

Johnston (Station) Historical Society
Post Office Box 109
Johnston, Iowa 50131
Www.johnstonhistoricalsociety.org

NEWSLETTER

Volume XI No. 5

Published Bi-Monthly

September 2004

President: Mary Jane Paez
Vice-Pres. & Programs: Judy Bogaard
Secretary: Marlys Seibert

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

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Sunday, September 26
4:00 PM
Simpson House
6161 Northglenn Drive

Guests always welcome!

LOOKING AHEAD:

Meetings:

Wednesday, October 27

Sunday, November 21

All meetings at 4:00 PM at the
Simpson House

From the President:.....

This has been a busy summer for me with work and travel and so I haven't put in as much time at the house and barn. I have been in constant contact with Bob Thomas by phone and email so I have followed the day to day progress. It is wonderful to stop by to see the progress made.

The first apparent improvement is the replacement of the porch columns. Bob Metcalf, his brother from Minneapolis and his son worked for two days getting the columns set perfectly. We added an extra column on the side porch to support the roof better.

Inside the house, more progress is being made on replacing the finished woodwork. The old kitchen that had knotty pine walls has been drywalled and trimmed with oak around the windows and doors. The oak had been salvaged from the old Seibert place on 86th Street and donated by Garland and Marlys.

Russ Slawson delivered the new furnaces to the house and will be working on installing the systems soon. We will be using salvaged antique floor grates to cover the cold air returns.

Windows have been reglazed, refinished and are being reinstalled with new window weight ropes.

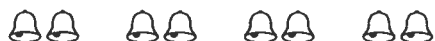
I received a wonderful phone call a couple of weeks ago. Ex mayor, Bob O'Hollearn, moved to California last year to follow his job responsibilities. His call was to issue a challenge. He and his wife, Jane, will match

donations up to \$2,500. He said that they very much supported our project and that they wanted to help get us through to completion. He said that though they live in California now, their hearts are still in Johnston. Are there others out there whose hearts are still in Johnston, who will help just a little more?

There have also been a number of class reunions this summer. This generated a donation for a "class" brick. Not to be outdone, we now have four classes that will be represented with bricks – 1941, 1942, 1950 and 1954. We can always put in more bricks!

The windmill is also getting refurbished. Jim Boll, of Dallas Center, has helped us find replacement parts and missing parts so that we can start the process of putting the windmill up.

We have been working on grant applications and fund raising proposals. There is a distinct possibility that we will be able to finish the roof on the barn. We will be hearing soon. Let's hope that the news is positive.



Welcome to New Members

Gloria Seibert Gibbons
Richland, WA

Contributions:

Caretaker (\$1 – 99)

JHS Class of 1954
(See listing under "Bricks")

Scout: (\$100 – 999)

Emma Jean Stillwell
Johnston, IA

Wagonmaster: (\$1000 – 4999)

Robert & Jane O'Hollearn
Granite Bay, CA

☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆

Bricks:

Johnston High School	CLASS OF 1954
Class of 1954	JOHNSTON HIGH

Janet (Elwell) Schuessler, Bill & Reva Turpin, Martha Dunn Sloan, Gloria Seibert Gibbons, Joyce Miller Carney, Garland Seibert, Richard Betz, Harold Adams, Jan White Hale, Veralea Heskett Adams, Sandra Mosier Ridgeway.

Jim & Janet Schuessler	JIM AND JANET
Slater, IA	SCHUESSLER

Ferne Michael	JOHNSTON HIGH
Windsor Heights, IA	CLASS OF 1942

Marilyn Courtney	IN MEMORY OF
West Des Moines, IA	E. E. TURPIN
Granchildren of E.E. Turpin	

Robert Thomas	CLASS OF 1941
Des Moines, IA	JOHNSTON HIGH

Richard Tarlton	1950 J.H.S.
Adel, IA	22 OF US



CITY OF JOHNSTON: 35 YEARS OLD

An article in the Johnston issue of the Des Moines Register for Tuesday, September 14, 2004, reminds us that this month Johnston celebrates the 35th year of its incorporation

as a City. Looking back in the files, we find a special section of the Johnston Advance, our local paper at the time, noting the 25th Anniversary of the incorporation, to be celebrated in November of 1994.

Mayor at the time was John R. VerHoef, and a Salute to Leaders published in the paper gives a listing of literally hundreds of other local citizens who had given over the years, or were currently giving time to the various city committees and boards

In March of 1999, the JSHS heard a history of the genesis of the campaign to incorporate, and of its eventual success, from one of the activists, Don Running.

The story that follows is worth re-telling on this anniversary.

JOHNSTON STATION TO THE CITY OF JOHNSTON: A HISTORY

Don Running who spoke at our January meeting was one of many Johnston area residents instrumental in bringing about the incorporation of the city of Johnston.

Running described some of the process by which the unincorporated community of Johnston, sometimes called "Johnston Station" became the incorporated City of Johnston, and the roles which he and many others played in this series of events.

In 1967 "Johnston" was essentially a school district, which had been consolidated, in 1914, from a number of rural school districts in mostly unincorporated areas.

Over the years there had been interest in initiating the incorporation of the

community, but after the building of the Saylorville Dam, adjacent cities, Urbandale, Des Moines, and Ankeny which were growing, expressed an interest in incorporating areas of "Johnston" into their own boundaries.

These annexation intentions were serious, and later led to some boundary disputes, which were eventually settled.

Dave Goss, Jr. a local businessman had, for some time, been lobbying, in the community and in the Lion's Club for some action to incorporate. He, and a number of other citizens felt that Johnston should be an incorporated community and responsible for its own destiny. At one time, Goss had his own attorney speak at a Lion's Club meeting about the process of incorporation.

The school board, too, was concerned because developers were pressing to build on what had been the Meredith Farm, along the west side of Beaver and north of Aurora Ave. This would bring more children into the district, but the tax base from residential property would not be sufficient to support their numbers enrolling in the school.

(Just a few years earlier, the development of Debra Heights, east of Beaver, had brought a large number of children into the district. The Johnston Schools had built a new building- now Lawson School-- to serve this school population, only to have the area vote itself into the Des Moines School District.)

Don Running was on the Johnston School Board at the time, and remembers talking with fellow board members Dwayne Wicker and Walter Eichhorn about this pressure from Johnston's neighbors. They reasoned that perhaps if Johnston were incorporated, it could control the kind of development

which would bring a broader tax-base for school support.

Sometime in 1967 - Running does not remember the exact date - he, Eichhorn and Wicker decided to act, and met with Dave Goss at Running's home. They agreed that they wanted to work toward incorporation of a city of Johnston. And they agreed to call other interested citizens to meet with them.

The difficulty was that Iowa State law held that a community could not incorporate within 3 miles of the boundary of another incorporated community. The most heavily populated areas of Johnston fell within that prohibition.

The solution lay in initiating the incorporation in an out-lying area, and then, after the fact, having residents within three miles of the Des Moines City limits voluntarily annex themselves into the newly-incorporated city of Johnston.

Running called another meeting of those who had been contacted.

Among those attending were: Don Running, David Goss Jr., Arthur Green, Charles Iler, Laverne Simpson, Lloyd Busby, Alan Leffler, James Ahern, Lew Clarkson, Lowell Temple, Richard Franklin, Don Duvick, and William Myers. (Later on, Harold Southerwick and others became involved).

Those who lived outside the three-mile limit organized to carry out the necessary steps to incorporation.

As an attorney, Running took the initiative to investigate procedures which had to be taken under law to file the necessary papers with the District Court. Boundaries were set outside the 3-mile prohibition, and they

included Camp Dodge and other properties north of, and just south of N.W. 70th Ave.

Approval for incorporation failed in the first election held early in 1968. But the group re-organized, and increased efforts to inform the local residents of the advantages of incorporation. There were opponents - one was the County Board of Supervisors. Others circulated "horror stories", and some false information about what would happen - our taxes would go up, we would lose police protection, etc.

According to Running, this was the most difficult time - the campaigning for the vote, answering objections raised, and trying to keep the process on track.

A second Petition to the District Court, signed by A.R. Green, Cleo Green, William C. Myers, Dorothy Myers, and Harold Southerwick, was approved on April 8, 1969. The proposition for incorporation passed by a 71 to 13 vote. at a June 23, 1969 election. In September the first city election was held; the Mayor, Harold Southerwick, and councilmen James Ahern, William Myers, Robert Rubel, Arthur Green, and Walter Eichhorn were sworn in to serve until January of the following year.

The next big task was to bring in all of the properties within that three-mile limit south and west of the newly-incorporated city by voluntary annexation.

Members of the Lions Club were mobilized to cover the community, to visit all residents, and invite them to sign petitions to annex themselves into the City of Johnston. They armed themselves with plat maps of the area, and information and petitions, and set out to cover the territory. This huge undertaking received a real boost when

Pioneer Hi-Bred petitioned for voluntary annexation.

Gradually, as property owners petitioned themselves in, Johnston became an intact city, eventually stretching from beyond Camp Dodge, to Interstate 80 on the south, and from the Des Moines river west to what is now 100th Street.

In addition to the many members of the Lion's Club, who worked so diligently to get annexation petitions out and signed, and including those mentioned above, others who took part in the early organization of the city were: Al Aulich (first city clerk), Lucille Southerwick, Robert Rubel, Lawrence Oliver, Paul Gomis, Robert Swanson.

Every community owes thanks and gratitude to those who had the foresight to look ahead and were willing to work toward goals which would enhance the lives of all its residents.

Johnston exists because of the efforts of Running, Goss, and the many others mentioned in this chronicle.

From the Johnston Historical Society Newsletter, Vol. 6, No.3



FROM THE EDITOR

The next issue of the JSHS Newsletter will be my last as editor.

Volume 1 No.1 of the Newsletter appeared in September of 1994. Initiated, written and edited by the late Charles Roberts, it featured information on the early Beaver Creek Settlement and so-called "claim

clubs", as well as meeting announcements and membership concerns..

After Chuck's untimely death in September of 1996, your current editor took over, assisted for a few years by Ray Schleih. Now after 8 years it is time to pass the job on to someone else.

I've learned much in "putting out" this publication every couple of months - much about Johnston's history and its people - and I want to thank all of you (and there are many) who have so generously contributed information and photos to make it a worthwhile effort.

We are looking for someone to take over as editor. If you think you, or anyone you know, might have an interest in exploring this possibility, please call Mary Jane Paez, 278-1170, or Selma Duvick, 276-2923. All inquiries welcome!

Selma Duvick, Editor

And a Reminder.....

The JSHS membership is on a Calendar year. If your mailing label reads "04" after your name, you need to renew your membership at the end of this year. Or better yet, right now!

Memberships: Single, \$10 per year

Family: \$12 per year

Send to : Johnston Historical Society

Post Office Box 109

Johnston, IA 50131

The JSHS is an IRS code 501(c)(3) organization