PIONEER PORTRAITS: THE JOHN R. JOHNSON FAMILY OF BARRY COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Contributed by Ross F., and Arthur W. Johnson

The Johnson farm in Barry County, 40 acres on the west side of Johnson Road, Section 19, and 40 acres on the east side of the same road, Section 20, Irving Township, has been named one of some 1800 centennial farms in Michigan.

FAMILY HISTORY

The pioneer experiences of the Johnson family have been compiled from notes left by our Mother, and from records in the family Bible. Only the dates of birth are shown in the Bible. The places of birth were given us by our Grandmother and Aunt Lovina, to which we have added the dates of death and burial places.

John R. Johnson and Elizabeth Harris were married in Yarmouth, England, in 1841. He was a fisherman on the North Sea. In 1852 they set sail for America, in a small boat, with their five children: William, 10; Lovina, 7; John, 5; Hannah, 3; and Robert, 1. During the trip they ran into days of absolutely no wind or breeze, and the trip lasted into months instead of days, before they reached America. With them, also came Mr. and Mrs. Robert Johnson and a Mr. and Mrs. Harris. Mr. Harris was a brother of the two Johnson ladies.

They lived in New York State for a while, where Margaret was born in 1853. In 1858 they moved to Michigan where they lived in a cabin on Section 24 of Thornapple Township, Barry County, for the winter. In the spring of 1859 they located on the present farm in Irving Township, which they purchased. These acres were granted to one Benjamin Green, July 11, 1836.

Their first home was a log cabin about six or eight rods from the present Johnson Road, near a nice spring of water. They later built beside the road which was not established when the log cabin was built. The road at that time led from the present house, south and west across the fields, to Robinson's Corners. The first home had beds in the corners of the cabin on poles stuck in the logs.

Money was scarce in those days, and the Father walked miles to do a day's work, splitting rails and bringing his day's wages home on his back. Usually this was something the growing family could eat, such as pork or cornmeal. In the winter months he made sleighs in their one-room cabin, the Mother often working in shavings up to her shoe tops, and when she complained she was told, "Shavings are nothing, what if our boy has to go to war." Later, their first-born, William, enlisted in the First Engineers & Mechanics, Company F, under General Sherman, and went away to war. Then the Mother knew she was happier with the shavings. William came home from the war in 1865, but was broken in health and passed away while still a young man. He rests with other soldiers in the Irving Township Cemetery.

The History of Allegan and Barry Counties shows John R. Johnson on the present farm in 1859; it is the last item in the account of Irving Township. An Atlas of 1860, belonging to Mr. Burpee of Delton, shows John R. Johnson as owner of the present farm in 1860. /Editor's note: The Titus Atlas of Barry County, 1873, shows John Johnson as owner of 60 acres in Sec. 19 and 40 acres in Section 20, and William Johnson and John Johnson, Jr., with 40 acres each, in Section 19/. All of the children have passed away. Our Father, Fred, was the youngest, and he left the farm to us, Arthur W. Johnson who resides on and works the farm, and Ross W. Johnson of Jackson, Michigan.

BIBLE AND FAMILY RECORDS

NAME	BORN	PLACE	DIED	PLACE OF BURIAL
John R. Johnson	4-1-1821	Yarmouth, England	5-3-1880	Irving Cemetery
Elizabeth Harris	10-17-1824	Yarmouth, England	2-12-1895	Irving Cemetery
		Children:		
William Johnson	7-25-1842	Yarmouth, England	12-16-1876	Irving Cemetery
Lovina Johnson	9-28-1845	Yarmouth, England	7-7-1933	Irving Cemetery
John Johnson	8-18-1847	Yarmouth, England	3-18-1917	Kalkaska Cemetery
Hannah Johnson	7-26-1849	Yarmouth, England	4-23-1870	Irving Cemetery
Robert Johnson	7-14-1851	Yarmouth, England	4-17-1929	Middleville Cem.
Margaret Johnson	6-27-1853	New York State	8-18-1865	Irving Cemetery
Samuel Johnson	4-28-1856	Thornapple Township	3-9-1927	Middleville Cem.
Charles Johnson	1-13-1858	Thornapple Township	9-4-1921	Middleville Cem.
Etta Johnson	9-29-1859	Irving Township	9-15-1931	Middleville Cem.
Elizabeth Johnson	2-2-1861	Irving Township	5-4-1939	Middleville Cem.
Ida Johnson	7-28-1862	Irving Township	5-14-1917	Caledonia Cemetery
Frederick Johnson	8-5-1867	Irving Township	1-31-1955	Irving Cemetery

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CORRECTION TO MICHIGAN PIONEER COLLECTIONS -- VOLUME XII

Sent by Isabella E. Swan - Grosse Ile, Michigan

In Volume 12 of the Michigan Pioneer Collections is an insert of an "undated" census taken in the district allotted to B. F. H. Witherell. A notation at the top indicates that it is probably for 1827.

After finding the Grosse Ile residents thereon who died in 1826, suspicions were aroused. Happily all census takers on Grosse Ile went to the Island and did the full job, so it is possible to discover the beginnings and endings of the Grosse Ile entries.

In the Burton Historical Collection, there is an original of the 1820 census taken in Monguagon Township (which included Grosse Ile). It is very different from the listings on the MPC insert.

Comparison of the 1820 census, as published in the Detroit Society for Genealogical Research Magazine, XVIII: 85, with the insert in MPC, demonstrates that the latter must also be the 1820 census. I have found only one exception. In 1820 Gideon Leet appears between Terrence Smith and Manoah Hubbard. Somehow Gideon is omitted in the MPC insert.

The men who died in 1826 on Grosse Ile are: William Macomb, Gideon Leet, and Joseph Bates. I also suspect that Sylvester Bates died prior to 1827, but have not proved this as yet. Hannah Bates, on the 1827 Monguagon tabulation, must have been either a widow, or her husband was off elsewhere in 1827.

In DSGR Magazine, XVIII: 85, note 20 states that Manoah Hubbard located on Grosse Ile in 1827. He came to the Island prior to 1820, and was here, I believe, as early as 1817 or 1818. He was still here in 1827, but had moved elsewhere by 1830.

I hope you can call this correction of the MPC entry to attention so that others may not be confused as I was for some time.
