock/Simpson house; the name reflects the three owners of the property.

According to JSHS member Marilyn Bauman Finney, it was built, possibly just before the turn of the century, or certainly, by 1903, by John Henry Bauman and his wife Mary Etta.

On John's death, his land holdings were divided among his children, and his daughter, Norma Bauman Garlock, took the house and surrounding acres.

Johnston residents will remember the Garlock orchard along what is now NW. 86<sup>th</sup> Street.

In 1955 the Garlock property was sold to Laverne and Shirley Simpson, who raised their sons in this home. Later they built a home for themselves across the street, and the Garlock house, as it was then called, was rented, or lived in by family members.

As of July 1, this house, the barn and the windmill are, through the generosity of the Simpsons, in the possession of the Johnston Station Historical Society, with the stipulation that the structures are to be moved from the land. We anticipate that they will be moved to the Johnston Commons on the west side of Merle Hay Road, just north of the Maurice warehouse.



## CAN YOU HELP?

Recently, Mrs. Jesse Hirsch Masterson, of Memphis, TN visited our area in search of

the places in Johnston where she spent some of her early childhood years, and attended school.

She found things greatly changed, and no wonder, for the location of the old school is occupied by the fire station, and the area where the old Johnston Station Depot sat is now the site of a Walgreen's store in process of construction. Indeed, it is hard to find anything in Johnston that is "the same".

Mrs. Masterson lived, nearly 80 years ago, on NW 62<sup>nd</sup> Avenue between Merle Hay Road and the Inter-urban tracks, and started school in 1920 in the old Johnston School building.

We hope that some one of our "old timer" readers will remember the Hirsch family. Mrs. Masterson is interested in obtaining copies of photos from her time, of the area near the old school building and the Johnston Station Write to the JSHS, P.O. Box 109 Johnston, IA 50131, and we will forward your replies to Mrs. Masterson



## 30 YEARS AGO IN JOHNSTON

### In 1971:

In June, a school bond issue vote for the new high school fails for the second time. The site selections seem to be the problem.

The West-vue Drive-in Theater is still in operation. (NW corner of Hickman and 86<sup>th</sup> Street)

The sixth grade students will attend classes at Camp Dodge barracks. Enrollment in elementary grades: 700; in Jr..Sr. High. 530.

City contracts to study the feasibility of building a truck route between N.W. Beaver Drive and Merle Hay Road.