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Fall 2018

# IT'S ABOUT TIME...

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT HOPE ARCHIVES

### First Settlers: Johnson Family

*We are writing about the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of our first four settler families in each newsletter for 2018. Please go back to our Winter, Spring, and Summer 2018 newsletters to read more about the arrivals of the Ashford, Stevens, and Harris families. We will also be continuing this series into 2019 and writing about other early families that arrived in Hope Township/Port Hope in its first decade of settlement.*

After quite a bit of research this past year we have been able to trace the roots of our final first settler family, the Johnsons. Although the story of the Johnsons only briefly touches Port Hope we think you'll find it very interesting.

Lawrence Johnson (1740-c1816), a Philadelphia Loyalist and Quaker<sup>1</sup>, left the United States for Digby, Nova Scotia in 1784 along with his family, comprised of wife Mary, and sons Abraham, Joseph, Nicholas, Thomas, and William. Previous to this immigration, Lawrence- a teamster by trade- was listed as working at the 'Hospital' for the Loyal American Regiment during the Revolutionary War, so we could speculate he was transporting goods or perhaps even the wounded during the War. He also lost some of his horses to the battlefield. At some point during the War he was placed on house arrest for refusing to do military service. His eldest son, Abraham, continued to work as a teamster during the War.

The Johnsons stayed in Nova Scotia for nearly years, leaving around 1792 to immigrate to Newark, Upper Canada with the Harris family, according to some sources (*the Harris family would also come to settle in Smith's Creek, see the Summer 2018 newsletter*). Lawrence's son, Abraham, stayed behind for a time in Digby to sell their land.

The family next travelled to Smith's Creek (Port Hope) in the new Hope Township with the Ashford, Stevens, and Harris families and arrived in.....

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HOURS  
Monday 12:30-4:30PM  
Tuesday to Thursday 9:00-4:30PM  
Friday 12:30-4:30PM  
*We're flexible!*

MANDATE:  
*The Port Hope Archives exists to collect and preserve archival materials which illustrate the growth and development of the Municipality of Port Hope or which pertain in whole or in part to activities within the geographic boundaries of the Municipality of Port Hope.*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:  
Marie Jones, Chair  
Evelyn Conn, Vice-Chair  
Peter Hunt, Treasurer  
Rick Sullivan, Secretary  
Suzanne Camm, Programming  
Bonnie Garrett, Membership

ARCHIVIST:  
Rachel Arnaud

*The Port Hope Archives is a registered charity.  
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**COMMUNITY HISTORY  
HAPPENS HERE!**

June 1793 (see our Winter 2018 newsletter to read about their arrival). They settled on Lot 1 Concession 2 neighboring the Stevens family, however they found that the township did not suit them and decided to leave before applying for Crown Grants. They would end up settling on Yonge Street in York County where Lawrence and his four eldest sons were each granted around 200 acres of land each, and in 1801 his youngest son William was also granted 200 acres. We believe the Johnsons arrived in York County in 1795– Crown Grant records from that year mention that Lawrence, Nicholas, and Thomas were requesting lots on the east side of Yonge Street, and Joseph and Abraham had already cleared 15 acres and built a dwelling on the west side of Yonge Street. By 1798 we also know that the family had built a total of four log cabins and cleared at least ten acres on each lot, a stipulation of the Crown Grant.

The Johnsons would become a well-known, respected, and long-standing family in what we now refer to as the Willowdale area of Toronto, approximately at the intersections of Yonge and Church Streets. In the early 19th century this area was being slowly settled, cleared, and farmed, and the town of York (Toronto) had less than 500 residents in total. The family became heavily involved in the local community with all of the men serving on local court juries, Lawrence working as an Overseer of Highways, son Joseph a Constable of York County, and Abraham Jr. a Justice of the Peace and also the organizer of the first Sons of Temperance Society on Yonge Street. Son Joseph later moved north to become the first settler of Holland Landing. Sons Abraham and Joseph, along with other family members, also fought with William Lyon MacKenzie's rebels in the 1837 Upper Canada Rebellion and were imprisoned for a short time for their role in the conflict.

The family's mark on the Willowdale area still exists to this day. Along with neighbor Jacob Cummer, Lawrence Johnson donated a parcel of land to hold the area's first cemetery and church. He was possibly the first person to be buried in the cemetery, established circa 1816, and many other Johnson family members were also buried there. This small cemetery still exists at Yonge and Church Streets, though Lawrence's marker is now long gone. A local street in the area was also renamed 'Johnson Farm Lane' in recent years after Lawrence and his sons. Also, a historic plaque about the Johnson family can be found on the site of the former York Cottage, a prominent brick home built on the Johnson land by Lawrence's grandson Abraham Jr.

Although the Johnson family spent only a short time in Smith's Creek, their importance as one of our first families weaves them into our early history. We can only imagine what they– and our other Loyalist settlers– saw in their lifetime: the Revolutionary War, followed by a migration with other Loyalists to Nova Scotia, a very long journey to Newark, then to the untamed forests of Hope Township, and finally to the growing town of York.

*<sup>1</sup>– We have found one reference that the Johnson family were Quakers, which was written by a descendant in 1912, but haven't been able to verify this with further research so far. Technically, a Quaker would not have been a Loyalist but they were welcomed to Upper Canada by Lieutenant John Graves Simcoe along with the Loyalists, were sometimes listed as Loyalists on official documents, and even traveled with the Loyalists. Quakers were also given land grants in Upper Canada. If the Johnson's were Quakers it would help to explain parts of their story– such as why Lawrence refused to participate in war and was only reprimanded with house arrest, and why they left the rich land of Smith's Creek for York County less than two years later– pockets of Quakers could be found along Yonge Street and in the nearby areas of King, Whitchurch, East Gwillimbury, and Uxbridge.*

## REPORT FROM THE BOARD

This will be our last newsletter of 2018 and we hope that you have enjoyed the ongoing research and stories of Port Hope's early founding families. We hope to continue with this theme into 2019, as we have had a great deal of positive feedback from you, our members.

We are excited that next year, 2019, will be the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Port Hope Archives and hope to celebrate this milestone with a special event. We'll keep you posted! Last month we welcomed a new volunteer, Hannah LeBlanc who is pursuing a career in Museums and Archives. Hannah has been assisting with the accessioning of items into our database.

The Port Hope Archives Board has had a busy year and we would like to thank you for your continued support through your memberships, donations and volunteer hours.

**Marie**

## ARCHIVIST'S MESSAGE

Historical research is all about making connections. Connecting people, places, and events together to create a larger picture from smaller pieces. Much of the research we do at the Archives involves trying to piece these connections together to enhance our knowledge of our local history.

For example, let's say we receive a donation of an old photograph—a family standing in front of a 2-storey brick house. No information is included with this photograph, except that the donor thinks it might be taken in Port Hope. We determine that it was taken in Port Hope because of notable buildings and landmarks in the photograph. Identifying these buildings and landmarks then leads us to date the photograph to a specific time period since we know when these buildings and landmarks were built or existed. These landmarks also allow us to locate where the photograph was taken. Identifying the location of the house allows us to research the property in the Land Registry, which gives us the names and dates of property owners. We now have a good idea of who the subjects of the photograph might be. We can then search our photograph and collections catalogue for other photographs of materials on the home or the property owners, and turn to our research resources. We now have a wealth of information about the house, street, family, and nearby landmarks.

It takes time, but without putting all of these small pieces together this photograph can't teach us much about our history. This method can be applied to any type of research you're doing— just break it down to what you do know, and note even seemingly insignificant details. Take it step by step and you'll soon find these connections. And, as always, don't forget to visit the Archives to see how we might be able to help you or advise you.

**Rachel**

## NEW TO THE PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION



**PHA#** 2008-28-7-6806

**Title:** 1909 Town League Champions

**Description:** Team portrait of the 1909 Port Hope Town League Hockey Champions, "Royal Artillery".

**L-R:** K. Johns, J. Brown, J. Valencourt, J.A. Brown, J. Record, W. Paul, G. McMillan, C. Perry, C. Davis, C. Perry, P. Nixon

## RECENT DONATION HIGHLIGHTS

**2018.6**– Affidavit written by Josiah Beers in 1847 detailing the location of an original surveying post from the first township survey in 1794 that had existed on Con 2 Lot 18. Beers' had noticed the post when he first arrived in Hope Township in 1808.

**2018.21**- Attendance and logbook of the Port Hope Girl Guides by leader Lillian Hamly, 1921-1924

**2018.22**- 'Campbell's New Language Lessons' book used and signed by Pine Grove School student Samuel Eastcott in 1884

**2018.23**– Portrait of Robina Winnifred Haskill and Mary Grace Haskill c1895

**2018.26**– Photographs and written history of 13 King Street, Port Hope

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**25th Anniversary of Port Hope Archives in 2019**

**Port Hope Archives' Annual General Meeting: January 2019** (*we will be sending out the AGM invitation and packages in January*)

## FIND US ONLINE!

Website: [www.porthopearchives.com](http://www.porthopearchives.com)

Flickr: [www.flickr.com/porthopearchives](http://www.flickr.com/porthopearchives)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PHArchives](http://www.facebook.com/PHArchives)

Archeion: [www.archeion.ca/port-hope-archives](http://www.archeion.ca/port-hope-archives)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/PHArchives>

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/porthopearchives/](http://www.instagram.com/porthopearchives/)

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