

JOHNSTON'S
50th ANNIVERSARY
OF
INCORPORATION
1969 – 2019
AND PREVIOUS
HISTORY

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The city of Johnston is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its incorporation in 2019. Many events are planned for this year-long celebration. A fifty-year span is a short time compared to the founding of surrounding communities.

So much has happened in the area before the incorporation. It is important to become aware of this history and include it in the celebration.

The Johnston (Station) Historical Society has researched much of our history and wants to share this knowledge with all who are interested.

The museum is located at 6161 Northglenn Dr. If you wish to take a tour or learn more, call 515-331-0687 and leave a message.

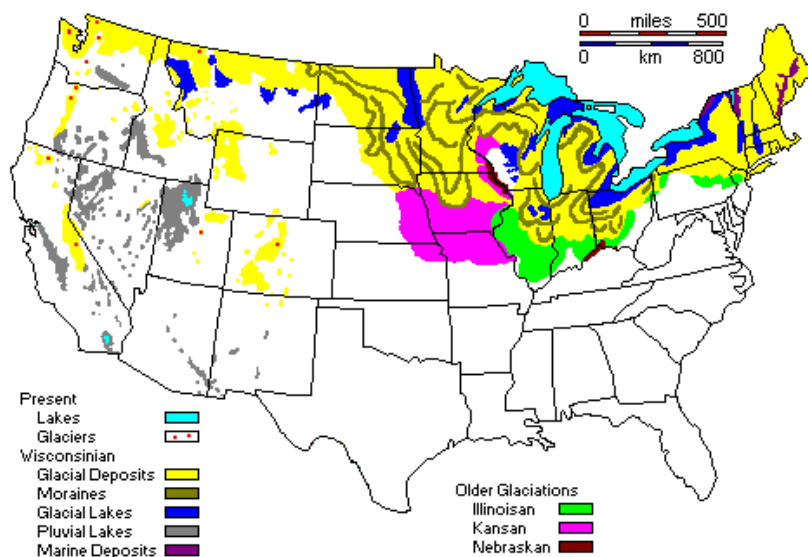


Johnston is geologically very interesting. How was it formed?

The topography of Johnston was formed 10 to 20,000 years ago with the advancement and receding of the last glacier. Twelve thousand years ago, the Beaver Creek valley was the original riverbed. The Des Moines River was a tributary.

As the Wisconsin Glacier retreated, it deposited debris that blocked the Beaver Creek water supply and the Des Moines River became dominant.

A ridge that remained after the glacier receded is presently NW Beaver Drive.



Who were the Native Americans that lived in the area?

The Sac and Fox Indians (also known as the Sauk and Meskwaki) came to Iowa from Wisconsin in the 1730's. They displaced the Ioways, who left for Kansas. The Sac and Fox made their home along the Des Moines River basin. The men of the tribes hunted for game and the women tended patches of corn that they planted. Following a treaty with the U. S. Government, the tribes ceded their land for a sum of \$800,000. Chief Keokuk led his people out of Iowa in May 1845, opening the way for settlers to move into the area.



Who was the first settler family?

The Johnston area got its start in September 1846, when Ezekiel and Mary Hunt “came west” from Kentucky with their family of 12 children and established a sawmill near NW 58th Street and NW Beaver Drive, at the present location of the pallet company. Over the years, the area had names such as Beaver Creek Settlement, Ridgedale and Huntsville.

How much did land cost for the new settlers?

The first settlers preferred to purchase land on the ridge where hardwood trees were plentiful. Fertile farm land could be homesteaded for a filing fee only or purchased outright for \$1.25 per acre. A farm of eighty acres could be purchased for \$100.00 plus closing costs.

The lowland was all prairie.

Three pioneer cemeteries were created.

When were the first burials in these cemeteries?

Ridgedale Cemetery (Hunt Burial Grounds)

Daniel Hunt, the 20 year old son of Mary and Ezekiel Hunt was the first burial in Ridgedale Cemetery





Valley View Cemetery

(McClain family burial grounds)

In 1851, J. D. McClain came to the county with his wife and family of 12 children from Virginia. Besides farming, he served as justice of the peace, township clerk and deputy assessor of the county. He was also the first postmaster for the area. This cemetery is located at the crossroads of NW 85th Avenue and NW Beaver Drive. The first burial was an infant, Winifred McClain in 1854. The McClain family was the original land owners.

When did Henry Wallace start the company that became Pioneer?

Young Henry A. Wallace began his experimenting with hybrid corn at his family's home in Des Moines. Later, Wallace continued his corn breeding experiments on a farm, which his wife bought in Johnston south of what is now NW 62nd Avenue, east of Beaver Creek.

The company, the Hi-Bred Corn company, that he founded with a few friends and his brother James in 1926, became Pioneer Hi-Bred International, a giant in the seed business, and since 2000, a part of the DuPont Company. In 2019, it has become a Corteva Company.



When was Green Meadows developed?

The start of Green Meadows in Johnston in 1977 was a turning point in the history of Johnston.

Green Meadows was the first master planned community development in the state of Iowa. Dr. William L. Brown, as President of Pioneer Hi-Bred and a member of the Johnston Planning and Zoning Commission, worked behind the scenes to create this development. He said, "Pioneer does not intend to get into the real estate business, but it does intend to exert a strong influence on how this land is developed."

Green Meadows brought sewage treatment, underground utilities, storm drainage, constructed lakes, a shopping mall, recreation trails and enough housing to accommodate about 3,200 residents, which would more than double the population of Johnston at the time.

Johnston got its first street lights thanks to the efforts of the Johnston Lions Club. In the 1960's, after getting 72 lights installed, club members went around and collected \$6.00 per year from residents for a number of years. The project was gladly turned over to the City after its incorporation. Natural gas lines were brought to Johnston because of the work of the Johnston Lions members. Talk of annexation by Urbandale and Des Moines and a need for treated water prompted the community to file for incorporation. After the second vote passed, Lions members helped with the incorporation of land 3 miles from Des Moines (Merle Hay Road and NW Beaver Drive). Next, Lions members went door to door to gather petitions for annexation from homeowners working south from the newly incorporated city . Pioneer Hi-Bred farm land along with parts of Camp Dodge were voluntarily annexed into Johnston.