

Johnston (Station) Historical Society
Post Office Box 109
Johnston, Iowa 50131
www.johnstonhistoricalsociety.com

NEWSLETTER

Volume X No. 3

Published Bi-Monthly

May 2003

President: Mary Jane Paez
Vice-Pres. & Programs: Judy Bogaard
Secretaries: Marlys Seibert & Pat Wallerstedt

Treasurer: Robert Thomas
Membership: Garland Seibert
Newsletter: Selma Duvick

May Meeting

Wednesday, May 28, 2003

4:00 P.M.

Simpson/Garlock House at
Johnston Commons
(Bring your own chair)

Program:

**A House and Barn Walk-through
Come and see the progress
we've made in transforming the
House and Barn!**

(Guests are always welcome)

photos of the rural schools included in
the Consolidation in 1915

- Done research on the origin of Van Dee's Ice Cream shop (known as the Dairy Sweet, at one time) on Merle Hay Road at the request of the current owner
- Been instrumental (through Ferne Michael) in the formation of a Community Band..
- Ferne Michael has also consulted with the Iowa Events Center on the Johnston school sports history for inclusion in the Hall of Pride planned for the Event Center.

March Meeting

Program: Jon Duvick gave an overview of the Des Moines Choral Society Concert on Iowa in the Civil War to be presented on May 10 at the Civic Center.

In our role as Johnston's historians, we have:

- Sent information on Johnston's history to a Wartburg student
- Given the Johnston School district some of the history of the district, and especially the names, and in some cases,

April Meeting:

Our representative on the Polk County Board of Supervisors, E.J. Giovannetti, presented to Mary Jane Paez a check for \$1500 from the Community Betterment Grant (RACI funds). The money is to be used for our House and Barn renovation.

President Paez ran through the events of our final acquisition of the Simpson House, to agreements with the City of Johnston, to our move last June, to our negotiations with contractors, our fund-raising (we've raised more than \$200,000 – but there are still

needs) and industrious work by some of our members at the site.

Our accomplishments are remarkable, and due to very hard work and dedication of our members and friends. Thanks to All!

The Annual meeting accepted the resignation of Treasurer Donald Zarley. Bob Thomas has agreed to serve as treasurer, and was voted into office.

Master Gardener Barb Zorn and others from the community will be developing and carrying out a master plan for landscaping and gardens at the House and Barn.



From the President.....

In preparation for the annual meeting in April, I reviewed what happened at the annual meeting in 2002 when the architectural drawings were presented. I can't believe we have come this far in a year. And it reminds me of how far we still need to go.

At this annual meeting, we were honored to have Polk County Supervisor E.J. Giovannetti, come to present us with a check for \$1500 to be used toward the heating and air conditioning of the barn.

When I applied for this Community Betterment Grant, I pointed out that the cost of installing the systems would be close to \$9500. This shortfall makes u scramble for more money to match the \$1500 so that we can comply with the requirements of the grant.

On my desk now is a pile of papers that I will use to apply for a RACI grant to be used not only to put in the HVAC systems but also to wire the barn for electricity. The

RACI grant cannot be used for museums so the house doesn't qualify. We'll know in June if we get this grant. So far, my rejection pile is higher than my contribution pile.

The inscriber has completed the first order of bricks, and we picked them up last week. They are beautiful! The Monument Company asked for some time to work on their own projects, so we will send in the next batch of brick orders after Memorial Day.

If you have considered ordering a brick, please send in your order soon. It's better to order a number of bricks at one time than just a few. When some of the finished bricks were put on display at the OASIS event, a number of people were impressed and took order forms.

The deck on the barn is being built in between rainstorms. It's going to be an excellent addition. I can envision casting a line from the end of the deck into the pond. Too bad there are no fish!

Bob Finney, Bob Thomas and Garland Seibert installed a set of double steel doors in the east end of the barn, and it looks terrific. Work has also been done in the house basement in preparation for the concrete work. Ferne and Lloyd Michael continue to keep the house cleaned up between work days.

We are eager to show the progress of our renovation at the May meeting. And we'll be having a huge fund-raising garage sale at the House and Barn during Green Days.



Thank you!

In his position as treasurer, Don Zarley has been of great service to the JSHS. He has taken us through the difficult times of important fund-raising, and of paying bills for our move and renovation activities

For his all his help in steering us successfully through these shoals and keeping us current with our obligations, the JSHS gives him our profuse thanks!

Our new treasurer, Bob Thomas, has generously agreed to take on the position. As "chief of move and renovation activities", he's more that qualified to carry on as treasurer, and we thank him for offering even more of his time to the JSHS.

BRICKS HAVE ARRIVED

We have received the first lot of engraved bricks from Monroe Monuments. They will be installed after the patio area is prepared with a concrete foundation.

These are century-old bricks salvaged from the foundation of the Simpson House.

There is still time to order bricks, and an order form is enclosed with this Newsletter.

YOUR NAME
ON A BRICK



BRICK ORDERS

Gary Busby
Dallas Center, IA
TRAVIS, NICOLE
MELISSA BUSBY

Ferne Michael
Windsor Heights, IA
KATHY LAUER
RICK / ABBY

REED
LIZ / JEREMY

MICHAEL
LLOYD / ANN

MICHAEL
BLISS / RYAN

Jack Hauser
Johnston, IA
JHN STA JAZZ
BAND NOV 2003

Pioneer Hi-Bred International
Johnston, IA
PIONEER HI-BRED
INTERNATIONAL

GREEN MEADOWS LTD

Russell Underwood
Johnston, IA
RUSS DAE BRIAN
UNDERWOOD

Dave Kurns
Johnston, IA
THE KURNS
FAMILY

New Members

Welcome to the following new member:

Sarah Summers
Johnston, IA

Memorial Gifts

Ferne Michael
In Memory of Joanne Schleihs Eppich

Contributions

Harry & Madilyn Allender
Johnston, IA

Don and Marilyn Zarley
Johnston, IA



Garage Sale!!

The JSHS is planning a gigantic garage sale as a part of the Johnston Green Days event.

We'll have the sale at the House and Barn location, at the Johnston Commons on Merle Hay Road, so visitors and customers will have the opportunity to see our progress.

Time: from 8 am to 3 pm on Friday and Saturday, June 13 and 14.

If you have items you would like to donate to the sale, please call:

Mary Jane Paez 278-1170
Bob Thomas 277-3882
Garland Seibert 289-1643

for pick-up or to arrange delivery of your donations, or if you would like to help with the sale.

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

BEN DEWEY: JOHNSTON RESIDENT PUBLIC SERVANT

During the period of WWI and in the years of the depression through WWII one of the best-known and respected names in the rural Johnston Station community was that of Bennett Dewey.

And not only in Johnston, for Ben Dewey served many years on the Polk County Board of Supervisors., and was recognized for his contributions to the county, especially in his work to renew and upgrade facilities at the Polk County Farm.

Ben Dewey was born in South Dakota before it was a state, and grew up in Lead, South Dakota, where he graduated from High School. His father had been an attorney for Sitting Bull, and Dewey remembered the Sioux chief visiting his family home. As a young paper boy in Lead, he delivered papers to Calamity Jane.

Though he wanted to attend college, neither scholarships nor funds were available to him, so after he graduated from high school Dewey traveled to Omaha and took a job as a reporter for the Omaha Daily News. (A photo, probably taken at this time, shows Ben Dewey with Frederick Remington, famous artist and sculptor of the old west). Later he went to Chicago, and did assignments for the Chicago Tribune.

When a job opened in Des Moines at the Daily News, Dewey took it, moved to Iowa, and subsequently worked as a reporter and photographer for the Des Moines Capital, and then for the Des Moines Register and Tribune.

Dewey moved, in 1910, to what was then a station on the Inter-Urban, known as Johnston Station after his wife became ill, and it was suggested that living in the country might improve her health. He bought land adjacent to the railway tracks, on what is now NW 59th Court, and built a home. For many years the street was known as Dewey Road.

Shortly after the move to the Johnston area, Dewey found it was difficult to keep up with the responsibilities at the paper, and live in the country, so when a position as secretary to the Polk County Board of Supervisors became available, he took it; the job lasted 18 years. During those years, he became intimately acquainted with the responsibilities and activities of the Supervisors, and so was eminently qualified for the job when he ran for Supervisor himself. He was elected to represent the fifth district for 3 six-year terms; he left the courthouse in 1948.

During those years he established an enviable record for service to the county: To quote from the 1936 "Des Moines Dispatch", "In 1935 Dewey was made chairman of the committee in charge of the county farm. He took this institution and literally re-made it, transforming it from a place of abhorrence into a fine comfortable home for old people. He recently led the fight for the signing of a contract for city water for this county farm, a much-needed improvement."

(The March/April 2003 issue of the Iowan features an article on Iowa County Farms, or Poor Farms. The Polk County Farm was located on Second Ave. near NW 54th Street).

Dewey was also noted for his work on the county road committee. Older residents of

Johnston remember the winter of 1936 when 10-foot drifts blocked the streets of the community, and dynamite was used to try to unblock the roads. From a May 1936 Plain Talk column, " .. the people of the fifth district are today applauding him (Dewey) for the work done during the past few months. During the blockade of all county roads by the recent snow and winds, the secondary roads of (fifth district) have been open for travel." The streets of the city of Des Moines remained snowbound at the time.

Closer to home, Ben Dewey was involved in the affairs of the small Johnston community. He was one of the founding fathers of the Johnston Consolidated School district, and served on its board for about 20 years. He was instrumental in the Federal Government's locating and paving the road from Des Moines to Camp Dodge along what is now Merle Hay Road instead of Beaver Road.

At his retirement from the Board of Supervisors, Dewey went in to the insurance business. He continued to give to his community, and in 1979 he sold to the City land on NW 64th Place for a park, and gave funds for equipment for the park. Known now as Dewey Park, it has recently been refurbished.

Bennett Dewey had three children: Blair, at one time Johnston City Attorney, Richard, an airline pilot, both now deceased, and Karen Dewey Miltenberger, currently of Wisconsin. He died on September 24, 1980 at the age of 94.

(Thanks to Karen Dewey Miltenberger for memorabilia of her father, Ben Dewey. Other sources: Northern Polk County News, Des Moines Dispatch, Des Moines Tribune).

Register

J. F. JOHNSTON, RAIL MAN, DIES

Feb 15 ~~1939~~

John F. Johnston, 77, of 1421 Beaver ave., for 30 years general agent of the Des Moines and Central Iowa railway, died at Iowa Methodist hospital Tuesday. He had been ill about a year.

Mr. Johnston had been a resident of Des Moines 58 years.

Surviving are his wife; two daughters, Mrs.

Paul M. Beppler, **JOHNSTON.** Des Moines, and Mrs. E. L. Crowell, Pittsburgh, Penn.; a son, James F., Des Moines; a sister, Mrs. J. W. Topping, Burlington, Ia., and four grandchildren.



OBITUARY NOTICE OF JOHN JOHNSTON, THE MAN FROM WHOM
THE CITY OF JOHNSTON TAKES ITS NAME

(Courtesy of Karen Dewey Miltenberger)