

Inventory of the

**Johnson Family**  
Rock Falls, Illinois

Records

In the

Regional History Center

**RC 100**

## INTRODUCTION

Mrs. Elma Arndt, daughter of Mr. Fred Johnson, donated the Johnson Family Records to the Northern Illinois Regional History Center on June 23, 1980

Property rights in the collection are held by the Regional History Center; literary rights are dedicated to the public. There are no restrictions on access to the collection.

Linear feet of shelf space: 2.25  
Number of containers: 3  
Northern Illinois Regional History Center  
Collection 100

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Johnson Family Records document various Johnson family enterprises from 1877-1978. The bulk of this collection documents the business affairs of the Bernhard Johnson Mill and the Johnson family farm and trace the development and inter-relationship of these two agribusinesses. The daybooks, cash books, ledgers, and contract books contain a variety of interfiled information such as detailed records of farm and mill laborers (1894-1940); wholesale commodity prices; railroad freight charges; the day to day expenses of the Johnson family. Family correspondence (1920-1924) provides insights into the concerns of farm families during the early 1920's with discussions on the state of the agricultural economy and family finances.

Researchers should note that Box #1, File Folder #2, pages 597-599 provides a list of grocers and feed stores located in Whiteside, Lee, and southern Ogle and DeKalb Counties (December 1903). Related holdings of the Regional History Center include the Taylor Farm Collection (RC 37), the H. H. Parke Collection (RC 43), the H. W. Colwill Collection (RC 47), and the Norris Family Collection (RC 74).

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

Fred Johnson was born on May 10, 1881 to Bernhard Johnson and Eva Juelfs Johnson, German immigrants who purchased a farm located off Route 30 near Rock Falls, Illinois in 1877. During the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893, the Johnson's leased and operated a boarding and rooming house at 356 Wabash Avenue. Mr. Johnson also leased the Johnson Hotel at 256 Michigan Avenue, Chicago (present site of the Hilton Hotel) from 1895-1896. Early in 1904, Bernhard Johnson purchased the Dillon Mill Company from Moses Dillon, renaming it the Bernhard Johnson Mill. Located on the Rock Falls side of the Rock River, the mill was made to provide an adequate feed supply for the large cattle-feeding operation on the Johnson farm. Nevertheless, the mill proved to be an unprofitable business, so in less than a year it was sold to Henry Utley. Today, this mill no longer exists.

In 1904, Bernhard Johnson also sold the 240-acre farm to his son Fred. Bernhard and Eva continued to live on the farm until Fred married Tena Shuler in 1906. The elder Johnsons then moved to Rock Falls where they lived for a number of years before moving to Chicago. Fred and Tena Johnson had two children, Lowell (b. 1904) and Elma (b. 1908). Fred Johnson operated the farm until he retired to Sterling in 1940.

In 1957 Fred Johnson deeded approximately 80 acres each to his son and daughter. Forty acres were condemned and purchased by the state of Illinois in 1971 to build a Freeway. Today, tenants occupy and operate the remaining family farm and Fred Johnson lives in Raleigh, North Carolina.

### SUBJECT TRACINGS

Family Farms  
 Family Life, History  
 Farm Life  
 Grain  
 Johnson Family  
 Rock Falls

### COLLECTION INVENTORY

<u>BOX</u>	<u>FOLDER</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
1	1	Farm History, 1978
	2	Legal Documents (Copies), (1877-1957)
	3-7	Family Correspondence, (1920-1924)
	8-9	Contract Books, (1894-1940)
2	1	Day Books, (1903-1904)
	2-3	Ledgers, (1894-1967)
	4-5	Journals, (1903-1940)
3	1	Letter Press Book, 1903-1908
	2-4	Day Books, (1903-1967)
	5	Aerial Photographs of the Farm (2), 1975