



Johnson Historical Society Newsletter

January 2021

As the calendar has turned the page on 2020, we all look ahead to a better 2021.

We have been closed since March but have held some meetings, outside in warm weather or on Zoom. Although not always the best arrangement, it has worked.

We have projects in mind to work on as well as ideas for programs once we are given the okay to open. If you have any ideas for programs that you would like to attend, please let us know.

We appreciate your continued support and look forward to being able to welcome you back into the Holcomb House.

Best wishes from all of the Board Members for a very Happy, Healthy and Safe New Year.

The Johnson Historical Society

is pleased to recognize the generosity of many community members, local philanthropists, and history enthusiasts who contributed \$302,250 during the Historical Society's Capital Campaign from March 2014 to July 2019.

With Chair Alice Whiting at the helm, campaign committee members Lois Frey, Linda Jones, Jane Marshall, David Marvin, George Pearlman, Margo Warden, Aggie West and Peggy Williams managed the task by preparing promotional materials, writing letters, talking with potential donors, coordinating four raffles, and participating in a yard sale, silent auction and a flea market. The funding has been secured to complete the purchase of the Holcomb House and the Historical Society has a home to help make the past come alive for future generations of Johnson residents and visitors.



Johnson Strong in 1918

There was a small general store located before the twin bridges in East Johnson. The owners, Abbie Dyke and Aurah Richards sold some fresh fruits, one kind of white bread, cold meat and hot dogs. A huge round of cheddar cheese was always available from which wedges could be cut. The store also sold patterned cotton fabric and flannel. A 50 gallon drum of kerosene was kept in the basement. Customers could bring their containers to be filled from the spigot. The ladies also sold gasoline from the pump located in front of the store.



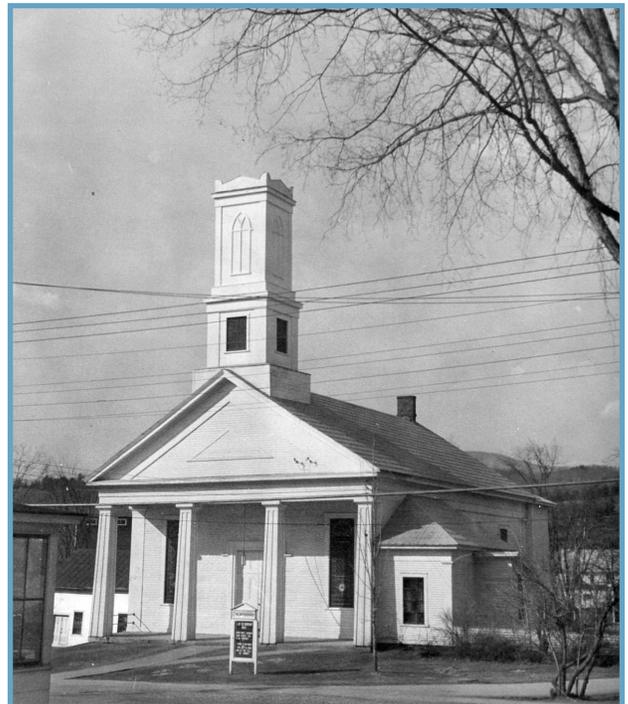
The following was shared with the historical society back in 2008 and it seems appropriate for us to share it with everyone today. A lady by the name of Lynne Kunze wrote inquiring about the two ladies that owned that general store in East Johnson.



Aurah Richards

“My father's family had just arrived in Johnson, at some time during the great influenza outbreak of 1918, with less than a dollar. My grandfather, Rev. R. J. Kunze was to be the new minister at the Church of the Nazarene there. As I remember the story, my father Lyman, his sister Naomi and my grandparents all became ill and these dear ladies, Abbie Dyke and Aurah Richards, took them in at their peril and nursed them back to health.”

“Thanks to these wonderful sisters, my family's lives were saved.”



The Congregational Church was dedicated November 12, 1851. Constructed in the Greek Revival style, the church facade became a visual attraction on Main Street. Beautiful stained glass windows graced the building. A pipe organ, the only one in town, was gifted by local businessman Delmar Barrows. In 1930, The Congregational and Methodist

cont. Congregational Church

Church joined together to become The United Church.

The church served as a community center, providing a place for Blood Drawings, Boy Scouts, Father and Son Banquets, Mother and Daughter Banquets and many other essential services.

The church burned in February 1969.



The Nye Block

The Nye Block, located on the corner of Railroad and Main Streets, was built by Leonard Knight in 1868-1869 in the anticipation that Johnson would become a junction for a railroad line to Newport, but this idea never materialized. The building was used as a general merchandise store and was never an inn or boarding house.

The three story structure, built in a flatiron shape, was forty feet wide in the front, one hundred and twenty five feet long and tapering to 22 feet in the back. A porch extended across the front and partially along the left side. It was the tallest and most ornately decorated structure in downtown Johnson.

At the turn of the twentieth century the building was purchased by William H. Nye and from then on it was known as the Nye Block. Mr. Nye operated the store until the 1930's. Mary Nye, his daughter, was born in the building in 1904 and lived on the second and third floors until after 1950.



The Grand Union store was located there from the early 1950's until the mid 1960's.

In the late 1960's Charles Hoag purchased the building and from then on it became known as the Landmark.

The old Nye Block/Landmark was completely destroyed by fire in July 1986.



The Grange Project

The Johnson Community Picnic Area was located on Route 15 W, two and a half miles below Johnson Village, just beyond West Settlement Road.

A house stood there, on the site, at one time but was destroyed by the 1927 flood.

Work on the picnic area project, sponsored by Johnson Grange 349, was begun in 1953 and completed in 1954. The committee was comprised of the following, Chairman Leon Andrus, Arthur Hooper and Carroll Baraw.

Stones that were a part of the foundation of

the old house were removed and the cellar hole was filled. A bull dozer was used to grade the lot which is 200 feet on the roadside and 50 feet deep. Resurfacing was done with crushed stone. Cedar posts were set on the roadside four feet in the ground. These posts were topped by rails which made a fence with four entrances for pedestrians. During the completion of the fence it was painted white. A fireplace was built and two picnic tables were added to the area. A sign was erected at the back of the lot stating, Picnic Area, Sponsored by Johnson Grange 349. Committee members and other Grange members put two hundred twenty seven hours into the project.

The Picnic Area proved to be very popular and was patronized daily by passing motorists and local folk.

Today the fireplace and picnic tables are gone.

Our Mission

The mission of the Johnson Historical Society is to preserve our history by weaving stories of the past with the present, using our collections of artifacts and displays, creating a legacy for future generations.

Our Board Officers

Dick Simays, President

Tom Carney, Vice President

Kelly Vandorn, Treasurer

Lois Frey, Secretary

Alice Whiting, Membership Chair

Board Meetings

We meet on the second Wednesday of every month at 9 AM. Due to Covid-19, meetings will be held on Zoom until further notice.

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<https://johnsonhistoricalsociety.org/>

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