

SOMETHING FROM THE ARCHIVES *By: Johnsburg Historian Mike Clark*

The big question this month comes from Joe Huemann who asks how did Hamburger Hill (Johnsburg Rd and Riverside Dr) get its nickname? Well I was told by Jackie Freund that her mother and father in law said that there was a family by the name of Hamburg that lived up that way. After checking the census records (About 1000 out of 750000 listings for Hamburg) I cannot prove or deny this but it is the most solid answer we have up to this point. Any more info would be welcomed at mclark@johnsburg.org. There are also urban legends that surround our famous hill that was once higher and steeper than it is now. A lone cow crossing on a cold slippery foggy morning and one vehicle coming over the top of the as yet nameless hill could possibly have been the factor in naming this stretch of road. I have also been told that this famous spot is where 2 Olympic caliber events were held in years past. Many have heard of the Algonquin, IL Hill Climb where the cars raced up the hills in town. Well in Johnsburg participants were to get up as much speed as possible coming east on Johnsburg Rd and when you got to the top of the hill you were on your honor to coast as far as you could. I don't know who the medalists were but if someone wants to provide the rest of the story? Another event which could have been considered for the 2016 games is the Hamburger Hill Bowling Ball Roll. If the record holders want the recognition they deserve they can call or write in and I'll announce them next issue. Now residents of Johnsburg, remember these events are part of Johnsburg's history and not to be tried at home. There was no traffic when these events occurred. And most importantly there was no Johnsburg Police Department. My favorite event on Hamburger Hill is during a blizzard or ice storm when your coming down the hill and someone on Riverside Drive decides they have plenty of time to turn and pulls out in front of you, fun fun fun!

Last issue we looked at the letter Nicholas Frett wrote to his family and friends back in Germany to encourage them to come to this new land. With no internet or Facebook or texting to use this was quite an accomplishment. In 1841 with the first US postage stamps a few years off, this letter probably had to be carried by someone who was going to the dock where the ships from Europe were arriving and put on a departing boat. Then delivered to the recipient once it made its way to the right town in Germany. Needless to say this probably took months if not years to get there. By the time it was passed around and read and then acted upon the people who arrived in Johnsburg as a result of the Frett letter were probably several years older than when the invitation was first written. The author Nickolas Frett had passed away in 1844 so he never even saw the results that this letter had on his community. Nicholas had a son John who welcomed these people from his homeland and helped them get settled. I have read where these people were so glad to be welcomed by John that they decided to name this new home after John Frett and we are all now called Johnsburgers. Thank God that his name wasn't HAM or there would be no question of how we name our hills.

The last question for this month is from Mike Ogorek who owns the building at 2204 Johnsburg Rd. This building is an apartment building and was home to Lorraine Hiller for over 65 years. While growing up and going to the Bush School (before it was the Bush School and Mr. Bush was the principal) I always heard this building referred to as the Frett Building, with good reason, Joe Frett owned it. Joe and his brother George along with Frank Freund started in business about 1921 as Frett Brothers and Freund Contractors. This evolved to Frett Brothers Contractors who built this building about 1926. They ran the business from the first floor and the Frett brothers lived in the apartments upstairs. Over the years Joe's wife became confined to

a wheelchair and they redid the downstairs into living space and moved downstairs. Later, George Frett ran the carpentry part of the business in Woodstock, IL and Joe Frett continued the masonry and concrete here in Johnsburg. By 1948 George became partners in Woodstock with George Jackson and was called Frett and Jackson Contractors. Joe stayed in Johnsburg and McHenry under the name of Joe Frett and Son. Joe was a community leader as well as player and manager for the Johnsburg Tigers Baseball Team. He was also instrumental in arranging the Baseball Game between the Tigers and the Chicago White Sox in Oct 1929. Throughout the years the rosters of the Johnsburg Tigers included Joe and George Frett, Frank Freund, George Jackson, and Joe Frett's sons Wally and Bob. So either there was a lot of work being talked about at the baseball games or more likely a lot of baseball being talked about at work. The Annual Joe Frett Memorial Golf Outing is sponsored by the Johnsburg Community Club, with the proceeds funding the Joe Frett Scholarship awarded each year at the Johnsburg High School.

Email history questions to mclark@johnsburg.org