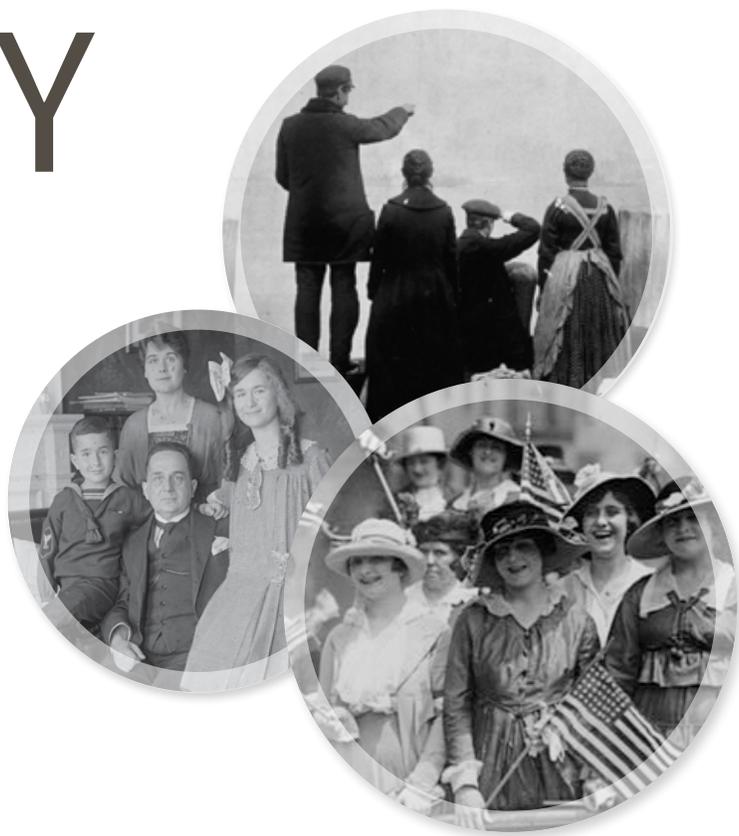


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# *The Johnson and Purnell Family*

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## OUR FAMILY STORY





Union soldiers in the Civil War, 1865



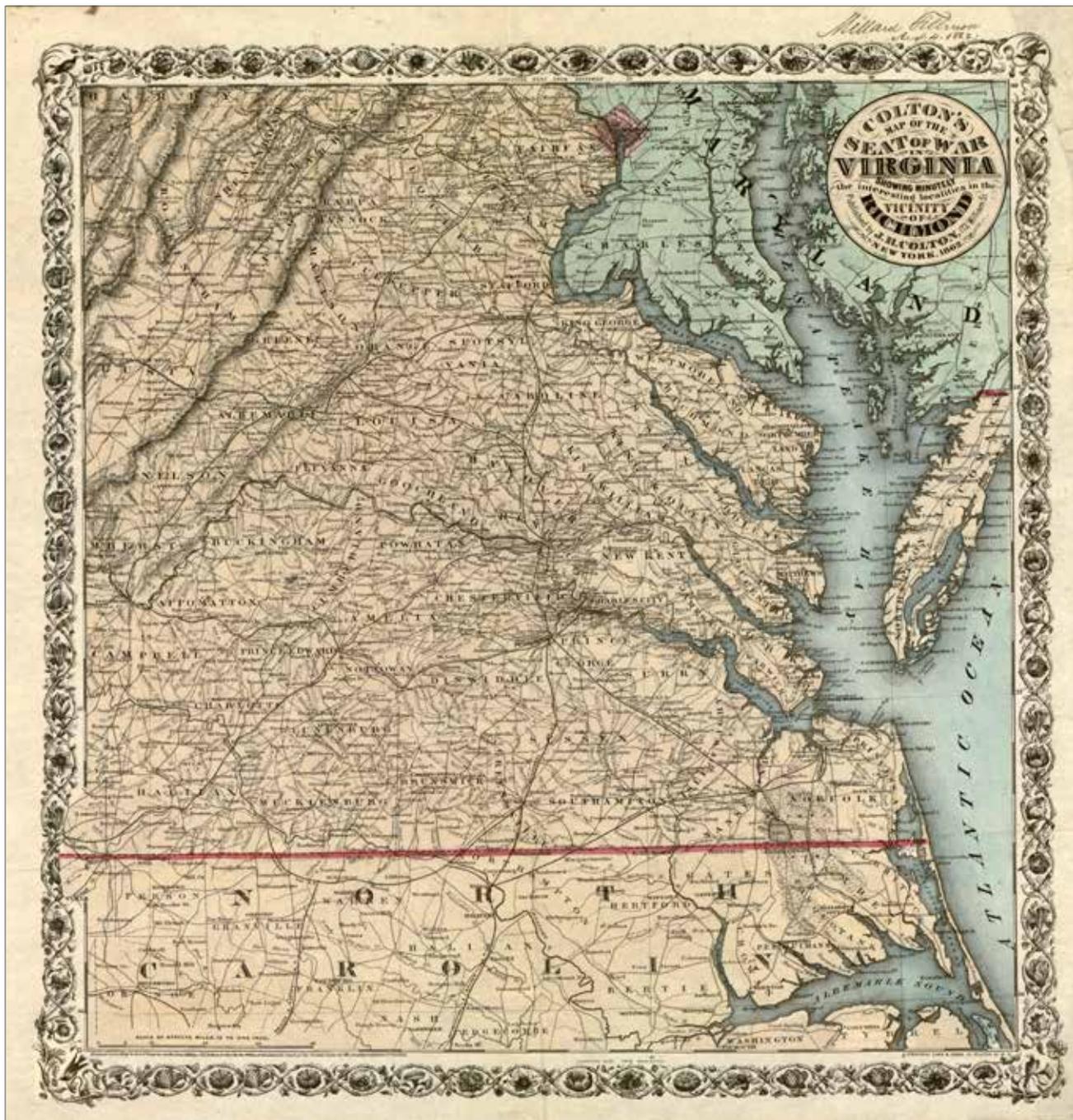
# The Johnson and Purnell Family

The following pages relate the known details and experiences of the Johnson and Purnell family lines—the maternal ancestors of Cindy Lou Hensley McCain. Their life stories begin in colonial times in Pennsylvania and Virginia, but meander to the west as various generations struck out to explore new possibilities on the frontier. Some settled in Kentucky and Georgia, while many eventually settled in southern Illinois, where numerous branches of the family weathered the Civil War. Firmly in the North but bordering slave territory, it proved to be a contentious location for many of them, even though few battles were carried out on Illinois soil. In the later pages of this collection, readers can even absorb the experiences of the ancestor William Eldrige Lipe, who served for the Union in the Civil War, through his own words, captured and preserved in a journal he wrote during the war.

Another distant relative, Daniel Blackman, served in the Illinois House of Representatives alongside Abraham Lincoln, who would later serve as U.S. President.

Many of the Johnsons and Purnells were farmers, scraping out a living on the land to feed their families and put some money aside for their later years. A remarkable percentage of the ancestors lived long lives—many well into their 90s—defying the high mortality rates and relatively low life expectancy of the periods in which they lived.

The story relies on documentary evidence gained through years of genealogical research, largely consisting of civil, church, land purchase, and probate records. May these memories of the Johnson and Purnell families last many lifetimes.



Virginia, 1862

# The Johnson Family Line

**T**he ancestors in the Johnson family line—the paternal ancestors of Marguerite Smith “Smitty” Johnson—survived various natural disasters, wars, and economic crises over the years, but for the most part, they also enjoyed a relatively quiet, rural lifestyle surrounded by neighbors and relatives. Those who were farmers, and therefore at the mercy of Mother Nature, enjoyed abundant crops some years and less prosperous harvests in others. Their lives were filled with hard work, but many of them lived long and fruitful lives.

The story begins with the earliest known Johnson ancestor, Thomas Johnson, and his wife, Rhoda Hart Dodson, both natives of Virginia.

## Thomas Johnson and Rhoda Hart Dodson



**Thomas Johnson**  
1808–1880  
b. Scott County, Virginia



**Rhoda Hart Dodson**  
1813–1911  
b. Halifax County, Virginia

**T**homas Johnson was born in 1808 in what is now Scott County, located in the far southwestern corner of Virginia. (The county was formally created in 1814, when Thomas was about 6 years old.) The names of his parents are not known, but it is likely they were born in Virginia.<sup>1</sup>

It appears that Thomas moved west with his parents and siblings to Kentucky, where he met Rhoda Hart Dodson. Rhoda probably also moved to Kentucky with her family when she was a child. She was born in Halifax County, on the southern border of central Virginia, on 14 September 1813, although her parents are not yet known. Few other records about her family and

her childhood are available, largely because the census records of Halifax County for the years 1790, 1800, and 1810 have been lost.<sup>2</sup>

## The Known Children of Thomas Johnson and Rhoda Hart Dodson

1833

**George Washington**  
(born 1833)

**Louis D.**  
(born 1835)

**Samuel M.**  
(born 1837)

**Elizabeth**  
(born 1840)

**Mary A.**  
(born 1842)

**Leanna**  
(born 1844)

**Nancy V.**  
(born 1846)

**Noah F.**  
(February 1849–  
16 November 1922)

**Kizziah H.**  
(born 1852)

**Eliza H.**  
(born 6 October 1854)

**John Thomas (Ancestor)**  
(17 March 1857–  
3 June 1927)

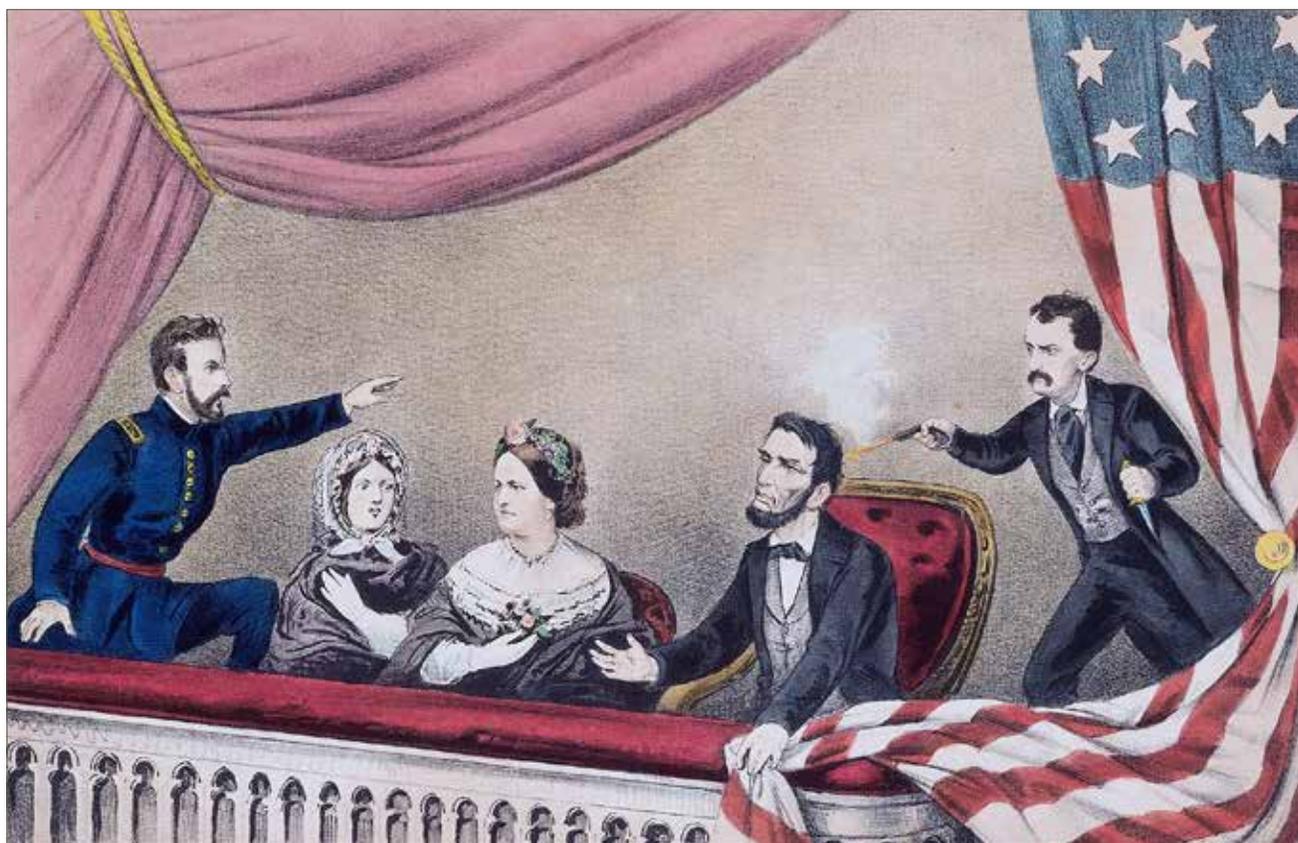
1927

**Thomas Junior**  
(born 1859)

Thomas and Rhoda had a large family of at least 12 children. It is possible that they lived in Madison County, Kentucky, as early as the 1830s, but official documents prove that they certainly lived there in 1850; that year's census includes the Johnson family.<sup>3</sup> Thomas was a farmer who owned \$82 worth of real estate, the equivalent of about \$2,400 in modern currency. Neither he nor Rhoda could read or write, although their older children did attend school that year, likely receiving a rudimentary education in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The curriculum in rural schools of that period was basic, focusing on essential skills. Since books

were expensive and scarce, teachers usually asked students to recite and memorize instead. At home, children were usually expected to prioritize their work on their family farm or in their home, and since houses were cramped and poorly lit by candles after the sun went down, it was difficult to read at night.

The family appears to have lived in Madison County through at least October 1854, since the birth of Thomas and Rhoda's daughter Eliza was recorded there that month.<sup>4</sup> Not long after Eliza's birth, the family moved to Rockcastle County, Kentucky, which borders Madison County. This part of



Currier and Ives depiction of Lincoln's assassination. (L to R): Maj. Rathbone, Clara Harris, Mary Todd Lincoln, Pres. Lincoln, and Booth.

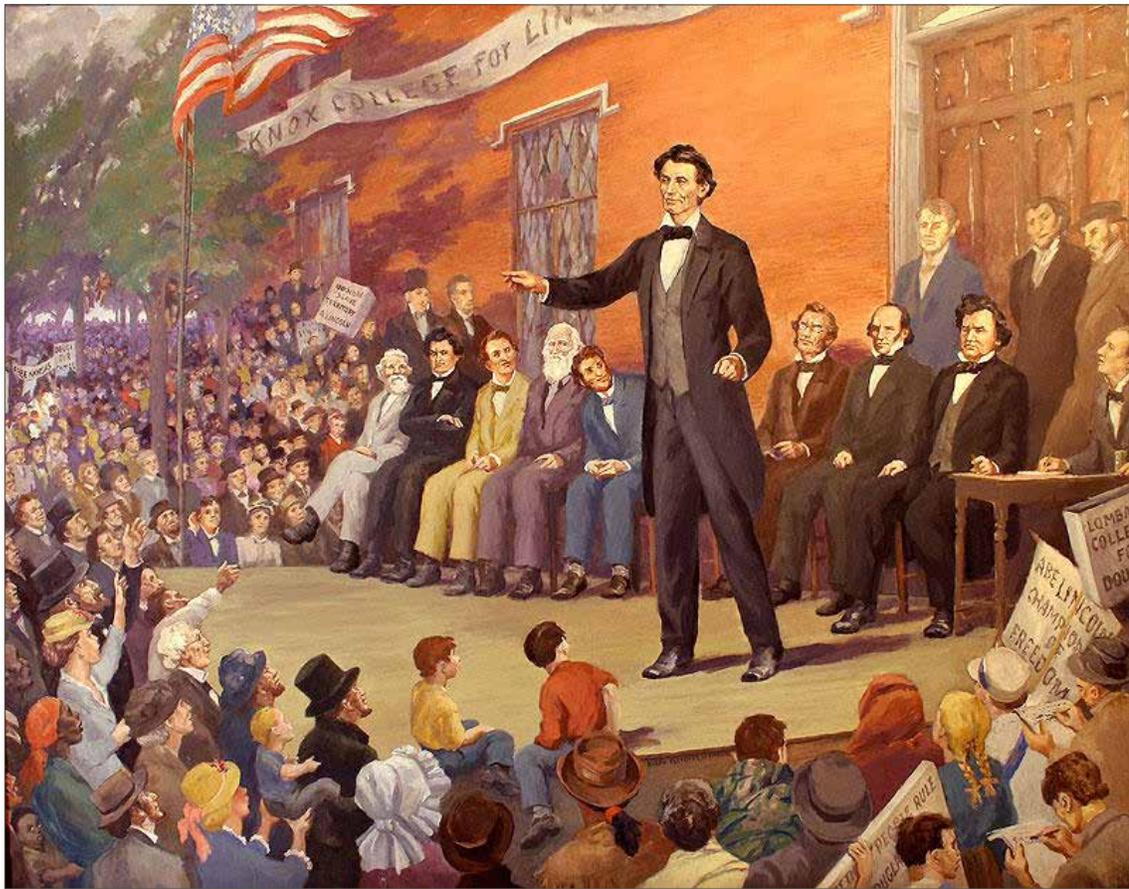
## HISTORICAL INSIGHT

## The First Kentucky Derby

The Johnson farm was located about 130 miles southeast of Louisville, Kentucky, and due to limitations on travel in those days the family likely never traveled to the city. However, they almost certainly heard about an important event in 1876—the first Kentucky Derby. A crowd of 10,000 people entered the stadium on 17 May 1875 to watch 15 horses gallop around the track in the inaugural race at Churchill Downs. The new grandstand was packed with ladies and gentlemen in their finest. A drum was tapped to signal the start, and the people erupted. The track was fast, the dirt hard and compact, and just 2 minutes and 37 seconds later, a horse named Aristides crossed the finish line. A celebration with champagne and a wreath of roses took place in the winner's circle, where all could see the champion colt.



Before formal racetracks were built in Kentucky, horse racing took place in abandoned fields and parks. Gambling and alcohol attracted rough crowds, prompting the wealthy to build tracks where they could race their prized thoroughbreds. 13 May 1845.



Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas debated at Old Main on the Knox College campus. It's the only remaining structure from their famous series of debates held across Illinois in 1858.

Kentucky was known by many settlers as the “hunting ground” since game was so abundant—likely a great help to families like the Johnsons looking to feed a large family as they established a new home.<sup>5</sup>

Thomas and Rhoda’s marriage was recorded in the Rockcastle County register in 1858, although it is likely their actual marriage took place much earlier.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps they had a marriage ceremony that was not recorded until many years later, or maybe they had a common-law marriage which they decided to register after their children were born. Regardless, Thomas was 50

### The Known Children of John Thomas Johnson and Eliza Amanda Lipe

1880

**Nellie M.**  
(1 April 1880–  
30 March 1964)

**Estelle Myrtle**  
(25 September 1882–  
26 September 1949)

**James Lyman (Ancestor)**  
(born 8 August 1888)

**Leon Edward**  
(23 July 1892–8 March 1953)

**Lois M.**  
(12 October 1895–  
6 August 1978)

**Mary**  
(born July 1899)

1978

years old and Rhoda was about 45 years old when the marriage was recorded, and they both indicated it was their second marriage. Rhoda's name was written as "Rhody Dotson" on this marriage register. Perhaps Dotson (or Dodson) was the surname of her first husband.

In 1860, Thomas and Rhoda were still farming in central eastern Kentucky.<sup>7</sup> They had \$400 in real estate and \$200 in personal property that year, assets that would equal about \$16,500 in modern currency. Their youngest six children still lived at home at that time. Only about 5,300 people lived in the county in 1860, which suggests that farms were spread out and most families likely had to be quite self-sufficient.<sup>8</sup> Tobacco was the primary crop in the area. The county is named after the Rockcastle

River, which runs through it, and the river is named for a particular rock near the town of Livingston that came to be known as Castle Rock in the mid-1700s.<sup>9</sup> The county lies in the foothills of the Cumberland Mountains and, when the Johnsons lived there, featured miles of dense forestland. Many sawmills and other businesses connected to the logging industry had sprouted in the decades before the Johnson family arrived.

The relative abundance of those years was soon interrupted by war. Although Kentucky was a slave state, it remained decidedly neutral at the outbreak of the Civil War on 12 April 1861.<sup>10</sup> Its connection to key Midwestern railways and its prime location along important waterways made Kentucky a prize that both



Nellie Johnson



Estelle Johnson



Leon Johnson



Mary Johnson



Farming was the way of life for most families living in Pulaski County, Illinois, in the 1880s.

the North and South wanted to win. As President Abraham Lincoln declared, “I hope to have God on my side, but I must have Kentucky.”

After a failed Confederate invasion in 1861, the state legislature petitioned Washington, D.C., for assistance. From that point forward, the crucial border state remained in Union hands until the war’s end four years later. Even so, Kentucky was a house divided. Confederate guerilla attacks disrupted daily life and struck fear into the hearts and minds of Kentuckians. Farms and businesses suffered as approximately 125,000 men marched off to the battlefield, most of them fighting for the

Union. Among them were 24,000 African Americans who bravely risked their lives in pursuit of their lasting freedom. Along the Kentucky frontier, fierce attacks on both sides created chaos and, in some cases, forced pioneers to abandon their homesteads.

On Good Friday, 14 April 1865, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln and his wife, Mary Todd, watched the Ford’s Theatre production of *Our American Cousin* in Washington, D.C., along with a celebratory crowd of 1,700.<sup>11</sup> But the laughter faded when Confederate sympathizer and famous actor John Wilkes Booth silently entered Lincoln’s box with a pistol, fatally shooting him with one

bullet. At first the audience thought it was part of the production, but when the assassin rushed on stage, jubilee dissolved into pandemonium. A barely breathing Lincoln was carted off to a nearby boardinghouse, where he died the next morning. He was the first U.S. president to be assassinated. (Within 12 days, after one of the largest manhunts in U.S. history that involved 10,000 troops, John Wilkes Booth, his assassin, was captured on a Virginia farm. He was fatally wounded during his arrest on 26 April 1865.)

By the time of Booth's capture, the leadership of a nation broken and bruised by years of Civil War had fallen on the shoulders of Vice President Andrew Johnson, who had only served as vice president for six weeks before

President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.<sup>12</sup> Johnson received word in the early morning hours of 15 April 1865 that the office of president had fallen to him and that an inauguration should occur quickly. Welcoming the nation's chief justice and other government officials into his room at the Kirkwood House hotel in Washington, D.C., Johnson took the oath of office, becoming the 17th President of the United States at 10:00 that same morning. President Johnson retained the existing cabinet members and set to work on implementing Reconstruction.

*“Gentlemen,” Johnson remarked, “I shall lean upon you; I feel that I shall need your support. I am deeply*



Many families made sauerkraut, which some called “liberty cabbage” during the war years.



A dust storm approaches a town in the Midwest, 1935.

*impressed with the solemnity  
of the occasion and the  
responsibility of the duties of  
the office I am assuming.”*

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Unfortunately, two courthouse disasters took place in 1871 and 1874, destroying many of Rockcastle County’s records for the period when the ancestral Johnsons lived there.<sup>13</sup> They left Rockcastle County after the war, in about 1867,<sup>14</sup> and lived in neighboring Jackson County, Kentucky, by 1870.<sup>15</sup> Their farm was in a location known as Horse Lick, which is largely gone today even though Horse Lick Creek still exists. The Civil War had stifled the growth of the family’s net worth in the 1860s. While Thomas had owned \$600 worth of land and property in 1860, he

had only \$500 worth 10 years later (five years after the war ended). In addition to Thomas and Rhoda’s own five youngest children, two others lived with the family in 1870—a 17-year-old Thomas S. Johnson (not to be confused with their own son Thomas, who was 11) and Noah W. Mullins, who was 4 years old.

Thomas died at the age of 72 in Horse Lick in January 1880.<sup>16</sup> The cause of his death was known at the time as dropsy, another word for edema—the collection of fluid in the body.

Rhoda lived with her son Noah and his family in Horse Lick in 1880.<sup>17</sup> Noah, a farmer, and his wife, Mary, had three young children: John, Martha, and Pleas. Rhoda still lived with them in 1900, on a farm near the town of McKee. By then, Noah and Mary’s oldest three

children had either died or left home, but six other children who had been born after 1880 lived at home, the older boys helping on the farm. These children included James, William, Debbie, Ettie, Sherman, and Thomas.

By 1910, when Rhoda was about 96 years old, she lived with her daughter Eliza and her family in Horse Lick.<sup>18</sup> Eliza was married to Jacob Lake, a truck farmer, and they had four of their 12 children still living at home, including a 12-year-old daughter named Rhoda, likely after her grandmother. Rhoda

died in Jackson County, Kentucky, on 24 February 1911.<sup>19</sup> She was 97 years old.

## John Thomas Johnson and Eliza Amanda Lipe

John Thomas Johnson was born in Whitley County, Kentucky, on 17 March 1857.<sup>20</sup> Much of his childhood was marked by the Civil War, which started when John Thomas was just 4 years old and ended when he was 9. Agriculture was the basis of Kentucky's economy during the war years.<sup>21</sup> Farmers there, who wanted



Shared gravestone of John T. and Eliza A. Johnson

access to the port of New Orleans via the Mississippi River, opposed secession because they feared commerce would be impeded by it. On the other hand, plantation owners and advocates of states' rights favored separation from the Union.

The state changed both economically and socially after the war ended. Tobacco was no longer the major cash crop; hemp took its place. Railroads continued to expand, making coal mining in the eastern part of the state more feasible. Some of Kentucky's urban areas, especially in the northern part of

the state, grew as manufacturing and industry increased.



**James Lyman Johnson**

born 1888  
b. Pulaski, Illinois



**Louisa "Lulu" Purnell**

1894–1977  
b. Illinois

John lived with his family in Horse Lick, Jackson County, Kentucky, in 1870, when he was about 13 years old.<sup>22</sup> The Johnsons were still picking up the pieces from the war years then, and John likely was expected to do his share of farm work, along with his siblings.



The Illinois Central Railway provided faster and more economical transportation from the Midwest to the Gulf of Mexico for Americans in the last half of the 19th century.

However, the census reports that he did attend school, and while he could not write, he was able to read.

Because John came from a large family (he had 11 siblings, and his parents had other children living in their home at various times), he likely was accustomed to crowded living conditions. In most families of that period, the concept of one's own room—and often even one's own bed—was a strange one. As Jack Larkin, author of *The Reshaping of Everyday Life: 1790-1840*, wrote, “Children and other adults living in the household slept together in a hall, garret, or bedchambers, although they usually separated the sexes if they had enough room.”<sup>23</sup> He goes on to describe the many conveniences of our modern culture that were absent at that time:

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*“Electricity arrived late in the century, as did the telephone. There was no television, radio or stereo, microwave, food processor, or flick-of-the-switch lighting. Lighting came from candles or from oil or gas lamps. Refrigeration was unknown until the invention of the simple icebox. Until then, housewives preserved foods by drying, salting, and smoking. The fireplace or woodstove fire had to be stoked relentlessly and invariably extinguished itself during the coldest hours of the night. The kitchen in summer must have been sweltering.”*

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John left Kentucky to move west in the 1870s, settling in Illinois. At the age of 22, he married Eliza Amanda Lipe in Pulaski County, Illinois, on 8 June 1879.<sup>24</sup> Eliza was born to William Eldridge Lipe and Mary C. Roy in Grand Chain, Illinois, on 27 September 1857. (See page 34 for more on Eliza's ancestors.)

Eliza was seven months younger than John and had grown up under similar political influences. Less than a year after she was born, the first of the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates took place in her home state of Illinois. The candidates for the U.S. Senate from Illinois—Abraham Lincoln and incumbent senator Stephen Douglas—had agreed to seven public debates, and the series deeply inspired the people of the state. One debate in Jonesboro, Illinois, on 15 September 1858 took place within about 25 miles of the Lipe home, and the family certainly would have heard the news surrounding the event, since turnout for the debates was enormous. At the Charleston, Illinois, debate three days later, a four-mile parade of supporters greeted the candidates, and thousands gathered on blankets with their picnic baskets. Although the candidates would be chosen by the legislature, not the people, the topics covered in the heated discussions were of great interest to everyone. The issue of slavery, in particular, drew many citizens from neighboring states. Stenographers from Chicago newspapers reported detailed accounts to a whole nation reading with bated breath. Although Lincoln's views on slavery lost him the

Form 1 REGISTRATION CARD No. 73		-18-A REGISTRAR'S REPORT	
1	Name in full <i>James L Johnson</i>	Age in yrs. <i>28</i>	(which)? <i>Medium</i> Slender, medium, or stout (which)? <i>Medium</i>
2	Home address <i>Christead Ill</i>	Color of hair? <i>Dark Brn</i>	Bald? <i>no</i>
3	Date of birth <i>Aug 8th 1888</i>	at arm, leg, hand, foot, or both otherwise disabled (specify)?	
4	Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)?	at my answers are true, that the person registered has read his own answers and that all of his answers of which I have true, except as follows:	
5	Where were you born? <i>Christead Illinois USA</i>	<i>E. B. Goss</i> (Signature of registrar)	
6	If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject?		
7	What is your present trade, occupation, or office? <i>R. B. Bridgely Carpenter</i>	<i>Pulaski Illinois</i> (Date of registration)	
8	By whom employed? <i>C.C. &amp; N. B. R. R. Co</i>		
9	Where employed? <i>Cairo, Division</i>		
10	Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support (specify which)? <i>Wife + 2 children</i>		
11	Married or single (which)? <i>Married</i> Race (specify which)? <i>Cauc</i>		
12	What military service have you had? Rank <i>none</i> ; branch <i>none</i> ; years <i>none</i> ; Nation or State <i>none</i>		
Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? <i>none</i>			
I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.			
<i>James L Johnson</i> (Signature or mark)			

James L. Johnson's draft registration card, 1917



Men signing up for the WWI draft, 1918

senatorial election, they would ultimately win him the presidential election just two years later in 1860, setting the stage for the Civil War in 1861.

### The Known Children of James Lyman Johnson and Louisa “Lulu” Purnell

1912

**Pearl**  
(born 29 August 1912)

**Marguerite Smith  
“Smitty” (Ancestor)**  
(16 January 1915–  
22 October 2006)

2006

**Jerrie**  
(born about 1932)

Eliza’s father, William, served in the Union Army during the Civil War and, while Eliza was just a young girl, he was away fighting for almost three years without the ability to visit home. He returned home two months before

her 8<sup>th</sup> birthday. She appears on the 1870 census with her family in Pulaski County, Illinois, when she was about 13 years old. She attended school through the eighth grade, and learned to read and write.

After Eliza’s marriage to John in 1879, the couple had at least six children. They and their firstborn daughter, Nellie, lived in Grand Chain, Pulaski County, Illinois, in 1880.<sup>25</sup> John was described as a laborer at that time, meaning he may have worked for hire on a local farm. However, a more detailed agricultural census schedule shows that John rented a small farm that included 40 acres of improved land, two acres of unimproved land, and 34 acres of woodland.<sup>26</sup> The farm was valued at \$2,500, the equivalent of



Illinois was one of the first states to ratify the amendment to the U.S. Constitution giving women the right to vote.

about \$63,000 in modern currency. He also owned \$100 in farm implements and had livestock including four horses, four cows, two pigs, and some poultry. His farm animals produced 50 pounds of butter and 18 dozen eggs in 1879.

John and Eliza and their family lived in Pulaski County in 1900, near a town called Ohio, which does not appear to exist today.<sup>27</sup> They could both read and write, and John rented his farm. Five of their children still lived at home; their daughter Estelle was not in her parents' household and had perhaps left home by that time.

The Johnsons still had a full house in Pulaski County in 1910, when their son Leon and their two youngest daughters—Lois and Mary—lived at home along with their 21-year-old son, James, and his wife, Lulu, who had married just a month before the census was taken.<sup>28</sup> John was 53 years old then and worked as a farmer for a “farm operator.” Again, whether this was his own farm or someone else’s is not clear. However, both Leon and James helped their father on the farm, suggesting it belonged to the family. As people who made their living in agriculture, the Johnsons were well

#### HISTORICAL INSIGHT

## The Social Impact of the First “New Deal”

*Working-class Americans, especially those in rural areas, felt the effects of the Great Depression very intensely.<sup>49</sup> Forty percent of the nation’s banks failed between 1929 and 1933, and almost four million manufacturing jobs were lost as consumption and production plummeted. The first “New Deal” created by President Franklin Roosevelt and his cabinet was intended to provide relief and recovery to those hit hardest by the depressed economy. The National Recovery Administration was established to bring industry, labor, and government leaders together to solve the nation’s economic problems, and the Civilian Conservation Corps provided young men with jobs in natural resource development projects. The National Youth Agency for which Lulu worked was one of the programs created under the New Deal.*



Despite the efforts of the first “New Deal,” long lines outside of soup kitchens persisted in cities across the nation, 1931.



Government-sponsored posters encouraged Americans to stay positive and reminded them that the ration system supported their boys fighting abroad. About 1942.

aware of how harsh Midwestern winters could be, and summers could be sweltering, too. In fact, southern Illinois is home to some of the largest temperature extremes in the world, and thunderstorms and tornadoes could easily flatten a healthy crop in minutes.

Coal mining was taking off in southern Illinois in those years, and the population of some nearby urban centers was booming. However, Grand Chain still had a population of fewer than 500 people in 1910. The neighboring town of Olmsted (sometimes spelled Olmstead) had just under 300 residents.

Most of John and Eliza's children were young adults when World War I broke out in April 1917. Their sons, James Lyman and Leon Edward, were in their late 20s and were required to register for the draft, since the Selective Service

Act was enacted just a month after the U.S. declared war on Germany.<sup>29</sup> Neither was drafted to join the fight, although Illinois eventually provided more than 300,000 recruits for the U.S. military during the war. As animosity toward Germany grew, many Illinois residents with German ancestry suffered as their neighbors became suspicious of them.<sup>30</sup>

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*Foods with German-sounding names began to be renamed: sauerkraut became "liberty cabbage" and frankfurters were called "hot dogs."*

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Perhaps the Johnsons were aware of these developments since their home state was settled by many people of German heritage.

The war ended in late 1918, and life



Gravestone of Daniel Lipe in Macomb, Illinois



Gravestone of Francis D. Lipe in Macomb, Illinois

returned to normal as many soldiers returned home to Illinois. By 1920, John was earning a wage as a foreman for a farm operation.<sup>31</sup> He and Eliza still lived near Olmsted in Pulaski County then. Only their youngest daughter, Mary, lived with them; she was 20 years old that year.

John died in Pulaski County on 3 June 1927, when he was 70 years old.<sup>32</sup> Eliza continued to live in their home near Olmsted, and by 1930, her younger brother, William, lived with her.<sup>33</sup> Eliza owned the home, valued at \$1,600—the equivalent of about \$23,500 in modern currency—but neither Eliza nor William worked outside the home. William died the following year, in 1931.

This left Eliza to weather the Depression years largely on her own, although at least some of her children likely lived nearby. Her son James had moved to neighboring Alexander County by 1935. In addition to the economic chaos taking place around the country, the Midwest also faced the Dust Bowl starting in 1930.<sup>34</sup> Caused by over-farming and severe droughts, it was the worst manmade ecological disaster in U.S. history, transforming a 150,000-square-mile area of once-lush prairie land—including Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas—into a desert.<sup>35</sup> The Dirty Thirties, as the period was known, coincided with the Great Depression—black blizzards caused coughs, buried houses, killed livestock, and left fields barren, compounding the economic hardship Americans already faced. The storms fueled an exodus of farmers out of the dust to the West Coast in hopes of securing employment. But for the 75



Women often participated in sewing bees to sew uniforms for soldiers. They also wrapped bandages to send to the front lines and organized food drives. 1860s, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



The Civil War cost the Union at least \$2.5 million per day, totaling more than \$6 billion by war's end.

percent who remained, believing in the government’s efforts to improve condi-



**William Eldrige Lipe**  
1832–1876  
b. Hawkins County, Tennessee



**Mary C. Roy**  
after 1845–after 1890  
b. Alabama

tions through conservation, education, and employment programs like the Works Progress Administration (WPA), life went on.

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*“No cracked earth, no blistering sun, no burning wind,” assured U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, “are a permanent match for the indomitable American farmers.”*

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By the early 1940s, rain had fortunately returned to the land. Eliza still lived near Olmsted in 1940, and a servant named Mary Aubrey lived with her and likely helped care for her.<sup>36</sup> Eliza paid her \$240 a year, the equivalent of about \$4,200 in modern currency.

Eliza died of heart disease and old age in Pulaski County, Illinois, on 22 March 1950, when she was 92 years old.<sup>37</sup> She was buried next to her husband.

## James Lyman Johnson and Louisa “Lulu” Purnell

James Lyman Johnson was born in Pulaski County, Illinois, on 8 August

### The Known Children of William Eldrige Lipe and Mary C. Roy

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1888 (making his birthday an easy-to-remember 8/8/1888). He grew up there in the relatively calm period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

One of the biggest changes he witnessed in his early life was the advance in transportation. Travel by rail transformed the United States in the late-19th century, making fast and efficient delivery of goods possible and providing freedom and opportunity to people.<sup>38</sup> Known as the “Main Line of Mid-America,” the Illinois Central Railway connected north to south and brought a sense of unity to post-Civil War America. This railroad would provide many opportunities for James when he grew to adulthood. Chartered in 1851, the Illinois Central was the first land-grant railroad; Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, both rising Illinois politicians, lobbied the federal government for its construction. The initial line connected Galena in the northwest corner of Illinois to Cairo at the southern tip, within miles of the Johnsons’ home. A branch also connected to the rapidly

1863 Expedition in the Field  
 On the 23<sup>rd</sup> The 9 companies was started thro  
 the 11<sup>th</sup> Regt Ills. Vol. Co. K went into the  
 11<sup>th</sup> Regt a solid Co officers and all ~~was~~  
 now constituting the name of F company in the  
 11<sup>th</sup> Regt Commanded by Col. ~~xxxx~~ in the  
 Second Brigade Commanded by Gen Hancock  
 here we Drilled and prepared for the great  
 Struggle at Vicksburg up the 26<sup>th</sup> of April  
 26<sup>th</sup> We left for Vicksburg arrived at Richmond  
 27<sup>th</sup> and Camped for the night on the  
 28<sup>th</sup> marched about 12 miles and camped on the  
 29<sup>th</sup> marched about 10 miles and camped at Smiths Farm  
 30<sup>th</sup> picking tents and fixing up all day & May the  
 1<sup>st</sup> lay here and Drilled until May the  
 10<sup>th</sup> and left took up our line of march  
 for Vicksburg and camped the same night at  
 Perkins Plantation on the May the  
 11<sup>th</sup> marched about 15 miles camped at Woods farm  
 12<sup>th</sup> marched 8 miles to Grand Gulf beside the River  
 on Steamer and camped for the night on the  
 13<sup>th</sup> marched about 12 miles and camped on  
 14<sup>th</sup> marched 18 miles and camped Rocky Springs  
 15<sup>th</sup> marched about 18 miles camped near Hammond  
 16<sup>th</sup> marched about 21 miles and camped on the  
 Road leading from Jackson to Vicksburg  
 our passage was forced this day through champion  
 heights with a hard fight with many lives  
 lost on both sides which resulted in a  
 complete ~~with~~ victory for us. The ground was  
 trampled with the Dead on all sides this gave us  
 the start of blood on the battle field  
 17<sup>th</sup> The battle of Black River bridge on the  
 18<sup>th</sup> marched within a few miles of Vicksburg camped  
 laid siege to Vicksburg in driving them into their  
 fortifications they forced in on us gaps and  
 canister shot and musketry with some times  
 to effect we lost a good many men in this  
 engagement by 2 o'clock all down in to the river

Page 1 of William Eldrige Lipe's Civil War journal, which he kept from 1863 to 1865.

growing city of Chicago. Completed in 1856, the Illinois Central was the longest railroad in the world at the time. In the 1860s the line began expanding into other states, reaching as far west as Omaha, Nebraska. After the Civil War, the railroad extended south. From its main terminal in Chicago, the Illinois Central carried passengers all the way to New Orleans by 1890.

When he was 21 years old, James married Lulu Purnell in Illinois City, Pulaski County, Illinois, on 11 March 1910.<sup>39</sup> Although she was only 15 years old at the time of her marriage, she reported that she was 18 on the marriage register, possibly to avoid the

Need for parental permission to marry as a minor. Lulu was born to James T. Purnell and Jemima Blackman in Illinois on 17 July 1894. She grew up near the town of Saline in Williamson County, Illinois. (More information on her ancestors appears in the second half of this story.)

James and Lulu lived with James's parents and three of his siblings—Leon, Lois, and Mary—in Pulaski County in 1910.<sup>40</sup> They had only been married



*“...our passage was forced this day through Champion Heights with a hard fight with many lives lost on both sides which resulted in a complete victory for us. The ground was truck with the dead on all sides. This gave us the scent of blood on the battlefield.”*

for one month when that census was taken, and James was working as a farm laborer.

James and Lulu had three daughters, with a gap of 17 years between the second (Marguerite) and the third (Jerrie). Their two oldest daughters, Pearl and Marguerite, were born before World War I, and James worked as a barber in 1915 when Marguerite was born.

After the war started, James, who was 28 years old, registered for the draft in Pulaski County.<sup>41</sup> He was working as a railroad bridge carpenter in the Cairo, Illinois, division of the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railway, also known as the Big Four Railroad.<sup>42</sup> He described himself on his draft card as being of medium height and weight with dark brown eyes and hair.

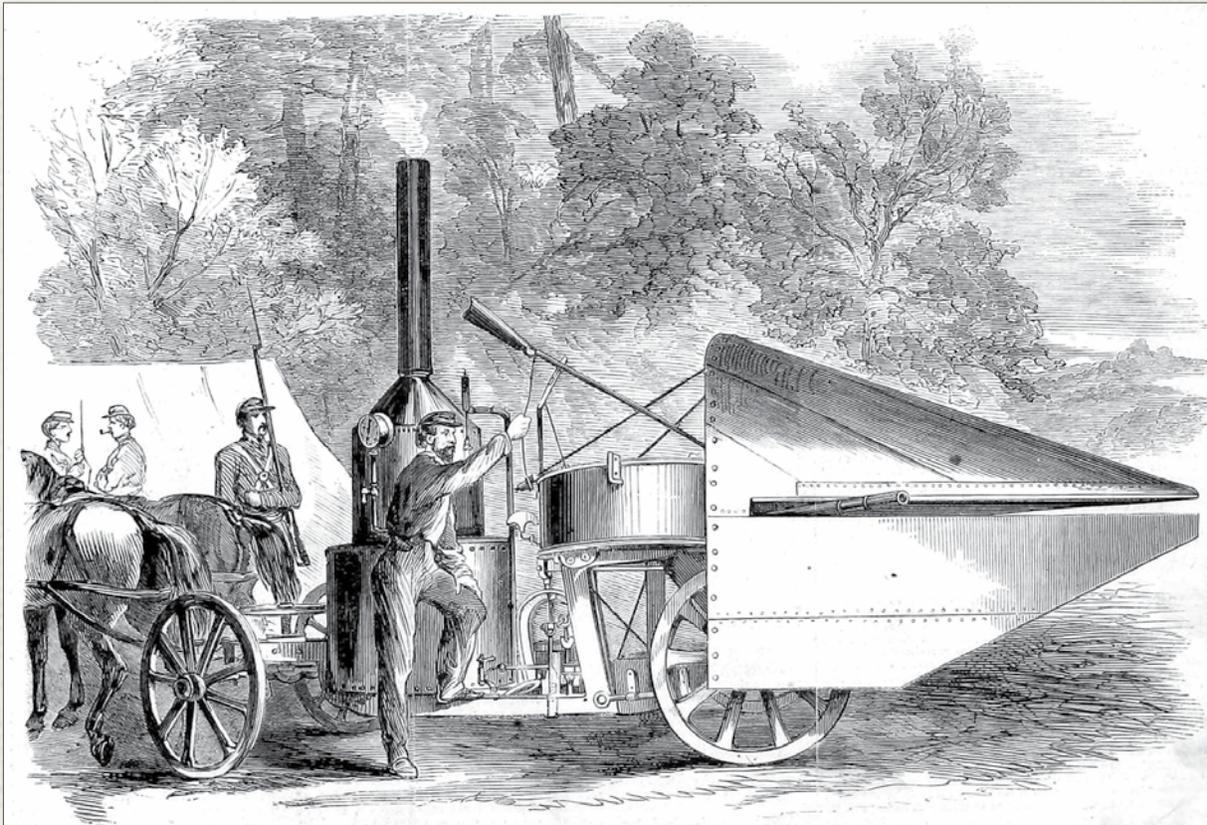
James was required to register for this draft, as was his younger brother, Leon. One month after the United States entered World War I in 1917, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Selective Service Act, requiring men between the ages of 21 and 30 to register for the military.<sup>43</sup> Initially, many Americans balked at the idea of a draft, voicing their continued desire to remain neutral. Determined to “unify sentiment in the nation” in favor of America entering the war, President Wilson organized a massive propaganda effort promoting the need for the Selective Service. Within a few months, 10 million men had signed up for the draft, and before the war's end in November 1918, six million more would add their names. Despite this

## HISTORICAL INSIGHT

## Civil War Advancements in Weaponry

to the Pacific Coast had extended full voting rights to women before 1920. When the 19th Amendment was ratified, only seven states remained where women had no voting rights at all. (Illinois was not among them. On 10 June 1919, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan had been the first states to ratify the amendment.) In the 1920 election, women did not vote as a political bloc, and a *New York Times* report estimated that about one-third of the eligible female voters in the state cast ballots in the presidential election.

James still worked for the railroad in 1920, but in a different capacity; by then, he was a locomotive fireman.<sup>45</sup> He and his family lived in a rented home in Mounds, Pulaski County, Illinois. While this town was larger than the ones near which James had grown up, the population of the entire county was still only about 2,700 at that time.



One inventive weapon used by the Confederacy during the war was the *Winans Steam Gun*, which used steam instead of gunpowder to propel bullets. Only one was ever produced, between 1861 and 1865.

success, thousands of Americans were still opposed to the draft. Nearly 350,000 “dodged” the draft, some with the help of local governments. About 2.8 million draftees served—more than half of the 4.8 million Americans who ultimately fought in World War I.

As the parents of three daughters, James and Lulu also likely followed the issue of women’s suffrage, and major news came in 1919, when the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution was passed:<sup>44</sup>

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*“The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”*

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*“A general charge was made on the rebel works but without effect; we had to withdraw from the field with heavy loss; the 11th lost 60 men in killed and wounded; with the loss of our Col. Neaves. Returned to camp about midnight from where we started.”*

It had taken the better part of a century to get there. To gain this brief addition to the U.S. Constitution in August 1920, women’s suffrage movement leaders had met for 72 years to discuss their goal of gaining full voting rights throughout the United States. There were smaller victories during this quest. Wyoming granted full suffrage to women in 1869, and every state from the Rocky Mountains



*“The most desperate torrents of shells and missiles was thrown in upon them. The jars from the 30 pounders was heavy.”*

Sometime before 1935, James and Lulu moved to the town of Cairo in Alexander County, Illinois—just west of Pulaski County. The town is located at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, but more importantly for the Johnson family, it also was a railroad hub. In the decades since the end of the Civil War, Cairo had become an important steamboat port as farmers and businessmen looked for ways to move their goods south to New Orleans.

However, the Depression hit the town hard in the 1930s, and residents there struggled along with the rest of America.<sup>46</sup> In 1937, Mother Nature dealt another blow. In February, the Ohio River swelled to record heights and flooded cities farther downstream, such as Paducah, Louisville, and Cincinnati. While the water in Cairo rose to within four inches of the river’s barricade, it slowly began to recede, and Cairo was the only city on the lower Ohio River to withstand the flood. It is likely that railroads bore more of the burden of transporting goods while the port cities along the river recovered.

Life was hard in other ways in Cairo, too. The town had the highest murder rate in the state in 1937, and prostitution was a rampant problem. In the early 1940s, 12 serious fires devastated downtown businesses, and many of

## HISTORICAL INSIGHT

## Civil War Medical Treatment

them were never rebuilt. Unemployment was extremely high, which increased the city's crime rate even further.

The Johnson family rented a home at 2209 Pine Street in Cairo, Alexander County, Illinois, in 1940, and by then James was a railroad engineer.<sup>47</sup> The details provided on the census suggest that he had an irregular work schedule. He had worked 56 hours the week before the census was taken, but he also reported that he had been out of work for 36 weeks of the year, working for only 16 weeks. His salary in 1939 was \$640, the equivalent of about \$11,200 in today's currency.

Lulu earned more than James in 1940—an unusual situation for those times. She worked as an assistant supervisor of the National Youth Agency (NYA). She had earned \$960 in 1939, the equivalent of about \$17,000 in modern currency. The NYA was a New Deal agency focusing

on providing work and education for young Americans between the ages of 16 and 25.<sup>48</sup> In 1939, it changed hands from the Works Progress Administration to the Federal Security Agency after the Reorganization Act of 1939 passed. Lulu likely oversaw various programs for the agency, which paid college-age students between \$6 and \$40 per month to complete “work study” projects at their schools. Another 155,000 boys and girls were paid \$10 to \$25 per month to do part-time work that included job training while still living at home. This was welcome relief for young people in America, whose unemployment rate had climbed to 30 percent during the Great Depression. The federal program hoped to keep these young people from further hardship and provide a way for them to contribute to society and build their job skills for future careers.

James and Lulu's youngest daughter, Jerrie, was



Civil War medicine collection

8 years old in 1940, and their household also included their oldest daughter, Pearl, and her husband, Carl Aicher, who was a life insurance salesman. He had earned \$1,300 in 1939, the equivalent of about \$23,000 in modern currency. Carl and Pearl had a 4-year-old son named Ronnie. Lulu's oldest sister, Maud, had moved to Illinois from Brookville, Texas, to live with the Johnson family, and they had a 68-year-old widowed lodger

named Lucy Gaunt, as well. Many families took in boarders in the Depression years to supplement their income.

James was 54 years old when he registered for the World War II draft.<sup>50</sup> He worked for the Illinois Central Railroad's Cairo division then. He was not in danger of being called into active military service. This was a special draft in April 1942 for men between the ages of 45 and 64. The U.S. government had

 *“Gen. Logan blew up Fort Hill at 4 o’clock p.m. from this time until night... hole [sic] columns of our men was cut down in trying to charge the works; the fighting lasted until about 10 o’clock at night. In this time many brave men fell on both sides and was ushered into eternity instantly; from this time up to July 1... constant fighting both night and day.”*

 *“The rebels was glad to come to terms for surrender; about 12 o’clock the white flag was raised; for the first time all hostilities ceased. The flag was taken down in a short time and hostilities begun again; we fought on until about 3 p.m. and the white flag suddenly appeared on Fort Hill. Hostilities immediately ceased to commence no more. All the balance of the evening it appeared like a storm had passed.”*



just entered World War II a few months earlier and wanted to take a complete inventory of manpower resources in the United States. This draft collected information on the industrial capacity and skills of these older men to determine whether they could be used in the war effort.<sup>51</sup>

As World War II raged on across Europe and Asia, Americans at home felt its effects. Shortages of metal, rubber, and food began to take their toll on everyday life.<sup>52</sup> The war effort abroad took precedence over life at home, and items like canned foods were redirected to the military. Transportation of fresh produce suffered because of gasoline and tire rationing, while imported foods were blocked because of shipping restrictions. On 20 January 1942, the Office of Price Administration formalized the rationing system to ensure a more equal distribution of goods. The Johnson family would have had to use one of these ration books. First sugar, then coffee, and finally meat, cheese, fats, canned fish, and milk were all added to the list of limited items. Eight thousand boards across the country.

 *“The entire Rebel Forces surrendered and the Second Gibraltar with all its power was effectually humbled consisting of 32,000 men, 60,000 stand of arms, 200 pieces of artillery and our brave old flag floating in the breeze from the bubble (?) of the courthouse.”*



Ulysses S. Grant

Grant's campaign to take Vicksburg is seen as one of the most brilliant missions<sup>142</sup> he completed during the entire war. His defeat of Pemberton's army at Vicksburg and the Union victory at Port Hudson, Louisiana, that followed five days later gave the Union control of the entire Mississippi River. The Confederacy was divided in half, and the Union could strategically control the flow of weapons, food, and other necessary supplies the South greatly needed. Grant's reputation got a significant boost from the Vicksburg victory, leading ultimately to his appointment as General-in-Chief of the Union armies.

## Final Thoughts

Smith Johnson—or “Smitty,” as she was often called—was born to James Lyman Johnson and Lulu Purnell in Cairo, Illinois, on 16 January 1915.<sup>53</sup> She was a toddler when World War I took place, and by 1920 she lived with her parents and older sister, Pearl, in Mounds, Pulaski County, Illinois.

Growing up in the Midwest meant numerous encounters with severe weather. Marguerite was 10 years old when the deadliest tornado outbreak in U.S. history occurred on 18 March 1925, about 60 miles north of Cairo.<sup>54</sup> Nine tornadoes rampaged across 220 miles of Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana for three and a half hours. With a track almost a mile wide and winds of more than 200 mph, the devastation was monumental. About 700 people were killed, at least 2,000 injured, and 15,000 homes razed to the ground. For those living in the region, the twisters changed their lives physically and emotionally. Mary Crawford, a victim from Illinois, recalled that for years after the storm, when her mother heard the crack of thunder, she would herd them underground.



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