The Johnson Family
of Scott County, Indiana

2004
Steve Otto
Introduction

The Johnson family roots are found in Scott County, Indiana, located north of Louisville, Kentucky. The county was formed in 1820 and then consisted of three townships (Jennings, Lexington, Vienna) with Scottsburg as the county seat. An 1867 redistricting created two more townships, Finley and Johnson.

A description of pioneer life by Carl Bogardus, in *Pioneer Life in Scott County*, evokes early hardships: “. . . from about 1800, when the influx of settlers into Indiana began, until the approach of the Civil War, about 1860. During this period the settler and his family were practically a self-sufficient group of individuals. The pioneer laboriously cleared the land and built his home and the necessary farm buildings with his own two hands, using only the crudest of tools then available to him. When he constructed his house the only luxury he allowed himself was the use of glass for windows. Many of them used greased paper for this purpose, and wooden pegs were used instead of iron nails.” And yet this part of Indiana prospered, along with its growing number of residents, as the nineteenth century progressed.

A companion piece to this work describes the Montgomery family of Scott County. These two pioneer families were united with the marriage of Augustus Arthur Johnson and Leda Belle Montgomery, in 1907.

A delightful surprise in preparing this work was contacting Marjorie Poitras, granddaughter of Rufus and Ellen Johnson and my first cousin twice removed. I thank her for laying so much of the groundwork in our family's history, and for her helping me fill in the missing pieces.
Johnson + [unknown]
The 1st Known (K) Generation

There is reference to the father of Washington Johnson being from Pennsylvania.

George Washington Johnson + Anna Havens Peck
The 2K Generation

Washington Johnson was born May 4, 1821, in Borden (Clark County), Indiana. He died Dec. 17, 1911, in Floyd County, Indiana. On April 7, 1846, he married Anna Peck in Clark County, Indiana. Isaac Shaw, J.P., “solemnised” the marriage. Anna was born Oct. 1, 1824, in Greenville, Indiana, and died April 7, 1860, in Borden, Indiana. She is buried in the Johnson family cemetery.

According to family tradition, the Washington Johnson family was of Scots-Irish descent. The 1880 Census states that Washington’s parents were born in Pennsylvania. There has been speculation that his father was James Johnson, referenced with Lancelot Johnson as being among the early founders of Borden, Clark County, Indiana (John L. Gibson, Early Wood Township–Borden). This has not been documented.

In the 1850 Census, Washington Johnson is listed as a farmer, with a real estate value of $800. In the 1860 Census he is still a farmer, with a real estate value of $3,000 and personal estate of $1,500. Together Washington and Anna had these children:

Theodore Phanandus, b. May 17, 1847, Clark County, d. April 17, 1925, in Union Star, Missouri

Rufus Alexander, b. Oct. 27, 1848, near Borden, Clark County, d. April 26, 1902, Scottsburg

Jasper Newton, b. April 2, 1850, d. Aug. 11, 1885, in Richfield, Kansas

El Brageleton, b. Nov. 15, 1854, d. Oct. 1884, in Richfield, Kansas

Naomi Edith, b. Nov. 8, 1856, d. July 18, 1924

Perry Gordon, b. April 4, 1859, d. June 30, 1876, buried Johnson family cemetery

Several infant children died, and the 1850 Census references a child, Newton I., born in 1849.

Washington Johnson married again after the death of his first wife, Anna, first to Nancy Karens, in 1869, buried in the Johnson family cemetery; and then to Juliette Dempster, in 1876, with these children:

Walter E., b. Sept. 10, 1878

Rufus Alexander Johnson was born Oct. 27, 1848, near Borden (Clark County), Indiana, and died by his own hand on April 26, 1902, in Scottsburg, Indiana:

“Last Saturday morning some time between five and six o’clock town marshal Rufus A. Johnson committed suicide by shooting himself through the heart with a revolver. The deed was done at his home on North Main Street. Between five and six o’clock he arose and went to the water closet, where placing the pistol close to his body, he fired the shot that proved instant death. He had been afflicted with something like heart trouble for some time and had occasional sudden attacks which is believed to have affected his brain. He was 54 years of age.

“He was a member of the Christian church and belonged to the Masonic, Odd Fellow and Knight of Pythias lodges. Elder Alfred preached a funeral discourse Monday afternoon after which the remains were interred at the Scottsburg Cemetery by the members of the Masonic lodge.

“So far as we have learned Mr. Johnson left no writing to indicate any motive for his self destruction. He leaves a wife, son and daughter who have the sympathy of all.”

(Scottsburg Chronicle, May 1, 1902)

Rufus married Sarah “Ellen” Graybill on Oct. 5, 1874, at Martinsburg (Washington County), Indiana. Ellen was born Aug. 20, 1850, in Martinsburg and died after a five-year illness on March 29, 1932, in Wheaton, Illinois, at the house of her daughter, Mae McCarron. She is buried in Scottsburg Cemetery.

“The remains of Mrs. Ellen Johnson, widow of the late Rufus A. Johnson, arrived
here Wednesday afternoon, and was taken by L.B. Stewart & Son to the home of Mrs. Mary Montgomery. The funeral service was held Thursday at the Christian church with burial in the Scottsburg Cemetery. Mrs. Johnson will be pleasantly remembered by many of the older residents of Scottsburg, she having lived here for many years, until the death of her husband, about 25 years ago, when she went to live at Wheaton, Illinois, with her daughter, Mrs. May McCarron. She is survived by two children, Mrs. May McCarron and Gus A. Johnson, the latter living in Richmond, Virginia. Mrs. Johnson was a devoted wife and mother, and a devout member of the Christian church. Her maiden name was Ellen Graybill, daughter of pioneer parents, was born Aug. 20, 1850, in Martinsburg, Washington County, Indiana, married to Rufus A. Johnson on Oct. 5, 1874.

“She was a woman of noble Christian character, loved by all who knew her. Her long suffering was borne with Christian fortitude. Her daughter took care of her through it all.” (Scottsburg Chronicle, c. April 1, 1932)

Together Rufus and Ellen had three children:

Mancen Rufus, b. July 13, 1875, d. April 1, 1879, in Scottsburg


The following extracts are from a 1993 history compiled by Marjorie L. Poitras, Mae’s daughter. “The home of Rufus and Sarah Ellen Graybill was at 366 N Main St. in Scottsburg. Part of the Christian Church they attended still stands, and there is a new church next to it.”

“Rufus was a miller by occupation and the town marshall at the time of his death. Ellen kept house and was accomplished at quilting, knitting, sewing, embroidery, and tatting. She had a lovely singing voice and probably sang in the church choir.

In Memorium

To the officers and members of Miller Lodge No. 555 O.O.F
Scottsburg, Indiana.

We, your committee, respectfully submit the following report.

Whereas it has pleased him who doeth all things well to call from us, Saturday April 26, 1902, at the age of 53 years, our beloved and devoted brother Rufus A. Johnson; therefore be it resolved:

That in his death the Lodge has lost a true and worthy member, whose life and deeds were in accordance with the teachings of Odd Fellowship and whose high sense of duty to his fellow man and his marked devotion to his family cast credit and honor upon the Order.

That we commend and emulate his virtues and will ever cherish a fond and lasting recollection of his associations with us.

That we extend our deepest sympathy to his bereaved family in their sad affliction and commend them to him who tempereth the winds to the shorn lamb.

That the charter of this Lodge be draped for the usual period, in his remembrance.

That a copy of these resolutions be sent under the seal of this Lodge to the bereaved family and that they be spread upon the records of the Lodge and published in the Scott County Journal.

Fraternally, [signed]
"[Mae and Gus] attended the local public school, and my mother graduated from Scottsburg High School on May 17, 1901. She attended the University of Indiana at Bloomington for a semester, but financial difficulties seem to have caused her to withdraw. . . . On June 10, 1902, she received her Common School Diploma and became a school teacher. Her ambition was to become a classical pianist, and she attended the Chicago Conservatory of Music at some time."

"In August 1916 my parents moved to East St. Louis, Missouri, and in August 1918 they came to Wheaton, Illinois. I was born in August 1920, while my parents were living in the Alice Apartments on West St. My grandmother was a gentle, brown-eyed woman who loved me very much, made clothes for me, and helped take care of me. . . . We accompanied her casket to Scottsburg, where she was laid out at the Montgomery home. [Mae’s brother Augustus was married to Leda Belle Montgomery.] On Thursday, March 31, her funeral was held at the Christian Church. The choir sang ‘Beautiful Isle of Somewhere.’ My mother sobbed over the casket before it was closed. We buried my grandmother next to Rufus and near Mancen in the Scottsburg Cemetery."

While the Johnson line disappears into Pennsylvania, Ellen Graybill’s ancestry is known quite a bit further back. Her father Manassah Graybill was born June 2, 1820, in Botetourt County, Virginia, and died April 7, 1876, in Scottsburg, Indiana. He married Mary Graves on Nov. 4, 1841, in Montgomery County, Indiana (more on Mary Graves below).

Manassah’s father was Daniel Graybill, born in the 1770s and married to Elizabeth Kinzer in 1794-5 in Franklin, Indiana. She was born Nov. 26, 1775,
and died June 7, 1848, in Putnam Co., Indiana.

Daniel’s father was John Graybill, born c. 1750 in Germany and died Aug. 22, 1818, at Manheim, Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania. He married Hannah Bonddecker.

John’s father, Christian Graybill, was born in 1719 near Mannheim, Germany, and died Jan. 16, 1787, in Drumore Township, Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania.

And finally, Christian’s father was Jacob Grabil Krehbiehl, born c. 1693 in Germany and died in Warwick Township, Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania.

Mary Graves was born October 11, 1820, in Russell County, Kentucky, and died Oct. 31, 1889, in Scottsburg, Indiana. Her father was John Graves, born Jan. 2, 1790, and died March 7, 1893, in Indiana; and her mother was Margaret Brookshire, born Feb. 20, 1791, and died March 26, 1878, in Indiana. They were married c. 1810 in Randolph County, North Carolina.

**Augustus Arthur Johnson + Leda Belle Montgomery**

The 4KGeneration

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**Beautiful Isle of Somewhere**

Somewhere the sun is shining,
Somewhere the songbirds dwell;
Hush, then, thy sad repining,
God lives and all is well,
Somewhere, somewhere, Beautiful Isle of Somewhere!

Somewhere the day is longer,
Somewhere the task is done;
Somewhere the heart is stronger,
Somewhere the guardian won.

Somewhere the load is lifted,
Close by an open door;
Somewhere the clouds are rifted,
Somewhere the angels sing.
Augustus “Gus” Arthur Johnson was born July 16, 1880, in Scottsburg, Indiana.

In 1902 he was living in St. Joseph, Missouri (his father’s obituary notes this). On June 26, 1907, he married Leda Belle Montgomery, from his hometown of Scottsburg. She was born Feb. 6, 1882, in Scottsburg.

There were links between the Johnson and Montgomery families. The fathers of the couple both belonged to Miller Lodge No. 555 O.O.F., and a newspaper clipping notes that family members had social contact: “Frank Gardner, Harry Harrod, Andrew Ray, Harry Mitchell, Jessie Everett, Misses Lydia Everett, Leda Montgomery, Myrtle Bridgewater, May Johnson, Irma McQueen, and May Watson went to Louisville Sunday and took a pleasure trip up the river on a boat.” (Scottsburg Chronicle, June 26, 1902)

Together Gus and Leda had one child, Mary Ellen Johnson, named for her two grandmothers and known as “Mary Ellen.” She was born Oct. 9, 1911, in St. Joseph, Missouri. The three were very close as a family.

At some point after Mary Ellen’s birth the family moved to Chicago, where Gus worked for Swift and Company as a traveling salesman. Swift was a large corporation that revolutionized the meatpacking industry by using refrigerated railroad cars to ship meat from large-scale midwestern slaughterhouses to population centers on the East Coast. The company managed to overcome consumer mistrust of processed meat and, with Armour meatpacking, developed vast mechanized meatpacking operations. These were described in Upton Sinclair’s 1906 novel, The Jungle.

Many years later Mary Ellen returned to Chicago with her husband, Henry Garber, to discover that her childhood apartment building had been razed for the expanding business. Henry often later teased his wife that she was raised in a slaughterhouse.

At age 84, Marjorie Poitras recalls: “I remember Gus as a very quiet person, easy to get along with. He probably took after his mother in appearance and attitudes. Leda, now she liked to talk. After the family moved to Richmond, Leda and my mother corresponded all the time. I remember she was visiting us when her granddaughter...
Freddie Sue was born – she got the phone call at our house."

The family moved to Richmond, Virginia, probably because of a company transfer for Gus, around 1926, when Leda and Mary Ellen appear to have joined Boulevard United Methodist Church (church records are incomplete). At one point they lived at the Wilmarth Apartments at 2712 Hanover Ave., Richmond.

Gus continued work as a traveling salesman and was often away from home. He began drawing Social Security payments in January 1953. In his retirement years he supplemented his income with work at Williams & Reed Dry Goods, on Main St. in Richmond, and at his son-in-law’s business, Garber’s Inc. Leda volunteered during World War II for the Red Cross, riding the bus to work and spending hours rolling bandages.

The operation at Swift and Company’s plant was so large the site had its own station on Chicago’s elevated transit system.
In their later years they lived several blocks from their daughter Mary Ellen at 1107 Goddin St.; and then across the street at 1001 Montebello Gr. They had a cocker spaniel named Bonnie.

Leda’s granddaughter Sue recalls her kindly affection. “She would scratch my back by the hour, I often wonder how her hands never seemed to get tired.” She also remembers being sent to Grubbs Grocery several blocks down the hill, and how “Gram” would compare all the marked prices with the receipt to make sure everything had been added up correctly.

Their granddaughter Mary Ellen remembers what a treat it was as a child to pack her suitcase and walk the four blocks for an overnight stay. “They would make a wonderful bed for me on the sofa, it made me feel so well cared for.” Gus always had a bowl of cornflakes before he went to bed, and Leda often prepared a full Sunday dinner with pot roast, all sorts of condiments, and butterscotch pie (their daughter’s favorite).

Gus died Jan. 24, 1964, in Richmond, Virginia, and his estate received a death benefit from Swift and Company of $3,200. Leda followed several years later, on Jan. 2, 1968. Each of their remains rested at the Garber family house, Montebello, followed by burial at Forest Hill Cemetery in Richmond.

Mary Ellen met her future husband, Frederick Henry Garber, in 1927. According to the family story (Montebello Memories, 1990), “Virginia Nelson was hosting a party following a play practice. Mary Ellen was in the play, and Henry happened to be there with Miss Anna [his mother] visiting. Henry later said he fell in love with her voice.” Throughout her childhood Mary Ellen recapped each year in a diary she wrote in the end pages of her Mother Goose book. The final entry, dated Oct. 9, 1927, reads in part: “I believe this past year has been the happiest of my life. All because I’m sincerely in love this time. Joe has faded out of the picture and the boy I love with all my heart has come in – Henry.” They were married for 46 years.
Mary Ellen Johnson gave this photo to her future husband. The inscription reads: “To the very dearest boy on earth. Mary Ellen. 12/23/29”

Frederick “Henry” Garber. Photo is inscribed on the back: “F. Henry Garber III, Sept. 2, 1929, Richmond, Va.”
1KGeneration

Father of George Washington Johnson, from Pennsylvania

2KGeneration

George Washington Johnson + Anna Havens Peck

CHILDREN:

Theodore Phanandus Johnson
b. May 17, 1847, Clark Co.
d. April 17, 1926, in Union Star, Missouri
m. Sarah Buttoff, Dec. 2, 1869

Rufus Alexander Johnson
b. Oct. 27, 1848, near Borden, Clark Co.
d. April 26, 1902, Scottsburg

Jasper Newton Johnson
b. April 2, 1850
d. Aug. 11, 1885, in Richfield, Kansas

Eli Brageleton Johnson
b. Nov. 15, 1854
d. Oct. 1884, in Richfield, Kansas

Naomi Edith Johnson
b. Nov. 8, 1856
d. July 18, 1924

Perry Gordon Johnson
b. April 4, 1859
d. June 30, 1876, buried Johnson family cemetery

Several infant children died

Newton I. Johnson (ref. 1850 Census)
b. 1849

George Washington Johnson + Juliette Dempster

CHILDREN:

Walter E. Johnson
b. Sept. 10, 1878

Alice Glenn Johnson
b. Oct. 19, 1882
d. Oct. 22, 1905

3KGeneration

Rufus Alexander Johnson + Sarah Ellen Graybill

CHILDREN:

Mancen Rufus Johnson
b. July 13, 1875
d. April 1, 1879, in Scottsburg

Augustus “Gus” Arthur Johnson
b. July 16, 1880, in Scottsburg
d. Jan. 24, 1964, in Richmond, Virginia

Loretta May (Mae) Johnson
b. Nov. 13, 1883
d. May 25, 1950
m. Joseph Henry McGarron
**4KGeneration**

Augustus Arthur Johnson + Leda Belle Montgomery

CHILDREN:

Mary Ellen Johnson  
b. Oct. 9, 1911, St. Joseph, Missouri  
d. April 17, 2003, in Richmond, Virginia  
m. Frederick Henry Garber on June 21, 1933

**5KGeneration**

Mary Ellen Johnson + Frederick Henry Garber

CHILDREN:

Freddie Sue Garber  
b. March 31, 1935

Mary Ellen Garber  
b. December 16, 1936

**6KGeneration**

Freddie Sue Garber + Thomas Franklin Stewart

CHILDREN:

Susan Garber Stewart  
b. Nov. 22, 1958  
m. Donald Etz on July 21, 1984  
m. Benjamin Gilbert Perkins on Nov. 17, 2001

**7KGeneration**

Susan Garber Stewart + Donald Etz

CHILDREN:

Lauren Michele Etz  
b. March 2, 1986  
Kristen Marie Etz  
b. March 10, 1989

**6KGeneration**

Mary Ellen Garber + Carl Hyde Otto

CHILDREN:

Kathryn Garber Otto  
b. April 7, 1959  
m. David Gilman on May 28, 1994  
Steven Carl Otto  
b. December 10, 1960