

FRANK JOHNSON, KNOWN AS "WILD HORSE JOHNSON" AND OTHER OLD SETTLERS

Hamilton County, Kansas

Written by Ruth Ausbun

Consultant: Mrs. Johnson, daughter-in-law of Wild Horse Johnson

** Additional information added about certain people mentioned in this story*

Mr. Frank Johnson*, who was known as "Wild Horse Johnson", lives near Kendall, Hamilton County, Kansas with his son. They live three miles west of Kendall on Highway 50 on the south side of the road in a stone house that was built in 1889. Mr. Johnson took up a claim in Kearny County and improved "it-up" in Hamilton County. This was before the lines had been permanently established. The county lines were changed which put Kendall on the Hamilton and Kearny County lines.

Mr. Johnson's wife (*Margaret*) came from Illinois (*born in Ohio*) to the buffalo range in 1886. Her parents took a claim in Kearney County, later moving to Kendall about the year 1900. Their occupation had been that of raising horses, long-horned cattle, sheep, and some wheat. Before she died in 1930, Mrs. Johnson explained many things about living in Hamilton County. She said that they had always managed to live through the droughts and depressions fairly well. She said that they used to get in a spring wagon and follow the cow trails to one of the neighbor's homes, but later did not have the time to spare.

Some people of today have the idea that the early settlers were ignorant and lived in such perilous times that they had no time for pleasure and recreation, but Mrs. Johnson insisted that they had better times then, than they had later. She seemed to like the old-fashioned way of living. In her younger years, there were very few graded roads if any, in that section of the country.

The primary sport was riding horseback. All of the ladies could ride with splendor. They wore long riding skirts, and all the saddles then were sided saddles. Several years ago the women thought that they were lucky if they got a new dress once a year. They didn't live on ice cream and cake either. They hardly knew what such a thing was... but they had plenty to eat and enjoyed themselves.

Mr. Johnson first came to the Southwest Kansas area in about 1846 and there were herds of buffalo and antelope then. You would find Mr. Johnson hunting a lot of the time. He had always lived here except for one year when he spent time in Oregon and Washington. Soon the Santa Fe Railroad was put in and Kendall, the county seat of Hamilton County, became a thriving little town. It was about a half mile south of Highway 50. The graveyard was built on top of the hill which led down to Kendall. In the early years, the town extended to the top of the hill and graveyard. Sidewalks were extended up the hill and several business buildings were located there. There used to be a 50-room hotel building, a big

hall, and a courthouse. South of the track there was a hardware store and several other business buildings as well as several dwelling houses. During the time Kendall was first settled, six different Johnson families were living there.

There were many wild horses in this part of the country and Mr. Johnson would chase them in a circle, the way wild horses actually ran. He would chase them to the Eastern part of the country just so he could sell them. He used field glasses to keep the horses in sight and he would keep them moving all the time so they wouldn't stop to sleep. He always had an extra horse for himself which helped to keep the wild horses moving. He continued to have his spurs and leather chaps that he used back then. The spurs are inlaid with solid silver and if rubbed would shine brightly.

Wild horse Johnson had several interesting experiences with the Indians on his hunting trips, but the majority of the Indians were friendly. One time he was camping in a low spot near Horse Creek which is south of Coolidge. He was on his horse, California Bill. Someone had scalped a tiny baby belonging to one of the Indians and a group of them were looking for the man who did it. Wild Horse Johnson had built his fire and was starting to fix his breakfast when the Indians were upon him. They were the Sioux Tribe and were going to scalp him whether or not they thought he was the man who had killed their baby. Johnson spoke a language that was a mixture of all the Indian languages and was known to all of them. He did a lot of talking and fixed their breakfast as he had heard an Indian's weakest spot was his stomach. In this way, he felt he could prove to the Indians his innocence and make friends with them.

At another time when he was hunting buffalo and antelope, a group of Indians got away from a reservation and were on the warpath. They were looking for buffalo and antelope for meat. They were also looking for wild horses. But being on California Bill, Mr. Johnson again managed to escape the Indians from harming him.

Continuing with other old settlers...

At Fort Aubrey, which is four miles east of Syracuse on Highway 50 and one mile south, there were several Indian graves where they had fought and were slain.

Two titled Englishmen came here to learn "ranching". They had heard about tarantulas here and how dangerous they were; so when they first landed here, they saw a turtle. They thought it could be a tarantula so they armed themselves with heavy gear so they could kill the turtle. The old settlers here thought this was very funny.

There was quite a lot of trapping in this part of the country. Badgers, coyotes, swift foxes, etc. were numerous. The prairie used to be covered with snakes. One old timer tells the story about going to town one day. He was in his wagon and he stopped in the sand hills to adjust the harness on his horses. As he turned to go to the horses, he saw a snake. He then reached for a post in the wagon so he could kill the snake, but when he looked around, he could see that the prairie was "alive with many snakes". He then jumped into his wagon and didn't look back until he got to town.

There were a lot of cowboys then. Dressed in their chaps and spurs, always armed with three or four sharpshooters; they would gather in the town. Bill Ramsey was one of the cowboys in those days. Very often the cowboys would go to town and gang up in a certain building and shoot out window lights. Mr. Williams, a short heavy little man, owned a store that had the local post office at the back of the store room. Bill Ramsey and about seven other cowboys got to acting crazy and went into Mr. Williams' store. They started to shoot out the window lights. Mr. Williams got an old sawed-off shotgun and started to shoot the cowboys. He ran every one of them out of the store and was never bothered by them again. Mrs. Johnson said the last time she saw Mr. Williams he was a conductor of a train near Kansas City.

Mr. Adney* came from Missouri way back in the days when people were not supposed to know anything. He had a family of five children and according to Mrs. Johnson, he was highly educated. The last time she remembered seeing Mr. Adney, he was hauling barrels of water in a wagon to Kendall on the road which was later named Highway 50. The wagon was pulled by a wild mule and a buckskin mule.

Dr. Spencer was an old gentleman who was very seldom ever sober. He ran an old drugstore here. A few years later, after he had died, they went to tear down the building where the drug store had been. As they were tearing the floor apart, they came to a hole in the ground. There was a five-gallon crock filled with every kind of snake one could think of. The crock also had some alcohol in it and the snakes had hibernated in it. Many people say that one day the doctor drank the alcohol that was on the snakes. There was a tramp riding a freight train one day. The tramp hit his leg up against the side of a water tank and it cut off part of his leg. Dr. Spencer wasn't sober as usual and didn't use any kind of antiseptic, but did manage to clean up the remaining part of the leg and was able to sew it up. The tramp's leg was scarcely ever sore.

Charles E. Nations, Frank Kelley, and Frank Hill founded Kendall. Nations and Hill were also the first lawyers of Kendall. They had many interesting experiences while hunting buffalo and were once caught out in the blizzard of 1886 while hunting for buffalo bones. (The bones were later sold for the use of purifying sugar.) They were in a wagon during the blizzard. The storm became so bad, they had to take the wagon bed off and turn it upside down on the ground. They crawled under it and spent two days and one night under the wagon. They said being cold and hungry wasn't as hard as having to lay on the ground under the wagon.

At another time, Hill and Nations were also hunting south of Lakin. They left one evening and as they came back the next night, a big hole had opened up into the ground. It was full of water that whirled around like a continuous whirlpool. When cattle would get into it they would be caught up in the water and it would whirl them around and suck them down. This hole eventually filled up, and at present Russell Beaty* of Lakin has a windmill over it in his pasture.

Some areas had so many rattlesnakes that it was very dangerous to step in places that were

covered with grass or weeds. An elderly lady tells about riding on her horse when she was a young lady. She had on a long riding skirt and was riding side-saddle. A snake fastened itself to the bottom of her skirt and of course, it wouldn't let loose. She rode back to the house as hard as the horse could run with the snake still hanging on, which goes to show just how numerous and dangerous snakes were at that time.

Additional Information

FRANK JOHNSON

"Wild Horse Johnson"

FRANKLIN PIERCE JOHNSON, son of Charles Christopher Johnston (1807-1864) and Mary Gilson (1813-1864), was born on 25 Jan 1853 in Ohio. He married **MARGARET JANE HULL**, daughter of Richard Hull (1827-1864) and Mary Mick (1837-1874), on 30 Jun 1884 in Columbiana County, Ohio. Margaret was born on 31 Mar 1861 in Columbiana County, Ohio. She passed away on 4 Jan 1930 in Kendall, Hamilton County, Kansas. Franklin died there in 1940. They were buried at the Kendall Cemetery.

Children from their marriage were:

NELLIE JOHNSON was born and died in 1885.

CHARLES "CHARLIE" CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON was born on 12 Apr 1886 in Kendall, Hamilton County, Kansas, and died on 6 Oct 1960. He was married to Elizabeth Grosz on 19 Apr 1918 in Garden City, Finney County, Kansas. She was born in 1895 and died in 1971. They were buried at the Valley View Cemetery in Garden City, Finney County, Kansas. Charles and Elizabeth had three children: Harry Johnson, Helen Johnson and John Eugene Johnson.

MINNIE PEARL JOHNSON was born on 23 Jun 1889 in Kendall, Hamilton County, Kansas. She was married to Lewis Harmond Slate on 9 Jul 1909 in Syracuse, Hamilton County, Kansas. Lewis was born on 20 May 1878 in Clinton, DeWitt County, Illinois. He died on 15 Sep 1946 in Kearny County, Kansas. Minnie passed away on 18 Apr 1974 in Yates Center, Woodson County, Kansas. They were buried at the Kendall Cemetery in Kendall, Hamilton County, Kansas. Five children were born in their marriage: Lillian Adeline Slate (1912-1989), Hallie Margaret Slate (1915-2002), Harmond F. Slate (1918-1975), Harold L. Slate (1921-1975), and Leland Walter Slate (1924-2011).

HUGH WASHINGTON JOHNSON (6 Sep 1891-9 Nov 1905).

ELMER HARRY JOHNSON was born on 15 Apr 1894 in Kansas. In 1920, he married Estel L. Blair, daughter of Montgomery Blair and Eva Catherine Bradley. Estel was born on 25 Jun 1899 in St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri, and died on 28 Jun 1980 in Orange County, California. Elmer died on 7 May 1986 in Los Angeles County, California. They were buried at Olive Lawn Memorial Park in

LaMirada, Los Angeles County, California. Elmer and Estel had three known children: Adelma Louise Johnson (1921-2020), Vernon Wesley Johnson (1923-1989), and George Byron Johnson (1924-2020).

FRANCES MARIE JOHNSON (10 Jul 1896-6 Feb 1907)

MARY ELSIE JOHNSON was born in about 1903.

FLORENCE OPAL JOHNSON was born on 10 Oct 1906 in Kendall, Hamilton County, Kansas. She married Murrell Emmett Pugh, son of George A. Pugh and Emma Lister. Murrell was born on 8 Oct 1898 in Erie, Neosho County, Kansas. He died on 4 Oct 1981 in La Junta, Otero County, Colorado. Florence passed away there on 1 Nov 2007. They were buried at the Fairview Cemetery in La Junta. Murrell and Florence had one daughter, Betty Lou (Pugh) Osborne (1931-2009).

Additional Information

MR. ADNEY



Henry Harrison Adney

HENRY HARRISON ADNEY, son of Jonathan Adney (1799-1866) and Electa Glenn (1811-1868), was born on 11 Jan 1841 in Vinton Gallia County, Ohio. An obituary written at the time of his death reveals he grew up on his father's farm, receiving his education at Ewington Academy in Gallia County, Ohio. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he was active in the organization of the 36th Ohio Infantry at Marietta, becoming the first Lieutenant of one of its companies. He remained with this regiment during the entire period of the war. His experiences were many and very extensive.

After the declaration of peace, Mr. Adney returned to his home in Ohio. He was then married to

ELIZABETH JANE BLAZER, daughter of Henry Blazer (1821-1910) and Rebecca Ann Jackson (1821-1886), on 29 Sep 1867 in Gallia County, Ohio. Elizabeth was born on 15 Jan 1850 in Green Township, Gallia County, Ohio.

Soon after they were married, Henry and Elizabeth moved to Missouri, and by 1880, they had moved on to Pueblo, Colorado. By the year 1900, they had moved to Kendall, Hamilton County, Kansas. Elizabeth died on 26 Feb 1914 while visiting their son and daughter-in-law in San Bernardino, California. She was buried at the Hillside Memorial Park Cemetery in Redlands, San Bernardino County, California. Henry died in January of 1920 in Leavenworth County, Kansas. He was buried at the Forest Hill Cemetery in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

Henry and Elizabeth Adney had five children: ADA IRENE ADNEY (1869-1923), CLARENCE GLEN ADNEY (1870-1964), CLEMENTINE ADNEY (1873-1952), ROBERT J. ADNEY (1875-1902), and ALBERT BLAZER ADNEY (1877-1918).

Additional Information
RUSSELL BEATY

*Many thanks to Gary and Anita Morgan for the photographs of
Russell Beaty and Anna May (Towler) Beaty*



RUSSELL TROTTER "R. T." BEATY



ANNA "MAY" TOWLER BEATY

RUSSELL TROTTER “R. T.” BEATY, son of Alvin Rogers Beaty (1850-1926) and Victoria Trotter (1856-1910), was born on 13 Jan 1877 in Carrollton, Carroll County, Missouri. In 1885, the family moved to the Hamilton County, Kansas area.

Russell married **ANNA “MAY” TOWLER**, daughter of Edward Towler (1851-1935) and Emogene Satterlee (1859-1938) on 24 Feb 1904 in Kearny County, Kansas. Anna May was born on 10 Aug 1882 in Vandalia, Audrain County, Missouri.

To this union, four children were born... three girls, **IDA (BEATY) MCKINNEY (1904-1990)**, **ETNAH (BEATY) HOFFMAN (1906-1974)**, and **VICTORIA (BEATY) OSBORN (1908-1978)**, and one son **RUSSEL T. BEATY (1913-1998)**. They lived in Stevens County, Kansas for a while, and in 1913, they moved to Kearny County, Kansas where they built their home just south of Lakin.

Mr. Beaty was a prominent landowner, rancher, stockman, and banker of the community and surrounding areas. He was a director of the Lakin State Bank and after his father died in 1926, Russell Beaty became the President of the Valley State Bank of Syracuse. He continued as President until he died in 1937, at which time, his wife, Anna May continued as President for two years.

Mr. Beaty passed away on 28 Sep 1937 from a heart attack in Lakin, Kansas. Anna May died on 27 Jan 1955 in Garden City, Finney County, Kansas. Both were laid to rest in the family Mausoleum at the Lakin Cemetery.