



# Johnson Historical Society Newsletter

May 2021

Welcome to Spring! Maybe we will soon see the end to this Covid experience. We are anxious to be able to reopen the Holcomb House and welcome visitors again to experience our varied collections. We are missing our programs and gatherings. Maybe we will be able to come together soon at *Tuesday Night Live* and experience hot dogs and pie.

We have been meeting regularly, outside when the weather allowed or via Zoom when Winter drove us inside. Strategic Plan work has been ongoing and will provide us with goals and plans for the next five years. We will have opportunities for folks to serve on some committees. If you might be interested, please let us know.

We continue to accept items for our collection. Please keep us in mind as you sort through your attics and sheds.

Please stay connected with us through our website and Facebook.

Be well everyone.

Dick Simays, President

## The Oread Club

Volunteers are and always have contributed to the well-being of our community. One group of women, the Oread Club has left a lasting legacy.



Front Row; L-R, Helen Mineart, Mary Nye. Middle Row; Lois Beard, Mary Sinclair, Margaret Smalley, Polly Dodge. Back Row; Ethel Hill, unknown, Sally Barrows?, Mabel Simays?, Katherine Desmarais

On January 25, 1899, the News and Citizen published the following item; *All ladies who are interested in forming a Women's Club for mutual benefit and improvement are requested to meet in the room over C.P. Jones Drug Store on Thursday, January 26 at 7 PM.* Eighteen women responded and started to work.

The Oread Club, one of the pioneer women's clubs of Vermont was organized on February 2, 1899. In 1908 they assumed responsibility for building a permanent home for a library.

Thanks to C. H. Stearns they acquired a piece of land on Railroad Street on which they erected the building. When the library was

## cont. The Oread Club

dedicated in 1909, it was said to represent the worthy thought, the devoted interest and the efficient work of a self-reliant, energetic and generous community. They joined the State Federation in 1915 and the General Federation of Women's Club's in 1930.

The Oread Club weathered the flood of 1927 which swept away much of their library accomplishments, both inside and outside. The Oread Club women maintained their same courage and determination redecorating the building and replacing books which the flood destroyed.

In 1940 a reading room and kitchen were added to their library building.

The Oread Club's interest was centered in literary and library matters during the early years. As time went on, they expanded their interests to include Teacher's College Scholarships, Book Wagon, Community Welfare, Public Health, and Community Art. In 1944, the Club turned an unused room in the library's basement into a Colonial Room which became known as the Johnson Historical Room. Here relics of the past were grouped into a livable manner, many remaining there until the Historical

Society was officially established in January 2007.

Many items seen in the photo are now on display at the Holcomb House.

Two recorded histories about life in Johnson are another accomplishment of the Oread Club. The first history was written in 1907 by the first Oread Club president Mattie W. Baker. In 1962, another version of the history was written by club members in order to preserve, for later generations, the story concerning the founding and development of Johnson. We are forever grateful for these histories.



*Historical Room*

## Build A Better Community Contest And Accomplishments

What are some of the accomplishments of the Oread Club. Their participation in the Build A Better Community Contest, sponsored by the General Federation of Women's Clubs offers some insights. The contest started on January 15, 1949 and continued until January 15, 1950.

The Oread Club women decided the contest had a real purpose and one that might unify the various groups about town to make improvements in Johnson. The project committees consisted of club women and received assistance from other town organizations. As taken directly from the Oread Club records we know the charge of each committee, who led the work, and what they accomplished.

Committee 1: Procuring highway markers to the entrances of Johnson: Mrs. Howard Hill and Mrs. D. P. Whiting. Feeling that Johnson has much interest in and around its town and yet there is no sign to inform the people as they pass through, this committee is considering markers similar to the aluminum ones that the state uses.

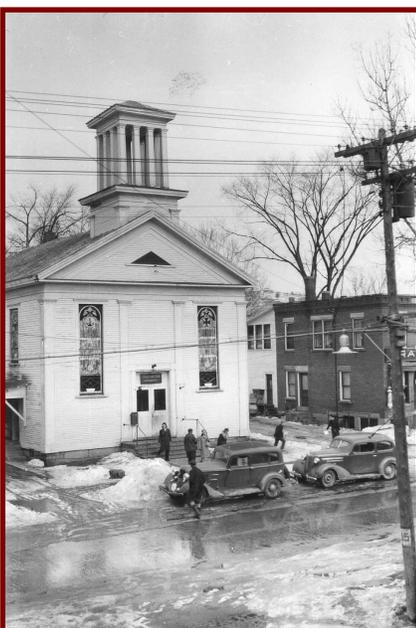
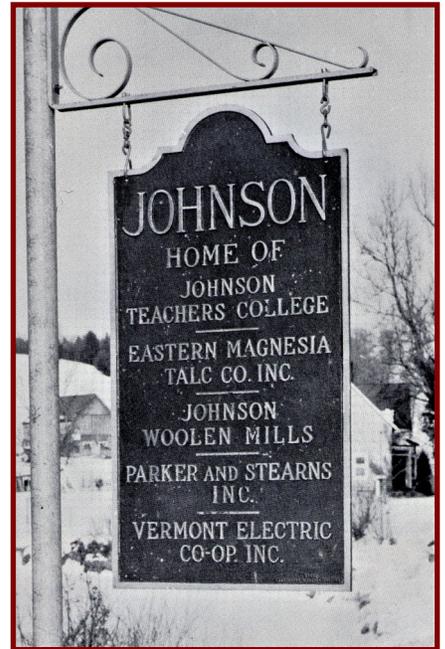
\*Three markers have been secured for entrances to the Village, at either end of the Village on Route 15 and one on Route 100C just above East Johnson. These sites were selected spots away from curves where travelers might slow down safely to read. The cost is about \$235.00. The markers are of permanent aluminum painted a dark green background with gold leaf letters, the same finish as the state markers set by the Historical Sites committee last summer. Our markers are double faced, 24" x 43", supported by means of pipe and ornamental bracket. Anti-turned rods are secured to the bottom end of the pipe to prevent any motion in concrete, in the case of high winds. The lettering reads

JOHNSON in 4" letters, the rest of the inscription in 2 1/2" letters reads, Home of Johnson Teachers College, Eastern Magnesium Talc Co. Inc., Johnson Woolen Mills, Parker & Stearns Inc., Vermont Electric Co-op Inc.

Committee 2: The cleaning of the river banks: Mrs. N. Dean Rowe and Mrs. Charles Prescott. Parker and Stearns Lumber Company and the local firemen offered services to this group. Nature provided Johnson with two beautiful rivers the Gihon and Lamoille. Unfortunately, refuse has been dumped into the rivers causing them to be unsightly many times during the year.

\*Because of our winters, cleaning the Gihon and Lamoille river banks will be put on hold until early spring.

Committee 3: Beautifying the front yard of the Post Office: Mrs. Harry Stackpole and Mrs. R. Rexford. The Post Office was once a beautiful old

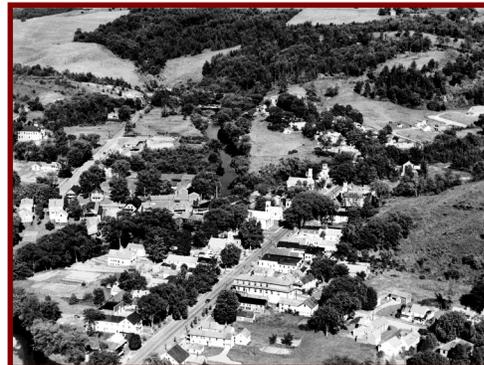


Old Methodist Church—Post Office

## cont. Build A Better Community

Methodist Church. Downstairs was remodeled suitable for the postal service. The grass in front of the building has been trampled, the ground is hard and unsightly. In times past, guard rails have guided patrons into the proper paths and shrubs once grew at the building's foundation.

\*The Women's Club of the United Church together with the Oread Club's committee members decided to pour some cement and to plant shrubs in the green next to the Post Office.



Committee 4: Planting trees on Main Street: Miss Lois Beard and Miss Mary Nye. This committee has already set out 18 of the 38 hard maples taken from the property belonging to Parker & Stearns. They were aided by the Johnson American Legion Post 46.

\*Eighteen trees were planted last fall from the bank corner down to the bridge and a few starting back on the other side. Forty more trees will be set out before the leaves bud in the spring. The American Legion, under the leadership of Dick Dodge, will finish the work. There will be trees on both sides of Main Street from Chesamore Hall to the bridge.

Committee 5: None of the streets have signs to name them. It was decided to have arrow pointers to direct strangers to main industries and the Teachers College: Mrs. Harry Parker, Mrs. W. H. Carter, Mrs. Roger Perkins, and Mrs. Richard Parker.

\*The pointers are in the process of being painted. Lloyd Lambert has been hired to do the work.

Committee 6: Procuring waste paper containers for the business section to help with the unsightly refuse on the sidewalks: Mrs. Frank S. Sargent and Mrs. Lewis L. Jones.

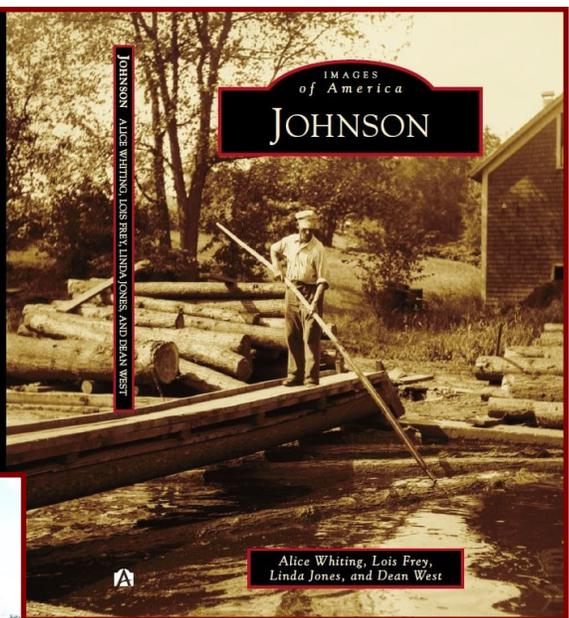
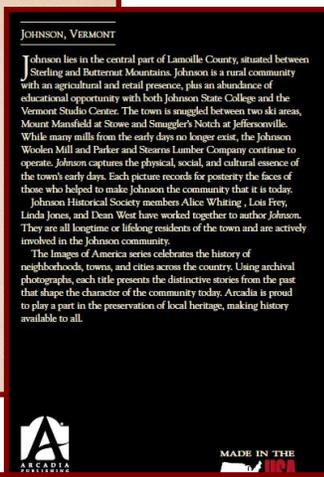
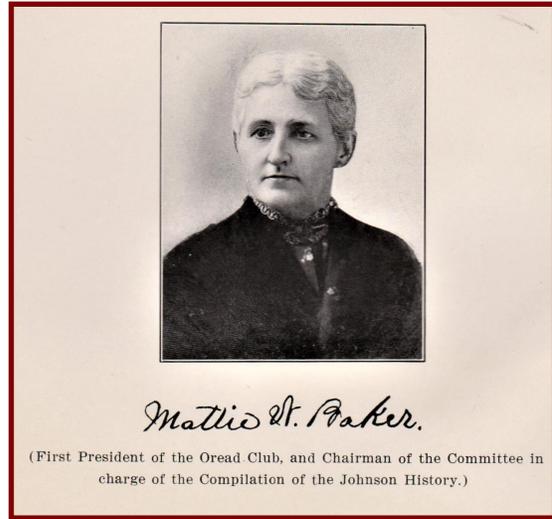
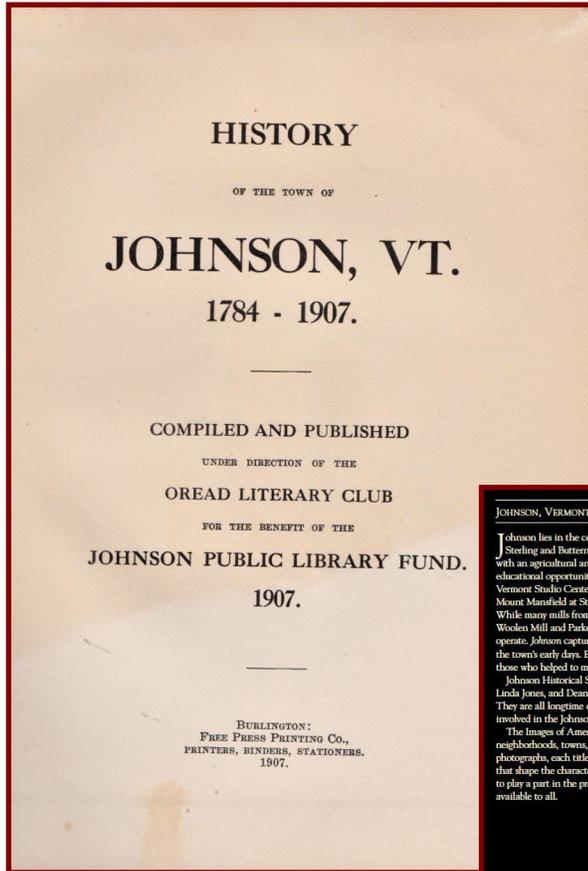
\*The committee is purchasing 4 or 5 receptacles, the slot type, such are commonly seen in parks. One to be placed near our Community Gymnasium, one near the Post Office, another near the Pharmacy and the other two placed where they are necessary at the time.

Committee 7: Benches, in a near-by yard, for passengers waiting at the bus stop: Mrs. Leon Simays and Mrs. Delmar Barrows. Johnson is known as a bus stop without an adequate place for passengers to wait. The bus stops at the Pharmacy, but it is very crowded at times.

\*This committee has no definite suggestions at this time, believing perhaps that benches are not the answer to this situation, a suitable restroom is also necessary to accommodate the bus passengers.

More than 100 years ago, Johnson was served by a cadre of volunteers who assessed the needs of our community and took action. The next time you enter our Public Library, walk along Main Street, or recognize streets and places by signage, you may want to think about the ladies of the Oread Club who dedicated their community service time for the betterment of Johnson. Stop by the Holcomb House to view some of their collectibles that have been given to the Historical Society.

**There are a number of ways** to learn about Johnson's history. One is to read from books written by Johnson residents. Images of America: Johnson is still available for purchase at \$20 plus \$5 postage by contacting the Historical Society. Mattie Baker's book can be found online, History of The Town of Johnson, Vermont 1784-1907.



From left to right, authors Alice Whiting, Lois Frey, Linda Jones, Dean West

## Curiosity Corner

These items are on display at the Holcomb House. What are they and how were they used? Let us know what you think at [johnsonhs@myfairpoint.net](mailto:johnsonhs@myfairpoint.net)



***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.*

### ***Board Officers***

Dick Simays, President  
Tom Carney, Vice President  
Kelly Vandorn, Treasurer  
Lois Frey, Secretary  
Alice Whiting, Membership Chair

### ***Board Members***

Mary Jean Smith  
Linda Jones  
Dean West  
Duncan Hastings

### ***Board Meetings***

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

### ***Visit Our Website***

<https://johnsonhistoricalsociety.org/>

### ***Like Our Facebook Page***

<https://www.facebook.com/barblin64>