



# Johnston (Station) Historical Society

*Discovering and Preserving Johnston History, for Tomorrow*

**JOHNSTON**  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 29 • Issue 4

Winter 2021

## From the President...

The end of the year is often a time to reflect on what we accomplished in the last year. In 2021, JSHS hired a consultant to design its inventory update and digitization plan and hired a part time summer intern to start that work. We will have another summer intern in 2022. We have received 2 grants that pay a large portion of those costs.



We also continued with needed repairs to the 1902 Simpson House Museum and its furnaces, along with installing improved security and surveillance systems.

We had over 125 people tour the museum, despite the inconvenience of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. With the help of the city, two more Johnston historical markers were installed.

We also helped the Johnston High School baseball coaches with ideas for historic “throwback” team uniform designs; using the original Blue and Gold Johnston High School colors and the now retired Beacon name and logo.

A local film company plans to use the 1902 Simpson House for the filming of a documentary on Simon Estes in 2022; as it resembles his boyhood home.

We look forward to 2022, when we hope to have more opportunities to continue and build on the work and donations of 27 years of JSHS supporters, including more tours of the museum, more visitors and more on-line access to our extensive document and photo archives.

We also want to thank our members, other donors, the City of Johnston and all our volunteers for their continued support of the preservation and presentation of Johnston history.

2022 board meetings will be the 4th Wednesday of each month at 6:30, in person at the Simpson

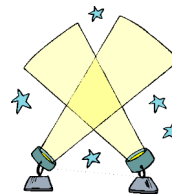
house. The annual membership meeting will be on Sunday, April 10 at 2:00 at the 1902 Simpson House Museum.

The 1902 Simpson house will continue to be open for tours by appointment, until the pandemic passes. All COVID-19 limitations for Simpson House visitors have been eliminated, but face masks and hand sanitizer are still provided.

Best wishes for the holidays and 2022 for you and your families.

Thanks for your support of local history!

*John Brown, President*



## Volunteer Spotlight

### Robert L. Thomas

By Mary Jane Paez

In October of this year, Bob Thomas passed away at the age of 97, seven weeks before his 98th birthday.

The Society needs to know all that Bob did for us. At the beginning of the Johnston Station Historical Society, Don Denman (Class of 1941) was our Treasurer. Don was the founder of his accounting company. With his efforts, the Society became a 501 (c) 3 educational organization. This designation saved us thousands of dollars in sales tax during the move and renovation of the Simpson house and barn. Don Zarley took over as Treasurer after Denman passed away. Zarley was a patent attorney, but he also had a degree in engineering. He made estimates of how much it would cost to move and renovate the house and barn. The estimates were way off, but it bolstered our thoughts of feasibility for the project. When Don became ill, Bob Thomas (Class of 1941) was asked to serve as Treasurer. He couldn't have come at a better time.



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## 2021 Holiday Open House

Although Santa did not join us on December 4th, JSHS volunteers, the Mayor and 25 other guests enjoyed 1902 Simpson House Museum tours, coffee, cookies and cocoa. This event was held in conjunction with the *Holidays in Johnston* event at the nearby Johnston Library.



## Archives Inventory & Digitization

The Johnston (Station) Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and presenting Johnston area history, as stated in our Mission Statement.

Thanks to the diligent work of its volunteers and the generosity of its members on the last 27 years, it now has an extensive collection of artifacts, photos and documents. Members of the community continue to donate relevant historical items to that collection.

However, the last complete computerized inventory of the artifacts, documents and photos in that collection was completed in 2009.

The JSHS Board has been working with the City of Johnston Library staff to have images of all the historical documents in the JSHS and the Library's collections available to the public at any time and photos. The pandemic has accelerated the trend toward on-line historical and genealogical research and away from research done by visiting a museum and working through the actual original documents. Also, the older documents and photos can be better preserved if they are not handled by those researchers. Finally, the public will not be limited to the photos, documents and artifacts that can be displayed in the 1902 Simpson house, but will have easy access to all of the JSHS collection.

Our 2021 Summer graduate student intern, Allison Guild, with the assistance of a college student vol-

unteer, Caroline Christenson, completed the inventory of the Johnston Schools room, the meeting room, the upstairs Old Settlers, Crafts and Research rooms. We now know, for those rooms, which items need to be added to the updated inventory. That work has also identified what items should be considered for additional preservation, and what photos and documents still need to be imaged.

JSHS has also subscribed to the Past Perfect collections management system, which is the premier software system used by smaller historical organizations. That will allow us to maintain the updated inventory on-line and provide on-line access to images of the documents, photos and artifacts in our collection.

The remaining work includes the inventory update for the 1st floor foyer and entry room, the upstairs Johnston, Johnston businesses and military room, the basement and the Simpson Barn. It also includes the scanning of the identified documents and photos, along with creating easy on-line access through the JSHS and Library websites.

This project has an estimated cost of almost \$10,000. It is being funded by member contributions, a grant from the State Historic Society of Iowa, Inc. and a Prairie Meadows Community Betterment grant. Please consider making a contribution toward this important initiative.

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## Additional Improvements to Ray Schliehs Park

Ray Schliehs was a decorated WWII veteran and a JSHS founder. One of the Johnston city parks now bears his name. JSHS helped place a historical marker, summarizing his contributions to our country and our community, at the park in 2020. Now, Russ Ostrander, a Johnston Troop 44 Eagle Scout candidate, has raised the funds to install a self-service bike pump and repair station at the park, which is on the main recreational trail connecting the extensive Johnston and Des Moines trail networks. Installation is planned for next Spring. Johnston also plans to add the city's first dog park to Ray's park.

## 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/>

## Tell Us Your Johnston Story Article

Johnston area history that needs to be documented and preserved is not limited to what happened 100 or more years ago. It includes much more recent events and life experiences. It even includes how we and our families have endured the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please send us your Johnston stories; to **JohnstonHistoricalSociety.com** or mail them to us at 6161 Northglenn, Johnston, Iowa 50131.

## Have you given us your e-mail?

The quarterly member newsletter is sent by e-mail to all members who have given us their e-mail address. If you get this newsletter in the regular mail, and regularly use e-mail, please consider sending us your email address to: **JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com**, to help us manage the costs and volunteer time needed to provide the newsletters.

Also, please send us any e-mail address, home address or phone number changes.

## Robert L. Thomas

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Bob grew up at Camp Dodge. His dad was the head General and Bob knew the Camp inside out. During WWII, he was stationed in Panama, where he met his future wife, Jean, who was an Army nurse. After serving in the Army National Guard for 40 years, he retired as a Colonel.

After retiring, he volunteered! His knowledge of building and tools came in handy working with Habitat for Humanity. He also worked part time at Miller Hardware. After we came to an agreement with the Simpson family about acquiring the house, barn, and windmill, and coming to an agreement with the City as to what was needed to place an old farmhouse and barn on prime city property, Bob was "on the job" full time. The Simpsons gave us a year and a half to clear out the buildings and the City of Johnston gave us four years to complete the project. Bob gave all his time and expertise to this enormous project. Once the museum was in place, Bob was here daily. If the flag was flying, the museum was open. I can assure you that if it wasn't for Bob, we would not be where we are today.

## Obituaries

Obituaries are compiled by Nancy Budrevich. If you know of others, please contact Nancy at JSHS. Contact information below.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Death date</u>	<u>Class of</u>
Robert "Bob" Thomas, Sr	10-12-2021	1941
Ginnie Bell	10-20-2021	1962
Kristine Riley	10-30-2021	1988

## Thank You to Our Donors!

In addition to membership dues, JSHS has received donations from:

**Judith Briles**                      **Carol Hoots**  
**Joseph Miller**                      **NCMIC Group Inc.**  
**Pauline Osentowski**    **Lois Waggoner**  
**Fred Schuler**                      **Tom Leffler/Judy Anderson**  
**Farmers Mutual Hail Insurance Company of Iowa**

In addition to donations of money and time, JSHS needs some used tools to maintain the 1902 Simpson House Museum, including an electric drill and a circular saw.

## 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. Simpson ..... Secretary  
Al Tokheim .... Treasurer & Information Technology



**Johnston Historical Society**  
6161 Northglenn Drive  
Johnston, IA 50131 515-608-5730  
Email: [JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com](mailto:JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com)  
Website: [JohnstonIowaHistorical.org](http://JohnstonIowaHistorical.org)  
Visit our website for new developments

## Membership Dues Reminder

Individual and family JSHS member dues are only \$20 a year. All members get the quarterly newsletter, invitations to JSHS events and can use the 1902 Simpson House for small meetings and events.

Johnston Historical Society now has PayPal available for the convenience of members and donors, 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.

[JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com](mailto:JohnstonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com)  
or scan the following QR code

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

Please complete this form and include it with your dues check:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State & Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Attend Johnston High School? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Year(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Maiden name: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Dues (January 1 to December 31)

\$20 – individual/family

\$50 – Business

New membership? \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal: \_\_\_\_\_



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