



**The Johnstown Historical Society  
and  
Historic Parish House and Museum**

June 2023 – July 2024

**Museum Director's Annual Report**  
Prepared by: Billie DeLancey

**July 23, 2024**

Johnstown Historical Society, Ltd. and the Historic Parish House and Museum  
701 Charlotte Street, Johnstown, Colorado 80534

## 1.0 Introduction

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

## 2.0 JHS Board of Directors

The JHS Board of Directors meets monthly January through November and schedules work sessions as needed throughout the year. Each Board member also serves on at least one of the JHS's six standing committees, and everyone works together as needed to accomplish the JHS's goals each year.

The Board also holds an annual meeting each November to recognize the work of our members and volunteers, elect new Board officers and directors, and to present any recommended changes to the JHS Bylaws.

The JHS Annual Meeting of the Membership was held on November 14, 2023 at the Johnstown Senior Center. We lost one Board member in 2023 and another one this year. The Board hopes to fill these two vacancies at this year's annual meeting. The goal is to find qualified individuals who can commit to the volunteer time and energy needed to carry out the Board's goals in the coming years. The Board also understands Johnstown's unique and diverse community and seeks to enhance its collective director profile by giving priority to that diversity within the qualifications of any future candidates.

The current board members are as follows:

| 2023 JHS Board of Directors |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| President                   | Clair Hull                   |
| Vice President              | Ardis Briggs-Tomlinson       |
| Treasurer                   | John Koed                    |
| Secretary                   | Chad Young (acting, interim) |
| Director                    | Cathy Hull                   |

## 3.0 Museum Director's Role

Billie DeLancey has served as the Parish House Museum Director since August 2020. Her role to date has included participation in most all aspects of the JHS's business and community outreach programs. The JHS Board has been able to assume some of her past work tasks, allowing her to spend more time on getting the Parish House historic collections programs updated as well as participating in training for both the museum's PastPerfect software and JHS website management. Billie prioritizes her time performing tasks in the following subcategories.

### 3.1 Administration

Billie performs several administrative tasks including serving as the main point of contact for the JHS and the Parish House. She responds to phone calls and email inquiries. She attends and is involved in Board meetings and work sessions, and she prepares a written monthly report of her work for the Board. The JHS has requested an additional part-time assistant in the proposed 2025 Town budget to work with Billie, mostly on administrative tasks and as a docent to be able to open the museum on additional days each week. For safety reasons, in order to be open, we need at least two people on site to cover three locations (three people on site would be optimal) – the main floor historic home, the basement museum, and the Visitor's Center.

### 3.2 Buildings & Grounds

As a Town employee Billie serves as a liaison to the Town of Johnstown through Hannah Hill, Town Clerk, who is her supervisor. Billie manages the day-to-day operation of the Parish House and Museum and coordinates repairs and general maintenance for the property. She oversees volunteer work on the Parish House property, including house cleaning, light maintenance, and yardwork.

### 3.3 History Colorado/SHF Grants

Billie is the State Historical Fund (SHF) grant program administrator for the JHS and Town. The most recent grant, which has just been finished and closed out, included the removal of the west side trees and failing retaining wall, regrading and laying new sod on the west-side yard, and relacing the historic retaining wall with a new one designed to look similar to the original wall built in approximately 1914. The Parish House property looks amazing this summer!

The JHS Board has requested a grant match in 2025 for the next phase of the larger planned project that will eventually include the following, all of which was included in the construction documents provided as part of the SHF grant completed in 2023:

- Anticipated 2025 – Refurbishment and/or replacement of the south and west retaining walls, iron fencing refurbishment, re-install historic driveway gates.
- Anticipated 2026 or 2027 – Replacement of the north retaining wall and install a façade cellar door where a vegetable cellar once existed and was used by the Parishes when they lived there in the early 1900s

### 3.4 Museum Collections

*Collections Management* – Billie has been working to improve the Collections process and incorporate additional museum 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. More work needs to be done, and Billie intends to spend more time on this effort this fall and in 2025.

*Public Exhibits* – Billie has worked with our local library to bring history to a wider audience over the past year, including:

- History of the community of Elwell exhibit – November 2023
- Johnstown Meteorite exhibit – June/July 2024

Billie also created a travelling history board this year honoring William Parkin, one of Johnstown's most important early leaders. The board is currently displayed in the Town Hall lobby and will move to other locations around downtown as a means to get history in front of the community.

### 3.5 Town of Johnstown

*Johnstown Strategic Planning and Downtown Masterplan* – Billie participates as a local history expert and voice within her employee group under Hannah Hill for brainstorming ideas that will be integrated with other employee groups and the public as part of the current downtown masterplan being developed by the Town of Johnstown.

### 3.6 Publicity

Billie writes feature stories for the Johnstown Breeze upon occasion to promote awareness of the JHS and its programs. In the past year, she has contributed numerous stories, including some related to the Johnstown Meteorite fall to promote the centennial event this year. Billie also secured a monthly history

column in The Johnstown Breeze earlier this year, which is published the third week of the month. This is another way she is able to promote Johnstown's history.

### **3.7 Community Engagement and Outreach**

*Elwell Project* – Billie continues to work behind the scenes to bring awareness of the little community of Elwell that holds much of Johnstown's early history, including the site of the Johnstown Meteorite fall in 1924.

*Johnstown Library* – Presentation: History of Table Manners in America.

*Dreams and Dragonflies Event Center* – Presentation: The History of Table Manners in America at a fundraiser to move the old Redabaugh barn across the road to the event center's property to save it from demolition by the developer of the former Redabaugh farm, which will become a new housing subdivision.

*The Loveland Connection* – Presentation: The history of the Johnstown Meteorite fall in 1924 and the devastating tornado that hit just south of Town on July 29, 1928.

### **4.0 JHS Fundraising and Events**

*Stitches in Time Quilt & Craft Fair* – The event took place at the YMCA on Saturday, September 30, 2023. It will be held on Saturday, September 28<sup>th</sup> this year, also at the YMCA.

*Cemetery Crawl* – The event was planned and scheduled for Saturday, October 28, 2023; however, it was cancelled due to the extreme cold temperatures that day. The event will take place on Saturday, October 26<sup>th</sup> this year at the Johnstown Cemetery.

*Annual Meeting of the Membership* – The event will take place on Tuesday, November 12<sup>th</sup>. Location to be determined.

*Holiday Open House and Bake Sale* – The open house was held on Saturday, December 2, 2023 at the Parish House. This year's holiday event is being planned and will take place on Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup>.

*BBQ Day 2024* – We kicked off the Johnstown Meteorite Centennial Celebration this year on BBQ Day with centennial committee member Dr. Richard Binzel riding in the parade with a replica of the Johnstown Meteorite that fell at Elwell on July 6, 1924. Dr. Binzel studied the Johnstown Meteorite for much of his career, and he was instrumental in securing the guest speakers from NASA and the actual meteorite that was loaned to us for the day of its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Parish House was open that morning, and we also managed a double booth at Parish Park to promote the forthcoming celebration to be held on the centennial date of July 6, 2024.

*100th Anniversary celebration of the Johnstown Meteorite* – The Johnstown Meteorite Centennial Committee consisted of eight members including two JHS Board members and the Museum Director. The event planning and development took center stage this past year and was celebrated on July 6, 2024.

The event was kicked off in January 2024 with engagement of all of Johnstown schools (except Civica, which declined the offer) in an educational program focused on the meteorite. The centennial date program included the dedication of a permanent memorial space at the entrance to the cemetery, complete with a historical marker commemorating the story of the meteorite fall and large boulder with a plaque. The remainder of the event's activities that day were held at Roosevelt High School, including a rock & gem show, student art show, kids' "Space Crafts", an evening program with guest speakers Thomas Jones, PhD (astronaut) and Carol Raymond, PhD (scientist, Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California). The event concluded with Johnstown's first drone show. The event was successful and has contributed to additional interest in the Johnstown Meteorite and the Johnstown Historical Society and its programs.

The Centennial Committee, the JHS Board of Directors, and the Museum Director are grateful to the Town of Johnstown for its role in funding the event and in donating the permanent memorial space at the location of the meteorite fall at the entrance to the cemetery for everyone to enjoy. The Johnstown Public Works department did an exceptional job of creating a beautifully landscaped memorial space.

## **5.0 Moving Forward 2024 - 2025 and beyond**

The JHS Board and the Museum Director continue to work on ways to improve its footprint in the Johnstown community and to carry out its mission to enrich our community through the preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of collected local culture.

### *Longer-term and Ongoing Projects*

- New oral history videotaped interviews – the Colony residents and other older Johnstown residents is in the works.
- Production of a second edition of Rebecca S. Healy’s 1977 book: “A Tribute to Johnstown” for sale as an income stream. This book was a U.S. Bicentennial project started in 1976 and completed in 1977. The U.S. 250<sup>th</sup> Semiquincentennial will be celebrated on July 4, 2026, along with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the State of Colorado. A revised edition and upgrade of this history of Johnstown is being discussed by the JHS as a project for that year’s celebration.
- Johnstown Breeze Newspaper Digitization – Joint project with the Breeze and the Colorado Historic Newspaper Collection (CHNC).

## **6.0 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.

We appreciate our working relationship over the past 25 years since the Town purchased the Parish House and the JHS moved in to manage a new historic home and museum. Between the ability of the JHS as a non-profit cultural organization to secure SHF grants and the continued support from the Town of Johnstown in providing the required grant matches, together, we have created an exceptional cultural and historical asset that the Johnstown community will be proud of for years to come. We look forward to discussing with the Town how our relationship has grown and matured over the years and to look at how we can update existing documents to be more relevant moving forward.