

Newsletter

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Secretary: Madilyn Allender

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Membership: Ferne Michael
Newsletter: Selma Duvick

NOVEMBER MEETING

Sunday, November 25, 4:00 p.m.
At the Crown Point Meeting Room

Program:

Our annual "Show and Tell"
Bring recent material on your family
research, photos, stories of Johnston and
Johnston History

And a Pot-Luck.
Bring your table service and a dish to share

FROM THE PRESIDENT.....

The last couple of months have been exhausting and exhilarating at the same time. The first exciting thing to happen was the \$50,000 1: 1 matching challenge grant we received from Pioneer Hi-Bred International. The second exciting thing to happen was that we matched it! This means that we have the money to move the house and barn and get them situated on foundations.

It also means that we have to work harder to raise funds to complete the project. We

have heard from many of you but we need to hear from many more.

For the past four weeks, a number of local members have worked at the house and barn to prepare them both for the move. It has been awesome to see the checklist of "things to do" turn into a list of "all done"! Herculean tasks have been accomplished. We can be justifiably proud of the expertise we have in our membership.

Local merchants have also supported our efforts. Subway, Hy-Vee, and Bredeaux Pizza have encouraged us with donated food for the workers. Aristic Waste Services donated the use of a roll-off refuse container.

To coordinate the move with the most suitable time to prepare for concrete pouring, it appears that we will be moving the structures in March 2002. This gives us the opportunity to work harder at fund raising so that the whole project can be completed sooner and more rapidly.

If you haven't already sent in your donation, please don't hesitate. No gift is too small. Every contribution makes this dream come closer to reality. Don't forget to buy a brick to commemorate your family.

Mary Jane Paez

September and October Meetings

Shirley Miller, a certified genealogy researcher who has written about and taught genealogy research, warned us that doing research into one's family history leads from hobby, through obsession and to incurable disease!

Speaking at our September meeting, Shirley gave us tips on a number of good resources for information, such as the State Historical Library, the State Genealogy Library, and the library of the Iowa Genealogical Society here in Des Moines. There is a Mormon Library in West Des Moines. Ellis Island records from 1892 forward are being made available on line.

County Histories, to be found in libraries, are good sources of information. Another source is cemetery records and censuses, the latter done by the WPA in the 1930's. Our historical society has contributed by enumerating the local cemeteries and placing the information in the on-line Tombstone Transcription Project.

Older tombstones are often difficult to read, so researchers have found ways to bring up and make the letters and dates readable. Shirley has found that using wide white chalk and a soft brush on the stones can help.

Shirley also gave us advice on searching Military records from the National Archives for Civil War information. County Courthouses are another important source for marriages, births, deaths, and wills. Courthouse staffs vary in the service they are willing to provide.

Possible websites include: rootsweb.com and familysearch.com

We heard a number of interesting stories on personal family searches, which make this kind of research so rewarding.

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After we heard from **Jerry Miller**, restoration painter, last spring about his work on the State Capitol building, we knew we wanted to hear more of his story, and so we invited him back to speak to us in October.

Jerry also worked on the restoration of Terrace Hill, our Governor's residence. And he brought his slides to illustrate the deterioration of the rooms over the years, the earlier repairs and modifications, and the discoveries, underneath them, of what had been the original decorative designs and colors.

The slides also showed the meticulous and careful restoration painting and use of stencils with which Jerry and his crew returned the home to its original elegance and beauty.

Make a visit to Terrace Hill and see for yourself!



New Members

Welcome to the following new members!

Marilyn (Stott) Gates
Clearwater, FL

Linda (Busby) Zeiger
Des Moines, IA

Membership Renewal

It's time for many of you to:

Renew your Membership in the Johnston (Station) Historical Society!

See the renewal form at the end of the Newsletter. Make a special year-end contribution for the Simpson House and Barn. And keep up with all the history of the community, and the House, Barn and Windmill move.



Looking Ahead.....

There will be no meeting of the JSHS in December.

- January Meeting: Sunday, Jan. 27th.
Program: to be announced
- February Meeting Wednesday, February 27th. Program: to be announced
- March Meeting: Sunday, March 24th
Program: Karen Pound of Jefferson, IA will speak on Gravestone Symbols.
- April: Annual Meeting. Wednesday, April 24th.

A Special Gift

In the July 1998 issue of the Newsletter we published a story of Herrold School written by Frances Sandegren Badgley. Since then, Fran has published book entitled "No Bed of Roses" a memoir of her life in wartime America, when her husband was serving in the Infantry in WWII.

As her contribution to the House and Barn project, Fran has generously donated 22 copies of her book, and requested that the money from their sale to go into our fund for the house and barn move and renovation.

We'll have the books available (cost: \$10) at our meeting in November. A copy would make a fine gift for someone who experienced those times of concern for loved ones in the service, of problems with rationing, housing, etc

You may also call Bob Thomas, 277-3662, to obtain a copy.



The Gold Star Memorial

A bronze plaque, bearing the names of graduates of Johnston High School who have given their lives in military service to our country will be dedicated in ceremonies at the Johnston High School Auditorium on Friday, December 7th at 10:10 am.

Don Zarley and the Gold Star Committee invited High School junior students, to research the names of those men, and to compile their biographies, and have done an outstanding job.

Those to be honored and remembered are:

Donald W. Jeffrey, JHS 1934
Jack Edenburn , JHS 1935
Donald Roy Michael, JHS 1941
Harry Max Minnick, JHS 1942
Philip Raymond Reese, JHS 1942
Harlan Rex Daggett, JHS 1948
Jack Dennison Rothwell, JHS1950

High School juniors and seniors will attend the dedication, as well as guests from the Military. The public is invited to attend what will be an impressive and moving ceremony.



In Memoriam

Geneva Horner Mazza, a 1934 graduate of Johnston High School, died of a stroke on November 1, 2001 in the Washington DC area. Geneva was a member of the championship basketball team of 1934, and was elected the first Queen of Iowa Basketball that year.

The JSHS sends sympathy to her friends and family.

Pioneer Days at Horizon School

On October 8 Ferne Michael and Mary Jane Paez presented a program of information about pioneers, and Johnston pioneers in the early days of settlement here, to an enthusiastic group of students at Horizon Elementary School.

They visited Mrs. Young's first grade class, where the students had made "shoebox" log cabins. Mary Jane talked about how pioneers lived, and Ferne told the stories of her ancestors, the Hunt family, who came to Johnston in 1846.

Meet Me at the Corner.... Merle Hay and NW. 62nd Avenue

Abel Findley Rittgers was a storekeeper who sold general merchandise in a brick building which some Johnston residents will remember was located on the north-west corner of Merle Hay Road and NW 62nd Avenue (then known as Route 62). He was in business there with his brother John in 1918.

Abel was the son of early Johnston pioneer Rueben Rittgers and Abigail Findley, and was born in Grimes in 1875. Before going into the grocery business, he had been a dairy farmer.

The store building itself was a square brick structure, built close to the road, with narrow steps leading up from the street level to the door. Next to it were three "Camp Dodge" houses. (These were one-and-two room wooden cottages which were in use at Camp Dodge during WWI, and which the government sold off after the war.)

Abel, or "Uncle Fin", as he was known in the family, had put these houses together next to the store, as a residence for himself, his wife Mabel and their children.

In September of 1921, Abel Rittgers was digging a ditch for a sewer line for his house. Unfortunately, the sandy soil caved in on him as he was digging, and he was unable to climb out; when family and neighbors came to check on him, it was too late for a rescue.

His widow struggled on with grocery store to run, a partially finished home, and three small children to care for. Abel's brothers Jasper and John helped as they could.

We don't know when Mabel gave up the store, but the next tenant at the brick building was a Mr. McDermott, who operated a grocery store there until about 1951.

At that time the Elwell family took over the business in the building; later they built a new "supermarket" store across the street, on the northeast corner. In 1969 or 1970 the expanding Hy-Vee Company bought out the Elwells.

A few years later, Hy-Vee, finding this building too small, constructed a new one behind it, and then tore down the old one, leaving a large parking lot in front of what is now City Hall.

An animal-grooming establishment known as the "Dog House" opened for business in the old brick store building still standing across the street. This name persisted when later a coffeehouse for young people opened there. In the fall of 1974 the name was changed to "Desert Pete's"; the building continued as a gathering place for the youth of the community and, now sponsored by a group of local churches, it was open on weekends.

Eventually the old brick store was torn down, (possibly to widen the intersection, or when water mains were laid in 1974-5), and the lot stood vacant. A house next door, (possibly one of the Camp Dodge houses) was taken out in widening of Merle Hay. A businessman who proposed to make boat propellers there put up a building on the corner in 1987. This enterprise failed, or moved elsewhere and the "Subway" sandwich shop opened at the location.

In the spring of 2001 the "Subway" business moved to another strip mall down Merle Hay Road; the building on the corner was torn down, and this year local residents have watched the construction of a new Walgreens store where Uncle Fin's grocery once stood.

(Thanks to Mary Rittgers, Mary Esther Rittgers, Ken Rittgers, & Connie Saunders for information)

THANK YOU!

To the many who have volunteered their time and effort at the House and Barn over the past weeks. It has been an exceptional effort!!

Bob Thomas
Don Zarley
Bob Finney & Marilyn Finney
Garland Seibert
Ken Wallerstedt & Pat Wallerstedt
Mary Jane Paez & Alix Paez
Judy Bogaard
Chris Kinsey
Joe Shore & Arlene Shore
Lloyd Michael & Ferne Michael
Don Duvick

And Kathy Wallerstedt who arranged for food for the workers.

They have: Stripped out carpeting, removed tack strips and staples from floors throughout house, cleared out old appliances, cleared out old junk, attic to basement – 40 cubic yards; removed and stored antique fixtures; taken down light fixtures, dismantled wood stove in parlor; taken down brick chimney at roof line, taken down stove pipe, cut water and waste pipes in basement; cleared out basement, cleared out lath and plaster in basement between joists, taken out fixtures in both bathrooms; stripped linoleum from floors; cleared out 3 years' accumulation from vagrant living in loft of barn; cleared out 66 cubic yards of hay from barn loft; removed doors from stalls; and more, as the work continues.

If you would like to help, call Bob Thomas (277- 3882) to see when the crew will be there to work.

GIFTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE
JOHNSTON (STATION) HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Trailblazer

Pioneer Hi-Bred International
Challenge

Patriot:

Dragoon

Lee R. Baker
In Memory of Raymond and Mildred
Baker
Selma N. Duvick

Sodbuster

Wagonmaster

Mary Helen Straker
Donald Zarley
Mark & Mary Johnson
Robert & Margaret Thomas

Scout

Pioneer Sons and Daughters
George and JoAnn Young
Emma Jean Stillwell
Ken & Pat Wallerstedt
Josie McGonnigal
Dorothy (Hunt) Thompson
Ada Diefenderfer
Laurayne Robinette
In memory of Huston and Ethel
Robinette
Garland & Marlys Seibert
Beverly Shelton
In memory of Howard Lee Shelton
Shirley L & Charles R. Burkett
Walter D. Olmstead
Jim & Fran Melas
James & Jean Gilbert
Alix & Mary Jane Paez
Kenneth & Valida Bilbrey
Ruth (Bilz) Dougherty
In memory of Roselyn (Bilz) Voorhees
Douglas Haefle & Eileen Robb
Brian & Patricia Laurenzo
Fran Badgley
For donation of books
Janet & Shirlee Herrold
Bessie Carlson
In memory of Pacia Rogers Cowgill

John & Joann Thiesen
Mark & Lori McAllister
Ruth Biddle
JoAnne Eppich
Rose M. Busby

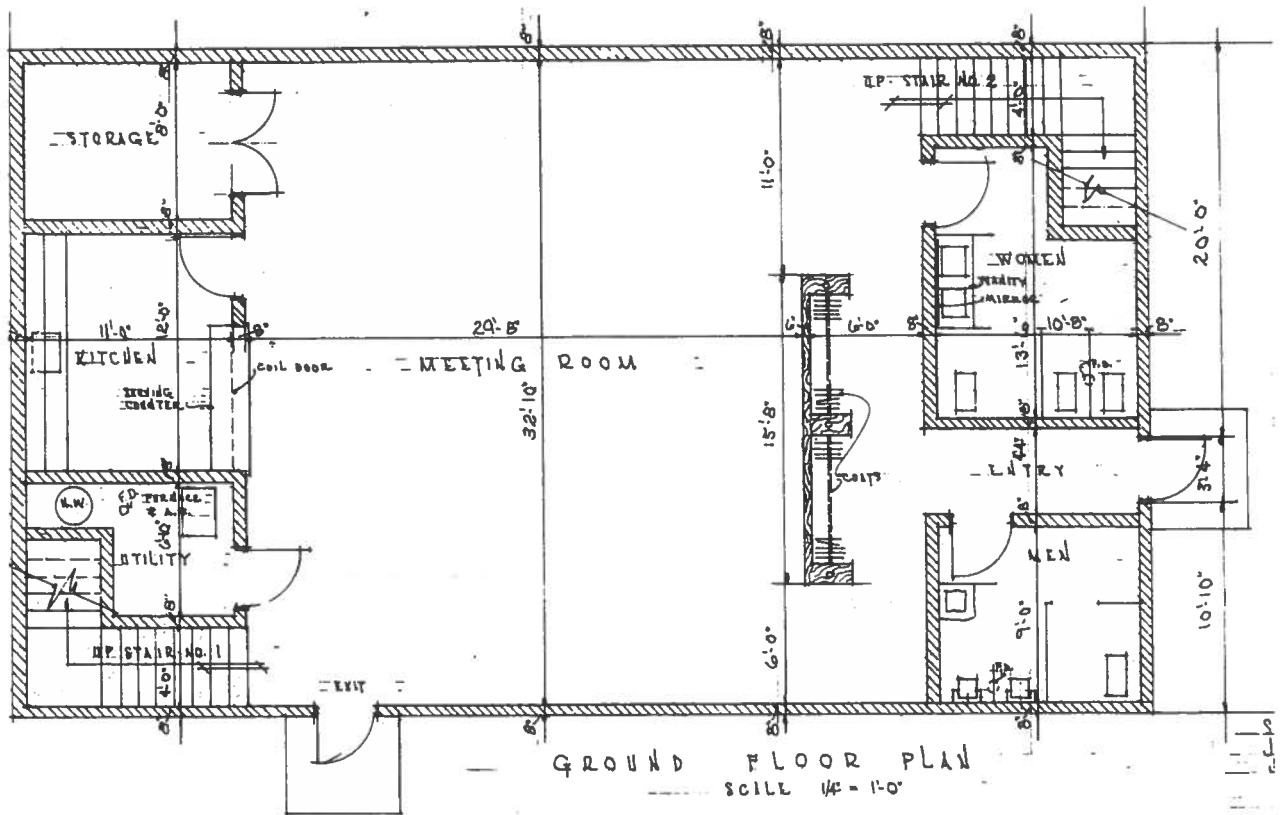
In memory of L.A. (Buzz) Busby
Randa Duvick & David Grosnick
Ferne Michael
Lloyd Michael
Kathy Lauer
Lloyd Michael II
Evelyn Frondle
Abby Lauer
Agnes Walker
Bliss (Michael) Williams
Carroll & Lilly Broadie
Merton & Jeanne Hansen
Jeanne Landgren
Wolfe Machinery Co.
Margaret V. Pennington
Madilyn & Harry Allender
Casey's General Stores
Dr. Alan & Lisa Swett
Irene L. Aulich

Caretaker

Amy Plymat
Mark & Lori McAllister
Jo Ann Hubacek
Robert & Shirley Johnston

Bricks

Ferne Michael
Lloyd & Ferne Michael
Alan & Deane McPherson
Ada Diefenderfer
Shirley & Charles Burkett
Jim & Fran Melas y
James & Jean Gilbert
Alix & Mary Jane Paez
Kenneth & Val Bilbrey
Eileen & Doug Haefele
Janet & Shirlee Herrold
Rose Busby
Robert & Margaret Thomas
Virginia Soelberg
Margaret V. Pennington
Irene Aulich



Architect's drawing of possible plan for the lower level of the Simpson Barn.
 Courtesy of Harold Bullington, Architect

XXX _____

Yes, I want to renew my (our) membership to the Johnston Historical Society.

(Check your newsletter mailing label. If it reads "00" or "01" after your name, you need to renew)

Single membership: 1 year for \$10.00 () I want to make a year-end contribution \$ _____

Family membership: 1 year for \$12.00 () Tax-deductible, IRS code 501 (c)(3)

Mail your check to: Johnston (Station) Historical Society
 P.O. box 109
 Johnston, IA 50131

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____