

# Jacob and Mary Johnson Family

*Submitted in 2015 by: Sylvia Johnson-Christensen-Roderick*



In the year 1866, my great-grandfather, Jacob Johnson, and great-grandmother, Mary, along with their two year old son, John, came to America from Christiania (now Oslo), Norway. They lived for four years at Dodgeville, WI. Here my Grandfather, Lewis, was born April 23, 1867 and my great-uncle Edward, was born October 10, 1869.

In 1870, Jacob moved his family to a farm six miles east of Milford, Iowa to a sod house he had built. It had three feet thick walls and two one-sash windows. The roof was made of willows laid on the rafters, then a good layer of wild hay and dirt on top of the hay. In the winter they burned twisted hay for heat. For light they used lard in a dish with a small rag for a wick. Two more boys were born at Milford, Iowa: Martin on October 20, 1872 and Peter on March 3, 1876.

Lewis had the job of herding cattle for at least four years, starting at age nine. He had the habit of reading the Bible while herding the cattle.

In the year 1877, a Brother Peter Hoen came to Jacob and Mary Johnson's home to tell them of the Adventist message. He stayed with them eight days, working in the hay field along with the family during the day and studying the Bible into the evening.

Becoming discouraged with their lack of interest in the studies, he left. After walking only one half mile, he heard a voice say, "Go back!" Brother Hoen knelt down in the ditch and prayed for God's help and then went back. After staying and studying with the family eight days longer, he left again. At the same place in the road he again heard a voice saying, "Go back, go back!" Brother Hoen again knelt down in the ditch, earnestly telling God he couldn't do it alone, but needed His help and then he went back and studied with the family ten more days – this time they finally decided to keep the Seventh-day Sabbath.

My great-grandfather had a terrible struggle giving up the habit of chewing snoose. When the craving seemed overpowering, he would run to the creek and strip bark off the willow trees and chew that until he finally won the battle against the dirty habit!

My great-uncle John had been away when the family studied and he never did join the rest of the family in the church. However, the rest of the family were faithful members of the Seventh-day Adventist church all their lives.

Years later, when my father, Jay Johnson, was in school at Hutchinson Theological Seminary, I think in 1927, one of his teacher's names was Hoen. One Sabbath the Hoens had my father along with other students over for Sabbath dinner. Mr. Hoen's father was visiting them and when his son introduced my father as Jay Johnson from Iowa, the father said, "Johnson – from Iowa ... would you by any chance be related to Jacob and Mary Johnson?" My dad told him, "Why they are my grandparents!" At that, the old man hugged my dad and wept for some time. Then he told the story of the family's conversion, ending with the statement,

**"What if I hadn't gone back?"**



Sylvia, great-granddaughter of Jacob and Mary Johnson, has been a faithful supporter of MWA – here, in 2009, she visits with Dr. Elmer Martinson, son of one of the two first MWA graduates

Dr. Larry Christensen, son of Sylvia and Dean Christensen and great-great grandson of Jacob and Mary Johnson, is a 1968 MWA graduate and has served as MWA Alumni President



Elder Wayne Andersen, another great-grandchild of Jacob and Mary Johnson, was Bible teacher at MWA for several years

Rue E. Hoen at MWA 1929  
His father, Peter L. Hoen, brought the SDA message to the Jacob Johnson family

