

HISTORY OF THE SIMPSON HOUSE

The history of the Simpson house reflects the settlement of the Townships of Polk County which are now a part of Johnston.

John Bauman and Anna Barbara Claus immigrated to the US from Württemberg, Germany in 1847. They were married in 1848, and settled in Ohio, where 3 children were born to them. In 1854 John and his family came to Jefferson Township in Polk County, Iowa, where they bought land along what is now NW. 70th Avenue., just east of Grimes. Four more children were born here; one of them was John Henry Bauman, born in October of 1855. He married Mary Friar, who was of Irish descent, and probably grew up locally, for there was a Friar School on the north side of NW. 62nd Avenue. near the current location of the Pioneer buildings.

Another son was Jacob; he married Louise Betz, daughter of Johannes Bez, who also emigrated from Württemberg, Germany. A plat map from about 1875 shows farmland in this area owned by the Seibert and Betz families, as well as the Bauman family,

John Henry Bauman prospered, and built a fine farmhouse on some of his land, probably at the turn of the century. The well-built house boasted large living and dining rooms with pocket doors, kitchen, and a large entry hall with a graceful staircase to the upper floor. There were 6 bedrooms on the second floor, and above them a pleasant and roomy attic with dormer windows.

John Henry's youngest daughter, Laura, married E.J. Garlock. The Garlock family had orchards along what was then known as "the Ridge Road" now NW Beaver Drive.

When the land owned by the elder John Bauman was divided among his heirs, the house and land around it went to Laura Bauman Garlock. It was at this time that Laura and E.J. Garlock planted their orchard along what is now 86th Street, and NW 70th Avenue. It was a community landmark, and the corner of 86th and 70th Ave. was known as Garlock's Corner.

The orchard prospered for many years, and survived the devastating Armistice Day freeze in 1940 when so many orchards in the state were damaged. In 1955 the Garlock family sold the farm, house and orchard: 200 acres. The new owners were Laverne and Shirley Simpson, who were looking for a good place to raise their family. Laverne was in the trucking business in Des Moines. For a number of years the Simpsons and their sons continued to maintain the orchard, and they sold apples from a small building along the road near the house.

The barn, located just north of the house, was destroyed by fire, probably in the 1950's, and was re-built as a horse barn by the Simpsons.

The time came when selling apples was not profitable, so Laverne and Shirley abandoned the orchard business, but continued to live in the house. After building a home for themselves across the road, the Simpsons rented the old house to others.

Early in 2001 Laverne and Shirley Simpson signed an agreement to give the house together with the barn and windmill to the Johnston Historical Society provided the Society move them from their current location by November of 2002.

Since then, Society members have been working to make this dream a reality by finding a location for the house (Johnston Commons). They have spent days cleaning out the house, removing old fixtures and carpeting, filling a dumpster with accumulated rubbish from the

basement and attic, taking out stalls and hay from the barn, and generally preparing the house and barn for a move, and subsequent renovation.

Not the least of their efforts has been contacting movers, architects, engineers, planners and other experts for help in the move and this renovation. They have canvassed the community to find necessary funds to carry out the move and prepare a foundation for house and barn at Johnston Commons. (At this stage, there are funds enough for the move and exterior renovation). And they have worked with the City of Johnston to develop an agreement, which will be of advantage to both City and the JSHS.

The preservation of the Bauman-Garlock-Simpson house which we intend to develop into a museum, and the barn and windmill are a reflection of the Society's mission to discover and to preserve the history of the Johnston community.



JOHN HENRY AND MARY (FRIAR) BAUMAN