

The Johnstown Historical Society
and
Historic Parish House and Museum

March 2021 through April 2022

Museum Director's Progress Report
Prepared by: Billie DeLancey

May 2, 2022

1. Introduction

This progress report outlines the activities of the JHS Board of Directors, the Museum Director, and volunteers who have all contributed to the overall success of the JHS over the past year.

2. JHS Board of Directors

Reorganization Efforts

The JHS reorganization efforts are moving along. In addition to regular monthly business meetings, the JHS Board of Directors and Museum Director also engaged in three work sessions between March and September 2021 and two so far this year with a third one scheduled in June. Accomplishments to date include new mission and vision statements:

Mission: The Johnstown Historical Society enriches our community through the preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of collected local culture.

Vision: Johnstown Historical Society fosters connections between a diversity of experiences in past and present local culture to strengthen the community.

The JHS Board has also discussed and decided on an updated logo, which is currently being redesigned. The Board has started on policy revisions and anticipates completion of these tasks, along with updated procedures and position descriptions for volunteers and committees before the end of the year.

JHS Annual Meeting of the Membership

The JHS Annual Meeting of the Membership was held on November 16, 2021 at the Johnstown Police Department conference room. The membership voted to retain the same board members as in 2020; however, the board president and one director switched positions as shown below in green.

2022 JHS Board of Directors	
President	Jamie Barker
Vice President	Ardis Briggs-Tomlinson
Treasurer	Becky Lassen
Secretary	Cathy Hull
Director	Chad Young
Director	Beverly Kirkpatrick
Director	Clair Hull

JHS Committees of the Board

Each Board member serves on at least one of the organization's six standing committees, and everyone works together as needed to complete the JHS's goals each year.

3. Museum Director's Role

The Museum Director's main role includes the management of both the JHS Collections and the Parish House property. In addition to the following activities performed over the past year, Billie DeLancey has also worked with the Board since the creation of her position in 2020 on administrative tasks and serves as a main point of contact for the Society and Parish House.

The Board of Directors will evaluate the Museum Director's performance and current workload in the next month or so as part of its overall reorganization process. Currently, Billie's workload requires more than 20 hours per week to accomplish, and consideration needs to be given to the additional hours required for her to be present at the Parish House on Saturdays starting next month. Billie will work with the Board to determine an effective approach to readjusting her responsibilities and workload.

Collections Management – The Museum Director has been working to improve the Collections process and incorporate additional standards of care. This action is needed in order to fulfill the JHS commitment to preserve its local collected culture (Collections) for many future generations to enjoy. She completed an online course through the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) last summer to gain knowledge in standards of care for museum collections.

Museum and Public Displays – Projects over the past year have included the Doc Jones exhibit at the Glenn A. Jones, M.D. Memorial Library, a new display featuring Johnstown's fires and FRFR at the Parish House, and two history boards that were placed for a month at a time at the library, YMCA, Town Hall lobby, and Senior Center as a means to bring Johnstown's history to the community in public places.

The Parish House – The Museum Director manages the day-to-day operation of the Parish House property and serves as the liaison to the Town Manager. She is assisted by a committed volunteer – John Koed, who serves as the Buildings and Grounds maintenance assistant. Projects over the past year have included an easement landscaping project funded and installed by volunteers; boiler replacement; and new main floor wood storm windows and one basement office window frame restoration by Heritage Window Restoration, which the State has approved. The latter two projects were funded by the Town of Johnstown in the 2021 and 2022 budgets. The storm windows were installed this past week, and the remaining basement window frame restoration will be completed in the next month or so. In addition to adding a layer of protection for the antique window glass, these upgrades to the Parish House will also reduce heating costs.

SHF Grant – For the Parish House property, the Museum Director will take over the responsibility this fall for future grant applications as the liaison to History Colorado and the State Historical Fund (SHF), which has awarded JHS with grants (excluding the 25% grant matches, historically provided by the Town of Johnstown) for major buildings and grounds improvements and preservation. Given accumulated funding to date from the SHF, we learned this year that the Parish House property is now under covenant with the State, which basically means that we must gain approval before making improvements or repairs to the property. Generally, these projects should be completed by qualified historic building contractors and vendors that are trained in preservation and maintenance standards. Improvements must be completed in accordance with the Secretary of Interior guidelines for registered historic properties. This stipulation is to ensure that the property remains in compliance with its status on both the federal and state historic registers, given the major investments in the property from the

SHF. Smaller maintenance projects, such as ongoing maintenance and general care are excluded from this covenant.

Community Engagement:

Pioneer Ridge Elementary School – The Museum Director was invited by Mrs. Davis’ 5th grade class to assist in a project about how primary and secondary sources of information are used today to tell history. The museum director prepared an hour-long PowerPoint presentation that was presented virtually by Zoom and engaged the students by having them participate in reading some of the slides and examine various documents and photographs from Johnstown’s history.

Elwell Elementary School Community Room History Timeline Wall – The Museum Director has been working with the Letford Elementary principals and RB+B Architects design team to provide photographs and their background history for use in the wall design. This project is nearing completion with one or two meetings left to finalize the design.

Community Requests for Historical Research and the Town of Johnstown’s Downtown Façade Grant Program – Requests for help with history-related questions about local families and properties regularly come to the Museum Director through emails, phone calls, and through the JHS Facebook Messenger app. The Museum Director responds to these requests and believes this is a valuable service that fulfills the new JHS mission to interpret and disseminate local history. Recipients have been very appreciative and grateful to have a resource for tapping into local history.

Ace Hardware Window Collage – This project is taking some time, but the Museum Director is working with Dawn Eger at Ace on photographs and history for their Parish Ave entrance area for a historic window collage.

UNC History Intern, Spring Semester 2022 – In an effort to gain student volunteers with a background in history, the Museum Director engaged with a few local colleges last year. UNC responded and the Museum Director worked with a history professor to design a tailored course in museum studies for Greg Jirik, a history major who is working on his master’s degree. Greg spent Tuesdays and Wednesdays at the Parish House as part of his directed studies and received training in museum collections care, donation accessioning, and docent training. He also conducted a moderate amount of research on several properties that will be added to an updated JHS Historic Walking Tour of Johnstown. Greg completed his required 75 hours of training at the Parish House last week and earned college credit for the course. He is going to stay on as a volunteer and work with the Museum Director on a new design for the walking tour (he’s a graphic designer by day) and assist with a new exhibit of the 1940s Johnstown Judo softball team to be installed in the Parish House Visitors Center by BBQ Day.

4. Fundraising and Events

BBQ Day – We officially reopened the Parish House and Museum to the public on BBQ Day last year after more than a year of being closed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. We reopened with our pre-Covid schedule of Wednesday mornings and have remained open through the subsequent Covid variant surges, wearing masks until the end of February this year when the Omicron variant subsided and mask restrictions were lifted.

Events on BBQ Day included an open house, old-time face-hole photo opportunity for a donation, the YMCA Time Capsule ceremony, and participation at the Elwell Elementary School groundbreaking ceremony.

Cemetery Crawls – Two cemetery crawl days were needed after our two-show sellout of a one-day event in 2020. Both the October 23rd and 30th Saturday events in 2021 were very well attended and included volunteer actors from JHS, the community, and Roosevelt High School.

Stitches in Time Quilt & Craft Fair – The event was moved from its traditional venue at Roosevelt High School to the YMCA in 2021 and was held on September 25th. The transition from previous years went well, and we are looking forward to an even larger event this year at the YMCA.

Holiday Open House and Auction – In late November the JHS Facebook Coordinator successfully staged another online holiday wreath, mini tree, and gift basket auction. The open house on December 11th was our best attendance day of the year; we gave seven tours in three hours.

The JHS made decent progress last year, despite the lingering pandemic. Income from donations, memberships, and fundraising in 2021 totaled \$9,411.00.

5. Moving Forward – 2022 and Beyond

Since the end of February when the Omicron variant transmission subsided and the masks finally came off (hopefully for good!), the JHS Board and Museum Director have been gearing up for a full recovery and come-back of our fundraisers, events, and ongoing projects from last year that are still in progress or have not yet been started. Some of them include:

Membership Drive – This event will be headed up by the JHS Membership/Volunteer Committee within the next month or so.

Website – As part of JHS's re-organization efforts the Publicity/Marketing Committee is working on a new website. We have changed to a new URL – JHSCO.org and have a temporary website while the team and Board work through considerations for a new website launch later this year. This project is included with this year's budgeted funding from the Town.

Extending Museum Open Hours – For safety reasons, we should have three JHS docents onsite during open hours. Starting this BBQ Day on Saturday June 4th, the Parish House will be open during the parade and will continue to be open on the first Saturdays of the months from 9:00 a.m. to Noon moving forward. We anticipate greater overall attendance on these weekend days and plan to include every Saturday as soon as possible, pending a few more volunteers who can commit to helping us stay open.

2023 Calendars – The JHS Fundraising Committee chair and the Museum Director are working on a design for the calendar, which will feature historic photos and history of Johnstown. Calendars will be available for pre-order this fall.

Stitches in Time Quilt & Craft Fair – The quilt fair will be held at the YMCA on September 10, 2022.

100th Anniversary of the Meteorite Fall at Elwell, July 6, 2024 – The JHS Board and Museum Director have begun to focus on a whole-town celebration by engaging with the Town

Council and will take the lead on a special committee on this 2-year-long planning effort to produce a successful and memorable event.

Crocheted Christmas Snowflake Project – This project of the Fundraising Committee will kick off in June and continue through the year with classes to be held at the YMCA and Parish House Visitors Center. Participants will learn to crochet snowflake ornaments for themselves and can participate in adorning the Parish House Christmas trees with them after Thanksgiving.

Other events are in the works and dates will be announced as the details are worked out.

Collections projects in the works this year include:

- Moving the Collections to the main floor closets of the Parish House as recommended by museum standards for preservation purposes.
- New Oral History Videotaped Interviews.
- Production of a second edition of Rebecca S. Healy’s 1977 book: “A Tribute to Johnstown” for sale as an income stream.
- Johnstown Breeze Newspaper Digitization – Joint project with the Breeze and the Colorado Historic Newspaper Collection (CHNC).
- Continued work on accessioning a backlog of donated artifacts.
- New history boards to be placed around town.
- New displays in the museum.
- Continued work on scanning JHS’s historic photo collection.

6. Our Continued Commitment

In conclusion, the JHS Board of Directors and the Museum Director remain committed to bringing the Parish House and Museum and our programs to the next level in museum professionalism. Our start has been slowed by the pandemic and its restrictions, but we’re in full swing again and we’re making better progress now.

The JHS Board and Museum Director appreciate our working relationship and the continued support from the Town of Johnstown in our museum effort.