

Johnston (Station) Historical Society

Volume 24, Issue 1

Newsletter

Spring 2016

From the President

The winter now is fading away and the spring flowers are blooming once again, and here at the Society museum we are now busy cleaning inside and out to get ready for the opening of its doors on Monday, April 4, 2016 from 2:00-4:00pm.

In the recent board election, Nancy Budrevich was re-elected for her second three-year term, and for their first three-year terms Mike Knight and Terri (Seibert) Holmgren. Thank you all for serving on the board.

With the coming of spring Carla will be busy cleaning out the flower beds and planting new flowers. If you would care to help Carla just leave a message on the museum phone: 331-0687. I know she would appreciate the help.

The painting of the walls in the school room has now been completed. A special thanks to Jan and Jerry Jensen for doing that for us. Come and see the new display cases that Jan has rearranged to showcase the school artifacts. These cases were donated to us by

Cont. on pg. 2



2016 Board of Directors Johnston Historical Society

President: Lois Waggoner is a 1969 graduate of Johnston Consolidated school

Vice President: Michael Knight is a 1964 graduate of Johnston Consolidated School

Secretary: Deb Krambeck is a 1963 graduate of Johnston High School

Treasurer: Nancy Budrevich is a 1962 graduate of Johnston Consolidated School

Archivist: Terri Seibert Holmgren is a 1966 graduate of Johnston Consolidated School

Membership Co-chairs: Marilyn Coonley and Al Lathrum are both 1964 graduates of Johnston High School

Jan Jensen and Carla Johns have completed their terms on the Board, but will remain active volunteers for projects as they are able. Keith Westbrook will continue to help us with the computers and our website.

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ANNUAL MEETING & OPEN HOUSE of the Johnston Station Historical Society

Sunday April 10, 2016
2:00-4:00 P.M.

Meeting will be held at 3:30 P.M.
Refreshments will be provided by the board.

President's message from pg. 1
the Gold Star Museum.

The plan for the front sign project that we have been working on for the last three years is now completed and the sign should be installed this spring. We hope this will help the people of Johnston realize that there is indeed a museum here so they will come to visit and enjoy.

Thank you all for your support and stop by soon.

Lois Waggoner, President

New Member

We have one new member since last reported: Elizabeth VanZomeren. We welcome you and thank you for joining the Historical Society.

Annual Membership Dues

We recently sent postcards to those who, according to our records, have not paid their dues for 2016. If you have not paid your dues, please do so soon.

The annual dues are \$20. Make checks payable to the Johnston Station Historical Society. Our address is 6161 Northglenn Dr., Johnston, IA 50131.

Museum Hours

The museum will reopen on Monday, April 4, 2016 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The museum will again close the end of November.

Our regular hours will be each Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday and the second Sunday of each month from 2:00-4:00 p.m. Please call the museum to schedule a time other than the times listed above. Museum phone: 515-331-0687.

Goals for 2016

As we enter 2016, the JSHS is looking towards replacing the damaged and currently unusable flagpole. We also plan on installing outside security lighting, in addition to completing the funding and installation of the new professional signage.

Signage Update/Donations

We have set up a fund to collect donations for the proposed new sign to be placed in front of the Museum.

We are in need of two things: donations for this projected \$1500 to \$1800 expense and someone that knows how and is willing to lay the brick base once we have the plans. This price does not include laying of the base.

To date we have collected \$1,105.00. The individuals that donated money for this cause are:

JHS Class of 1963	Carla Johns
Lois Waggoner	Marilyn Coonley
Pauline Osentowski	Rose Busby
Joseph Miller	Terri Holmgren
David Goss, Jr.	
Don and Jean Heldenbrand	

Donations

Below are the individuals/foundations who have donated to the work of preserving the history of Johnston since the last newsletter. We would like to recognize these individuals:

Vivian Zimmerman	Patricia Tharp
Scott and Cheryl Temple	Wesley Jordan
Nick and Dorothy Orlich	Charles Burkett
Roger and Betty Wigton	Jeanne Landgren
John and Michelle Brown	Judy Christy
Denny Elwell Company	Al Lathrum
Vivian VanZomeren	

The Board of Directors would like to thank each of you for your generous donation.

Remembering Theodore Rittgers

by Terri Seibert Holmgren

We live in a more modern time now, but just about everyone takes a moment now and then to wistfully miss the “more simple times” of years ago. That’s what this article is about...those years ago when relationships were created and treasured. One such relationship was one this author had with her school bus driver. With her school bus driver?!? This might lead you to think about a lurid newspaper headline where some school bus-driving pervert was apprehended taking advantage of a young innocent passenger. This story is nothing like that. It is a story of a true friendship that developed over my 13 years attendance in the Johnston Community School District, from 1953-1966.

1923 JHS Graduate



This is Theodore Rittgers' home, which used to sit on the hill where Eagle Ridge development is now, at the corner of NW Beaver Drive and 70th Street. It was moved in the 1990's by Jim Allender to the 6700 block of Toni Drive and a couple of modern porches were added.

Theodore was a descendant of a well-known Johnston pioneer family. He was a farmer and a school bus driver. Theodore passed away in 1995, at the age of 90.

Orie Reed was the first bus driver who picked me and my older sister Marilyn up at the bottom of our long driveway from 1953-1955. He was a nice man with a friendly face and a high forehead like my father. I remember he usually wore a baseball cap. I thought it was different than the hats that my father wore. He had hats for business and church, as well as hats for farming, but not caps; Dad wore cowboy hats for work around our farm.

Then in the fall of 1956, we got a new bus driver. He didn't wear a baseball cap like Orie or hats like my father. His hats seemed exotic to me. He had a pork pie style hat and sometimes he wore a Tryolean style, which was a little smaller than my father's fedora and it also had a colored band around it and a brightly-colored feather in it. Sometimes he wore a “flat cap.” This new driver was definitely a hat guy. He was always smiling when we climbed up the steps of the bus, Bus #2, and greeted us with a bright “Good morning, girls!” His name was Theodore Rittgers.

Theodore had a pretty long bus route. We were usually the third passenger pickup. He stopped ¼ mile east of us on 62nd Ave. to pick up Steve “Farmer” and Marcia Findley, whose house was

where John Deere Credit complex is now. Marilyn and I could stand at the kitchen window on the east side of our house and see the bus stop at the top of the hill for the Findleys. He would also pick up the Tharp kids who lived next door to the Findleys. We would grab our coats and run down our hill, getting there just as Theodore pulled up and opened the door of the bus for us.

We then headed farther west and went around the mile, taking a right at 100th Street, picking up the Sheldahl kids and a few others. Then we took another right at 70th, picked up Lowerys, the Spinden girls, the Rice kids, the Sidermans, and the Betz kids. Bus #2 then continued east to Clive Road (86th Street). Theodore would drive a little ways north towards Herrold to pick up students. We would come back south and pick up the Simpsons. As Johnston grew, the route grew also, so in later years we picked up other families, including the five Clarkson boys. Sometimes there was a bus that wouldn't start or another driver would be sick, so Theodore would take us over to pick up the kids at Camp Dodge. That was always a thrill. Theodore drove that big yellow bus like a race car when he went up and down the hills in Camp Dodge! He was probably in a hurry due to having to pick up two routes, but he really seemed to enjoy it and it was exciting for the kids on the bus also. It didn't seem unsafe at all, just exhilarating! I don't remember anyone ever falling asleep on Theodore's bus, but we always arrived safely at school, and on time.

The route home was the same, only in reverse. Marilyn and I were almost the last ones off the bus. We spent a lot of time on the bus with Theodore. Johnston was quite small then. Most everyone knew everyone else. I am not at all sure exactly how our friendship started...between a bus driver and a little girl, but I will forever be grateful for it.

Theodore must have known my father traveled for business and I know Theodore had two sons, Ron and Tony, but no daughters. At some point in 4th or 5th grade, Theodore asked my parents if he could take me and my sis Marilyn to go roller skating. We had never been roller skating. We lived on a gravel road, there were no sidewalks, and we did not own skates. Theodore was a master skater and he took us to the rink way out on Grand Avenue in West Des Moines. He taught me and Marilyn how to skate on skates we rented there. I remember he bought me a red skating skirt. We would go several Saturdays per month. Finally, my parents bought us skates and I would practice in our double garage.

Not only did he take us skating, but once in a while, he would drive up our 1/8 mile long hilly drive to pick us up or drop us off. If I was home from school sick, he might stop in after his route with a little flower, a card, or a stick of gum to cheer me up. When Marilyn and I baked cookies, we would take some to Theodore in a little brown lunch bag. At some point, when I was in junior high, they built a skating rink behind the high school, where they held skate nights. We stopped going to West Des Moines on Saturdays, as I got busier with school activities, but we remained close pals, as well as enjoying our bus driver/passenger visits. We exchanged birthday and holiday cards. He came and cheered at my basketball games as I went into high school. It really feels, even today, like Theodore became like a second father to me. Maybe we were the daughters Theodore never had.

Theodore was a gentle man and a gentleman. He had a marvelous smile and a happy spirit. If you were to hear in our modern times about a relationship like ours, you would not be blamed for feeling suspicious of the adult's motives. Such a possibility never entered our minds back then. Theodore Rittgers and I were simply great friends.

Those were also the days when kids were expected to memorize things. We memorized our

multiplication tables; we memorized the Preamble to the Constitution; we memorized the Gettysburg Address. I got pretty good at memorizing stuff. I am so grateful that we were taught to memorize. I am grateful because although I have lost the last Christmas card that Theodore gave me my senior year in high school, in 1966, I was wise enough to memorize the sentimental poem that was inside that card. It meant that much to me at the time. That poem has remained in my memory for the past fifty years. I have recited it on various occasions and had a chance to tell people about this very special man. It expresses the exact feelings that Theodore and I had for each other.

For A Special Friend At Christmas

There's always one tree ornament
Of which we never tire.
A shining star, an angel
Or a graceful silver spire.
Though others may be broken,
This one's kept from year to year
And it always makes the Christmas tree
More beautiful and dear.
And so it is with friendship
For each life is like a tree
and the ornaments that trim it
show how lovely it can be.
Life's ornaments are blessings
And they may be great or small
But the blessing of true friendship
Is the dearest one of all.

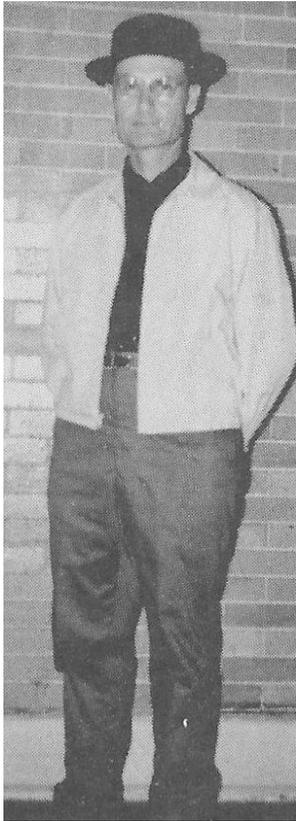


Photo from 1958 JHS yearbook



Photo from 1957 JHS yearbook



Teresa Seibert 4th grade



Marilyn Seibert 5th grade

Meet the New JSHS Board Members



My name is Terri Seibert Holmgren and I graduated from Johnston High School in 1966. My husband Ron and I have recently retired from teaching in Des Moines Public Schools. I started Johnston in kindergarten, attending in the original school building until 5th and 6th grade, when I attended in the barracks at Camp Dodge, then returned to the familiar old building until graduation. All five of our children graduated from Johnston, in 1989,1990, 2001,2003, and 2006. I live in the house where I grew up, and on what remains of the Iowa Century Farm that has been in the Seibert family since 1876. It is located ½ mile west of 86th Street, on NW 62nd Avenue. When I was growing up in Johnston, it was the only house on the south side of a country mile of gravel, then known as Johnston Road. Now it is 4-lane divided NW 62nd Ave. I proud of the fact that I hold the all-time 6-on-6 Johnston girls' basketball single game scoring record of 50 points. I will be the new Archivist for the JSHS.



My name is Michael B. Knight and I am very pleased to be part of the Johnston Historical Society. I will be the new Vice President for the JSHS. I was a Johnston High graduate in 1964 and was happy to have spent 6 years in the Johnston School District. After graduating, I eventually joined the United States Air Force. (1968 to 1972) I served in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970. I worked and went to school for the next several years. I joined the Iowa Air National Guard, 132nd FW, and served for over 20 years. (1982 to 2001). I graduated cum laude from Upper Iowa University in 2001 receiving a BS degree in Public Administration. I transferred to the California Air National Guard, 129 RQW, in 2001 earning the rank of Chief Master Sergeant. I married my wife, Linda, in 2001. I happened to be stationed at Incerlik Air Force Base at the end of 2002 and we were ordered to stay in place. We were part of the original invasion of Iraq in March of 2003. I had the honor of serving my country in Korea, Japan, England, Germany, Turkey, Kuwait and Iraq. The 129th RQW is a rescue outfit and we were part of the rescue operations during Hurricane Katrina. I retired in 2006 returning to Iowa. We currently live in Urbandale.

First State Win in 82 Years



1934 center Mary Warner meets 2016 center Taryn Knuth

We are very proud of the Dragons win in the Girls' State Basketball Tournament. It was their first final win in 82 years. They placed second after losing to Ankeny Centennial 46-42.

There to cheer them on was 99-year-old Mary Lathrum Warner. Mary still drives, lives by herself, and has her own business. After visiting the team at the high school, Mary was given tickets and T-shirts to thank her for her visit. Mary is the last known living member of the 1934 squad. Mary's team finished third in 1934, the last time the Dragons had a final win.

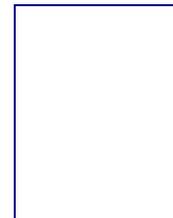
Obituaries

Obituaries are compiled by Nancy Budrevich. If anyone knows of others, please let Nancy know. Nancy can be contacted by mail: 6161 Northglenn Dr., Johnston, IA, 50131; by email: jshs@q.com; or by phone: 515-331-0687. Over 1,000 Johnston related obituaries are now on file at the museum.

Name	Relationship to Johnston	Date of Death
Floyd Woods	Class of 1946	12/13/15
Mary Pontious Leazer	Class of 1959	12/23/15
Robin Nicol	Classmate of 1972	12/25/15
Adam Nixson	Class of 2005	12/28/15
G. Kay Sloan Ethell	Class of 1955	12/29/15
Frank Blakley	Class of 1959	01/01/16
Megan Sue Dean	Class of 2005	01/12/16
Dorothy Seibert Parry	Class of 1939	01/18/16
Samuel McKenzie	Classmate of 2016	01/29/16
Bill Fletcher	Classmate of 1943	02/18/16
Richard Boll	Johnston Resident	11/29/15
Melvin "Mel" Ghee	Johnston Resident	12/09/15
Lyllis Friest	Johnston Resident	12/11/15
Marvin Mauk	Johnston Resident	12/18/15
Marilyn Murray	Johnston Resident	12/18/15
Warren Langwith	Johnston Resident	12/19/15
Clyde Anderson	Former Johnston Resident	12/19/15
William Cox	Johnston Resident	12/20/15
O. Loudene Empey	Johnston Resident	12/24/15
Joan Marie Kruzich	Johnston Resident	12/27/15
Jane Irving	Johnston Resident	12/30/15
Vivian Slaven	Johnston Resident	01/17/16
Marianne Ayers	Johnston Resident	01/17/16
Kenneth Sage	Johnston Resident	01/26/16
Reta Williams	Johnston Resident	01/28/16
Virginia "Ginny" Ghee	Johnston Resident	01/29/16
Ryan Wedemeyer	Johnston Resident	01/31/16
Dolores Holz	Johnston Resident	02/01/16
Ellen Day	Johnston Resident	02/04/16
Shirley Maclafferty	Former Johnston Resident	02/20/16
I. Jeanne Mehalovich	Johnston Resident	02/22/16

We are also sorry to tell you of the passing of Marilyn Zarley on February 24, 2016. Marilyn and her late husband, Don Zarley, were members and contributed to the society when it first started. Don was a former resident of Johnston.

Johnston (Station) Historical Society
6161 Northglenn Dr
Johnston, IA 50131



Johnston Historical Board Members

Lois Waggoner, President
Deb Krambeck, Secretary
Terri Holmgren, Archivist
Alan Lathrum, Membership

Michael Knight, Vice President
Nancy Budrevich, Treasurer
Marilyn Coonley, Membership

Museum phone: 515-331-0687
Website: www.johnstoniowahistorical.org

Mark Your Calendars

Society Events

April 10, 2016 Member Meeting and Open House 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the museum
November 3, 2016 Annual Chili Supper 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the lower level of the barn

City Events

May 7, 2016 Kites on the Green 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. in Johnston Commons
May 24, 2016 -October 4,
2016 Johnston Farmers Market each Tuesday from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in
City Hall parking lot
June 17-19, 2016 Green Days in Johnston Commons

Reminder: The museum will be opening on April 4, 2016.