

**JOHNSTON (STATION) HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**P.O.Box 109 Johnston, Iowa 50131**  
**6161 Northglenn Drive - Johnston Commons Park**

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**JSSHS is a 501(C)(3) organization**

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President's Column

I can't begin to tell you how proud I am of the Johnston Historical Society museum. The years of hard work are paying off. My pride is intensified when I find that The Weatherspoon Charitable Foundation has again recognized our work with a check for \$1,000. The Weatherspoon family has a long history of Johnston involvement.

Raymond and Vivian Schleihs have been moving to a smaller home and have been sending stacks of pictures and documents that can help us research Johnston's history.

Mary Esther Rittgers recently brought in numerous scrapbooks with family pictures to share with us. The Rittgers family dates back to the 1850's when they arrived in the Johnston area.

The Simpson family has been going through Vern and Shirley's belongings, before their house is sold. We are fortunate that the family thought of us. They gave us two etched glass windows that originally were in the attic of the museum. Among many other treasures we received Shirley's wedding dress.

We were also notified that we were recipients of a Des Moines BRAVO grant for \$5,000. We applied for this grant to update our computer systems for data entry and retrieval. This grant is very competitive among cultural entities in the metro area. We were fortunate to be selected.

On October 4<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., the Society will host its annual craft sale in the barn loft. Last year, the sale was in November and the day was chilly. Please come and support this event.

The Johnston Living magazine has expressed an interest in publishing a History of Johnston book. They would like our help with the project and they will make a donation to our Society.

At the beginning of this column, I mentioned how proud I am of the Society. This pride is reaffirmed when I get a phone call asking, "Would the Society be interested in .....?" We are nothing without the support of people interested in Johnston. My phone number is 515 278 1170.

***WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS:***

**Mr. & Mrs. Ronald L. Lehman**

**Ruth Long Solomon, JHS 1947**

**Ramona Crowell Ward, JHS 1947**

**The Jim Morrill Family**

**CONTRIBUTIONS:**

**\$1000 from the Weatherspoon Charitable Foundation**

Additional contributions with dues' payment:

**Ramona Elnora Masters**

**Mr. & Mrs. Ron Lehman**

**Howard Hunt**

**Richard & Bettie Franklin**

**Mildred Sample**

**Pat Tharp**

**Wayne and Ruth Sellner - *Thank you all so very, very much.***

**OUR SYMPATHY To The Families of:**

**Suezanne Bilz Flitcraft Bilz**

**JHS 1952 /JSHS member who passed away in California 20 April 2008**

**Ruth Hunt Stone - JHS 1941/recent Historical Society member**

**Sandra Lee Pontious, JHS 1958 who passed away August 25,2008.**

**Her sister Nancy Budrevich, is a member of the Historical Society.**

**New Address:** Ray (JHS 1935) & Vivian Schleihs: 6021 Greendale Circle #108 Johnston, IA 50131 The Historical Society has been the recipient of many articles/items for our museum through the generosity of Ray and Vivian, and efforts of Ray's sister, Shirley Schleihs Adams, as well as their three daughters. We thank you.

*Robert Friesen, long-time Johnston resident and who, in 1964, was the first Iowa Farm Bureau Cookout Contest champion, returned to that event for the 2008 edition of the Iowa State Fair to compete with six past champions in a designated category of grilling venison/deer meat. Mr. Freisen uses his custom-made drum grill.*

**School and Community news:**

~The Johnston Dragons Girls' Volleyball team won the State of Iowa Class 4-A Tournament last fall.

~On July 26, 2008, the Johnston High School Boys' baseball team closed out their season to become the first Division 4-A school to be undefeated state champions since the tournament expanded to four classes 1981. The Dragons defeated Marshalltown in a 6-2 victory to become the Boy's State Champions for 2008.

~The Johnston Junior League of 13-14 year old boys advanced in the Junior League World Series held in Taylor, Michigan in mid-August, losing to Hilo, Hawaii, in the championship game with a score of 6-5.

*CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR YOUNG ATHLETES!*

*Believe in the best, think your best, act your best, do your best and never ever settle for less than your best.*

**Spotlight on A Local Business:** CREATED IN JOHNSTON, INC. is located at 6330 Merle Hay Road Johnston, IA 50131 This business was started in 1987 out of a two car garage with a bucket and a shovel to mix concrete with and two main objectives: to make high quality concrete products and to provide the best service possible. This is accomplished by mixing, pouring and painting every statue to the high standards set and expected by their "valued customers". There is a large variety of concrete statuary available and new items are added each year. They also offer repair and repainting to fix *most* statues, even though it might not have been purchased from them. They are open all year, but do have seasonal hours. Indoor and outdoor displays are a fun place to browse. The company is owned and operated by Dennis and Susan Meyer along with their *Created in Johnston Staff*.

**Athletics from the past: 1923** *“Johnston High school will have a football team this fall. A game has already been scheduled with Bondurant for Friday, September 23. Efforts are being made to secure games with several other Polk county teams. Since this is the first team put out at Johnston for several years, the team naturally lacks experience. What the team lacks in experience they expect to make up in “fight”. The squad is small and light but they are good workers and willing to profit by experience. Several men show promise of developing into players of real merit. The squad of about eighteen men is coached this year by Mr. Thornburg. He has been putting them through stiff workouts for the last two weeks and hopes to whip a creditable team into shape for the first game next Friday. No position on the team are cinches, but either Wilcox or Robert Rittgers will be at quarter, with Lundstrom and Cook probably in the back field. Betz seems to have a good hold on one end, with Robert Snider, Wilkinson and Chester Adamson fighting it out for the other wing positions. Frank Ivers is rapidly developing into a dependable player and will likely find a place as halfback or one of the tackles in the game Friday. Archie Rittgers, at center, is proving himself a tower of strength. No man is sure of a position either for Friday or the remainder of the season. Keen competition is sure to develop some real stars before Thanksgiving.”*

**PLEASE NOTE THAT -as a historical society, we are interested in what is going on today because that is tomorrow's history. Sometimes we find ourselves digging and scraping to find information regarding older businesses, families, houses, etc. Then we suddenly discover that someone had just what we needed and wanted all along! The JSHS is interested in school items and photos, family histories, city government and business histories, and artifacts of note. Everyone can become a part of this heritage - Please check the web site for more information. Or, better yet - come visit the Museum. You just might be surprised. Look for the U.S. flag flying from the front porch of the house as that means someone is there to let you in for a look around the museum.**

September 1923 The Webster Township Farm Bureau Picnic—

“ The Farm Bureau members and their families held their first picnic Saturday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, in Fred Wilson’s woods. The boys played catch and the men played horseshoe in the morning, while the women and girls unpacked the dinner and visited. Every one brought a well filled basket and the dinner was served cafeteria style. There was a large variety and it is certain that every one had enough to eat. The coffee was made over a camp fire by a representative of the *Butternut Coffee Company*. The afternoon was devoted to sports of various kinds. The first event was a gunny sack race for boys under 10, in which Ralph McPherson won first, Earl Thomson second and William Rittgers third. Ralph received a ball mitt as a prize. The next event was a foot race for girls under 10. Girls playing in this event were Wanda Nelson, first; Carrie Clements, second; and Irene Erickson, third. Wanda received a little wrist watch. Next the boys under 10 ran a foot race, in which Ralph McPherson won first, John Friar, Jr. second, and Floyd Thompson, third. Ralph received a pocketbook for winning this race. The girls over 10 then ran a foot race and Bessie Brewer won first, Mildred Wilson second, and Virginia Findley third. Bessie was given a *Hershey* bar as a prize. Mrs. J.B. Friar received a *Hershey* bar for throwing a stone the longest distance. A white hen was then turned loose and the married woman who caught it was to have it as her premium. Mrs. C.F. Steen caught it, but said she would give it to the girl who could catch it. Mildred Wilson was the lucky girl. The next exciting event was a tug of war in which married women took part. The members of the winning team were Mrs. Will Keyte, Mrs. J.A. Rittgers, Mrs. A.J. Rittgers, Mrs. J.B. Friar, and Mrs. Orville Howard. They received a *Hershey* bar. Florence Thompson won a quarter for throwing a stone and hitting a board about a foot long and six inches high that was close to the ground. There were other sports in which prizes were given. These included a sack race for girls over 10, high jumping, men’s tug of war, horseshoe pitching, blackman, last couple out, drop the handkerchief and the high kicking. Sidney Findley kicked seven feet. We are certain that every one had a very good time. But rather imagine that some of the older ones (and possibly some younger ones also) were rather tired and stiff the following day. “

*In the "good 'ol days", advanced education was also important.: 1923*

\* Allen Thompson will leave for Ames next week to resume his studies there.

\* Kenneth McPherson left for Fairfield on Wednesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, where he will continue his work at Parsons College. He has spent the past two weeks at the home of his parents, Mr. & Mrs. W.G. McPherson.

\* Raymond Rittgers is continuing his work at Drake University this fall.

\* Agnes Kuefner is again teaching the fourth and fifth grades at Bondurant this year.

\* Sidney Findley is remaining at home the first semester to assist his father with work on the farm.

\* Margaret Stubbs will enter the School of Education at Drake University this fall.

\* Fern Shiffer is attending Des Moines University this fall. Fern is a member of the 1923 class.

\*It is rumored that Marie Longo will enter the C.C.C.C. in October. She is also a member of the 1923 class.

**ADDITIONALLY:**

*\*Filling silos has been the work in the community for several days.*

*\*Mr. Grant Gibson, Mr. John Kuefner, Mr. Clyde Witmer and Walter Parmenter are feeding carload lots of cattle.*

*\*John Lundstrom and Ebert Bell are traveling with Meredith's cattle to several of the state fairs. They left July 5<sup>th</sup> and expect to be back sometime in October. When last heard from they were in Springfield, Illinois. They wrote there have been two heavy frosts there.*

*\*Mr. Charles Peitzman was in Chicago last week with two carloads of fine hogs.*

*\*The A.F. Rittgers store has been turned into a "self-serve" store.*

**THE HARVEST:** The Neighborhood came alive when threshing time came around. In the spring the seeds had been sown, nature took over and the crop was ripe on about the Fourth of July. Horses hitched to the binder moved around the field as a sickle cut a wide swath of oats, the grass falling on a canvas and the canvas rolling the cut grain to another level where the bundle was formed, tied by binder twine, kicked onto a carrier and dropped in the field. The next task was to 'stack' the bundles by hand – not as simple a task as it appeared! One bundle was positioned on top of each shock to help keep moisture out of the inner ones. The oats was shocked, just waiting for the threshing crew. The crew stopped at each farm. It took days at some places and just hours at smaller farms. The big steam engine puffed and sputtered its way from farm to farm, dragging a rickety machine behind called the separator. The bundles were thrown onto the hay rack using a pitch fork, some racks pulled by horses that responded to 'whoa !' and 'git up!' commands, while others farmers used tractors. (as a kid I was allowed to drive the tractor for Grandpa or an uncle and responded to the same commands of 'whoa' and 'git up!') Others set their tractors at a 'low idle' and let it move forward at that pace, driverless.

The racks loaded with bundles were pulled close on each side of the long belt connecting the threshing machine (separator) to the steam engine. The bundles could then be thrown off onto the conveyor and carried into the machine for threshing--- the oats loosened and dropped to the collector, falling into a waiting wagon while great billows of golden-colored cut straw belched from a huge tube, blown into a stack on the ground. A long belt ran from back of the threshing machine to the big tractor, about 30 feet away, made everything work together to harvest the precious crop. In order for the men to 'wash up' before eating, two or three small wash stands were set up near the pump with feed sack towels for drying off their hands, faces and necks. The full course meal itself was served at long tables set up under the shade trees. The women heaped the noon table with fried chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, roast beef, butter and fresh baked bread, vegetables from the garden and homemade pies for dessert. (On one occasion prior to being old enough to be of help I had managed to eat all the browned crusts off the baked pies in the shanty or summer kitchen.)The job of washing dishes completed, the lunch for the men in mid-afternoon was begun. It consisted of lemonade, sandwiches and cakes. Sometimes it was necessary to prepare an evening meal as well. The grain bin filled with oats for the chickens, horses, hogs and the straw to be used as bedding. Next would be the corn harvest. Threshing of oats was indeed an exciting time.

\*\*DUES ARE NOW PAST DUE – IF THE NUMBER BEHIND YOUR NAME IS '08 OR LESS, THIS WILL BE THE LAST NEWSLETTER. Thank You \$10 Single; \$12 Family

**THE CRAFT SALE AT THE BARN IS SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2008 BEGINNING AT 9:00 A.M.** PLEASE COME AND PATRONIZE THOSE VENDORS WHO ARE SCHEDULED TO SHOW THEIR HANDIWORK AND ITEMS THAT ARE FOR SALE. REMEMBER: THE HOLIDAYS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER! COME AND SHOP EARLY.

Meeting dates: *Sunday September 28, Wednesday October 22, and Sunday, November 23*  
Open House: always 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month from 2-4 P.M.

**THE APRON**--The only time Grandma was without her apron was when she was in bed or at church. Aprons were of many colors and designs, made from remnants, washed and rewashed flour sacks, or often from what was left of a worn-out dress. They were ample, serviceable, and worn as all the household chores were performed. The apron helped with tough duties like opening a tight mason jar, and with gentle tasks like wiping a tear from a grandchild's eye. The apron was big enough to keep dresses clean and to provide shelter for a shy toddler when a stranger came to visit.

Kindling to start the cook stove fire was carried from the woodshed to the kitchen in an apron. When the men came in from morning chores and it was time to serve breakfast, the apron protected hands while carrying a hot platter to the table. After breakfast, while tidying up the house, the apron became a catchall as Grandma dusted – mislaid safety pins were made into a chain that hung from the bib, while stray marbles or puzzle pieces were dropped into the ample pocket. After the house was in order, it was time to think about dinner. On the way outdoors to pick some peas, Grandma might notice a spot of dust that had been missed and it was wiped away with a corner of the apron.

The screen door sometimes was covered with flies so a vigorous flapping of the apron would shoo away those pesky insects. In the garden the apron was better than a basket for holding peas. When done with dinner dishes, Grandma sat in her rocking chair, lifted her apron to wipe away the perspiration, then flapped it up and down like a fan to refresh her self during the midday heat. Before long, she dropped off to sleep. After a short nap, it was back to work.

The apron was used to move a family of kittens from under a piece of farm machinery that would be needed in a day or to – or to carry away a clutch of eggs that some contrary hen had laid in the corner of the horses' feed box. It also served as a good 'holder' for gathering eggs at the chicken house. That evening, just as Grandma would be about to sit for a spell, a neighbor might come for a visit. Grandma quickly would untie her apron, lift it over her head, turn it clean side out and put it back on as she went out the door. If it was a cool evening, the apron could be wrapped around bare arms to ward off the chill. Of course, this revealed the dirty side of the apron, but it didn't matter – the neighbor knew all the same tricks. And, by tomorrow, Grandma would have a fresh, clean apron and be ready for another day.

***We close with this thought - a quote from Malcolm Forbes:  
"People who matter are most aware that everyone else does, too."***