



Johnston (Station) Historical Society

Discovering and Preserving Johnston History, for Tomorrow

JOHNSTON
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 29 • Issue 2

Summer 2021

From the President...

Our computer enhancements required that we use a new e-mail address and phone number.

E-mail: JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

New phone number: (515) 608-5730

1902 Simpson house maintenance included repairing two broken windows in the first floor school room and two windows in the first floor bathroom. The school room storm window was rebuilt by Steve Sutton. It was then painted and installed. The porch light was removed and has been replaced with a motion sensor light and security camera.

Future board meetings will be the 4th Thursday of each month at 6:30, in person at the Simpson house and via Zoom.

The 1902 Simpson House was open for the May 1 City Kites on the Green event. The Johnston Farmer's Market is again being held every Tuesday afternoon in the parking lot next to the Simpson House, at least until the end of June. The Simpson house will be open for tours during those times. All COVID-19 limitations for Simpson House visitors have been eliminated, but face masks and hand sanitizer are still provided.

Archives Inventory and Creating On-line Access to Documents and Photos:

Much of the future of historical archives is on-line. The state of Iowa has 100 times more on-line archive inquiries than in-person visits; showing that many younger users want on-line access.

Our Archives Inventory and Digitization initiative is in progress. A museum management consultant provided the report and recommendations for updating the collections inventory, placing it on PastPerfect software and making all our photos and documents available on-line through our website and the City library website.

A Summer intern has started and will work part-time into August. While we already received a significant donation and have applied or will apply

for several grants, the total cost of our inventory update and putting our historical documents and photos on-line is about \$7,000.

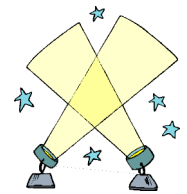
We will soon have to replace the two furnaces and the two air conditioners in the Simpson House, which will be a significant expense.

The continued support of our members, other donors, and volunteers has allowed us to continue to make significant progress improving how we preserve and present local history.

John Brown, President

Volunteer Spotlight

Carla Johns has served the Johnston (Station) Historical Society in almost every possible way over many years. Her service includes being a board member, Treasurer, volunteer, donor and in helping to maintain and improve our Simpson house flowers and garden. She has been one of those supporters who is already ready to step up and help.



Deb Krambeck has also been a consistent supporter, as a board member, volunteer, board officer, getting the newsletter out and in maintaining and improving our flowers and gardens.

Volunteers Needed: The Johnston Historical Society needs volunteers for the following:

- Maintaining our beautiful flowers and gardens
- Updating our archives inventory
- Serve as a house tour guide
- Help with occasional Simpson house repairs and upgrades.

You probably have skills and interests that would be a good fit with the preservation and presentation of local history. Contact us at johnstonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or at (515) 608-5730 to volunteer.

Hy-Vee “My Heart” Giving Bag Program

The Johnston (Station) Historical Society has begun generating donations through the Hy-Vee Giving Bag Program.



That program, which launched in November 2019, is a reusable bag program that facilitates community support with the goal to make a difference in the communities where customers live and work. When a customer purchases a \$2.50 red “My Heart” Reusable Grocery Bag at any Hy-Vee store, they have the opportunity to direct a \$1 donation to a local non-profit by using the attached Giving Tag. We have already begun generating donations through the use of the Giving Tag. After you purchase the reusable “MY HEART” grocery bag:

1. Visit myHy-Veecause.com within 7 days of their purchase.
2. Remove the scratch-off layer on the Giving Tag to reveal the unique code.
3. Submit their code and select the Johnston Historical Society as the non-profit organization that you would like to receive a \$1 donation.

The Ridgedale Cemetery Marker

A new historical marker was installed along the Beaver Drive recreational trail.



The city will install the Stagecoach Stop marker at Beaver Drive and 66th Street, after the Beaver Drive and trail work is done.

A proposed Ben Dewey Park plaque text has approved by some of his descendants and we will include the cost of the historical marker in a year-end Polk County grant request.

One Hundred Seventy-Five Years

On December 28, 1846, the Iowa territory became the State of Iowa. If you get out your calculator, you'll see that 175 years of statehood will be coming up at the end of the year. Coincidentally, Ezekiel and Mary Hunt, along with their 12 children, came to the Johnston area in September, 1846. After they crossed the Des Moines river, they had a choice to head north toward the ridge with timber, or head south toward rich prairie land. They chose the timber and set up a sawmill about at the same area that the pallet companies still stand on NW Beaver Drive just west of Merle Hay Road.

175 years since the first settlers came to the area is something to celebrate. We are making plans for such a celebration. We have the “why”, now we need to work on the “what”, “when”, and “where”. Plan for something special. We will keep you posted.

1902 Simpson House Video

A short video tour of the house that was posted on the State Local History network site in 2018 can be viewed at:

<https://www.facebook.com/IowaHistory/videos/925822240920506/>

New Board Member Appointed

We are happy to announce that Mary Jane Paez has agreed to join the Johnston (Station) Historical Society Board of Directors. Mary Jane was an original charter member of the Society and served as its second President from 1994 to 2008. She has history to share and she wants to continue the success of the Society.

Johnston in the Pandemic

The history we should preserve and protect should include information on the distant past and recent events. We are creating a collection of Johnston in the Pandemic documents and pictures. Please send us anything you would like to contribute.

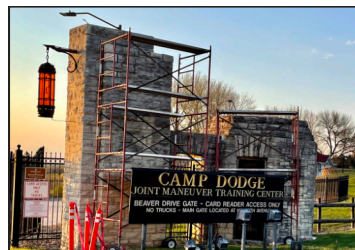
Just a reminder...

A benefit of membership is occasional use of the 1902 Simpson House for meetings and special events. The first floor meeting space can accommodate up to 20 people. Contact us for more details. JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

The Limestone Fence at Camp Dodge

The stock market crash in 1929 was the beginning of the Great Depression. Fortunes were lost, banks closed, and people were jobless. To make matters worse, drought and severe dust storms destroyed farmland in the prairie states during the first half of the 30s. During the depth of the Depression, President Roosevelt (FDR) was elected and took office in 1933. There were 13 million people unemployed. Among many programs that he enacted for recovery, he created work programs for the unemployed. His first work relief was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) giving employment to thousands for environmental benefits. Trees were planted, forest fires fought, and soil conservation projects started.

In 1935, FDR created the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The New Deal program employed many people for building roads and public buildings. Eleanor Roosevelt wanted to be sure that the arts were represented and many murals were also created. Googling "WPA projects in Iowa", you will find an enormous amount of incredible work projects were accomplished. One that is missing is the limestone pillars and fence along the east side of Camp Dodge. The Camp Dodge swimming pool concession building was also part of the project. Michael Voigt, Director of the Gold Star Museum, said that the fence was created in 1937. One of our original members, Ferne Bice Michael, had told us that her dad worked on the fence. A few of the attributes of



WPA projects were that the best materials were used in the project and that the work took longer than usual, giving workers a chance to be paid longer.

WPA was in use for close to eight years. World War II ended the program as the nation turned its might to the war effort.

Camp Dodge has just finished with some repairs and maintenance on the fence.

Johnston Historical Society now has PayPal available for the convenience of member and donors, JSHS now accepts PayPal when paying annual membership dues or making gifts to help preserve Johnston History. When using PayPal, it is as simple as using our email address as a payment destination.



Scan. Pay. Go.

JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com
or scan the following QR code

Enter the desired payment amount, add a note telling us what it is for and you are done. It is that simple.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

The purpose of the Johnston (Station) Historical Society is to bring people together who are interested in the history and preservation of the Johnston area, which includes the early settlements of Johnston Station, Beaver Creek Settlement, Ridgedale, Huntsville, Herrold and Dodge City. To this goal, we work to get the community engaged and involved in Johnston's rich history by providing a museum and events to the public.

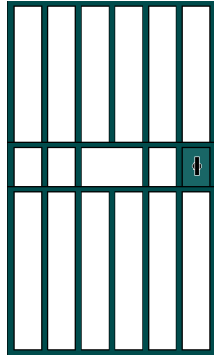


VISION STATEMENT:

Discovering and Preserving Johnston History Today, for Tomorrow.

How an Escape Helped Build Our Jail

As we admire our new City Hall, and appreciate our new Public safety building and our Library, we should think back about our prior City Hall, that also served as the library and police station.



Johnston residents passed a \$14 million referendum in August 2011, with an overwhelming 82 percent approval, to build a public safety building and fire station annex.

Before the city could hold the groundbreaking for that new facility, one 19 year old reassured those voters that they had made the correct decision to give our police the facility they needed to support our community.

That burglary suspect escaped custody on Nov. 11, 2011, at about 10:30 PM. He was being questioned by detectives and an investigator. Those investigators were entering their 16th hour of duty on that Friday evening.

The suspect escaped from a back interview room. Johnston police and Polk County deputies searched the area with the assistance of police canines, but were unable to locate the suspect.

The escapee was suspected of then stealing a small SUV from the 6300 block of Northwest 54th Court, just north and west of the building then used as City Hall and the Johnston Police Department.

Officers tracked him to a residence of a relative in suburban Lake County, Illinois. With help from the local police department, the suspect was apprehended and taken into custody without incident. He was then extradited back to Polk County.

News quotes included: "It was a combination of the building and our officers letting their guard down," "The building is nothing new."

The building was originally built by Elwell's Grocery, then became Johnston's first Hy-Vee store, and later served as City Hall, the library and the police station. It was torn down last year.

The escape highlighted the department's inadequate facility. News quotes included "Primarily, we look at it as we have this facility here that is not adequate for detaining people.' "We are aware of that, and as a result we have to be on our guard. ...We have a facility that is not adequate for that containment, but it's what we have to work with."

The groundbreaking for the new public safety building and fire station annex was held in August of 2012 and it opened in August of 2014.

Board Members and Officers

Board members: Tom Leffler, Al Tokheim, A.J. Simpson, Lois Waggoner, Mary Jane Paez and John Brown.

Student Advisory member: Lily Simpson

Officers:

John Brown.....President and Archivist
 Lois Waggoner Vice President
 & Assistant Archivist
 A.J. SimpsonSecretary
 Al Tokheim.... Treasurer & Information Technology



Johnston Historical Society
 6161 Northglenn Drive
 Johnston, IA 50131 515-608-5730
 Email: JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com
 Website: JohnstonIowaHistorical.org
 Visit our website for new developments

Obituaries

Obituaries are compiled by Nancy Budrevich. If you know of others, please contact Nancy

- **Mail:** 6161 Northglenn Dr. Johnston, IA 50131
- **Email:** JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com
- **Phone:** 515-608-5730

Over 1,000 Johnston related obituaries are now on file at the museum.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Death date</u>	<u>Class of</u>
Frederick W. Wissler	10-28-2020	1976
Ivan Wikner	3-14-2021	Resident & Pioneer Agronomist
Donna Michael Knox	3-31-2021	1962
James "Jim" Braswell	4-7-2021	1963
Cecil "Jon" Lewis	5-23-2021	1963
Mary Mead Hon	5-25-2021	1963
Ronald Main	6-5-2021	1965