

Louisa County Clubs, Meetings and Chapter News

CJ LIONS CLUB

After a meal of Casey's Pizza and dessert provided by Lion Janice at 6:00 PM, the regular meeting of the Columbus Junction Lions Club was called to order October 20, 2025 by Secretary Lamoyne due to the absence of President Bill Hingst. The meeting was held at the Columbus Community Senior Center. 8 members and 1 guest attended. Lion Nancy gave the prayer prior to the meal.

Secretary Lamoyne called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance.

It was noted that President Bill and Treasurer Cassie were absent due to a family illness. Lion Mike delivered the Pizza and filled in for Cassie to collect the charges for the meal.

Lamoyne thanked Lion Janice for providing the delicious dessert and Lion Mike for delivering the Pizza for this meeting.

Guest Speaker

Lamoyne introduced guest speaker Cori Milan, Community and Economic Development Director assigned to Louisa County under Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach.

She began by providing a brief summary of her working career. Her grandparents were Iowa farmers. She spent several years teaching English in the Far East and Spain before coming to Iowa to begin her extension work. She is the only County Extension worker in Iowa that relies on private funding for her position.

She briefly reviewed the various ISU Programs under the Community and Economic Development umbrella. These Programs are related to Community and Business Development, Local Government and Housing, and Data and Technology. She spent the rest of her presentation explaining in some detail the Community Visioning program ongoing in Columbus Junction. With input from local community members, a list of landscaping improvements to increase the attractiveness of the city have been identified with cost estimates of \$150,000. Now funds through grants and donations have to be obtained to proceed with the projects. She indicated one of the services her office can help with is grant writing. After answering a few questions she was applauded for her excellent presentation. This was the first presentation she has made to a Lions Club.

Secretaries Report

Secretary Lamoyne read the minutes of the previous meeting which

were approved as corrected.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Cassie's input reported the current balances in the Administrative and Activity Funds and the net proceeds of \$1,055 from the Columbus Day breakfast fundraiser. This report was approved as presented.

Old Business

Lions Bill and Cassie provided inputs indicating the Club's Columbus Day Parade entry went well and thanked those members who participated and Lamoyne for the use of his truck.

They also provided an update on the plans for our Club project to collect new mittens, hats, etc, for local elementary school children in need. A collection box will be provided at City Hall and publicity will be in the Gazette and on Facebook.

New Business

Lion Mike proposed that an agenda item should be included in a future meeting to decide if our Club has the desire and resources to continue providing parking assistance for home football games. He said we were shorthanded with workers to provide the desired level of service at the last game.

Lion Jim Howell gave a detailed report on Lion Aggatha's bout with E Coli.

Tail Twister

Lion Verl entertained the members with amusing quotes from the Art Linkletter book "Kids Say the Darndest Things".

There being no further business, Lamoyne adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Lamoyne Buser

Club Secretary

HALF HOUR CLUB

Nine members of the Half-Hour club met at the rural Shellbark #5 School house.

The meeting opened with a brief history of the school. The restoration of the building and the addition of an outhouse.

We enjoyed our sack lunch and extra goodies.

The business meeting began with the Mary Stewart Collect.

Minutes of the September meeting were read and approved.

Treasurers report read and approved and Community reports given.

Events of Columbus Community starting with Columbus Day and going to voting in November.

New Business: Angel Tree in early December.

No other business. We adjourned and enjoyed a time of visiting.

Sincerely,

Kay Perkins

Secretary

LOUISA'S hiSTORY

A 20th Century History of Louisa County, Iowa

Community history in old shells full of holes

by FRANK BEST

Our community is full of history's mysteries. Strange happenings, unexplainable sightings, and even mysterious deaths. I have heard many stories over the years. From the ghost at Lover's Leap to the little girl ghost that haunts a field along the Iowa River. I will say I have even experienced a few things that I cannot explain. Being a stopover for those traveling by train, Columbus Junction has its share of stories of strangers and strange events in town. Well, before Columbus Junction was here, Columbus City was the halfway stop on the Burlington Iowa City Road. So, it too has stories about strangers coming through.

One such story, unfortunately, led to the passing of John P Getts. John was the oldest son of Jacob and Hannah Getts who lived in Columbus City. Jacob's trade was that of a blacksmith, and he owned his own shop in town. John was born in 1838 in Ohio and had moved west with his family in the 1850s. By 1858 John, who was living in Columbus City at the time, met and married Rebecca Hann. The two settled down, and John helped in his father's shop as well as working on local farms. In April 1861, war broke out with the attack of Fort Sumter in South Carolina. July 1, 1861 John enlisted in the army. He was mustered into Company C of the 5th Iowa Infantry. This company contained many young men of Louisa County, including Thomas Littleton of the Littleton Brothers from Toolesboro. Unfortunately, John was discharged with a disability in September of 1862 due to injury. Mustered out in Jacinto, Mississippi, he made his way north back home to his wife and family. After returning home and healing, life returned to normal for John.

March 22, 1867, was a normal day in Columbus City, for the most part. Shops were open as usual. People were going about their business; nothing really seemed to be out of the ordinary. At first no one really noticed the stranger that showed up in town. Like I said, this was a normal sight in town as people came and went on the Burlington Iowa City Road all the time. However, this gentleman really didn't seem to have a purpose. He was just milling around going in and out of the shops. What caught people's attention is that he was wandering throughout the town, not just the business center. As a matter of fact, the only thing anyone could remember about his travels was that he had purchased a bottle of Wahoo Bitters at one of the local stores. Now, Wahoo Bitters was an elixir that was an old Indian recipe, at least that is what the makers said at the time. It contained the finest natural medicines, roots, and several types of tree bark. It also contained a great deal of natural bourbon whiskey.

That evening also happened to be meeting night at the Columbus City Masonic Lodge. A gentleman who lived south of town, Amzi Donaldson, had rode his horse in to attend the meeting. Amzi tied his horse out in front of the meeting hall and went inside, just as he normally did each meeting night. However, this time when Amzi came out, his horse was gone. Amzi and other members notified law enforcement, who were most likely at the meeting, and an investigation started. Men rode all over town trying to determine if the horse had been taken

or just happened to come untied and wandered off. After a diligent search, it was determined the horse was not in town. It was also noticed that the stranger who had purchased the bottle of Wahoo Bitters was also now gone. The next morning the search resumed for both the horse and the stranger from the day before. Nothing was found and all hope was almost lost. Then, late that evening, city officials were notified that the horse had been found. The horse was captured running loose just north of Mount Pleasant. It was still in possession of its saddle and bridle; only it did not have a rider. No trace of the stranger was ever found.

Now, the morning after the disappearance of the horse and stranger, a bottle was discovered outside of Jacob Getts' blacksmith shop. The bottle appeared to have just been either dropped or discarded. Strangely enough, the bottle was labeled Wahoo Bitters. Thinking a patron of the shop had dropped the bottle, it was taken in the shop and left. Eventually the bottle was moved to the back of the counter and forgotten.

On March 30th John Getts came into the shop to help get some work done. He wasn't feeling like himself and complained to one of the workers in the shop. The worker remembered the bottle of Wahoo bitters that had been sitting at the back of the counter. Feeling that what John needed was the power of the ancient Indian cure-all, he retrieved the bottle. He offered John a small drink and John refused. Understanding the bourbon effect of the elixir, he decided he didn't want to take any. However, the shop worker insisted it would help, and John finally gave in. The contents of the bottle were shaken, and John took a couple drinks. At first nothing seemed to be better, then suddenly John went limp and lifeless. John was immediately carried to the drug store next door, and the story of what had just taken place was explained to Dr. J.M. Robertson. The doctor poured another medicine down John's throat to make him expel what he had drunk.

Eventually John woke up and was able to speak. Dr. Robertson asked for someone to go get Dr. Neal. Dr. Robertson gave John more medicine, and John said he was starting to feel better. However, he suddenly sat up and screamed for someone to grab his legs as it was coming back. Sadly, these were John's last words. John fell back and immediately died. Dr. Neal arrived, and he and Dr. Robertson had someone bring the bottle of Wahoo Bitters to them. After an examination of the bottle's contents, both doctors agreed the bottle contained a poison, most likely strychnine.

An investigation was launched by Louisa County officials. Unfortunately, no sign of the stranger, or who may have left the bottle, was ever discovered. The newspapers noted that John and his wife Rebecca had been living estranged for about a year. Rebecca was making her home at the time, with her parents in Missouri. Rebecca would go on to marry David Votaw in Nodaway, Missouri that same year. John was a young man with a lot of life ahead of him, and it seems unlikely that someone could have been targeting him. However, a lot of questions are still left without answers, and we will never know.



Columbus City Blacksmith Shop

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