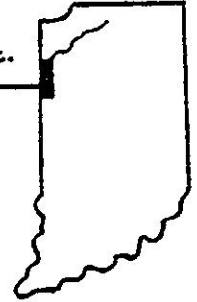


The Newcomer

A Publication of the NEWTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

INDIANA'S *youngest* COUNTY



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1906 memoir tells pioneer life

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following sketch, written by Susan Botkin Johnson in October, 1906, tells the story of the Johnson family's migration from Virginia to Ohio. Susan Botkin was a cousin to the Johnson who settled southwest of Morocco. Silas Johnson and his brother Dempsey were circuit riders for the Christian Church then called "the New Lights." Their sister Sally married James Archibald, an early settler in Washington Township. Carrie Evelyn Linduska, a member of the Newton County Historical Society, is a descendant of the latter. This sketch captures the migratory experience of many of the early settlers who came to Newton County via Ohio.

A little family sketch, very imperfect, for Eva M. Dakin, of her great grandparents, John and Susanna Johnson, they were both named Johnson, and were of English descent. They were not a bit alike in temperament. He had light brown hair and eyes. She had black hair, dark eyes and fair complexion. They were born, reared and married in Campbell County in Old Virginia. Three of their children were born in that state. In the fall of 1808, on account of slavery in that state and all around them, they decided to emigrate to Ohio, a new state and free. Moving 500 miles by wagon in that day was a serious subject to consider. No very good roads, and not many bridges. Camping out at night, leaving their parents and all their near relations except one brother that came with them, they must say good-bye to all their sacred associations. They could not buy bread at every town they came to. Where they stopped for the night and set up their tent, the cooking had to be done, supper and lunch for the next day, and occasionally some washing had to be done for the children.

After four or five weeks of slow traveling, they landed in Highland County, Ohio, where they stayed for two years. In 1810 Clinton County was surveyed and named. They decided to make their home in Clinton County. In the spring of 1811 they bought land and moved there in the woods; not a stick was amiss until cut away.

The "picnic" of moving was over now, and work had to begin. The County was heavily timbered, they had to live in

the wagon until they could build a pole tent for shelter while the men cleared some ground, made a garden and planted some corn. Then there must be some rails to split, and good fence built around that corn patch; for all the stock that there was in the county ran outside, as there were no pastures fenced up as yet. The tent was open on one side where they kept a log fire to do their cooking and warming on cool mornings and evenings. And the fire would keep the bears and the wolves out of the tent while they slept.

I do not know how long they lived in the tent, but as soon as they could they built a log house large enough to accommodate their growing family. They lived in that house until all their children were born and several of them married.

They were much annoyed by the bears killing their pigs and shoats. Their little bunch of sheep had to be penned near the house every night to

on account of slavery in that state and all around them, they decided to emigrate'

save them from the wolves. They were much annoyed by the bears killing their pigs, and the lead horse and cow had to have pretty good sized bells put on before they were turned out. There were so many bushes among the timber, they were hard to find. They might be close to the stock and not know it without the sound of the bells. Game such as bear, deer, squirrel, quail and wild turkey was plenty, so they could have all the fresh meat they needed by shooting it.

There were plenty of sugar trees; if they were to have sugar they had to make it, which they did every season. They learned all about the privations and hardships of the pioneer in a new country. In heavy timber the work was much harder for men and women.

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After most of their children were grown up, they built a one-story brick house where they spent the remainder of their days. They died there, loved by their children and respected by their neighbors. The old home is still standing, but has been remodeled and is owned by strangers.

John and Susanna Johnson did live to see all their children married and settled in life. They had eleven born, four sons and seven daughters. One daughter died in infancy. Ten lived to be grown and married. Of the ten, there were 68 grandchildren born. Fifty lived to be grown and married. Fifteen died young. Twenty eight are living so far as I know. Two grandsons died this year (1906), Brother Moorman's sons. Grandmother was a member of the Fiends Church at Dover. A very quiet friend, she lived her religion every day, and tried to shun the appearance of evil. There was never any dancing or card playing in her house. She advised her children to do the same. They did not always do as she desired. I believe her pious walk and chaste conversation was the first lesson of salvation to her large family.

The brothers and sisters all united with the M.P. Church at a camp meeting held on the grounds of the new cemetery at Port William, near the old log church called "Concord." There was a great revival and many conversion. Those brothers and sisters were faithful to the end. Several were good workers in the church. I love to think of the four brothers, large, fine looking Christian gentlemen. Two of the living granddaughters are over 81 years old, and the oldest grandson living is almost 80. I do not consider the family of ten a long-lived family. There was but one of the family who is dead. Polly Johnson was 80 years, five months and 20 days old when she died Sept. 14, 1894.

There was never a case of consumption or scrofula in the family that I know of. The first of the grown children to die was the youngest son who died of winter fever at 22 in October, 1838. Typhoid had not developed in this country at that time. His name was Anselem. He was married and had one little son six months old. He was in Dakota the last I heard of him. Most of the family died of acute diseases. Father held to the doctrine of Friends, but never united with the church. He was an old time Whig. All his sons and sons-in-law voted in the same way. Their first child was born March 27, 1800. Their youngest, Susan Botkin, (the author of this memoir) has lived to 1906. So the children have occupied a small portion of this Earthly vineyard 106 years.

INQUIRIES

The Society has received requests recently from individuals working on family genealogy. J. Francis Bell, 226 S.W. 38th Terrace, Cape Coral, FL 33914 is seeking information on descendants of Harvey Spier Spencer Bell. Information on the Moynihan and Brewer families is being sought by Tom Zarrilli, 441 Hardendorf Ave.; Atlanta, GA 30307.

Work begins on Ade Home restoration

The restoration work on George Ade's Historic Hazelden Home got underway in earnest in July. As the television camera recorded the event, Newton County officials, representatives of the George Ade Memorial Association, the Kankakee-Iroquois Regional Plan Commission, Lt. Gov. Frank O'Bannon's staff, and state solons Sue Landske and Claire Leuck took part in a formal groundbreaking ceremony in mid-July to kick-off the restoration work at the home of the late Hoosier playwright and humorist George Ade. The work is on the project slated for completion in early 1996. During the restoration project, all the artifacts, memorabilia and historical materials normally at the Ade Home have been boxed and placed in storage at a warehouse in Lafayette for the duration of the construction period. Work at the site will include installation of a new roof and a new heating and air conditioning system, repairs to the stucco and the deteriorated wood siding panels, and the installation of a handicapped-accessible entrance and restroom. The pricetag for the project is \$561,000, with funding from a \$500,000 grant from the Department of Commerce, as well as a grant approved by the Newton County Council and Commissioners and private donations. Hazelden, built in 1904, stood empty for two decades after Ade's death in 1944. It underwent an initial restoration 30 years ago.

Goodland's lost park

In the old days it was a point of pride in the various towns to have a beautiful park where people would be stepping off the train. This can still be seen in Florida cities where train stops would have winter visitors alighting.

In Goodland we still have ours because Mr. William Foster, who planned the town, left a parcel, just as Julius Caesar did in Rome, according to Brutus Mark Anthony, "... in perpetuity for the people to disport themselves" in the beauty of the park.

The only hint of this artifact of the old days is a water fountain. Once there also used to be a water trough for the horses as well.

The location of this now-largely forgotten park was across Newton Street (Goodland's Main Street) from the present Foster Park, and just north of the railroad. One would think it to be the east edge of the Ag Max Elevator property. Even the elevator manager is unaware that the town owns this and cannot let it go.

I have to wonder what its future will be. Poor little orphan park. -Written by Velma Dart, immediate past Vice President of the Historical Society

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NOTES

The warm weather months have not deterred Historical Society members as the meetings around the county have enjoyed excellent attendance.... Kyle Conrad arranged for the April meeting at the Brook Town Hall. The members got an opportunity to visit the Brook Museum which contains a most impressive collection of photos, articles and memorabilia linked to Brook's history.... In May the scene shifted to the Covenant Federated Church in Kentland where Bob Simons entertained the members with his recollections of the town's past. This meeting marked an important development for the society as it was the first of the programs to be audio taped. All subsequent programs will be recorded for posterity.... The annual membership meeting in June provided members with an opportunity to inspect the Kentland Pennsylvania Railroad Depot which was moved to Alvin C. Cast Park in Kentland where it enjoys frequent usage in its new reincarnation as a community center. John J. Yost, who was a member of the committee which moved and restored the 1912-vintage facility, gave a talk on the building's history and the task of its restoration. It was not Yost's talk, but probably the delicious potluck dinner that drew the crowd for this, the annual membership gathering. Also a part of the program was an update from Mike Davis, President of the George Ade Memorial Association, on the status of the restoration project at the Ade Home.... The July meeting will be one long remembered by the Society members fortunate enough to attend. The location of the meeting was Thayer, and tours were given of the old Fogli Hotel by Mr. & Mrs. Jack Leesie, and Mr. and Mrs. Nick Yacuk opened their home, the former Diana Hunt Club for inspection by the

Society. Both facilities have rich histories and have been lovingly transformed into private residences by their current owners. This rare opportunity to visit these two sites drew one of the largest crowds at any recent meeting of the Society.... The Warren T. McCray Scholarship was awarded in May to Miss Austina Reed, a senior at South Newton High School. Miss Reed is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Darrell Reed of Kentland, and she plans to attend Manchester College where she will major in political science. The winner was selected based upon essays submitted by students vying for the scholarship. The efforts of Gerald Born were greatly appreciated in the awarding of this scholarship.... With consolidation of the South Newton elementaries looming, Dorothy Johnson wrote a letter to the School Board on behalf of the Historical Society expressing the Society's concern about the trophies, pictures and other artifacts in the buildings. When the high schools were consolidated in the mid-1960's many of these types of items were dumped in a landfill.... Meanwhile the Family Division of the Society has been continuing its work on cataloging graves in Lake Township. The group is working with Lake Township Trustee Nikki Hanger. Work is nearing completion of the Lake, McClellan, Beaver and Washington Township portion of the project.... This year's edition of the Pun'kin Fair was a very special one in that the institution celebrated its Diamond Jubilee. One part of the anniversary celebration was a display of Punk'in Vine memorabilia assembled by Society Treasurer Janet Miller.... Newton County history received some wider attention recently when the Sunday, Aug. 13 edition of the *Lafayette Journal and Courier* featured a two-page, richly illustrated pair of stories on Gov. Warren T. McCray, Orchard Lake Stock Farm, and McCray's prize bull Perfection Fairfax.

Brook's remarkable W.W.II contribution

There have been numerous commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War Two. Newton County residents may point with pride to the contribution of Indiana's youngest county to the cause of freedom. The following items, taken from John Connell's loving tribute to his hometown *And They Called Her Brook*, point out the remarkable sacrifice made by the Iroquois Township community.

"No other town of its size has given so much at Pearl Harbor as has the smalltown of Brook, Indiana." Such was the headline that appeared in the Chicago Tribune shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The Tribune told how two young men from Brook graduated from Brook High School together, had enlisted in the Navy together and had asked to serve on the same ship. These two Brook boys were Wilfred Criswell and Galen Albright who were on the battleship Arizona, one of many ships sunk in Pearl Harbor during the sneak attack on December 7, 1941."

Connell also offers this item about the per capita contribution the community made to the war effort. "The people of Brook and Iroquois and Washington Townships are proud of their veterans and *Continued to page four*

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patriotism. Even the great newspapers of the of the U.S. recognize its patriotism. On July 13, 1944, in a nationwide press release by the *New York Herald*, the news story was headed, 'New York Whirls Gaily Thru War in Its Night Clubs.' It then went on to say, 'To contrast New York's War effort with that in the heart of America, one might do well to put its war indices alongside those of the hamlet of Brook, Indiana (population 888). Brook exceeded it May War quota by 50 per cent. New York was 14.7 per cent short of its May quota. It was also 35 per cent behind in its June quote.

'Brook, with its 888 people, has 102 boys in the service now and none on the street. New York, with its 7.5 million, has streets and cafes thronged with young civilians and finds itself hard pressed for volunteers.'

TO READ MORE ABOUT IT...

Historical Society members interested in reading more about Newton County's role in World War Two may want to read *Kentland's World War II Scrapbook* by Marg Steinbach Carlson. This book, drawn from the *Kentland Democrat's* award winning coverage, carries stories and photos of service men and women from all over Newton County.

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A publication of the Newton County Historical Society, Inc. Published in March, August and October of each year. Articles for submission are encouraged and may be sent to the editor, John J. Yost, 508 North Third Street, Kentland, IN 47951.

Membership dues to the Newton County Historical Society are annual from July 1 to June 30 of each year and are structured as follows:

Student	\$2.00
Individual	\$5.00
Family	\$8.00
Institutional	\$25.00
Contributing	\$50.00
Individual Life	\$100.00
Family Life	\$175.00

Membership includes receiving three issues of *The Newcomer*. Gift memberships are always welcome. Meetings held on the fourth Monday of each month.

Officers of the Newton County Historical Society are:

President, John J. Yost, Kentland
Vice President, Sue Humphrey, Kentland
Secretary, Robert Williamson, Morocco
Treasurer, Janet Miller, Kentland

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