

# Newsletter

Volume VII Number 3

May, 2000

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

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

## May Meeting

**Date: Wednesday, May 24, 2000**

**Time: 4:00 p.m.**

Since Sunday, the scheduled meeting date, is also the date for Commencement,

The date for the May meeting has been changed. **Please note!!**

**Place: Crown Point Meeting Room**

**Program: Don Gerdom**

Don will speak on his Army Service, and his career in public service since that time.

Come and enjoy Don Gerdom's story!

Des Moines and became director of the Easter Seal Center, and in 1964, Clerk of the City of Des Moines.

Don taught school at Hoover High School until he took disability in 1983. In 1987 the Iowa Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America was organized, and Don began there as treasurer in 1988.



## At Our March Meeting .....

Ferne Michael brought a number of class group photos which she has gathered for the OASIS display (held earlier this month), and for the All- Johnston Alumni Reunion to be held September 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

All enjoyed looking over the photos, and reminiscing about school classmates and experiences.

Ferne has photos from the following years: 1920, '23, '26, '27, '32, '34, '35, '38, '40, '41, '42, '47, '49, '50, '54, '55, '56, '61, '62, '67, '68 and '72. If you have a class group photos, make a copy and send it to Ferne at the following address:

## About our speaker .....

Don Gerdom is a WWII Veteran who has been active with the Paralyzed Veterans of America. He is currently the executive director of the Iowa Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

During his career of public service he has been the secretary of the Mayor of Burlington, Iowa, and Clerk of District Court in Burlington, Iowa. In 1957 came to

Ferne Michael  
7214 Riete Ave.  
Windsor Heights, IA 50311-1304

It would be wonderful if we could fill in all  
of the gaps before the Reunion in 2001!



## ANNUAL MEETING

Members met at Crown Point and elected  
officers as follows:

**President:** Mary Jane Paez  
**Vice-president and Programs:** Judy Bogaard  
**Secretary:** Madilyn Allender  
**Treasurer:** Donald Zarley

**Committees:**

**Membership:** Ferne Michael  
**By-laws:** Donald Zarley  
**Ways and Means:** Louis and Gay Friestad  
Margaret Pennington

**Finance:** Louis Friestad  
Ray Schleih

**Acquisitions:** To be filled

**Programs:** Judy Bogaard

**Newsletter:** Selma Duvick

**Archive:** Bob and Shirley Johnson  
Judy Bogaard

**Public Relations:** Madilyn Allender

**Phone:** Jean Mott, Beulah Darling,  
Lilly Broadie, Beulah Bettoney,  
Ada Diefenderfer, Margaret Pennington,  
Bob Thomas.

**Genealogy:** Shirley Miller, Phil Murray,  
Ken and Pat Wallerstedt, Myrtle Van Dyke,  
Dolores Summey.

**Museum/House:** Ray Schleih,  
Connie Maxwell, Lloyd Michael,  
Bob Thomas, Ken Wallerstedt,  
Barbara Zorn, Donald Zarley

**Agent:** Ray Schleih

Many thanks to Beulah Darling and Pat  
Wallerstadt for past service as secretary and

vice-president and program chair  
respectively.



## MEMORIAL DAY FLAGPOLE DEDICATION

A detail of the Iowa National Guard from  
Camp Dodge, under Col. Al Rolfes will  
take part in a formal ceremony of dedication  
on Monday, May 29 at 9 a.m. for the new  
flag and flagpole installed at the Ridgedale  
Cemetery. All visitors are welcome.

The 25 foot flagpole is a project of the  
JSHS, with assistance from the city and  
funded by J.C. White, Don White, and Bill  
and Jane Wagner.

This is a fine opportunity to observe  
Memorial Day, and to see another project of  
the JSHS. See story below.



## EIGHTH GRADERS PLANT TREES

(and learn that Cemeteries are not  
"spooky places"!)

The Johnston Historical Society and  
members of Mrs. Sharon Mahoney's  
eighth grade Service Learning Class  
continued what is becoming a traditional  
relationship, when 44 members of Mrs.  
Mahoney's current class helped with  
planting trees, and general clean-up at  
Ridgedale Cemetery. Students had done  
similar chores in October of 1998 and May  
of 1999.

Members of the class were bussed to the Cemetery on Thursday, April 27, and helped to plant trees purchased for the cemetery through gifts and grants. They planted trees in holes city workers had dug, spread mulch, did general pruning of shrubs, trimmed around headstones, and helped to reset some head stones.

An added attraction for the workers was to see the newly-cleaned head stones, a project completed with funds from a Polk County Community Betterment Grant. Stones at Valley View and Kinsey/Lawson Cemeteries were also cleaned.

In spite of some light showers, students and adult helpers kept at the job, and enjoyed working together.

“As they were leaving on the bus, many of the students looked back at the cemetery and the new plantings and expressed their satisfaction and pride in the job they had done.”, said their teacher, Mrs. Sharon Mahoney.

Students who came with Mrs. Mahoney to do community service in the cemetery were: Bryce Augustine, Sarah Brown, Stephen Cate, Rachelle Dick, Amy Geels, Jennifer Goellner, Tyler Gustafson, Cole Hollobaugh, Christopher Jameson, Joshua Kingry, Tabatha Kniesly, Kurt Larson, and Amanda Obermeyer.

Also, Jane Slusark, Rachel Twinn, Michael Walker, Sheena Wendel, Jenna Woody, Frank Roggio, Stephanie Robison, Brian Marks, and Tyler Sloan.

Others participating were: James Binnie, Molly Duben, Taylor Haskan, Shannon Huffman, Brandon Jones, Whitney Kirk, Shara Lane, Jarod Lockner, Megan

Morehouse, Spencer Morris, Laura Stoeker, and Robby Swacker.

Also: Randy Thomppson, Rachel Vorm, Brianne Wall, Danielle Welch, David Blume, Jeremy Cordes, Danny Johansen, and Chris Middlekaut.

Members of the JSHS who helped were: Ferne and Lloyd Michael, Bob Thomas, Philip Murray, Bob Johnson, Mary Jane Paez, Judy Bogaard, Connie Maxwell, and Selma Duvick.

Merton Hansen and Joe Shore, from the Johnston Lions Club came to lend a hand.

City workers there who dug the holes, brought the mulch, and watered the newly planted trees were: Brian Wilson and Tim Mentele.

Thanks to everyone!!



## From The President.....

At the annual meeting in April, I was re-elected as President of the Johnston (Station) Historical Society. I am honored to continue as the president even though I wasn't raised in Johnston nor am I an alumna of the school. I did come to Johnston as a young wife and mother, so I have that perspective.

Every other month, one of my duties as President is to write a column for the newsletter. I enjoy writing when I have the time. Over the years, I have thought and written about preserving history. In looking over the membership roster, I notice that we

have members throughout the U.S. Our history is far-flung.

I don't know who reads this column, but I would like to propose an assignment for those who do. Please don't fling the newsletter down at this point – keep going. I would like each of you to write down a short paragraph, describing some aspect of your life in Johnston. Tell about your family, your ancestors, your school days – whatever.

I would love to hear from each and every one of you. Keep it simple. I may have further “assignments” later.

Johnston has been and continues to be made up of wonderful people. The history of this community can be as old as one hundred and fifty years or as new as yesterday. Send me your paragraphs and I will keep them in our files for posterity. Send them to my address:

Mary Jane Paez  
6165 Crabapple Lane  
Johnston, IA. 50131

Everybody has a story to tell. Tell yours!  
Mary Jane Paez



## Silent Auction Fund Raiser

**The Johnston (Station) Historical Society** is planning a Silent Auction to be held in conjunction with the Johnston City celebration of “Green Days”. Held annually, “Green Days” is a recognition of the numerous plant

and nursery facilities and businesses in Johnston.

Our *Silent Auction* fund raiser will be held at the Crown Point Community Center on June 17<sup>th</sup>, where items donated to the JSHS for this purpose will be on display for the public to bid on.

Bidding starts at 2:00 p.m., and closes at 4:00 p.m. Bidders must be present at 4:00 p.m. to see if they are the top bidder.

At the same time visitors may learn more about the JSHS and what our projects have been, and what we hope to accomplish.

We need donations from members and friends. If you have an item you would like to put in the auction, call Margaret Pennington at 279-5321.

The JSHS will also take part in the “Green Days” parade.



### Welcome to New Members

We welcome the following new Members:

Nick & Mimi Vignovich  
Sun Lakes, AZ

Barney Vignovich  
Bartlesville, OK

Dr. Charles W. Howe  
Woodward, IA

Judy (Broadie) Briles  
Johnston, IA

Nancy (Pontious) Budrevich  
Des Moines, IA



### In Memoriam

Homer Hunt, a former member of the Johnston (Station) Historical Society, died on March 16, 2000 in Grand Rapids, MI. He was born in Rippey, Iowa, and had lived in Omaha before moving to Michigan.

We send our sympathy to his family.



### Contributions

Ferne Michael has made a contribution to the JSHS in memory of Homer Hunt.



### An Original Family Homestead: In Johnston For Nearly 150 Years

Mary Rittgers writes about her late husband Clarence's ancestors, and their move to Iowa back in 1853-4. Clarence was descended from Daniel Rittgers, who came to this area with his older brother, J.B. (Jacob) Rittgers.

Their father, John Augustin Rittgers came to America in about 1795, from Prussia. He came as an indentured servant to John Comer, who owned a plantation in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Mr. Comer had other indentured servants as well to work his land, for he did not believe in slavery.

John Augustin eventually married Comer's daughter Catherine, which released him from his indentured status. Nine children were born to them, including Daniel and J.B. who were born in Virginia. John Comer died, and the family moved to Fairfield County in Ohio in 1816. After John Augustin died in 1848, the brothers Daniel and J.B. and others came to Iowa with their families.

Daniel lived where the North Glenn development now is located, and he had a sawmill on N.W. Beaver Drive where the pallet business currently exists.

Rueben Rittgers was the son of Daniel, and he married Abigail Findley. They had a farm north of NW. 62<sup>nd</sup> Avenue at N.W. 51<sup>st</sup> Street. The original family home and barn, located on the west side of N.W. 51<sup>st</sup> Street, were destroyed by fire. They had a large orchard, as well as a garden.

Mary Rittgers now lives on an acreage at N.W. 51<sup>st</sup> Street and N.W. 64<sup>th</sup> Place which is the last plot of land which has stayed in the family for nearly 150 years.

Reuben Rittgers and his wife Abigail are buried in the Rittgers Cemetery on Northwest Beaver Drive, as is his father Daniel, his son Thomas Park Rittgers and Thomas' son Clarence.



Reuben R. Rittgers and Abigail Findley Rittgers  
August 26, 1865

Looking Ahead: June Meeting  
Wed. June 28, 4 p.m, Crown Point  
Mary Rittgers will speak on  
"Those Roving Rittgers". Come!!