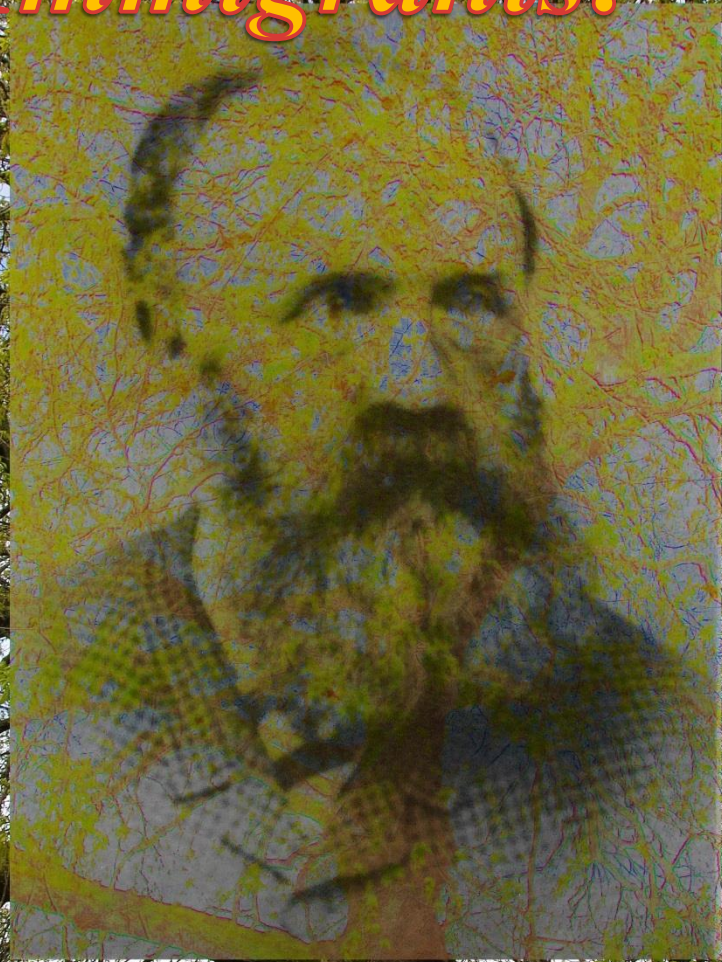


*The Restless Danish  
Immigrants:*



*The  
Johnson Family*

Researched and Written by Anthony W. Buirchell



# Preface

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My partner Deborah Joy Johnson was my inspiration for this book. She was keen to know about her ancestors and when we found a letter from Aunty Rita (one of the original Daintree 10 and a twin) who mentioned "...we have Irish, English, Scottish, Danes what a mixture..." the seed was sown. So who were these Johnsons and how did they end up in Australia?

After a lot of research mainly through Ancestry.com and Trove the pieces of the jigsaw started to come together. Ambrose Johnson and his family made their way from Denmark via the USA to land on the shores of Hobson Bay (Melbourne) in 1855. Ambrose was a mining surveyor and spent a good deal of time in Daylesford before moving north to try farming. His son Fritz Borregard took up land around Murwillumbah. Fritz's son Burton Borregard started in Tyalgum as a farm labourer and then trekked to the Daintree with his wife Merion and children. Here he became a successful dairy farmer and his children formed the Daintree 10 in this book.

We became so excited by our research that we travelled across the country from Perth to Brisbane and visited the many places Fritz and Burton lived in. Later we spent three glorious days in Daylesford, Victoria travelling to the places Ambrose frequented. What inspirational journeys.

Along the way we met several people who went out of their way to make us welcome and help us with our research. We thank the Cairn's Historical Society; Daylesford Historical Society; Daintree Primary School and the following individuals Heather Mutimer from the Daylesford Historical Society, Burt Johnson for giving us all his father's photos from the Daintree and Marjorie Johnson for her information and stories.

I have tried to cross reference all material and attempted to acknowledge where work has been used from other sources.

The book has been a labour of love for the Johnson clan and I hope they learn as much as we have about their Johnson ancestors and cherish the moments as they read about the lives of these remarkable relations.

Anthony W. Buirchell



Heather Mutimer from the Daylesford Historical Society assists Deborah Johnson with researching old newspapers. Photo by A. W. Buirchell

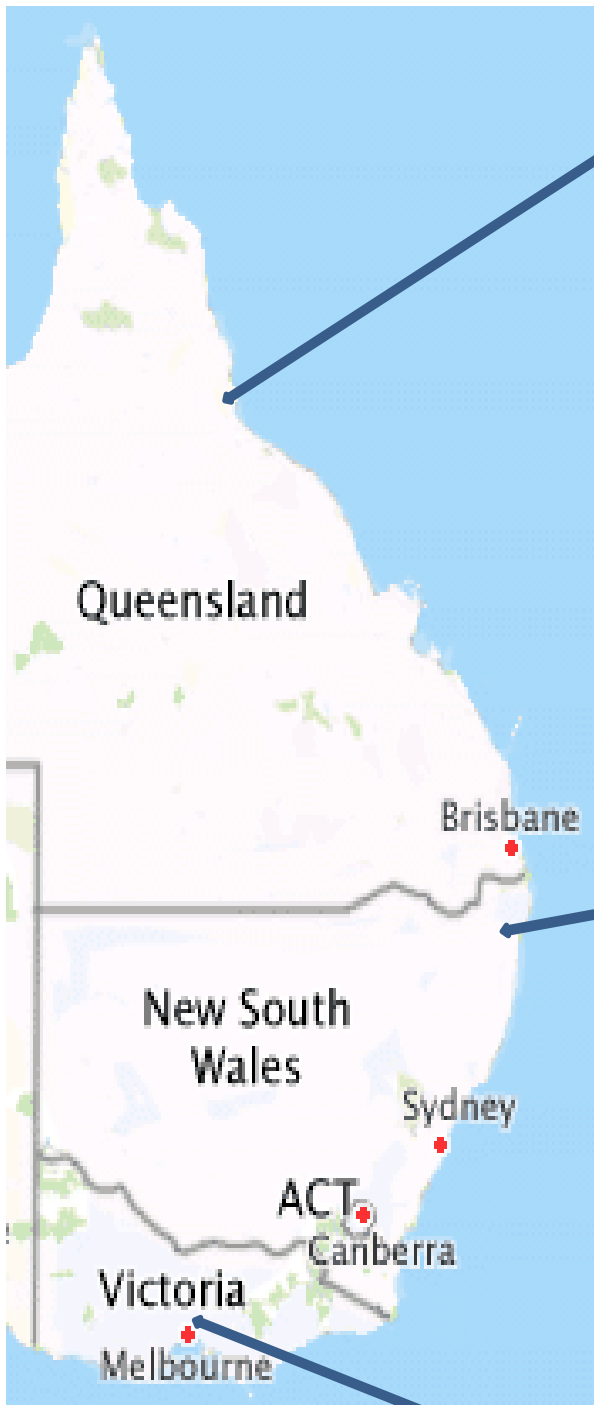
*The Restless Danish Immigrants*  
*the*  
*Johnson Family*

*Chapter 1 Ambrose Johnson: Mining Surveyor 1820 – 1895*

*Chapter 2 Fritz Borregard Johnson: Farmer 1858 – 1941*

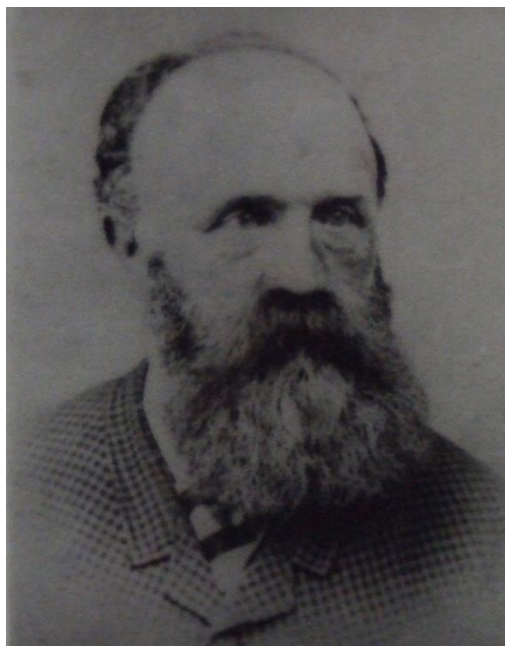
*Chapter 3 Burton Borregard Johnson: Farmer 1892 - 1967*

**Researched and Written by Anthony W.  
Buirchell**



Ambrose, Fritz and Burton travelled extensively across Victoria, NSW and Queensland. Ambrose landed in Melbourne, went to Daylesford, Warregah River, Grafton, Sunny Corner and Bathurst as a mining surveyor. Fritz farmed around Murwillumbah at Dunbible. Burton, born in Lithgow, laboured around Tyalgum, trekked to Daintree with his wife, Merion and children. Burton farmed in at least 10 different locations in Queensland, then semi-retired to Brisbane, Tweed Heads and finally Nambour.

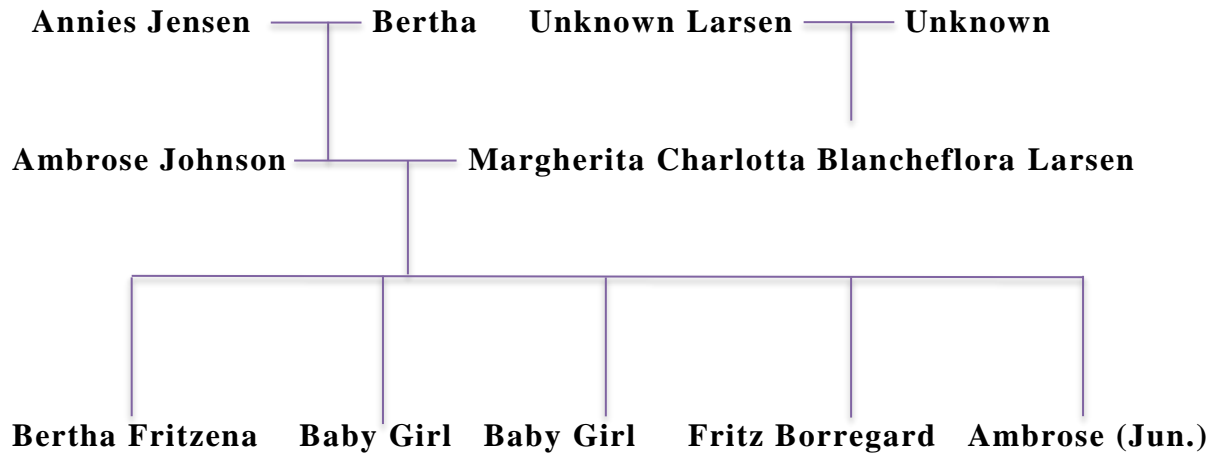
## Chapter 1



Ambrose Johnson the first "Aussie" Johnson.  
Courtesy Daylesford Historical Society.

# *Ambrose Johnson: Mining Surveyor 1820 – 1895*

## Ambrose Johnson - Pedigree



**A**mbrose was born in Haarlem, Netherlands in the Kingdom of Denmark in 1820. His father was Annies and his mother Bertha. Little is known of his parents although it does say in Ambrose’s Death Certificate that his father was a farmer.

Ambrose was well educated in Holland and was fluent in English, Danish and German. He also has a beautiful copperplate writing style as seen in the Memorial for Naturalisation that he wrote (see over). From about 1838 he gained qualifications as a Mining Surveyor (Engineer in today’s definition). He met and married Margherita on the 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1847 in Haarlem Holland.

Margherita Charlotta Blancheflora Larsen (the spellings vary in the documents encountered and the surname Garson appears) was born in Denmark in 1823. She had 5 children but two died possibly at birth. The three surviving children were Bertha 1848 – 1921, Fritz Borregard 1858 – 1941 and Ambrose (Junior) 1860 - 1869. When the other two females were born we don’t have any evidence. We do know of their existence as it was stated on Margherita’s Death Certificate.

Ambrose was somewhat of a restless man and went seeking his fortune here and there. In 1859 Ambrose was eager to become a naturalised Australian and petitioned the Governor of Victoria and it is in this document we find out what he and the family were doing from 1851 to 1859. (See following pages for Certificate)

Four of his fellow miners, for he had immigrated to Australia to seek his fortune on the Jim Crow Diggings near Hepburn in Victoria, urged him to seek his naturalisation and thereby becoming a “Fair Dinkum Aussie”. He wrote the document himself in the way of the time and had it witnessed. It must have had the desired effect because the Governor of Victoria granted the citizenship. Furthermore, Ambrose soon took on more important roles in the new colony.

1872

So His Excellency Sir Henry, <sup>1872</sup>  
Barthly Knight Commander of the  
most Honorable Order of the Bath  
Captain General and Governor in  
Chief of the Colony of Victoria and  
Vice Admiral of the same &c &c &c

The Memorial of Ambrose  
Johnson of the Old Race Land  
Melburn in the County of  
Ballot in the Colony of Victoria  
Mining Surveyor

Respectfully Sheweth

First — That your Memorialist is a Native  
of Naeshow Lolland in the Kingdom of Denmark and  
was educated for the profession of a Surveyor

Second — That your Memorialist is thirty six  
year years of age and is a married man with two  
children

Third — That your Memorialist left Denmark  
in the year one thousand eight hundred and fifty one  
and proceeded to the United States of America, where he  
took up his residence in the State of Georgia and carried  
on business as a Surveyor in that State until the month  
of February one thousand eight hundred and fifty five —

Fourth — That in the said month of February  
one thousand eight hundred and fifty five your said  
Memorialist proceeded to New York, and in the same  
month sailed from thence in the American Ship "Dart"  
for the Port of Melbourne

Fifth — That your Memorialist arrived in  
Melbourne about the end of June or the beginning of  
July in the same year, and almost immediately proceeded  
to the Jan Bow Diggings in the District of Hepburn, where  
he has ever since resided following the occupation of a  
Miner, until the month of August last when your said  
Memorialist was appointed Mining Surveyor for the  
Hepburn District

Sixth — That your Memorialist is desirous of  
settling in the said Colony of Victoria and of purchasing  
and holding real estate in the said Colony and that  
on these grounds your Memorialist is desirous of availing  
himself of the privileges granted to aliens by the Act of



The Governor and Legislative Council of New South Wales  
Victoria, number thirty nine.

That your Memorialist therefore respectfully  
requests that your Excellency may be pleased to grant to  
your Memorialist a Certificate under the provisions of the  
said Act conferring upon your Memorialist the privileges  
of a natural born British subject with such restrictions  
as to your Excellency may seem meet.

And your Memorialist, as in duty  
bound will ever pray &c.

Walter Johnson  
7th day of February 1859.

We the undersigned persons being respectively  
resident in or near to the Old Race Course  
Melbourn in the County of Talbot in the Colony of  
Victoria having read the foregoing Memorial of Walter  
Johnson do hereby certify that we believe him to be  
a person of good character and that the statements  
contained in his Memorial are true so far as we  
know or believe and that we have known him for  
upwards of thirty years.

Name	Residence	Occupation
John Burrows	Old Race Course	Store Keeper
Alfred M. Donalds	Old Race Course	Miner
Nepolar A. Bartlett	Old Race Course	Miner
William Dixon	Old Race Course	Miner
Geo. H. Dyer	Old Race Course	Storekeeper

Dated the seventh day of February One  
Thousand eight hundred and fifty nine.

He began work for the state of Victoria as a Mining Surveyor in August 1858 and this would have added weight to his Naturalisation application.

His family would have automatically been considered as part of the Naturalisation request and no doubt Margherita may have let out a long sigh knowing that they would not only own land and a house but she and her family would be staying in one spot for the foreseeable future.

Ambrose was a restless man who wanted to strike it rich somewhere. In 1851 he packed his wife and daughter up in Holland and set sail across the Atlantic Ocean headed for the goldfields of Georgia in the USA. Here he got a job as a mining surveyor and for 4 years stuck it out.

In February, 1855 he packed the family up again and headed for New York. This was to be his embarkation point as he had obviously heard of the Victorian gold rushes and the richness of these fields.

Still in February but many days later he brought tickets on the American ship the TARTAR. He was bound for the Port of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. More specifically he was out to fossick for the rich gold on the Jim Crow Diggings in the district of Hepburn. The family arrived in Melbourne sometime in June/July 1855.

Even though he was a fully qualified and experienced mining surveyor he chose to be a miner. How successful he was we will never know. We do know that he was ambitious and had the personality to get people to believe in him. Each of the witnesses to the Naturalisation Request indicated they had known him for three years and readily certified he was of good character. The request is dated 7<sup>th</sup> of February 1859.

Family life would have been interesting for Margherita and Bertha out in Australia. Initially they would have lived on the mining claim in a rough wooden lean to. It would have been a far cry from what they would have been used to in their previous locations. After the appointment of Ambrose as a mining surveyor the Johnsons moved to a property and a house on Shepherds' Flat just a few miles from Hepburn.



The Racecourse area in Hepburn where Ambrose first went after arriving in Australia. Photo by D. J. Johnson



Shepherds' Flat near Hepburn where Fritz and Ambrose (Jun) were born. Photo by D. J. Johnson

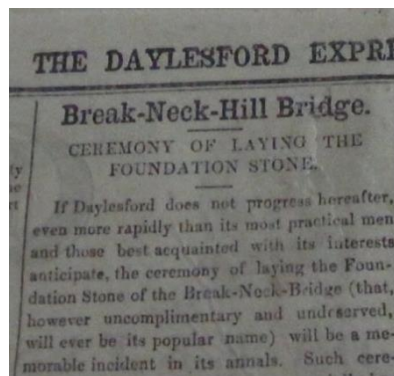
In the meantime Margherita became pregnant some time in 1857. She had already had Bertha Fritzena born in 1848 and lost two other girls stillborn.

A son, Fritz Borregard(e) was born in 1858 at Shepherd's Flat. The Borregard(e) appears to come from a district or town in Haarlem Holland, where Ambrose grew up. The Birth Certificate is a complete mess and shows that the Johnson's version of English is not understood by the registrar. It is possible that Margherita was dealing with this registration at the time. The surname is given as JENSEN and mother as Fluer, Blanche. Possibly a language problem that caused the Registrar to spell as phonetically as possible! The Fritz Borregard(e) christian names are as used throughout the boy's life. There is no consistency in the spelling with the final e sometimes on, often not.

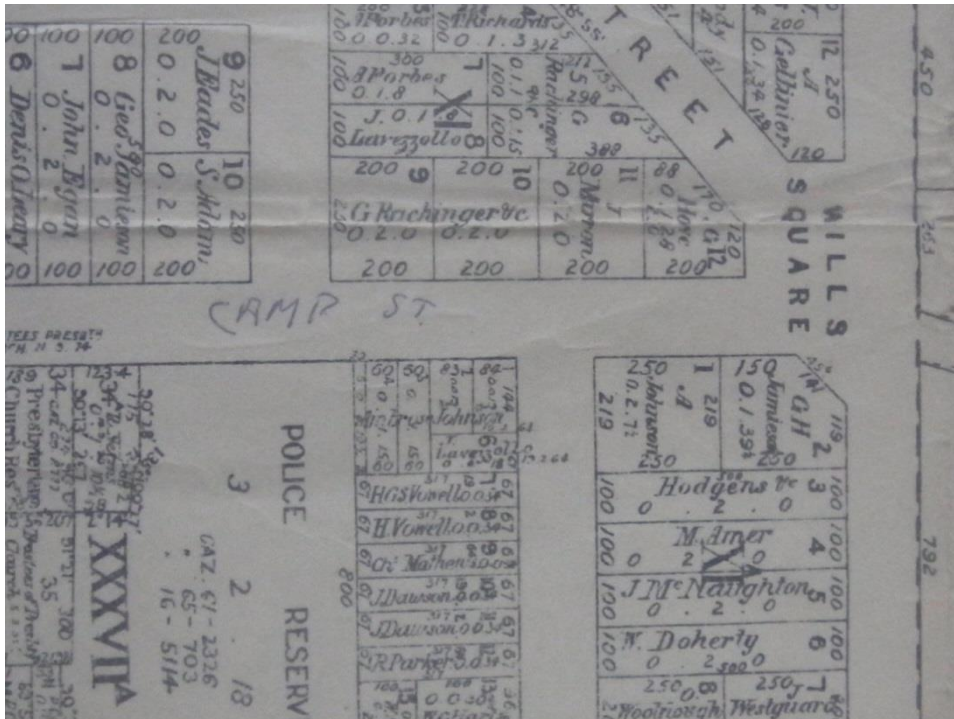
In 1859 Margherita again fell pregnant and she had Ambrose (Junior). He came into the world on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1860 at Shepherd's Flat. Margherita was 37 years old.

Ambrose was by now in full swing as a mining surveyor for the District of Hepburn. He travelled from Shepherd's Flat into Hepburn then visited all the mines and the diggings in his jurisdiction. He probably did this by horse as the terrain was steep and rocky being full of holes and overburden. There was also a lot of sluice mining occurring especially by the chinese and so water would have flowed in all directions. As the years past the mines became deeper and companies were formed to mine using machinery.

Our first news of Ambrose Johnson being involved in the civic life of the Victoria was found in an article in the Daylesford Express newspaper titled January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1861: "Opening of Breakneck Hill Bridge". The road from Shepherd's Flat into Hepburn Springs had a notorious crossing over a creek. Either side was flanked by high, steep banks and the road formed an S bend. There was many an accident over this crossing so to improve conditions the Yandoit and Frankland Road Boards had a bridge designed by Ambrose Johnson built over the crossing.



"On January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1861 the Foundation stone was laid by Francis Doveton. Those present from the Yandoit and Frankland Road Boards included Ambrose Johnson, Surveyor; William George Hart, Secretary; and William Galt, Contractor. Mr Doveton was presented with a silver trowel and he used this to ... "spread the mortar with it beneath the stone, which was by now under the superintendence of Mr Galt, lowered to its bed with musical honors. Mr Doveton then applied the mallet, square and plumb, and subsequently declared the stone to be well and truly laid. To consummate the good work, oil and wine was poured upon the stone, and corn scattered upon it, as emblems of peace, joy and plenty."



Ambrose Johnson owned land on both sides of Hill Street where it intersected with Camp Street. His name can be seen written across the holdings.  
 Courtesy Daylesford Historical Society

Other evidence showed he was keen to buy land and become involved in local business. He bought a quartz crusher located between Italian Hill and Daylesford. As money came in from his job he purchased land in Camp Street on both corners of Hill Street. His name is written over these blocks in early maps of the township of Daylesford. Here he built a large brick residence with stables and a servants' outbuilding.

As the mining surveyor he was required to make monthly reports on the mines, the miners and the activities taking place. His monthly reports were published in the local newspaper along with the reports of all the other mining surveyors. A few samples will give the idea of his work.

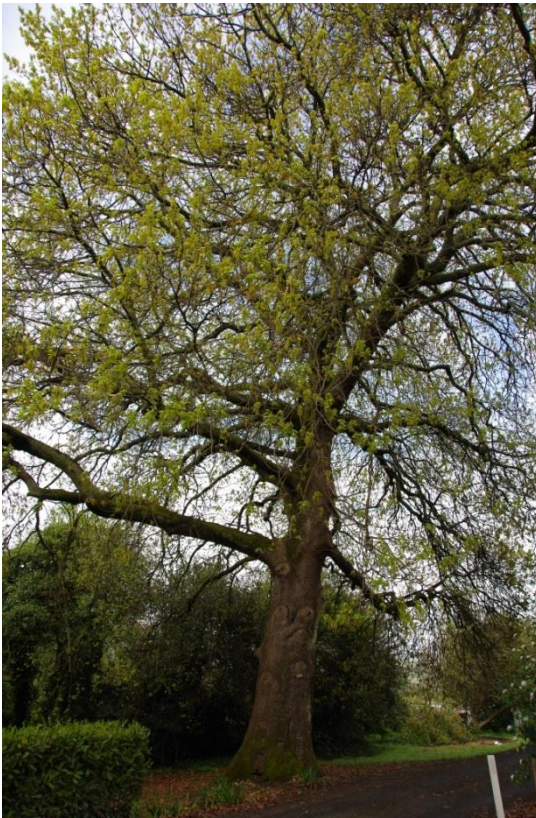
The Argus Monday 11 February 1861, Mining Surveyors' Reports for February 1861:

“Hepburn Division - (A. Johnson, surveyor). Population – Alluvial miners, 2640; quartz do., 490. The number of the mining population has not undergone any visible change during the month past, a few rushes in the vicinity of gold workings being all that has taken place. No increase has taken place in steam power, but a number of claims are being prospected, and in several instances parties are in treaty for engines. Mining matters throughout the division have, during the month, been slowly but steadily progressing, and it is doubtful if any goldfield offers greater inducement to the miner. There has been marked change in that branch of industry. Yandoit has not been quite as lively as usual. There has been a small rush to Butterfly Gulley.”

Ambrose was a man who liked to move things along and was searching ways to improve how systems operated. The mining reports were written up and sent to the Mining Minister at the end of every month. The Minister would peruse these and then send them on to local newspapers. Ambrose was of the opinion that the double handling was unnecessary and costly. In attempting to change this set up he sent his January 1862 report (see below) to the Daylesford Express on the 8<sup>th</sup> February as well as his usual mailing to the government. The paper was in praise of such a move but the government was not so complementary. The report in question is below:

The Argus Friday 28 March 1862 (from Trove):

“Mining Surveyors’ Reports for January 1862, Hepburn Division - (A. Johnson, surveyor) Mining population – Europeans 1890; Chinese 850. Of these there are 2500 alluvial miners and 240 quartz miners. Steam engine for alluvial mining 3 of 34 horse power, for quartz mining 14 of 174 horse power. Number of distinct auriferous quartz reefs 69. 1585 tons 10 cwt of quartz yielded 949 ozs 2 dwt, 4 gr of gold. In both descriptions of mining matters have been rather brisk, and the amount of gold produced very satisfactory.”



The English Oak planted by Ambrose Johnson in 1862 to commemorate the wedding of Prince of Wales and Danish Princess Alexandra.  
Photo by D. J. Johnson

Ambrose was always seeking ways to show his Danish background and how proud he was of Denmark. One such occasion occurred in May 1863 when he organised and led a procession to celebrate Princess Alexandra of Denmark’s marriage to the Prince of Wales. Peter Miller, the Municipal Chairman and Ambrose marched along the streets of Daylesford carrying an Oak tree each. Ambrose carried his for his beloved Princess and Peter Miller for the Prince of Wales. His wife, Margherita and the three children, Bertha, Fritz and Ambrose (Junior) would also have been involved. They planted the oaks in what was to become the Wombat Hill Botanical Gardens.

After the parade and planting, a bonfire was lit of 1000 tons of wood and was considered, by the proud people of Daylesford, to be the biggest bonfire in Victoria to celebrate the Royal Marriage of the future King Edward 7<sup>th</sup>. To top the celebration a barbecue was held for all who had joined in.

One of the oaks remain among the huge collection of trees that eventually was planted under Curator Gascoine. A photograph of the existing oak is above.

Ambrose had a good Samaritan side to his character and this is borne out along the way. The first glimpse of we get occurred on 26 June 1862 when it was recorded in The Argus (Melbourne, Vic:

1848 – 1957), Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1862 that he offered a donation to a widow whose husband had perished when the ill-fated Royal Charter ran aground in the Irish Sea. The ship had been bound for Liverpool from Melbourne when foul weather suddenly fell upon it and there was little the captain or crew could do. Many lives were lost.

“Mrs. Hughes and the wreck of the Royal Charter, to the editor of the Argus; Sir, Accept, as below, our humble contributions in aid of the widow of the Rev. S. R Hughes ... Ambrose Johnson £ 1 10 ....”

Ambrose was considered not only the mining surveyor for the Victorian Government but clearly worked for the Shire of Hepburn as well. So he had two jobs, one a colonial government appointment the other for local government.

In The Argus newspaper on Wednesday 19 November, 1862 his name is found in an advertisement for tenders to supply slate:

“Glenlyon Slate Quarry Company – To Slate Quarrymen, Splitters &c – Tenders are invited for raising and splitting slates at per thousand and slabs &c at per superficial foot. Tenders to be addressed to A. Johnson Esq. mining surveyor, Daylesford ....”

Further evidence that Ambrose was both mining and shire surveyor came in The Star (Ballarat, Victoria 1855 – 1864) Wednesday 13 July, 1864: where tenders were called by the Yandoit and Franklin Road District to build a bridge:

“Tenders are invited for the construction of a Bridge and approaches over the Deep Creek, below Kelle’s Hotel near Blanket Flat. Plans and specifications can be inspected at the office of the surveyor, Ambrose Johnson, Esq, Camp Street, Daylesford.”

Disputes and conflicts came and went during Ambrose’s work on the Hepburn Council. Most were overcome and people moved on. One such dispute however left a lasting bitterness between former friends. At the Council Meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1862 Peter Miller, who was a Councillor, became agitated.

This conflict between Ambrose and Peter Miller had festered after a dispute as to the alignment of Bleakley Street in Daylesford. Ambrose wanted it to go across the causeway of Wombat Flat (now Daylesford Lake), curve up and join Camp Street. This would have given him easy access to his residence in Camp Street. Peter Miller, as owner of a shop in Vincent Street, demanded the extension curve into Vincent Street. From current maps it would seem likely Peter Miller won the fight but the underlying animosity continued to simmer. At the council meeting the interjections and verbal slanging match arose from a letter that Ambrose wrote to Council denying that he had written a Report regarding the Courthouse site.

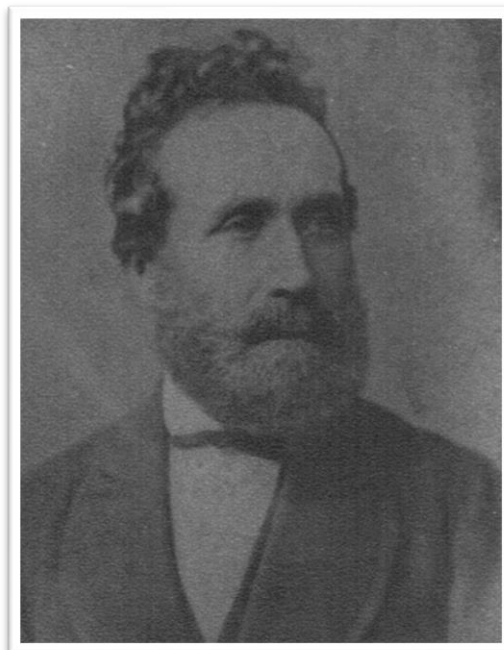
Ambrose is quoted in Daylesford Express, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1862 Council Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> December: “I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your instructions this morning, relating to a copy of some report to the Government, recommending site for courthouse. In reply, I own that I have not the remotest idea of ever furnishing any such report and I therefore trust that the Committee will excuse me for requesting you to assist my memory and inform me to what particular report allusion is made or on what occasion it was furnished.”



Looking along Bleakley Street across the Lake Daylesford causeway. Photo by D.J .Johnson

Councillor Peter Miller became hostile saying that he “...deplored the tone in which the letter was written. Was this the way in which their officer should address Council?” He was also put out because Ambrose vacated his seat at that point. He wanted Ambrose to answer some questions but the surveyor was not forthcoming. In total frustration Miller asked that the surveyor be dismissed. There was further discussion with Councillor Jameison saying he thought Ambrose’s letter was; “... a complete reply and as good a answer as could be written.” Councillor Hollenstein found nothing insulting in the letter even though Miller insisted there was.

Ambrose continued to refuse to answer questions so in the end Miller sought a motion to dismiss Ambrose for the “gross insults he offered to the councillor...” The Chairman ruled the motion out of order but Miller put his motion again and it was seconded and carried. Ambrose was out of his job as the Council Surveyor. A week later the Daylesford Express newspaper carried an advertisement for a vacancy for the position. A week after that letters were written to the same paper demanding a public meeting about the dismissal and the council actions. Evidence points to Ambrose returning to his job.



Peter Miller (left) and Ambrose Johnson clashed many times. Courtesy of Daylesford Historical Society.

Ambrose was a man of the people as shown in *The Australian News for Home Readers* (Vic. 1864 - 1867) Monday 25 July 1864 p 11 when he was quick to offer his help and expertise in a "Dreadful Mining Accident Two Men Blocked by a Fall of Earth.

"One of the most painful mining accidents we have had occasion for a long time past to record, occurred on the 29th ult., about nine o'clock a.m., in the workings of the New Wombat Hill Company's number one shaft. While seven men were engaged, in one capacity or another, blocking back from a point not far from the Haphazard Company's boundary, an immense mass of earth, fell down, not it would seem without a brief, previous warning, as one of the men — Isaac Allison— said, addressing another, 'Harry I'm off, it will come down.' Allison instantly moved back, but was not a foot beyond the reach of danger, when the earth fell down, as he was struck in the leg by some of it in its descent. In the particular part of the workings where the accident occurred, there were only three men employed, and their names were Isaac Allison, Henry Couch and William Leyshon. Of these the first escaped, as we have already stated, but the other two, thinking there would be sufficient time to save their clothes, ran back for them, and while attempting to do so the earth fell in, whether upon them or outside of them it is impossible to say. Immediately on the occurrence becoming known at top, the most energetic efforts for recovering the two men were commenced. The mining manager was, below in No.2 shaft when the occurrence took place; but upon hearing of it he hurried back to No.1 shaft, taking with him every man employed at the former. It was found, however, that no more than six men could work at the same time in clearing out the fallen earth; but, in order that the work might be prosecuted in the most vigorous manner, twelve men have been kept below, one half of them relieving the other half every thirty minutes. It would be impossible to estimate correctly what length of stuff must be removed to reach, the position of the men blocked in; but it is considered likely that the distance is about forty foot, and if that be so, it may be expected that it will be cleared away some time to-day. Should the unhappy men have escaped death from the fall of earth, sufficient air must gain admission to them above the fallen stuff, but there is danger that if all the fallen earth cannot be got out some time to-day, the water may rise above them. It is needless to say that the manager superintends the operations with the closest attention, and the most painful interest in the result, or to add that the men are working with their utmost energy. Dr. M'Intyre, as the medical officer to the relief fund, was promptly in attendance, lest his services might be required, this accident, following so soon after the happy social gathering of the workmen of the claim, renders it more melancholy in their contemplation; and the recollection that they rejoiced on that occasion that no serious accident had previously happened to anyone in the employment of the company, forces upon them the painful reflection that persons engaged in their dangerous avocation cannot calculate upon always escaping danger even though the best precautions against it be taken. It is to be hoped that the unhappy men — whose state of suspense, if surviving, must be truly terrible - will soon be rescued. Mr. Ambrose Johnson, the mining surveyor, descended the shaft during the afternoon, with a view of rendering any professional assistance in his power..."

"The hope entertained that the two men blocked in by fallen earth, in the drive of the Wombat Hill Company, would be safely recovered, has been most happily realised, From the time of the occurrence, at about half-past nine o'clock on Wednesday morning, till the afternoon of Thursday, most persons had heard that the men had lost their lives ; but signals they made within were then heard by the workmen outside, and it was known that one at least survived but whether injured or not remained to be discovered. The intimation, slight as it was, encouraged the willing miners at their laborious work, and the drive would have thenceforward gone in faster than previously, if that had been possible. At five minutes past one, yesterday, the miners of the watch to which the entombed men belonged had the inexpressible satisfaction of breaking through to them and of thereby relieving them from the horrible state of suspense in which they must have been. They were found to be unhurt, with the exception of a few scratches, and they could have walked unassisted to the shaft. They were speedily brought up, and, upon appearing on the brace, Harry Couch seemed to be scarcely at all the worse for his confinement for 53 hours, in a close dark chamber, without food, and but lightly clad; but his mate in misfortune, William Leysdon, appeared to be a little more affected, but that may have been occasioned by the presence of some relations of his, who had come from a distance to await the



result of the accident. The two men were at once taken by Mr. R. M. Smyth, the manager, to Jamieson's Hotel, and there all that was necessary was done for them, under the directions of Dr. M'Intyre. Almost the first question asked by them was, "Is Isaac Allison safe?" They were under the impression that he had been crushed to death under the fall of earth. As they were running out after getting their coats, the earth commenced to fall in pieces about them, and one large block that fell interrupted their passage, and obliged them to precipitately run back, and in doing so they dropped their coats."

Ambrose was a stickler for carrying out his jobs to the letter. He came into conflict on many occasions and one such was a dispute with the miners of the Havelock Quartz Mining Company. Sam Pitt and James Barkla in a team of four worked the north end of the Crown Reef, Stanbridge Street, Daylesford. As noted in 100 Years of Daylesford Gold Mining History; "They had a dispute with Mining Surveyor Johnson in 1864, alleging they lost some ground by his lay-out of their base line." It was subsequently found after measurements by other surveyors that Ambrose was correct in his measurements.

He also had great difficulty in communicating with the hundreds of Italians who frequented the many mining sites. He found the Swiss and Italians who worked the Italian Hill area particularly frustrating. Even though he was fluent in Danish, English and German he could not get his tongue around Swiss nor Italian.

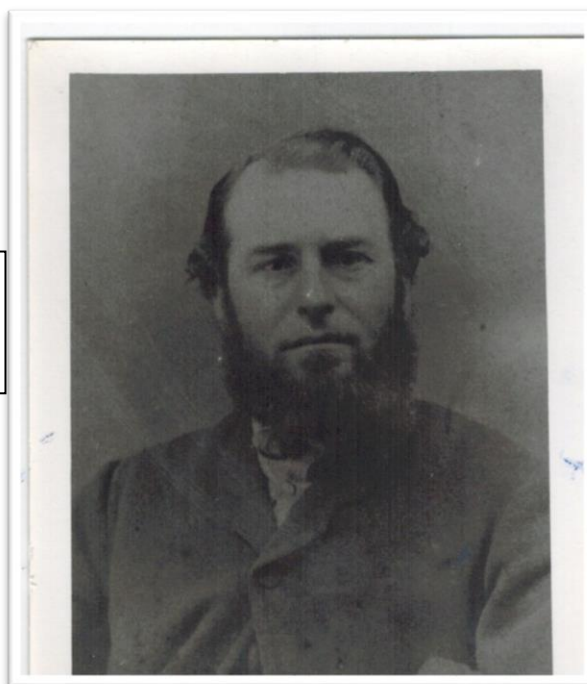
During 1864 a major controversy erupts regarding damming the Coliban River near Daylesford. A Mr. Wardle was the first to come up with the idea and presented a plan to the Minister for Mines a Mr. Sullivan. He had the backing of some capitalists and was adamant that the scheme would cost the Victorian Government nothing. After some months of consideration the government hadn't made a decision. A new player by the name of Mr. Reilly submitted a plan that he claimed would be bigger and better although he was asking the government to fund it.

On 9 November 1864 a long and protracted meeting was held between the protagonists and the minister. Ambrose Johnson as shire surveyor was present as were several others including the MLA for Creswick, a Mr. Fraser. At some stage in the proceeding Mr Fraser tendered the plans prepared to back Mr Wardle, "...which were accompanied by an elaborate report drawn up by Mr. Ambrose Johnson, the district mining surveyor". Ferdinand Krause a civil engineer and geologist was also working with Ambrose on this water scheme. Ferdinand went on to be quite famous around the Victorian goldfields in his professions.

The Castlemaine Mining Board held regular meetings to deal with issues of mining and their surveyors. On December 15, 1864 the Daylesford Express reported on one such meeting. One of the issues they looked at was a complaint from miners that Ambrose Johnson, mining surveyor, charged £2 per miner for giving evidence. The going rate at the time was apparently 5s. A petition from 350 miners also requested the Board to stop the practice of charging these excessive fees.

Ambrose's surveying skills were used in the proposal for a railway line from Malmsbury to Daylesford. The entire meeting between the two councils was reported in the Kyneton Observer February 28, 1865: "A deputation from the Daylesford borough council met the members of the Malmsbury council on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> at the Duke of Kent Hotel, Malmsbury to discuss a railway between the two boroughs. The Daylesford council was represented by Mr. George Patterson (Mayor) and Mr. Peter Miller with Ambrose Johnson surveyor and Mr. W.G. Hart, town clerk."

William George Hart was involved in the Hepburn Council as town clerk and worked with Ambrose Johnson on many important projects. Courtesy Daylesford Historical Society.



The two councils discussed the matter at length and agreed that a line would be feasible and was also necessary. At this point, “Mr. Ambrose Johnson ...gave a brief explanation of the proposed line. He said to save purchasing land, his suggestion would be to carry a line along the main road for seven or eight miles, then through Crown lands to the Loddon (river) which he proposed to cross on the old crossing, about a quarter of a mile below the new bridge. The road he said was three chains wide – more than could ever be required for traffic – and even less than one chain would be sufficient for a single line of rails. He calculated that the line would be constructed at from ten thousand to twelve thousand pounds per mile.” The councils were impressed by the report and costing and unanimously carried the motion for the construction to take place.

Daylesford was a town in the flux of a mining boom with new arrivals daily. The lawlessness was evident in all areas and of men from all walks of life. Ambrose appears to lead a life dedicated to his work and in clear line with the laws, rules and regulations of the times.

“Charge of Conspiracy to Defraud” was the headline in the *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic: 1848 – 1957) Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 1866. The fraud case mentioned above did not involve Ambrose directly. He was called as a witness because he had overheard a conversation that men had conspired. It is also interesting to note that in his evidence (see below) Ambrose showed his fierce patriotism for his native land of Denmark.

Five men were charged with conspiracy to defraud by continuing a belief that the gold mine they owned was a rich and viable one when in fact it had almost played out and they were basically insolvent. The men were: James Wheeler MLA., Zalmonah Carlisle manager of the Daylesford Union Bank, Matthew Glenton, Edward Jowet, Mr Foott and George Burniston. The charge as read out in court and published indicted that they meant to: “...cheat and defraud certain subjects of Her Majesty the Queen, who might purchase shares in a certain gold mining company called the Cornish and York Quartz mining Company (Limited), by falsely and fraudulently pretending and giving out that the profits obtained by the said company by means of their mining operations were sufficient to yield and pay large profits and dividends to the shareholders therein and thereby inducing such persons to pay large sums of money for such shares to said company as they might be induced by means of such fraudulent pretences to purchase.”

The charge was laid by widow Ferguson whose husband had been duped into paying \$200 per share and due to the stress and worry of finding them worthless had had a heart attack and died.

The case took two days and at one point Ambrose Johnson was called as a witness. He explained that he was the local mining surveyor and that he had heard Mr Burniston and a Mr Foott discussing the buying and selling of shares. His testimony as reported in *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic: 1848 – 1957) Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 1866 reads:

“I know Burniston, one of the members of the Cornish and York Quartz mining Company. In my presence he stated something in reference to the Cornish and York Company. Mr Foott and Mr Burniston spoke about the Cornish and York Company, they said something about calls and dividends being made at the same time and Burniston said that either Mr Carlisle or Mr Wheeler said that would ‘crack the shares up in the market’ and that either Mr Carlisle or Mr Wheeler suggested it. To the best of my belief he made use of some such expression as that. He stated in my hearing that either Mr Carlisle or Mr Wheeler said that.”

He was cross examined over the expression and taken to task over his language to which he replied; “I am a Dane. This conversation took place sometime in November last. I payed [sic] very little attention to what Burniston and Foott said to each other. To the best of my belief Burniston made use of the remark, but I do not know whether it was said in reply to Mr Foott. He said it was either Wheeler or Carlisle made the suggestion for making the calls and dividends. I had no interest in the conversation. I had heard that Foott had complained of his purchase.”

The end result of the trial to commit was a tied judgement so the case was dismissed. Wheeler MLA tried to get sympathy from the sordid affair by buying back widow Ferguson’s shares. Wheeler crops up in several more situations involving Ambrose and they are to Ambrose’s demise.



The Daylesford Courthouse looking along Albert Street.  
Photo by D.J.Johnson

Ambrose had made his intention clear back in 1859 when he was Naturalised. He wanted to stay in Australia, buy land, build a house and carry out useful civic work. His good intentions saw him travel 150km (90 mile) north of Daylesford to the Sandhurst region to put his name forward for a selection of land.

It is interesting to note that he was already accumulating a tidy number of properties. At Daylesford he had purchased the land on Camp Street consisting of several acres. He also had bought a block on the corner of Granville and Grant Streets. The latter was in partnership with Peter Miller. Two more blocks were noted in the *Victoria Government Gazette*, May 23, 1862 as being in Yandoit and these consisted of 40 and 31 acres respectfully.



Modern day Daylesford from the Courthouse along Albert Street. Photo by D. J. Johnson

Up to this time there had been many famous land ballots throughout Victoria. They were all well attended with an assortment of bidders from squatters, miners, farmers, townfolk – good people and bad. Many of them created their own illegal activity especially the use of dummies – people who bid for others then gave the land back to their backer for a small fee. This came about because you could only register for one draw and greedy farmers wanted more than the meagre amount likely to be from one draw.

The Sandgate selections saw similar shenanigans.

Ambrose seemed to be a bona-fide bidder and drew allotment 114 at Carraggarragg [Carag Carag] 94 acres 2 roods 19perches and he paid \$4. 15/- for this land.

He had established himself in a new colony far away from his land of origin. He had travelled half the World over. He had developed a fine reputation. At this stage of his life with a steady job, a loyal wife, three growing children and a house in Daylesford he must have been feeling pretty content. Left field had been long out of his vision but maybe he should have glanced that way every so often because his world was about to tumble down.

In August 1866 the Minister for Lands disallowed some of the Sandgate selections under the belief that they acted as agents (dummies). Ambrose found himself with a letter of disallowance. He immediately organised and sent an affidavit to the Land Department attesting to his bona fides in making the selection.

In the meanwhile the Daylesford Express attempted to extract revenge over the earlier issue of Ambrose favouring the Mercury newspaper with his mining reports. In their editorial they lambasted Ambrose regarding favouritism and called his integrity into question. They brought up the issue of Ambrose acting as a dummy in the land selections.

Not to be out done Ambrose began legal proceedings against the Daylesford Express and was suing the paper for \$1000 as reported in The Argus (Melbourne, Vic: 1848 - 1957) Monday 9 April 1866:

“The Daylesford Express is being sued by Mr. Ambrose Johnson, surveyor. The case has arisen out of comments on Mr. Johnson's conduct in connexion [sic] with the applications under the 42nd clause of the Amending Land Act, damages are fixed at £1,000.”

Someone or somebodies appeared intent on creating a lot of problems for Ambrose. The Daylesford Express editorial was just the beginning. However, an advertisement in The Argus Wednesday 20, September, 1866 shows Ambrose is not happy and is serious about moving away from the area and thus away from future inuendo. Ambrose puts his property in Daylesford up for auction.

“Important Sale of Valuable Freehold Property, Daylesford, At Auction.

Wm. Geo. Hart has received positive Instructions from Mr. Ambrose Johnson, who is leaving this district, to submit to public competition on Wednesday next, 20th September, 1866.

The whole of his valuable property situated in Camp and Hill streets.

Full particulars can be had on application to John C. M'Causland. Esq., land agent, Collins Street.”

As we see later he either didn't sell or withdrew from the auction.

His efforts to escape the daily grind of Daylesford would come to naught. Small things that are dealt with in the most efficient way, through the correct channels and according to the legal requirements can still create angst in the minds of others. Slowly these become accumulative and then personal. This is what appears to happen in the case of Ambrose.

We have already seen how easy it was for the Minister of Mines to sanction Ambrose because he sent his mining reports directly to the local Daylesford newspapers. On 11<sup>th</sup> July 1866 the newspapers took Ambrose to task regarding favouritism to one over the other getting notices re tenders, mining reports etc all of which were required to be advertised by law. The Geelong Advertiser explained the outcome of this: “The allegation made against Mr. Johnson was that he had taken advantage of his position as contract surveyor under the 42<sup>nd</sup> clause of the Land Act to favour a certain local newspaper (the Mercury) in advertising the ‘notices’ required by the Act.” The nonsense of this was that the Mercury was a daily whereas the Express was tri-weekly so clearly the Mercury would get 6 chances at the notices as they were issued but the Express only three.

Other things began to fester culminating in the Minister for Mines sending in the police to confiscate all of Ambrose's documents. This virtually terminated Ambrose's position as the Mining Surveyor for the Hepburn District, a job he had worked so hard for and carried out with the utmost skill for the past 8 years.

Another festering situation that had seen Ambrose and the Victorian Government at loggerheads concerned the sale of land in and around Daylesford. Since November 1866 the Minister of Lands (Honourable Mr. Grant) had thrown open every piece of vacant land that came to his notice. However, according to the Land Act any land that is found to be auriferous (gold bearing) cannot be sold. Mining surveyors were by law to determine whether land was auriferous and then to protect it from sales.

This conflicted with what the rich, farmers and government officials wanted. They were determined to buy up the land for their agricultural and leisure pursuits and no doubt as speculations. The Government wanted the sales to bolster the government coffers.

Reporter for the Ballarat Star 27 February, 1867 wrote in hindsight: “It had long been apparent (and is so still) that, in order to replenish the public coffers, the Hon. Mr Grant was not at all particular as to

what amount of land he threw into the market or under what circumstances, so long only as the cash flowed freely in. In the course of a year or so we may expect to see the whole of the great Loddon Basin, with its deep-laid continuations, safely and snugly the property of a few ministerialists, who have first, by being allowed to drive several coaches and numerous teams of horses through the 42nd Section of the Land Act, obtained possession of the same, under the pretense of settling down to agricultural pursuits.”

Ambrose as the mining survey was intent on upholding the law as it was written. He determinedly stuck to the letter of the law in declaring land auriferous.

Again we read in the Ballarat Star 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1867: “Common decency, however, generally prompted the withdrawal of land from sale, wherever the Mining Board or other public bodies asked for withdrawal, on clear evidence of such land being auriferous. The Castlemaine Mining Board, as directly representing the miners, have ever been vigilantly on the look-out to prevent auriferous land from being sold; and no member of that board, we are glad to say, ever allowed more praiseworthy activity, in this, as indeed in all other respects than did our own two members, Mr. L. D. Holmes and the late lamented Mr. Braddon. To come to Mr. Johnson-his first collision with the "department" was occasioned in this wise:-Certain land at Daylesford was advertised for sale by the Crown – Mr. Johnson reported to the Mining Board that it was auriferous, and the Mining Board obtained the withdrawal of the land from sale. Time passed on. Again was the same land advertised for sale, again Mr. Johnson reported to the board, and again the board got the land withdrawn. For a third time these processes were repeated, with a like result; the Mining Board, however, on the last occasion, proving to the Government that not only was the ground auriferous, but that Mr. Spence had held the same by virtue of miner's rights, had spent some fifteen hundred pounds on it, and was even then engaged driving a tunnel through it, having already completed work to the extent of eight hundred feet. With an ordinarily honest government, this would have been the end of the affair, so far as offering the land for sale was concerned, but with such an extra-ordinarily honest and conscientious Government as M'Culloch's, this was not so. That which looked very much like a deliberate fraud was resorted to. The description of the land was varied, and it was advertised and finally sold at Majorca! The unpleasantly-honest-and-out spoken mining surveyor (Ambrose Johnson), together with the Mining Board, afterwards found out that they had been blindfolded and duped, and the mining community defrauded; but the land was sold, and so there was nothing useful to be done in that instance. They of course, felt disgusted at the impudent trickery, and determined to keep as watchful an eye as possible on future land sales. The task, it must be confessed, was a most difficult one-as difficult as watching a liar, who, as is well known, is a far more dangerous and difficult customer than a mere thief.

Shortly afterwards another case occurs, Mr. Campbell, an unco' canny chief from the north o' the Tweed, was very anxious to get his "blither Scots" into Ministry, to give him the chance of adding to his already fair proportions of land, and his wish was so far complied with, that certain undoubted auriferous land, adjacent to his own 640-acre block, was advertised for sale on three separate occasions, and on each occasion was withdrawn, upon the report of the mining surveyor, Mr. Johnson, to the Mining Board, that the ground was auriferous, and the consequent protest of that body. It will scarcely be credited, excepting by those who know the Ministry, but it is a fact that again was the land offered for sale. The Mining Board scarcely liking to believe in such another glaring breach of faith, wrote to their surveyor, Mr. Johnson, asking him if it was the same land (thrice offered, and thrice withdrawn), and if so, for him again to report on the auriferous nature of the same. But by this time the Government, gnashing their teeth in fury at the honest independence of a Government employee, had initiated an instalment of their since notorious -"gagging" Civil Service regulations; and Mr. Johnson, in reply to the board, said the land was identical with that thrice withdrawn, but that he must not give information to the board as to the nature of the ground, as he had received a circular, of which the following is a copy:

SIR,-I am directed by the Hon. the Minister of Mines to caution you to refrain, under any circumstances, from giving opinions to any persons respecting the auriferous or non-auriferous character of Crown lands except through this department in the usual course.

K. T. F Hough Smyth, Secretary of Mines,

A. Johnson, Esq., Mining Surveyor, Daylesford.”

Ambrose received this stern letter from the Minister of Mines effectively gagging him. He could no longer send his reports directly to newspapers nor could he communicate with the Castlemaine Mining Board.

Local newspapers were aghast at the treatment that Ambrose’s was being subjected to.

Ballarat Star 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1867 wrote; “We take it that the above circular is about as cool an insult to the Mining Board as could be offered, and serves to show that the Government are unscrupulously bent upon doing what they like with the auriferous lands of the colony, without the slightest respect to the welfare of the miner; and the better to carry out their nefarious practices, they caution the surveyors to give no information to the miners' representatives. But some heavy punishment had to be found for a public servant daring to have conscientiousness - the Attorney-General only being allowed to trade in that article - and in the absence of any charge against Mr. Johnson, his ruin was resolved upon by ordering him at a moment's notice to be transferred to Avoca, where his emoluments would be reckoned by about as many hundreds as those of his Daylesford offices would be by thousands. It is to be remembered that Mr. Johnson has been for eight years and a half in the employ of the Government; that he has faithfully and ably performed his duties; that he has never enjoyed leave of absence; and that his home and property are situated at Daylesford. On receiving his peremptory notice to quit, he represented to the Government that it would be ruinous to leave at once, and he therefore asked that he might be retained at Daylesford for four months, in order to give him time to advantageously dispose of his property. This not unreasonable request met with a blank refusal, as it would evidently in some measure detract from the severity of the intended punishment. Mr. Johnson then asked for four months' leave of absence, a request which, under ordinary circumstances, would never be refused to an officer of such long service. But this, too, was refused, and Mr. Johnson had therefore no alternative but to send in his resignation; it was accepted, and the malice of the Government instantly followed up by putting the indignity on Mr. Johnson of sending a posse of police to take the books, &c, from him, he, at the same time, being prepared to hand the same over at the first request to do so. That a meritorious public officer should be thus forced out of the public service by sheer malice because of his having done his duty honestly is a disgrace even to the present Ministry, and the whole affair deserves sifting- at the hands of Parliament.”

On the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1866 Ambrose Johnson was officially transferred as acting mining surveyor and mining registrar of Avoca. This was the final insult to Ambrose’s integrity and he was left with little option to refuse the transfer.

There is nothing Ambrose could do to have his transfer changed and even asking for a short period to get his private life into order is rejected. His final efforts are seen at a meeting of the Castlemaine Mining Board as reported in The Argus 13<sup>th</sup> February 1867:

“...a testimonial, very handsomely engrossed on vellum, was presented by the chairman, on behalf of the board, to Mr. Ambrose Johnson, late mining surveyor for the Daylesford division of Hepburn. The chairman supplemented the presentation with some highly eulogistic remarks of Mr. Johnson's value as a public officer, and also stated his regret that that gentleman had found it necessary, from the harsh treatment he had received at the hands of the chief of his department, to sever his connexion [sic] with the board, which had then existed more than eight years. Mr. Johnson, in acknowledging the compliment, stated that had he not resigned the office he held, but obeyed the preemptory orders he

had received from the Mining department, it would have been most ruinous to him in a pecuniary sense.”

The Ballarat Star in acknowledging Ambrose’s testimonial wrote on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 1867: “..., in reference to the testimonial presented to Mr Ambrose Johnson by the Castlemaine Mining Board, that in returning thanks for the honor, he merely alluded to the sinister influence he believed had been, brought to bear upon him, so as to compel the resignation of a lucrative post, and one which he has filled for so many years in a very able manner - satisfactorily alike to the mining community and to the Castlemaine Mining Board. As we feel convinced that the facts of the case will fully bear out the statement, we unhesitatingly assert our firm conviction, that Mr. Johnson has been sacrificed by the present Government, because he was too conscientious, and too carefully endeavored to conserve the interest of the miners”.



Jameison’s Hotel in Daylesford  
Photo by D, J, Johnson



The Gold Exchange (now ANZ) in Daylesford where all miners bought their gold findings into.  
Photo by D, J, Johnson

In the meanwhile things were hotting up around Daylesford. A number of people who had been friendly became alienated through business and political activities.

In December, 1866 the Belle Vue Hotel was burnt to the ground. Three locals were questioned and taken into custody and charged with arson. The prisoners were Carrighan, Patterson and Hartley.

Ambrose was co-opted by the police to help out with surveying the site, mapping it and building a model. He was later involved in the trial as an expert witness.



An extract from the *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic: 1848 - 1957) Thursday 15 January 1867, p 5 records his evidence as:

“Ambrose Johnson, sworn.—I am an engineer and surveyor, and know the site of the late fire. I remember when the premises were in the possession of Hodge. Since the fire I have visited the place, in company with Inspector Smith, Mr. Valentine, and Detectives Alexander and Walker. I traced the foundations, and, with the assistance of Mr. Hodge, ascertained where all the portions were. At the request of the police I made a survey of the place. Beckett's residence is about twenty feet higher than where the hotel stood, and an uninterrupted view could be obtained of the conflagration from there. A tank, that would hold 500 or 600 gallons of water, was standing behind Glenlon's house. It was only distant from the hotel twenty-four and a half yards.”

It became evident over a 13 day trial that the arson was deliberate with Carrighan setting the fire that destroyed the hotel, and Patterson and Hartley collaborating in an insurance fraud.

The end result of this case as reported in *Launceston Examiner* (Tas: 1842 - 1899) Monday 4 February 1867 p 3

“Daylesford, Jan, 20. The great arson case was concluded to-day, and the three prisoners were committed for trial, George Carrighan for setting fire to the Belle Vue hotel, and George Patterson and Henry Septimus Hartley for being accessories before the fact. .. Although the case lasted thirteen days, the Bench only took ten minutes to sum up.”

Some while later Ambrose was back in court trying to get paid for his work in the above case. Detectives Walker and Alexander attested that Ambrose Johnson had been hired by Inspector Smith to make a model of the hotel and to provide accurate measurements of the site. For this he had been hired for £39. As it was Ambrose's solicitor withdrew £40 from the sub-treasury that same morning and it was agreed that this would suffice for payment.

Not one to sit idly by Ambrose has moved on from being a mining surveyor and has purchased part ownership of the *Daylesford Mercury*. Maybe he was thinking that this was where the power to fight evil lies.

As things came to boiling point around Daylesford other major falling outs began to occur. One of these resulted in George Patterson (former Mayor of Daylesford), to seek out Dr James M'Nicoll (Magistrate and Coroner of Daylesford), for the purpose of having him witness a declaration. That document became the object of great animosity over the many months ahead. Ambrose unwittingly lands in the middle of it all and is accused of major conspiracy.

The declaration declared before M'Nicoll and signed by him as witness read: “Daylesford, 7th January, 1867: I, George Patterson, of Daylesford, in the colony of Victoria, do declare before James M'Nicoll, Esq, J.P. for the colony of Victoria, that in the month of August or October, 1866, George Henry Jamieson, of Daylesford, and Ambrose Johnson, of Daylesford, did propose in my presence at a meeting of the proprietors of the *Daylesford Mercury* to engage, if possible, some person to set fire to the office of the *Daylesford Express* and burn it down. And it was also proposed by Mr. Ambrose Johnson to waylay and murderously assault James Henry Wheeler, M P., for injuries done by the said J. H. Wheeler to the said Ambrose Johnson and G. H. Jamieson. And it was also proposed by G. H. Jamieson to engage some person or persons to waylay and assault Peter Miller, Esq. J.P., on his way home from Daylesford to his dwelling, New Racecourse. At another meeting G H. Jamieson informed me that it was his intention to burn down the building known as Jamieson's Dramatic Hall, He told me that he would give £25 or £50 for anyone who would do it for him. I declare the above statement to be true in every particular, to the best of my recollection, and in the event of anything happening to the said J.H. Wheeler or Peter Miller, Esq. J.P., I am prepared to come forward and give evidence to what has occurred at those meetings. George Patterson, Daylesford.”

It took several months but once certain members of Daylesford became aware of the Patterson document there was great concern. Eventually the desire to know exactly what was written in the declaration resulted in a meeting being arranged between Mr. George Patterson, auctioneer and Mr. George Jamieson, proprietor of the newspaper, Daylesford Mercury. The meeting was held on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> October 1867 at 3pm at Harper's Hotel. What started as a seemingly quiet, arrangement soon developed into a fracas with future dire consequences. The fall out would last many months and the cost became considerable.

Other news worthy things continued to happen in Daylesford. One of these events that ended in tragedy was the disappearance of three local boys. Ambrose again showed his benevolent nature in trying to find these children.



Cairn where the 3 lost boys began their journey chasing goats. Photo by D.J.Johnson

Three boys, two were brothers, wandered off and did not return home at night. A preliminary search was made by parents, neighbours and police that evening. Nothing was found and as the weather worsened it was agreed to start again in the morning. The next day others joined in and two witnesses came forward but the boys were not found. In the meantime word was being circulated as to the misadventure seeking all able bodied men to a meeting that night to formulate a full scale search.

The search meeting and the ordeal that the community went through is summed up in a report from The Ballarat Star (Vic: 1865 - 1870; 1914 - 1918), Friday 5 July, 1867 p 2;

“The Lost Children. The arrangements of Tuesday night's meeting were yesterday carried out to the letter. By eight o'clock the first detachment started from the Specimen Hill works. For a couple of hours after that bodies of men were sent out, as Mr. Inspector Smith said, in the most admirable order. The whole range of country embraced in the programme was searched, but we regret to say without success. Towards afternoon the day got very wet, but it was only the approach of night that stopped the search. Daylesford is during the day quite deserted; and, among the few whom necessity kept at

home, the question when two met was as to any tidings of the lost children. So soon as it was ascertained that no trace had been got of the boys, another meeting of the inhabitants was called, to be held at the Theatre Royal, which was crowded. The Mayor was again called to the chair. Mr. Taylor, police magistrate, stated the manner of the day's search and its unsatisfactory result. He hoped, but could hardly believe the children were yet alive. It was a duty, however, the people of Daylesford owed to themselves, to society, and to the parents of the children, that the search should be renewed the following day, and the day after that if necessary. Mr. Inspector Smith congratulated them on the manner in which they had mustered. He had telegraphed to several places for black trackers, and expected one that night. (A Voice—"He is come.") Mr. Smith was glad to hear it, and hoped three men would be appointed to accompany him, and that no others would interfere with them. Mr. Smith urged a continuance of the search. Mr. Ambrose Johnson, Mr. Henderson, and other gentlemen stated the results of their search.

Mr Johnson said he did not yet despair of their being found alive. He urged the necessity of the search being renewed the following day (to-day), and if necessary the day after, and from day to day till they were got alive or dead. He had given his services, and would continue to give them, and he knew that many of those who were out that day would do the same; but all were not able to afford the time, and to such some inducement should be hold out. He said he would give a reward of £10 for the recovery of each boy found and alive, and no doubt others would give also. As many who were likely to be actuated by such a reward lived in the bush, he suggested that the local press should print hand-bills offering a reward, and that the exploring party on the following day should put them up in every place where likely to be seen. Mr. Johnson's very liberal offer was received with very great applause, and on the motion of Mr. Johnston, draper, a supplementary list was then opened, and a sum amounting to about £60 was subscribed in the room, irrespective of Mr. Johnson's sum. It was also resolved that subscription lists be left at Jameison's hotel and Bleakley's hotel, and in the banks, and that Messrs. Johnston and Richmond be requested to canvass for further subscriptions, the mayor undertaking at the request of the meeting to issue placards and guarantee a reward of £100. The sum subscribed in the meeting apart from that of Mr. Johnson, was to be paid if the children were found alive, or one-half if dead, with the exception of Mr Stanbridge's subscription of £10, which he made payable whether they be found dead or alive.

In reference to the conduct of the search for to-day a number of suggestions was made, some proceeding on the assumption that the children are alive, some holding that they must be dead. Mr. Johnston, draper, proposed that the following day be also devoted to the search and that to enable this to be properly done all places of business be again kept strictly closed. This was unanimously agreed to. Some discussion took place as to whether there was any certainty of the children having been seen alive on Sunday at Specimen Hill. The father of the boys Graham stated certain circumstances that left no doubt on his mind that they had been there on that occasion. He also said that the boys being strong and healthy, he felt satisfied they were yet alive, and that the youngest one was likely to survive the others. Mr. Perrins thought it possible that the search had commenced too far away, and said he would next day examine Boots' Gully, Bald Hill, Adelaide Reef, and the locality to the west of Table Hill, and others would join him."

The search went on for several days without result of any kind. It was some months before the mystery was cleared. Unfortunately the end result was tragic.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic: 1848 - 1957) Friday 27 September 1867 p 1 made front page with the following;

"The fate of three young children who were lost from Daylesford on Sunday, June 30, and who were for some time searched for in the most persevering manner by all the inhabitants of the town and surrounding district, was at length elucidated in a painful manner, by the discovery of their remains on the 13th inst.

The attention of a man named M'Kay being attracted by observing that his dog was carrying a child's boot with a portion of a foot in it, the news was circulated, and a party got together to renew the relinquished search. The bodies were, after some searching, discovered near the hut of M'Kay, on the Mack Creek, near the saw-mill. Two of the unfortunate children were in the cavity of a hollow tree, where it seems that they had crawled in and huddled together, to endeavour to keep each other warm.



Cairn near where the 3 lost boys' bodies were found. They had walked many miles before huddling together in a hollow tree. Photo by D.J. Johnson

Of the third only a few bones and the skull remained, and it was thought that this body had been dragged out by dogs. From the appearances presented, there seemed to be no doubt that the children had in their wanderings found their way impeded by a brush fence; that, it being night, they were unable to see that by following along the fence for only a couple of hundred yards they would get to the hut of M'Kay, and that they had turned into the hollow tree to shelter from the bitter cold of the wet winter's night, thinking, probably, to find their way by the aid of the fence without difficulty in the morning. They must then have lain and slept and died together. It was felt as a very melancholy consideration the fact that the poor children had reached so near help and yet failed to find it. Two of them were brothers, named Graham; the other was named Burman. The remains were interred in Daylesford, where it is proposed to erect a monument by public subscription over their graves."



The monument to the 3 lost boys erected through public subscription. Photo by D.J. Johnson

The controversial document believed to be written by Patterson resurfaces not soon after the above tragedy. There is a determined effort being made by George Jameison and Ambrose Johnson to obtain the original so that they could remove it from scrutiny. They were of the opinion that it contained fraudulent claims about them. Jameison set up a meeting with Patterson and Ambrose offered to draw a cheque for £50 to buy the document. What should have been a simple case of exchange developed into a fracas?

The Ballarat Star Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1867 ran the following news about the meeting and the ensuing incidences:

"A fracas yesterday, arising, it is said, from a novel attempt to play the game of 'Yankee Grab,' caused much local comment. As we are informed, Mr. George Patterson, the auctioneer, met Mr. George Henry Jamison [sic], the ostensible proprietor of the Daylesford Mercury, by appointment, about three p.m., at Harper's hotel.



The Albert Hotel run by Harper  
Photo by D.J. Johnson

Mr. Patterson had a document, which, for some reason best known to himself, Mr. Jamison was so anxious to possess himself of that he offered £50 for it. Mr. Patterson consented to the terms, and laid the paper on the table, Mr. Jamison also producing a cheque for the amount, drawn by Mr. Ambrose Johnson on the National Bank... Mr. Jamison caught up the coveted document with one hand, and attempted to snatch the cheque he had given with the other. Mr. Patterson, however, was too quick for him, but Mr. Jamison seized his wrist and attempted to wrest away the draft. Finding he could not succeed, Mr. Jamison by his superior weight forced Mr. Patterson into a corner, exclaiming at the top of his voice, 'You b—y wretch I'll murder you', and struck him. Mr. Patterson, lighter than his antagonist, is much the more athletic, and seeing he could not avoid it, hit Mr. Jamison three or four severe blows in the face, one of which knocked out a tooth. Mr. Jamison thereupon roared, 'Police,' and rushed from the room without his hat. While Mr. Patterson was buttoning his vest, which had been torn open in the struggle, Mr. Ambrose Johnson, of course by accident, entered the passage leading to the room, and exclaimed, 'What's the matter?' To this Mr. Patterson replied 'Oh! You know very well,' and left the place. But the cream of the story is this— that on paying in the cheque, immediately afterwards at the bank, the manager politely intimated that payment had been stopped, and it is said, before the cheque was given, one gentleman only witnessed the affair at the hotel. We leave the public to draw their own conclusions from the transaction."

Ambrose had pulled a swiftly in ensuring he got the document but did not have to part with any money for it.

Once the contents of the declaration were seen by the aggrieved they took court action as outlined in The Argus 16<sup>th</sup> November 1867:

“Our readers will remember a fracas that occurred in the Albert Hotel, Daylesford, some weeks ago, for the possession of a document, of the contents of which many mysterious and damaging reports affecting the character of several parties in Daylesford, had from time to time been hinted at. That document bore to be an affidavit by Mr. George Patterson that he and others--some named, some referred to--had entered into a conspiracy to burn down a number of houses in Daylesford, and even to murder Mr. James Henry Wheeler, M.L.A., and Mr. Peter Miller, J.P. This document was signed, and bears to have been sworn to in January last, since which date up to the present time, or at least till the circumstance became known to the gentlemen who were said to have entered into the conspiracy with Patterson, Messrs. Wheeler and Miller, having a strong personal animosity against the alleged conspirators, had systematically shown the document, or certified copies, to numerous parties, including many with whom it was believed the knowledge of such a charge would be damaging. These things having come to their knowledge, and fortified by the document in question, the parties calumniated have had recourse to law, a criminal information has been filed on the information of Mr. Ambrose Johnson, one of the alleged conspirators, against Messrs. Patterson and Wheeler, for a malicious propagation of libel. Summonses have been served on them, and they will have to appear before the City Police Court, Melbourne, on Tuesday, the 19<sup>th</sup> inst. Writs for \$1500 damages for libel have also been served on Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Peter Miller, at the instance of Mr. George Henry Jamison, another alleged conspirator.”

The case aroused much interest and the court was packed. Dr. M’Nicoll began as witness and explained his part in witnessing the declaration made by George Patterson. William Drummond the Police Magistrate at Daylesford attested that: “William Drummond, sworn, said I was Police Magistrate at Daylesford. On the 19th June this year I met Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Brierly Brown in Bourke Street, near the Albion Hotel. I walked up the street, and Mr. Wheeler proposed I should go up to the Parliament Houses. Mr. Brown had then left us. Mr. Wheeler said he could show me some documents that would change my opinion about the Cornish and York case. I said I had formed no opinion one way or other, and as I was no longer Police Magistrate at Daylesford I had no objection to see the papers. He showed me some papers.... Then after this he said I will show you another paper, to show you what a set of ruffians you have had to deal with in Daylesford, and how they stuck at nothing to injure him in the case spoken of. Patterson was not present. (Document handed to witness). He then took out this document and showed it to me. I know this to be the same document because I read it over carefully, and by an erasure in it, and by the signature of Dr. M’Nicoll; I expressed my opinion that Dr. M’Nicoll had been a great fool for putting his signature to a document of this sort, without making it public. I went straight to the Detective Office... saw Mr. Nicholson next morning, and told him about the document.”

Ambrose Johnson was called to the stand and made the following statement; “I held the office of mining surveyor up to September, 1866. I was also mining registrar, and surveyor under the 42nd section. I see the document produced. It refers to me. I did not in the month of August or October, at a meeting of the proprietors of the Daylesford Mercury propose to burn down the Daylesford Express. It was not proposed by me to waylay and murderously assault J. H. Wheeler, M. P., for injuries done by the said Wheeler to A. Johnson and G. H. Jamieson; neither was it proposed by G. H. Jamieson to waylay and assault Peter Miller, Esq, J P, on his way from his dwelling, New Racecourse. In July, 1866, the partnership of the Mercury was dissolved. There was no partnership existing in August or October, and there could have been no meeting of partners.”

George H. Jamieson manager of the Daylesford Mercury denied all that he and the others were accused of. He explained his part in the meeting at Harper's Hotel and the subsequent exchange of £50 for the document.

The Bench retired for 30 minutes to consult, but came back divided in opinion. The Bendigo Advertiser, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1867 then noted that; "Mr. Sturt said the Bench considered that the only part of the evidence that at all compromised Wheeler was that of Drummond, but the Bench was of opinion that Mr. Wheeler showed the document to Mr. Drummond for the purpose of advice, and as there was no other evidence against him he was discharged. The Bench committed Patterson for trial on the 16th December next; bail allowed, himself in £100, and two sureties in £50 each."

The final judgment from the Supreme Court was published in the Australasian Saturday 14 December 1867; "The Supreme Court delivered judgment yesterday in the matter of ex parte Ambrose Johnson, in re J. H. Wheeler, M.L.A. The magistrates of Melbourne having determined, not to commit Mr. Wheeler for trial on a charge of publishing a libel, an application was made to the Supreme Court to use its discretion of giving leave to a private individual to file a criminal information, against the offender. The Court observed that additional facts had now been brought forward, which might induce a different course by a bench of magistrates on another application; remarked that the present application was not made against the libeller, but against a person who was charged only with giving another person's libel additional publicity and noted that the original libeller had been committed by the magistrates for trial and then, under all the circumstances of the case, declined to interfere and exercise its extraordinary jurisdiction."



James Henry Wheeler the MLA for Hepburn who figured in many clashes with Ambrose Johnson. Courtesy of the Daylesford Historical Society



George Patterson is found throughout the chapter on Ambrose Johnson as both friend and foe. Courtesy of the Daylesford Historical Society

Ambrose was certainly in the wars and let down badly by a justice system that he thought was there to protect him. Maybe he would have had a determined smile when he woke up on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> November and read the following in *The Argus*:

The great Daylesford libel action, which occupied the City Court on Tuesday and Thursday of last week, was perhaps the most extraordinary case that has ever been investigated in that or any other court of justice in the colony. Probably most of our readers have perused the reports of proceedings that have appeared in our columns. The story was sufficiently novel and startling to secure for it the attention of the public. It contained matter enough, to furnish material for a five act melodrama, with something remaining over that would work up into a three-volume sensational story of the type now so greatly in vogue. And the dramatis personae are not the kind of persons that usually figure in tales of colonial crime and suffering, true or false. Here were none of your doubled dyed scoundrels from Cockatoo or Port Arthur. No Norfolk Islanders are these, but responsible men, well placed in the world--justices of the peace, mayors, members of Parliament and the like. On which side lies the crime and on which the suffering, has yet to be ascertained; but the extraordinary fact is already before us, that two sets of men, rival factions in a small inland township, have waged against each other a war as deadly as a Corsican vendetta, in the course of which murder and fire raising, if never actually contemplated or planned by the one party, were gravely anticipated by the other! The quarrel has been growing for years, The Daylesford township and gold-field having greatly fallen away from the prosperity that both once enjoyed, the leading men of the place, having little else to do, engaged in domestic strife of the most rancorous description; and each party having a newspaper in its interest, the war was kept up with the utmost vigour on either side. Anything served for an excuse--the position of a new bridge, the bestowing or withholding of some piece of local preferment, municipal or political elections--about all those it was, metaphorically if not literally, war to the knife and to the fire-stick. In January last affairs began to come to a crisis. Patterson, who has been committed for trial on a charge of writing and publishing a false, scandalous, and malicious libel against Ambrose Johnson, having then fallen out with his party, made a declaration to the effect that he had conspired with the Mr. Johnson already mentioned, and with one G. H. Jamieson, some months before, to murder Mr. Wheeler, M.L.A., and to burn down the office of the newspaper in the interests of that gentleman and his party! This precious document is now alleged to have been shown to certain parties some months after it was signed, by Mr. Wheeler, which formed the libelous publishing for which he was tried on Thursday, and acquitted on the following day.

In connexion [sic] with this case, our question presses for an answer; How did the magistrate who received Patterson's declaration reconcile it with his sense of public duty to keep what was disclosed to him from the knowledge of the police? Did Mr. M'Nicoll, (for that is the magistrate name) believe that there was a conspiracy in the town to commit arson and murder? If so, his strange reticence would have rendered him a guilty participator in the event of these crimes being consummated. If, on the other hand, he believed that Patterson's declaration was false, then he was countenancing perjury, and aiding in the concoction of a scandalous and malicious libel, when he attached his attesting signature to the document. Whichever view we take of this magistrate's conduct in the matter, it is equally indefensible and extraordinary. As a medical practitioner in the small community in which the parties to the affair were prominent members, he must have found himself placed, during many months, in the unpleasant predicament of having incendiaries and murderers for his associates or a perjured libeller, according as he believed or disbelieved the declaration which he had assisted Patterson to make. Possibly he has already suffering sufficiently for his gross indiscretion. To carry a guilty secret in his bosom from January to November would be heavy punishment to most men; but then Mr. M'Nicoll must have a strangely constituted mind or he would never have fallen into his present scrape. We would certainly recommended his conduct to the notice of the Minister of Justice. Only that Mr. Kindon is himself a difficult psychological problem. We should look to see prompt action taken with Mr. M'Nicoll, magistrate and coroner on the ground of his conduct throughout this

It is difficult to foresee any development to the Daylesford scandal case which will not be highly unsatisfactory on public grounds. Patterson is now awaiting his trial for libel--will he admit the libel,



prove it true, and justify it. In that case he will only clear himself of one charge by convicting himself of another still more heinous. And then he can scarcely prove his declaration true, as the only witnesses who could avail him are the alleged co-conspirators, who, if guilty, cannot be expected to convict themselves. Whatever may be the issue of the present proceedings, the scandal will remain as a blot upon our civilisation and a stain upon our good name. Daylesford has been singularly unfortunate in being so frequently the theatre of outrage and crime. No district in the colony is more favoured by nature - none has been so desecrated by man. Beautiful and picturesque beyond most other regions, it has long enjoyed a bad eminence as most lawless and unsafe; and this scandal case is more damaging to its reputation than the murders, and robberies, and brutal ravishings that had previously rendered it notorious, inasmuch as now some persons are necessarily implicated whose circumstances placed them beyond the ordinary incentives to crime, and whose position, private and public, should have rendered them active supporters of the law and sworn enemies to disorder and crime. It is only left to us to hope that the disgraceful affair will now be sifted to the bottom."

During all of the court cases and the moving back and forth between Daylesford and Melbourne there is a major social occasion that Ambrose gets invited to. Ambrose is one of thousands who was invited to the Royal Levee to meet the Duke of Edinburgh. This took place in Melbourne on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 1867.

The Daylesford Mercury and Express April 9, 1868 has an article that shows Ambrose sold his part ownership of the newspaper. "I have this day sold to Messrs. Croft and Brown ... all my interest in the 'Daylesford Express' newspaper ..."

The new owners placed an article in the same paper indicating that they had taken over the ownership. Further they had used the editorial to reply to a local writer who had called himself 'Liege' and insinuated that Ambrose Johnson had used his position as the Borough Surveyor to make a slab path in front of his Camp Street residence and office. The editor wrote, "It must have been well known ... that Mr. Johnson made the pathway at his own expense." He went on to castigate the correspondent for not being open and honest and for an unmanly and unethical dig at Ambrose, stating, "But it was perhaps the correspondent's prodigious witticism that, 'there was something rotten in (the state) of Denmark' which induced the lively gentlemen of Albert Street to insert his vindictive correspondence."

Ambrose became embroiled in a court case involving Rath and Patterson. The Daylesford Mercury and Express May 6<sup>th</sup> 1869 reported the case. Ambrose had given £60 to the two men for furniture and effects but was then denied ownership of these. He asked the local policeman, Constable Price, to execute a warrant and to seize the goods. This was carried out but Rath and Patterson took the matter to court claiming the seizure of the goods was unlawful. The judge ruled in Ambrose's favour.

In June 1869 Ambrose and Margherita are stunned when their son Ambrose (Junior) became unwell. The boy lingered for nearly two weeks before succumbing to diphtheria. He died on 6<sup>th</sup> July, and was laid to rest in the Daylesford Cemetery. They both must have thought back to the parents of the 3 lost children and knew what it was like to lose someone so small and vulnerable.

Unfortunately there is nothing more recorded that could give us an insight into the life and times of Ambrose (Junior). Like so many children of the time his life was cut short by the devastating diseases of the time. Fritz and Bertha had lost a brother and they also must have been stunned and devastated.



Ambrose Johnson Junior's grave in the Daylesford Cemetery interred 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1869 died from diphtheria. Photo by D.J.Johnson

Ambrose in his melancholy continued to be as robust as possible. An advertisement in *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic: 1848 - 1957) Friday 2 July 1869 p 3 indicated "Transfer of Land Statute -No, 2200\_ Ambrose Johnson, of Camp-street, in the borough of Daylesford, county of Talbot, surveyor and miller, has applied to bring the land described at the foot hereof under the above statute; and the Commissioner of Titles has directed notice of the application to be advertised in "The Argus" newspaper, and has appointed fourteen days from such advertisement, after which time the land will be brought under the operation of the statute, unless a caveat shall be lodged forbidding the same,

Dated the 24th day of June, 1869. Land Referred To. Crown Allotments 9 and 10 of Section 27, Daylesford, parish of Wombat, county of Talbot."

The above advertisement indicated that Ambrose was the owner of a flour mill. The flour mill was located on the south-west corner of Ruthven and Vincent Streets and originally owned by George Jay.

Ambrose had been involved in buying this flour mill through dubious means. The flour mill saw Ambrose back in court defending his rightful ownership as reported in *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic:1848 - 1957) Monday 22 November 1869 p 6;

"Law Report. Supreme Court. Old Court-house - Saturday, Nov. 20.

This was a redemption suit, instituted by the mortgagors of the Daylesford Flour-mills and other property in Daylesford. The bill stated that in 1861 George Jay mortgaged the mills to an insurance company for £1,000. He afterwards settled this and other property on his wife. The insurance company had conveyed the property to the defendant Johnson, who pressed for payment and threatened to sell. It was then arranged that the trustees of the settlement, and Mr. and Mrs. Jay, should give a new mortgage to Johnson of all the property included in the settlement. This mortgage was executed June, 1867, containing a provision for the extinction of the debt by instalments. In February, 1868, default having been made in some of the payments, Johnson sold the property by auction, and it was bought by Buscombe. In March Buscombe conveyed it to Johnson. The bill alleged that Buscombe bought as agent for Johnson; that the sale was, in fact, a sham; and that the mortgage contained no power of sale. The defendants contended by their answer that the sale was a *bona fide* one that, there was no fraud.

It was contended for plaintiffs that the evidence fully supported the allegations in the bill; that the conduct of the parties, before and after the alleged sale to Buscombe, was inconsistent with any other theory than that the sale by Johnson to Buscombe was, in reality, a sale by Johnson to himself; and further, that the mortgage deeds under which the sale had taken place did not, under the circumstances, as proved in evidence, authorise it, as Jay, although a nominal defendant on the record, was substantially in the interest of the plaintiffs. Mr. Dwyer addressed his arguments in support of the case put by the plaintiffs. He animadverted on the harshness of Johnson's conduct, as shown by the manner in which the sale was conducted: contended that no default sufficient to render the power of sale exercisable had been made in the payments; and that the admissions of Johnson and Buscombe to several of the witnesses showed that Buscombe was an agent in the matter."

The decision by the court took some time and it was in *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic: 1848 - 1957) Thursday 21 April 1870 p 7 that we find the following;

"The suit was instituted to set aside the pretended exercise of a power of sale in a mortgage deed. The plaintiffs were the trustees of the marriage settlement of a Mrs. Jay, on whom property in Daylesford was settled by her husband. The property was subject to a mortgage for £1,000 to the Australasian Insurance Company. The defendant Johnson advanced the trustees money to pay off the company, and obtained an assignment of the mortgage, and entered into possession of the property. He was to be repaid, principal and interest, by the tenants paying him £6 per week rent. Alleging that default had been made, he sold the property by auction to Buscombe, who soon after reconveyed to him. Issues had been sent for trial by a jury whether default had been made, and whether Buscombe had bought as agent for Johnson, and the jury answered both questions in favour of plaintiffs. The case now came on for decree on these findings.

Mr. Stephen asked for a decree that the sale to Buscombe was fraudulent and void, and for an account of what was due to Johnson, as mortgagee in possession, the master being at liberty to charge him an occupation rent and costs till the decree against Johnson and Buscombe.

His Honour said he would not give costs against Buscombe. Plaintiffs might consider themselves well off that Buscombe did not appear to ask costs against them.

Mr. Dwyer asked for Jay's costs as against Johnston [sic] ...His Honour said that Jay was merely a formal defendant, and he was not inclined to give him costs. He would consider the case."

The final decisions re the case was given the next day and reported in *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic: 1848 - 1957) Thursday 28 April 1870 p 6. This was a somewhat complicated ruling and basically says Ambrose won some and lost some.

"His Honour, the decree he would make was as follows :- Declare that the sale of the mortgaged property in bill mentioned to the defendant James K. Buscombe was not warranted, inasmuch as if the rents received by the defendant Ambrose Johnson prior to the 26th day of December, 1867, had been applied to the mortgage debt, there was no right in the said defendant to sell ; and also declare that the said sale was fraudulent, being made to the said defendant J. H. K. Buscombe as an agent for the said defendant Ambrose Johnson; and declare that the plaintiffs, George H. Jamieson and Robert Henderson, are entitled to redeem the said mortgaged property, and that the said Ambrose Johnson is liable to account for the proceeds of the allotments 9 and 10 of the said sold property, as mortgagee in possession. Refer it to the master to take an account of the amount due on account of the sum secured by the deed of the 27th day of June, 1867, in bill mentioned, giving the said defendant Ambrose Johnson credit for the sum of £1,000 therein mentioned, and interest thereon at the rate of £12.10s. for every £100 by the year ; and also for money laid out by him in repairing and improving the mortgaged premises, pursuant to the letter of the plaintiff G. H. Jamieson, dated the 10th day of September, 1867, in the said defendant's answer mentioned, with like interest; and also credit for all other sums by him properly laid out in other repairs (not being alterations) of the said mortgaged premises, premiums of

insurance, rates, taxes, and expenses of collection, assignments, costs of proceedings against tenants, and other outgoings; and charging the said defendant Ambrose Johnson with all sums which he received, or without wilful default might have received, of the rents, issues, and profits of the said allotments 9 and 10, or in lieu thereof, from the 10th day of February, 1868, at the option of the plaintiffs (George Henry Jamieson and Robert Henderson), charging the said defendant from and after the said date with a reasonable occupation rent for the said allotments 9 and 10, such rent to be measured without adding to the value for alterations or improvements made by the said defendant A. Johnson after that date. Direct the master, in taking the said accounts, to make a rest on the 26th day of December, 1867, the 26th day of June, 1868, and so on half-yearly, charging interest at the said rate only on the balances from time to time remaining due. Order the said defendant Ambrose Johnson to pay plaintiffs their costs of this suit, including those of the issues up to and including this decree, when taxed and ascertained. Refer it to the master to tax and ascertain the same, Direct that the bill be dismissed as to the defendant J. H. K. Buscombe. Direct that the said defendant J. H. K. Buscombe and the defendant George Jay abide their own costs respectively. Reserve the question of future costs and further directions; liberty to apply.”



Ambrose John bought properties on the corners of Hill St and . He built a brick residence on the land to the left.  
Photos by D. J. Johnson

In May 28<sup>th</sup> 1870 Ambrose was incarcerated in the Melbourne Gaol after not paying £572. 5S in an equity suit of Johnson V Jameison. There had been negotiations between the parties regarding payment with the subsequent arrest and jailing of Ambrose. One can speculate that this referred to the flour mill case noted above.

The judge in his summing up said, “...I think there was something of impropriety and of sharp practice in arresting the defendant (Ambrose Johnson) ...” It is interesting to note that this unnecessary humiliation hoisted on Ambrose did not offer him a lesson as he himself was guilty of using these tactics later on in life (see the story of the ploughman).

Ambrose appears to have had enough of Daylesford and all the problems and people he keeps clashing with. He asks the local auctioneer to sell his substantial property. The advertisement is found in The Argus (Melbourne, Vic: 1848 - 1957) Friday 14 October 1870 p 2

“Alfred Bliss has been favoured with instructions to sell at Bleakley's Commercial Hotel, Vincent Street, Daylesford, on Friday, October 25, at twelve o'clock, The following Valuable Freeholds.

Lot 1. Allotments 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of Portion 37A parish of Wombat, containing 2a 10r, fronting Hill and Camp streets, on which is erected brick residence, stable, coach house and outbuildings. Lately the property of Mr. Ambrose Johnson.”

In June 1871 Ambrose was in the Clarence River area making a scientific geological survey on behalf of himself and others. Whether the survey was successful is not known but it becomes evident that Ambrose was smitten by the area. The setting of Warregah Island might have brought back memories of the canals and lowlands in his precious Denmark. He bought land in the area and took up farming. He appeared happy to be an overseer of his properties rather than the farmer getting his hands dirty. Fritz was now 12 and this may also have influenced Ambrose's buying land, wanting to give his son a purpose in life and one like his grandfather Annie's would make sense.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1872 we find he has been in the Clarence River NSW area and written a letter to the editor of the local newspaper.

“Ambrose Johnson -We have received a letter from the North Arm (Clarence River) bearing the signature of the above gentleman, complaining of the report of an election meeting held in that neighbourhood over which he presided. As the report complained of did not appear in our columns, we must decline to give insertion to Mr. Johnson's letter.”

Our next proof that he had settled in the Clarence River area sometime early 1871 comes from an advertisement in The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser 20 April 1872, Ambrose is selling land that he owned. It would appear that the sale is for part of the total land holding that he had purchased.



Ambrose Johnson farmed on the Warregah River after leaving Daylesford. It looks like his native homeland of Denmark.

“Choice farms Warregah Island rich brush land comfortable homestead.

T. Bawden has been favoured with instructions from Ambrose Johnson Esq., to sell by public auction, at the Rooms Grafton, on Thursday, 25th April, at Eleven o'clock sharp the whole of his magnificent property on Warregah Island, North Arm, comprising Lot 1 All that Piece or parcel of land, containing fifty-six acres two roods (more or less), being the whole of portion one hundred and thirty five, and part of portion one hundred and thirty seven, of the parish of Harwood. Upon this lot there is a comfortable weatherboard verandah shingled Cottage containing six rooms, detached kitchen, and servant's room, pantry, &c, large barn. This lot is partially fenced, about eleven acres are cleared-seven acres of which are planted with sugar cane fit for cropping next season. There is also a paddock of about seven acres, the trees on which are sapped.

Lot 2 All that Piece or parcel of land, containing forty acres two roods (more or less), being part of portion one hundred and thirty-seven. About ten acres of this lot are cleared, six of which are under cane and maize crop.

Lot 3 All that Piece or parcel of land containing forty six acres (more or less) inclusive of a roadway twenty five links wide, extending through its length on one side, being portion one hundred and thirty-eight about ten acres of this lot have been cleared.

Lots One, Two, and Three have frontage to the main channel of the North Arm, immediately opposite the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's Works, Chatsworth Island.

Lot 4 All that Piece or parcel of land, containing forty four acres (more or less), portion one hundred and thirty-nine. Twenty -seven acres of this lot, originally rich brush, has been felled and partially cleared. This lot is situate on the back channel of the North Arm, immediately at the rear of lots Two and Three, through the latter of which there is a roadway reserved to the main channel.

These really choice properties are well worthy of the attention of Farmers, Capitalists, and others. The position and quality of the land is unequalled.

Further particulars may be obtained from the Proprietor, on the Estate, or from the Auctioneer.”

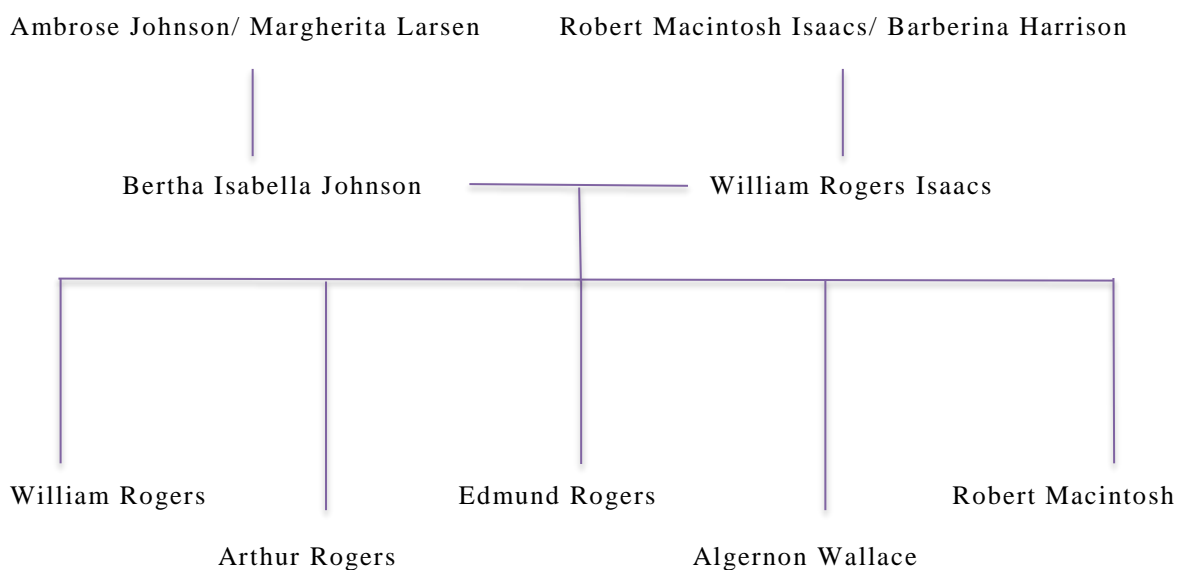
Ambrose did not move from the district as he became a magistrate 18 months later. His name appeared in an appointment notice by His Excellency the Governor on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1873, with the advice of the Executive Council he was pleased to appoint the under mentioned gentlemen to be Magistrates of the colony, viz.:... Ambrose Johnson, of Warregah Island, North Arm, Clarence River.

His first job was to be an easy one probably to break him in. On 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1874 at the Grafton Court he granted a billiard licence to the proprietor of the South Grafton Hotel. Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser (Grafton,NSW: 1859 - 1889) Tuesday 10 March 1874 p 4)

Ambrose’s daughter Bertha was married as reported in the Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842 - 1954) Saturday 21 March 1874 p 1;

“ISAACS—JOHNSON.—March 5, by special license, at Warregah, Clarence River, by the Rev. J. Spencer, William R., eldest son of Robert M'Intosh Isaacs, barrister-at-law, to Bertha Fritzina, only daughter of Ambrose Johnson, Esq., late of Denmark.”

**Pedigree of Bertha and William Isaacs**



As part of a deputation Ambrose signed a letter dated Tuesday 1 September, 1874 requesting a meeting with the Mayor of Grafton. The purpose of the meeting was to get alterations done to the Grafton Courthouse.

“To His Worship the Mayor of Grafton,

Sir, We, the undersigned, hereby request that you will convene a meeting, for an early day, to Consider the Proposed Alterations in the

Court House, &c, at Grafton, and to take such measures it may be deemed advisable to procure alterations and additions more suitable to the growing wants of the district, and the establishment of circuit court at Grafton.

We are, Sir, your most obedient servants

John Zuill, J.P. Ambrose Johnson, J.P. ...”

The mayor’s reply was published below the above letter indicating he was happy to have a meeting.

Sometime late 1874 Ambrose decided to employ a ploughman. Due to a contractual disagreement between the two they ended up in court. The case is captured in the Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser (Grafton, NSW: 1859 - 1889) 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1876 but was long and drawn out. The case was extended over 18 months and the court proceedings took a total of 9 hours. It engendered a lot of local interest and so the courthouse was always packed.

Basically it revolved around the 2<sup>nd</sup> Section of the Master and Servants’ Act and the difference in what the defendant (Arnold) and the plaintiff (Ambrose Johnson) said was the agreed contract.

When seeking a ploughman Ambrose heard that a chap named Arnold was available and seeking such work. Arnold was an hotelier and owned other property but was keen to do farm work.

Ambrose approached him and they agreed that Arnold would begin work the next week. Arnold also asked if there was any work for his wife and daughter to which Ambrose replied in the negative. Arnold then suggested that a hut be built for him and his family and this was agreed to.

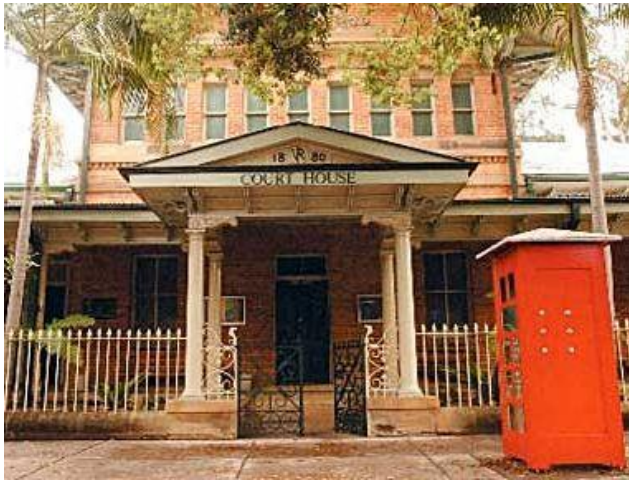
Now it seems that everything had been amicably agreed to but things come to a head several months later when Arnold gave a month’s notice to leave. At that point Ambrose refused the request explaining that the contract he agreed to work for 12 months at £1 per week and rations. Arnold said the contract he believed he had taken was for one month’s advanced notice. Arnold worked the month and left.

Ambrose then took out a warrant as he believed Arnold had contravened the 2<sup>nd</sup> Section of the Masters and Servants Act.

This warrant was issued and Ambrose sent his son Fritz to pick it up. The Magistrate told the boy that he would only release the warrant to the father. Ambrose consequently rode into Grafton, retrieved the warrant and took it to the police to be executed.

Arnold was arrested and handcuffed in front of his family and friends. He was taken by boat back to Grafton and incarcerated in the lockup for two days. He claimed that this was humiliating and that he had done nothing wrong. He sued Ambrose for malicious prosecution.

After 9 hours of deliberation the court found Ambrose guilty and he was required to pay Arnold £150 in damages.



Grafton Courthouse est. 1880. Ambrose was a Magistrate as well as a defendant in this building.

A letter to the NSW Colonial Secretary was written by Ambrose to the local paper after a flood through the Clarence River area. According to the locals much of the press was trumped up so Ambrose in his usual determined and thorough way set about finding out the real damage done. His letter published in the Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser (Grafton, NSW: 1859 - 1889) Saturday 19 August 1876 p 2 is self-explanatory:

“To the Honorable the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, Sydney.

Warregah Island, North Arm, Clarence River, August 10, 1876.

Sir, having come to the conclusion that, so far as the portion of the Clarence River with which I am more particularly connected (namely, the north main land and islands between Rocky Mouth and the Heads), the injuries sustained in the recent flood have been grossly exaggerated by alarmists in the Sydney and local Press. I made it my business, in company with another gentleman, Mr. A. M'Innes of Warregah Island, to visit most of the farmers and planters individually upon their own farms and plantations, and have satisfied myself that not only did they not sustain any injury worth recording, but they believe almost unanimously that they will derive substantial benefit from the deposit of rich alluvial which the flood has left on their land, and with the exception of one man, who has lost a few head of cattle through having penned them in a yard from which they could not escape, the entire amount of cattle lost is seven.

I visited about 63 of the residents, all of whom coincide in the views I have expressed, and have authorised me to publish them. Amongst the residents referred to are the representatives of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company at Chatsworth, two proprietors of private sugar mills, three hotel keepers, two storekeepers, and numerous farmers of long- standing and experience in the district. To each person I visited the subjoined list of questions were submitted, and with one or two exceptions replied to in the form also subjoined. The replies of each individual, with his signature at foot, are in my possession.

I have been informed by gentlemen, who have made similar inquiries on the south mainland, and Palmer's and other Islands between Rocky Mouth and the Heads that the information received has been to the like effect.

No doubt it will be found in a few instances on the upper river that injuries have been sustained by farmers, but I believe on the whole it will be found that the general injuries sustained will be counter-balanced tenfold by the general benefits conferred by the rich alluvial residuum deposited.



I am, &c., (Signed) Ambrose Johnson, J.P.”

In response to Ambrose’s letter above the editor of *the Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser* (Grafton,NSW: 1859 - 1889) was unduly critical of what was written. It obviously irked Ambrose, in particular what he deemed was unfair misquoting, so he fired back another letter;

“To the editor of the Examiner,

Sir, - The Subject of my letter to the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, published in your last issue, having been somewhat unfairly criticised, and as I cannot help thinking knowingly misrepresented, in the same issue, may I request a place in your next publication for the following remarks. In my letter, published on the same page with your remarks, I said ‘No doubt it will be found in a few instances on the upper river that injuries have been sustained by farmers.’ Misquoting my letter in your leader, which you have done in italics, you have made me say, ‘No doubt it will be found in a few instances on the Upper Clarence that injuries have been sustained,’ altogether omitting the words by farmers; and by your subsequent remarks criticising the quotation as including the commercial losses sustained in Grafton. I had no intention of prying into the affairs of the commercial community or of attempting to lift the veil which separates them and their affairs from all but the privileged eyes whom alone, in common with the losers, their losses concern.

The remarks I made were confined exclusively to planters and agriculturists and their losses, and my object in making and publishing them, which I did by express permission, was, as avowed in my letter, to prove that the injuries sustained had been grossly exaggerated in the Sydney and portion of the local press.

I would also beg to draw your attention to the fact that I did not say, ‘Mr. P. Fipp had 60 sides of bacon damaged’, but I did give Mr. P. Fipp's own answer, that he had 50a of corn damaged.

Yours &c, Ambrose Johnson, J.P. Warregah Island, North Arm, August 19.”

Shortly after another letter appeared in the *Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser* (Grafton,NSW: 1859 - 1889) Saturday 26 August 1876 p ). It was from Mr. Andrew Somerville, one of the oldest farmers in the Clarence River District. He took Ambrose to task although his information doesn’t link readily to what Ambrose had written in his letters.

“To the editor of the Examiner,

Sir,- Seeing the accounts of the late flood in the Examiner and other local papers, I wish, as one of the oldest residents in the Clarence River district, to contradict statements made by Mr. Ambrose Johnson. That gentleman or you must have made a mistake.

W. Hiland, D. Campbell, D. Fraser, D. Kirk, and J. M'Aulay had over 18 inches to spare (from the flood). There is no Mr. Conlon or A. M'Millan living on Chatsworth Island. Quailey, M'Aulay, Farmer, Somerville, and the Sugar Company's Mill had over 3 feet 6 inches to spare, and all the cottages on both sides of the mill had to spare on the river bank. Jones, Archibald, Fraser, senr. Fraser, junr. Poolman, and others had one foot to spare, and three-quarters of a mile back there was plenty of dry land for camping ground for cattle, other parts may have suffered more, but I think nothing to hurt.

Mr. Johnson, when he undertakes such an arduous task, ought to state facts. Having seen all the floods in the river for the last, sixteen years, I do not think the present one has done more damage than the '63 flood. Some people thought they were ruined, but they soon found it otherwise. The waters may

have injured some of the maize growers up the river, but the sugar planters have not suffered in any way, neither has the cane. At the Sugar Company's Mill the week after the flood, the average density of the juice was 10 1/2 degrees, which was never reached any previous season.

Mr. George Morrison, of Goodwood Island, instead of having 10 inches of water, had over that to spare. Mr. Morrison, Mr. J. M'Aulay, and Mr. Andrew Somerville state that the flood was not higher than the '63 flood at their respective places.

I will give you a more detailed account by and by.

I remain, &c., Andrew Somerville. Chatsworth Island, August 21, 1876.”

Even though Ambrose had sold 4 lots at auction back in 1873 he still maintained other acreage in the Warregah Island farm lands. On 30 December, 1876 the Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser (Grafton, NSW: 1859 - 1889) Tuesday 9 January 1877 p 2 carried his request to erect 2 gates on sections of his property.

“Public Gates.-Application has been made by Mr. Ambrose Johnson for a gate (not less than 11 feet wide), on reserved road at the south boundary of A. Johnson's 53 acres, portion 136, Warregah Island, parish of Harwood, county of Clarence: and also for a gate (not less than 11 feet wide), on reserved road at the north boundary of A. Johnson's 46 acres, portion 138, Warregah Island, same parish and county.”

Ambrose continued to show his civic responsibility this time by assisting the Grafton School Committee. He joined the committee as an advisor to building a new infant school. His surveying skills were clearly appreciated by the committee. It was reported in the Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser (Grafton, NSW: 1859 - 1889) Tuesday 29 May, 1877 that on Friday last the new Infant School, which has just been completed, was formally opened, by Mr. Hawdon, M.P., of the Local School Board. There was a large attendance of children present, also and a considerable number of lady and gentlemen visitors.

In his speech Mr Hawdon noted that the building, was neat and substantial, and had been faithfully built under the superintendence of Mr. Ambrose Johnson, the representative of the Council.

Ambrose continued in his role as a Justice of the Peace and was involved in a drowning case as reported in The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser (NSW: 1843 - 1893) Saturday 3 November 1877 p 7:

“A magisterial inquiry was held at Poverty Point on Friday last, the 19th instant, before Mr. Ambrose Johnson, J P., touching the death of a man named Donald Murray, whose decease by drowning was reported in our last issue. Sergeant Lenihan deposed that from information received he proceeded to Poverty Point, and was shown a dead body in a water dam; the body was in a partially standing position, the side face resting against one of the projections of the dam, and about six inches beneath the water; on the body being removed from the water, no marks of violence were discernible, except under the right eye, where the skin and a portion of the flesh had been removed, and a few other slight injuries about the face and neck, which a witness attributed to the body having been preyed on by craw fish that were numerous in the water; in searching the body he found two £1 notes and sixpence in silver in a chamois bag, together with a few other articles; witness subsequently inspected the hut previously occupied by deceased; the door was fastened by a padlock ; on the door being opened, the hut did not present the appearance of having been occupied for some time; the dam was afterwards drained, and its greatest depth was a little over five feet. From the evidence of W. E. Granville, F. B. Johnson, and R. Nicholson, it appeared that deceased was last seen alive on the 13th instant, and that he had lately been in depressed spirit. The magistrate having failed to arrive at any definite conclusion as to the cause of death, the depositions were forwarded to the Attorney General for his decision.”

It is interesting to note that the witness F. B. Johnson mentioned as witness above is Ambrose's son Fritz Borregard. He was working for either the shire or the courts and would have been 19 years old.

Although he kept his land on Warregah Island, Ambrose moved on and looked to mining once again. During 1878 he took up a position as mining manager of the Long Tunnel Gold Mine at Timbara, New England.

Financially things caught up with Ambrose as it is reported in The Australian Town and Country Journal (Sydney, NSW: 1870 - 1907) Saturday 16 November 1878 p 14 that he was insolvent as follows:

“Ambrose Johnson, of Warregah Island, Clarence River, surveyor. Cause of sequestration : Insolvent has been sued by the Australian Alliance Insurance Company as a surety for money alleged to have been advanced eleven years ago in Victoria to one Frederick A. Newton, which liability insolvent disputes, and has taken defence to the action which he is unable to prosecute for want of means. The amount is £112. The only other creditor is Edward Arnold who, in January, 1877, obtained a verdict for £50 damages besides costs, at the Grafton District Court before Judge Meymott, but the Supreme Court sitting in Banco unanimously set aside that verdict and granted a new trial. This action was again tried at Grafton before Judge Meymott in July last, when a verdict for £200 damages, with costs, was obtained. Insolvent, in his affidavit, maintains and says he is advised that the verdict is bad in law. Liabilities, £312, of which £200 is secured; assets, £10.”

A rather elaborate advertisement in the Australian Town and Country Journal (Sydney, NSW: 1870 - 1907) Saturday 14 May 1881 p 40 shows Ambrose is still working in the mining surveyor area. He has been engaged on a private commission.

The advertisement is the Prospectus of the Comstock Gold and Silver Mines Company, Gurnie Creek, Upper Murray District, NSW. The company was seeking additional capital to purchase machinery for the extraction of gold and silver.

“The property has been recently inspected on behalf of the new company by Mining Engineer and Surveyor Mr. Ambrose Johnson, who holds diplomas from the Governments of Denmark, Victoria, and New South Wales, whose report in extense and plan can also be had on application.”

Ambrose continues to be involved in the mining industry and finds himself at Poverty Point (north of Euchuca, NSW) as we see in the Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser (Grafton, NSW: 1859 - 1889) Saturday 19 August 1882 p 8;

The following is taken from the annual report the Department of Mines of New South Wales for the year 1881.

“From Mr. Warden Graham's report we extract the following:- At Poverty Point, extensive works are still being carried on by the Surface Hill Sluicing Company, under the supervision of Mr. Ambrose Johnson. The works consist of dams, reservoirs, and races, to obtain a sufficient supply of water for hydraulic sluicing. I am informed the company have expended over £10 000 in preliminary works. For a short period when water was available a trial was made and a quantity of dirt put through; the result was most satisfactory, showing a large profit over working expenses. I regret that, I have not lately had an opportunity of visiting this interesting mine, and, being able to report more fully on the progress of the works; but I am informed by Mr. Johnson that sluicing will probably commence in two to three months. The works consist of nearly 10 miles of races, a considerable amount of fluming, some of it over 60 feet high and a tunnel 60 chains long, through a spur range. The tunnel was a work of great magnitude, as hard diorite rock had to be contended with.

The works at Poverty Point alone, if the result of the sluicing comes near the expectation based on trials, will give a great impetus to mining. The land held by the company will take many years to work out, in fact it is impossible to arrive at an estimate of the extent of the gold-bearing granite; the ranges of mountains in the neighborhood, and probably miles of country, will yield payable gold under the process of hydraulic sluicing. As I have before reported the gold is contained in the granite, and a large proportion of the rock is rotten, and can be cut down with the hydraulic; the hard granite, contains the same average of gold, but it is a question whether it will pay for crushing. I have no doubt but if this company succeed, other mines in the vicinity will be started, as the belt of gold-bearing granite is known to extend a considerable distance; the great drawback is the want of water, which can only be overcome by the expenditure of capital.”

An application to mine copper on the Wellington (between Orange and Dubbo, NSW) is received by the Department of Mines NSW from Ambrose and another person, James Fletcher, Jun. as advertised in the Australian Town and Country Journal (Sydney, NSW: 1870 - 1907) Saturday 24 May, 1884 p 8

“Date of application. April 23, 1884 ; name James Fletcher, jun; description of land applied for, upon and under portion of the Permanent Common, county of Wellington, parish of Wellington; extent, 40 acres; purpose for which land is to be used, to mine for copper.

Date of application, April 23, 1884; name, Ambrose Johnson ; description of land applied for, upon and under portion of the Permanent Common, county of Wellington, parish of Wellington; extent, 40 acres; purpose for which land is to be used, to mine for copper.”

It is not possible to determine whether Ambrose was in partnership with Fletcher or whether they were applying in competition. The outcome is not available.

Ambrose moves to Sunny Corner in NSW and we pick up his trail late 1884. Sunny Corner is located west of Lithgow and east of Bathurst in NSW. To get a feel for this new and vibrant mining town at the time Ambrose arrived the following article was in the Australian Town and Country Journal (Sydney, NSW: 1870 - 1907) Saturday 11 October, 1884 p 24.

“The Miner, Silver Mining at Sunny Corner and Mitchell's Creek.

THE most convenient method of reaching Sunny Corner from Sydney is to proceed by train to Rydal whence the mail cart runs to the new township. A waggonette also leaves about every second day starting from Mr. T. J. Moore's Royal Hotel, Rydal distance being about 17 miles. From Bathurst mines are reached by means of Messrs. Cobb Co.'s coaches, a distance of 25 miles. From Rydal the road is very good for the first nine miles, passing through Mount Lambi and Meadow Flat, the land on either side in the valleys being well cultivated, oats occupying the largest area; several small orchards are also noticeable on the line of route. The latter part of the journey is over a bush track, which the greatly increased traffic of late - the generality of the teams passing being very heavily laden with timber, coke, lime, &c, for the various works now being carried on has cut up the way considerably, and in wet weather it must be very heavy.

At this time of the year the scenery is much enlivened by the large quantities of wattle beheld on either side. The first indications of the infant township at Sunny Corner are the corner pegs and trenches cut by the miners to reserve town allotments at intervals of 66ft, fronting what will be the main road. After having passed a number of these a tent or two appears. Here workmen are busily engaged putting up the frameworks of dwellings and stores.

In what will probably be the centre of the town two hotels are near completion and at various points around are a few rough stores comprising a bakery, two butchers, and two produce stores. Large sawmills are shortly to be erected in the vicinity of the town, and tenders will long be called for the erection of a post and telegraph office and police station.

In consequence of the clause of the Mining Act requiring improvements to the value of £10 to be made on the various selections before expiration of 28 days, the whole scene is of bustling activity, the miners, after finishing their daily toil, devoting all their spare energies to the erection of various style dwelling-houses, from the humble and primitive shanty to the more pretentious modern galvanized iron hut. The great majority of the inhabitants still, so to speak, camping out, and clearing is being actively carried on around the new township, which is, if we may believe rumour, to be called Mitchell and commences one mile east of Mitchell's Creek.

The one great drawback to the township will probably be the want of water. The Black Springs in the vicinity are said to become dry in summer time which would necessitate water being brought from Mitchell's Creek.

The only hotel accommodation procurable at the time of our visit was at Murray's, Mitchell's Creek, about a mile and a half from Sunny Corner. Mitchell's Creek, the scene of the old gold rush, is picturesquely situated in a winding valley, steep hills rising abruptly on all sides. The township is an exceedingly small one, consisting of a church, public school, two stores, post office, and three or four houses in the immediate vicinity. The hotel is at some distance, being hidden by a turn of the road.

Everywhere by the road and on the adjacent hills, are evidences of the rush that took place there years back; the whole bed of the creek being turned over, and some of the ridges being completely honeycombed with shafts and drives. Reefing is still being carried on with fair result, but the prevailing craze is silver mining; in fact, all the likely country around where deposit of the precious metal are supposed to exist has hurriedly taken up, and a vast area has been leased for purely speculative purposes. The best view obtainable of the silver-bearing region is from summit of the hill overlooking the Sunny Corner mine. Here the whole country lies spread out before the gaze of the onlooker in one immense panorama; two chains of hills running parallel, with a deep valley intervening, stretch miles away into the far distance; and in the commencement of this valley, and on the slope of the hill-side, is situated the now famous Sunny Corner claim from whence the silver ore is being extracted in such large quantities. It was first worked as an alluvial claim for gold-mining by a party some 17 years back, but owing to the absence of water operations could only be carried on during wet weather...

The nearest silver mine to the township is Tonkin and Co's lease of 20 acres, which adjoins the Sunny Corner on the south, and is the furthest point south where payable ore has been struck. The mine is worked from an adit (tunnel), and the lode was struck at 130ft. The miners are 12ft into the lode, and not yet through it. The manager is Mr. Ambrose Johnson, J.P., a gentle man possessing considerable mining experience...."

The article goes on to describe the many other mining companies operating in the area.

The entire Sunny Corner/Mitchell area proved to be very rich. The newspaper of the above article concluded the article by writing: "... during this short run (of the furnace) it produced bullion containing no less than 7354oz of gold and silver, the principal portion being silver."

As reported in the Australian Town and Country Journal (Sydney, NSW: 1870 - 1907) Saturday 29 November, 1884 p 42, Ambrose is very keen to see Sunny Corner prosper. He became involved in the Progress Committee;

"Sunny Corner, November 24. (1884) Progress Committee. - A large public meeting was held at Varley's Hotel on Saturday, having for its object the formation of a progress committee. Ambrose Johnson, Esq., J.P., presided, and resolutions to that effect were submitted to, and unanimously approved by the meeting. A number of the principal residents of the town and district were then nominated and duly elected to form the committee, amongst others being A. Johnston [sic], J.P., Messrs George, William, and John Hurley, Bulkeley, Pasker, Varley, Harper, Crowley, Purchase, &c."

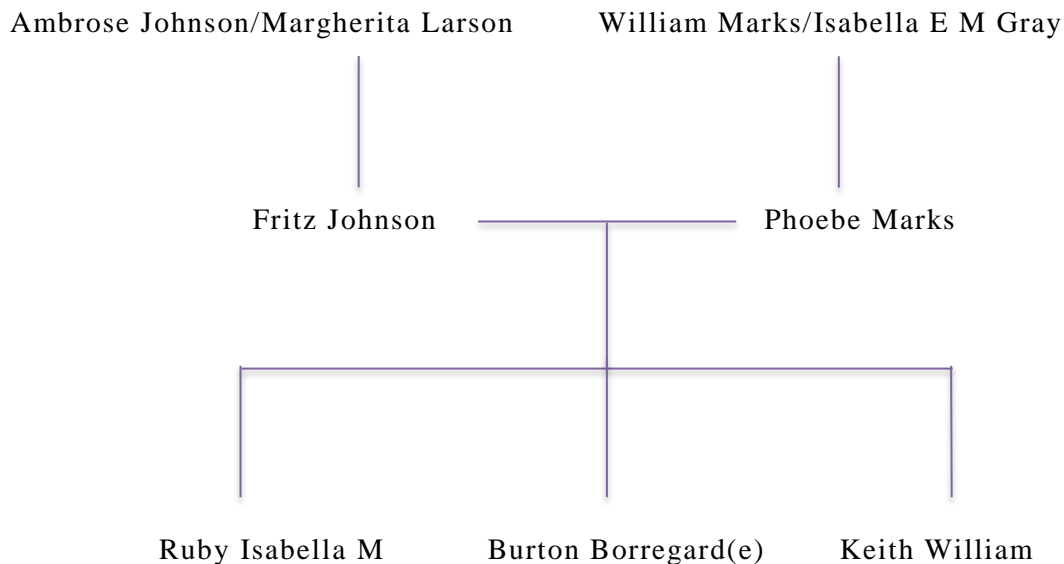


Early photo of the Sunny Corner silver and gold mining area.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1885 Ambrose attends the wedding of his only son, Fritz, to Phoebe Marks at Tirzah, Tweed River. The advertisement was in The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) Tuesday 28 April, 1885 p 1;

“JOHNSON—MARKS.—April 2, at the residence of the bride's parents, by the Rev. J. A. R. Brotchie, M.A., Fritz Borregard, only son of Ambrose Johnson, surveyor, late of Denmark, to Phoebe, daughter of William Marks, Tirzah, Tweed River.”

**Pedigree of Fritz and Phoebe Johnson**



Ambrose continues as chairman of the Sunny Corner Progress Committee as reported in the Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal (NSW : 1851 - 1904) Wednesday 27 May 1885 p 2; “Mr. Cox, of the

Technical College delivered a lecture on, 'Geology;' in Mr. Weinert's, Victoria , Hall, on Tuesday evening; to a fairly large and appreciative audience. Mr. Ambrose Johnson, J.P., occupied the chair.”

Ambrose becomes embroiled in sticking up for the local businesses in Sunny Corner. He writes to the editor of The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) Saturday 5 September, 1885 p 9 complaining about the government’s selection process for the new post office.

“Post Office at Sunny Corner. To the Editor of the Herald.

Sir,—It is reported here that the Government are arranging, or have arranged, with their pet firm—Messrs. Hudson Brothers and Co., Limited—whereby the new post and telegraph offices are to be erected in the timber yard occupied in this town by the aforementioned firm. If the report is true, it is time the public should be acquainted with the injustice of such proceedings, and the Government learn that such practices cannot be done with impunity. There is no necessity for the Government to place themselves under any compliment to this firm, as there are plenty of sections equally as well, and better situated than these under notice, belonging to the Crown; and if they still prefer other ground than the Crown's, let them do as any other business people have to do—buy the land that they consider better adapted—but not to perpetrate the injustice to our fellow and respected townsman, who has so long afforded them accommodation, and insult the good sense and business ideas of all business men in the place by taking the offices from the store (the present position) to another store not so well situated, without the residents either being consulted in the matter, or any official publication being made until all is finally settled—as in the case of the Sydney water supply.

This is written in the hope it will appear in your columns in time for the Government to reconsider the question before committing themselves to an act repugnant to the common sense of all straightforward and justice-loving men. Signed by request. Ambrose Johnson, J.P. Mitchell, Sunny Corner. September 1.”

The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) Saturday 5 September, 1885 p 13 the editor writes back to Ambrose and rebukes his assertions.

“With reference to the letter of Mr. Ambrose Johnson, which appears elsewhere, it would seem from inquiries which we have caused to be made, that the subject of establishing a new post and telegraph office at Mitchell, Sunny Corner, has received very much consideration on the part of the authorities, who without calling for offers of suitable sites or premises received a goodly number. The work of the post and telegraph office has hitherto been conducted by Mr. Buckley but in consequence it is said, of the official work extending and his own business increasing, he recently intimated that he could not continue to act in the capacity of post and telegraph master, and accordingly sent in his resignation. The Government then appointed Mr. Tomkinson, of Carcoar to the vacancy, and about the same time it received a number of offers of sites or premises to be used for postal and telegraphic purposes. Among these offers was one from Messrs. Hudson Brothers' Company, Limited, another from Mr. Tonkin, of Bathurst and a third from, Mr. Buckley. Those from Hudson Brothers and Mr. Tonkin were submitted to Mr. Inspector Watson, of the Telegraph Department, for him to report upon. Messrs. Hudson Brothers offered to erect a certain description of weatherboard cottage, of which plans were submitted, for the Government, and to lease it and the land whereon it will stand at 35s per week for two years with the option of purchase at the end of that period. Mr. Tonkin's offer was of a similar nature; but his terms were that he should receive £125 for 12 or 15 months, or a rental for three or four years of £70 a year. Mr. Watson reported that both sites were centrally situated and suitable. The Government having considered this report finally decided to accept the offer of Hudson Brothers, and so the matter stands.”

Ambrose was a keen participant in politics even to the point of trying to get a local elected. As noted in the Evening News (Sydney, NSW: 1869 - 1931) Thursday 22 October, 1885 p 8, he wrote a letter imploring a John Shepherd to stand for parliament.

“The Electorate of East Macquarie. To John Shepherd, Esq., of Yetholme and Sydney.

Dear Sir, — Understanding that a vacancy in the representation of the Electorate will occur, consequent upon the absence from the colony of New South Wales of Edward Combes, Esq. C.M.G, we request that you will allow yourself to be nominated as a Candidate for the Electorate, and will do our best to secure your return. We remain, Yours respectfully, Ambrose Johnson, J.P. (And here follow 620 other, signatures.)”

John Shepherd replied to the letter explaining why he was unable to accept the kind nomination and added extra notes to score political points. His letter was printed directly under Ambrose’s letter in the Evening News.

“Ambrose Johnson, Esq, J.P. and the others signing the Requisition. Gentlemen, - In response to your largely signed Requisition, I beg to announce to my fellow electors that I am a Candidate for one of the seats now vacant in the Electorate of East Macquarie.”

Ambrose in his role as member of the Sunny Corner Progress Committee invited a speaker to address the packed hall in Sunny Corner. Reported in The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) Wednesday 31 August, 1887 p 10;

“Mr. J.P.T. Caulfield delivered an address in the Carrington Hall, Sunny Corner, last night, and about 300 people assembled. Mr. James Crossley, the chairman of the progress committee, presided, and Messrs. John Dobbie, J.P., and Ambrose Johnson, J.P., occupied seats on the platform. Mr. Caulfield spoke for over two hours, during which time he strongly advocated protection and prophesized it would be the law of the land within two years.”

Ambrose becomes a director of The Australian Band and Albion Gold-mining Company at Sunny Corner. The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) Wednesday 11 July, 1888 p 13 ran an advertisement for the company’s prospectus;

“The Australian Band and Albion Gold-mining Company Sunny Corner Big Hill. To be Registered under the No Liability Act.

CAPITAL: £48,000, in 48,000 SHARES of £1 EACH. 24,000 SHARES are Issued to the Proprietors as paid up to 10s each. 18,000 SHARES have been allotted to the Public on the following terms, viz.: 1s on application, and 1s on allotment. Calls not to exceed 1s per month.

Directors: John Shepherd, Esq., J.P., Ambrose Johnson, Esq., J.P., James Dickie, Esq., Robert Sands, Esq., John Falconer, Esq.

This company is formed for the purpose of purchasing and working 34 acres of mineral lands, situate in the parish of Castleton, county of Roxburgh, in the Mitchell's Creek goldfield district ...

The property is well known as having been (and still is) worked with profit. The present proprietors requiring no money outside of their paid up shares (to 10s), the whole of the proceeds from sale of shares will be expended in the purchase and erection of efficient crushing plant and other machinery, building dams, and the proper development of the mine.

Extensive work has been already performed by the proprietors as will be seen from the reports herewith, which show that, with the erection of suitable machinery, for which purpose the present company is being now formed, it will prove a dividend-paying venture from the very start.



The following reports, from such well known practical authorities as Mr. M'Donald, mining manager and late proprietor of Mount M'Donald Mine, and Captain Ambrose Johnson, J.P., late Mining Surveyor to the Board of Science and the Department of Mines, Victoria, will show the very high opinion they possess of this valuable property.

This mine is most favourably situated, for inspection by share-holders and directors, being situated on the well-known Big Hill, West Mitchell, one mile west of Sunny Corner mine and only 14 miles from Rydal, with daily coaches to and from, and Rydal being only 120 miles from Sydney by rail, visitors leaving by mail train at night, can be on the mine early the following morning.”

Following this information are two reports from the mining surveyors M'Donald and Ambrose Johnson. Both lavish praise on the richness of the mine and the resources available to the miners.

Ambrose had been on the borrow to finance his ventures and over reached himself. In the Australian Town and Country Journal (Sydney, NSW: 1870 - 1907) Saturday 28 December, 1889 p 1 under heading of Sequestrations on Petition of Debtors No. 1928 Ambrose Johnson of Sunny Corner Ambrose is bankrupt.

The court hearing reported in the Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal (NSW: 1851 - 1904) Saturday 8 February, 1890 p 2 gives the reason. “In the case of Ambrose Johnson, of Sunny Corner — Mr. Webb appeared for bankrupt, who attributed his bankruptcy to pressure of creditor, Mr. John Shepherd.”

Even with bankruptcy hanging over him Ambrose continues in his role as Justice of the Peace. He is called to a hearing about the death of a local jockey as reported in The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) Wednesday 28 May, 1890 p 8;

“Sudden death of a Jockey Sunny Corner, Tuesday.

A young man named George Swan, residing at Lithgow, and a jockey by profession, died on the Sunny Corner racecourse yesterday afternoon. The deceased was mounted on Marangaroo, and had just completed a canter prior to the start of the race when he was observed to fall from the horse, and on being picked up life was found extinct. A magisterial inquiry was held by Mr. Ambrose Johnson, J.P., to-day, at Tattersall's Hotel, when, from the medical testimony given, a verdict of death from syncope was returned.”

The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) Saturday 24 September, 1890 p 7 reported the finalising of Ambrose's bankruptcy.

Ambrose is not done with mining as yet. He decided to seek gold and silver in the Dark Corner fields. An advertisement in the Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal (NSW: 1851 - 1904) Friday 3 June, 1892 p 2; from the Department of Mines grants permission for mining activities at Dark Corner.

“Sydney, 31st May. Sir, — I am directed by the Secretary for Mines and Agriculture to inform you that, on the recommendation of the Prospecting Board, the following grants have been made in the Sunny Corner division of the East Macquarie electorate: -Ambrose Johnson, Dark Corner, West Mitchell, to sink a 6 x 3 shaft near S.E. boundary of Homeward Bound St. George Reef to a depth of 200ft at 20s per foot to 100, 25s per foot from 100 to 150, and 30s per foot from 150 to 200ft, also drive or crosscut at 100ft level 100ft 20s per foot, and at the 200ft level 100ft at 25s per foot.”

This is the last we hear of Ambrose in life. He died on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1895 in Bathurst at the age of 75. According to his Death Certificate he had a heart condition, valvular (is any disease process involving

one or more of the four valves of the heart), for several months. His remains are interred in the Church of England section at Bathurst Cemetery.

Margherita lived on at North Arm of the Tweed, Murwillumbah. It would be likely that she lived with Fritz and his wife Phoebe as they owned property in Dunbible which is near to Murwillumbah. She died in 1905 and is buried in the Murwillumbah Cemetery.

JARVIS	George Henry	25.12.1920	4 months
JASCHINSKI	Eileen	8.4.1930	67 years
JAY	Robert Augustus	—	—
JEFFERY	Joseph Alfred	4.3.1926	16 days
	Audrey Jean	13.10.1930	4 years
	June Martin	7.7.1920	4 years
	Madeline Joyce	20.4.1930	89 years
JESS	Jane	18.6.1932	70 years
	William Edward	20.7.1928	69 years
JESSOP	Hannah	8.10.1931	13 hours
	Mary Jean	22.4.1910	2 years
JOHANSEN	Doreen Olga Mary	5.8.1937	84 years
	Frederick	22.9.1923	65 years
JOHANSEN	Mary Jane	26.6.1929	1 year
JOHN	Dawn Maureen	30.6.1929	13 days
JOHNSON	Annie	9.6.1910	47 years
	Charles	11.10.1929	6 weeks
	Dawn Lydia	20.7.1926	13 hours
	Edward	2.12.1942	84 years
	Edwin Hill	14.11.1923	38 years
	Elizabeth Emily	25.8.1919	45 years
	Frederick Thomas	28.11.1906	16 days
	George	5.6.1927	1 hour
	Harold	8.6.1929	78 years
	Isaac	27.8.1922	13 years
	Janie Frederica	21.2.1928	8 hours
	John Keith	19.9.1913	18 years
	Keith William	6.9.1905	84 years
	Margherita C.B.	21.2.1924	57 years
	Nina Rosalie	23.5.1931	15 hours
	Noel Edward	25.8.1907	63 years
	Olaf	22.6.1912	2 days
	Robert		

Honour Board at the Murwillumbah Cemetery entrance shows Margherita C.B. Johnson d 6.9.1905 aged 84 years. Note also her grandson Keith William Johnson. Photo by D.J. Johnson

## Chapter 2



Fritz is 2<sup>nd</sup> male from L back; Phoebe is middle row with dark hat.

# FRITZ BORREGARD JOHNSON

1858 – 1941

**F**ritz Borregard Johnson is somewhat of an enigma in comparison to his more famous father Ambrose. Whereas Ambrose was traceable through newspaper articles, letters and shire records, Fritz seemed to live a quieter life. Nevertheless he still figured prominently in the civic life of the communities he resided in.

His story is pieced together from documents and newspaper articles together with prominent historical happenings of the times. As the author I have taken some liberties in writing this booklet.

The Fritz story starts well before he was born but explains how he came to be born in the Hepburn District near Daylesford, Victoria in 1858.

The family were from Denmark where his mother, who had the delightful name of Margherita Charlotta Blancheffora nee Larsen, met and married his father Ambrose Johnson. The marriage took place on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1847 and they were soon blessed with a baby daughter, Bertha Fritzena, born on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1848.

Ambrose was a highly educated and ambitious man who had qualified as a mining surveyor (engineer). He was also fluent in three languages, Danish, German and English.

At this time there was much unrest in and around Denmark particularly due to the Princes's Wars.

Ambrose decided to emigrate to the United States of America. The family arrived in New York in 1851 and made their way to the goldfields in Georgia. Here Ambrose was able to attain a job as a mining surveyor. The fields had been rich alluvial but this had played out and deep mining was now the go.

The Californian Gold Rushes were just at the beginning of winning fortunes for the prospectors willing to venture there. Many of the Georgian miners did this leaving behind companies to drill deeper into the auriferous bedrock.

By February 1855 Ambrose was looking for newer challenges and has heard about the goldrushes in Australia. He is drawn to one particular area called the Jim Crow Diggings near Daylesford in Victoria.

The family returned to New York arriving in the city early February 1855. Ambrose was able to find a passage to Australia on the ship Tartar. He booked for the three of them and towards the end of February all was in readiness for them to embark on their new venture. One would assume they sailed south around the Horn, across the Pacific and arrived in Port Melbourne early July 1855. The four months at sea would have been a trial in itself.

They disembarked in one of the busiest ports in the World at the time due to the thousands who were flocking to the goldfield around Bendigo and Ballarat. Ambrose would have bought three tickets on the Cobb and Co coach that was headed for the Jim Crow Diggings out near the small town of Daylesford.

They arrived at the diggings and set themselves up on the Racecourse which was in the middle of the diggings stretching from Sailors' Falls to Shepherds' Flats. Ambrose set about becoming a prospector and panning for the elusive gold specks. Water was one of their main problems especially in the dry

season. Major sluicing canals were made and even the ingenuity of the miners saw some blast a tunnel through solid basalt to change the course of the creeks. The hole became known as the Blow Hole.

After three years Ambrose decided to show his credentials to the locals and he was soon given the job as Mining Surveyor for the Hepburn District. This entailed checking on all the mining activities and the miners in his jurisdiction.

Margherita and Bertha battled on under trying conditions throughout this period of time. Margherita finds she has fallen pregnant and she has a baby boy she calls Fritz Borregard.

The Birth Certificate is difficult to follow as the surname is Jensen and mother is registered as Fluer Blanch. This makes it difficult to access and to read. The problem could have been a language difference between mother and the Register. The Register tried to write what he was hearing as phonetically as possible. It is assumed that Ambrose was not available at that time as he was fluent in English.

On 7<sup>th</sup> February 1859 the family is living on the Old Racecourse near Hepburn Springs. In the same month Ambrose petitions the Governor of Victoria for Naturalisation. This is duly granted and so the Danish Johnsons become true blue Aussies.

On May 31<sup>st</sup> at the age of 40, Ambrose and Margherita have a second son. This little one was born at Shepherd's Flats where they must have moved to after being at the Racecourse. His Birth Certificate shows him as unnamed and at first glance gives the belief that he was still born. This is not the case although his future is cut short. The new son is named Ambrose after his obviously proud father.

Sometime in the early 1860s the family moves into new residence at 7 Camp Street in Daylesford. Ambrose has obviously been earning good money from his job and possibly from his fossicking. The house is made of red brick and outside there are stables and a groom's quarters. Across the road on the other corner with Hill Street Ambrose owns the property for agisting his horses and other animals. Margherita and Bertha must have been extremely pleased with this more permanent situation. Over the decade of the 1860s Ambrose becomes embroiled in many situations. With the constant comings and goings of their father the boys would have looked to the stability of family life provided by Margherita and Bertha. Their education and socialization would have fallen to the two ladies. No doubt the boys would have run care free and excited together through the diggings. Their adventures taking them up Wombat Hill, which at this time was denude of all vegetation, and down along the creeks to Wombat Flats (now Daylesford Lake). The daily hustle and bustle would have kept them amused and the different languages shouted across the area they roamed would have been confusing.

All seemed to be wonderful to Fritz and by the time he was 9 years old he would have believed he lived in the best place on earth. All was about to change with two horrific and traumatic incidences. These would have changed his life forever as well as the family's life.

On Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1867 four small boys were playing outside their houses on the other side of Daylesford to where the Johnson family lived. Their attention was taken by a few stray goats moving on the hillside. They made a split decision to go goat hunting. The group consisted of William Graham aged 6, his little brother Thomas aged 4 and their mate Alfred Burman, aged 5. The fourth child had disagreed with their thinking and had turned back after a short distance. The other three

trudged on and even after being warned twice about becoming lost they ignored the pleas and assistance of help. They then disappeared.

The parents and police searched into Sunday night and then by sunlight on Monday the whole of Daylesford and surrounding areas had been alerted. Search parties combed the area where they were last seen and aboriginal trackers were brought in. Nothing was found. To make matters worse the weather had turned bitterly cold and wet on the Sunday night and into the next days.

Ambrose was a part of the search party even offering a reward to anyone who found the children, dead or alive. His gesture was to try to offer an incentive to those who could not normally take time off from their busy days.

At home Fritz and his siblings would have been a grilling about wandering away without telling mother and father where you were headed. They would have been watch by concerned parents and their play antics curtailed. The uncertainty pushed into days and then weeks causing continuous anxiety for all. It would have been a sad and harrowing period for Daylesford population. Families would have been stressing the importance of staying together and loving each other because life can be so easily taken away. How prophetic this was would soon alarm the Johnson family and especially Fritz.

Three months later on 14<sup>th</sup> September, 1867 a dog returned home to its master, McKay, carrying a small boot with a portion of a foot in it. A search party was formed and soon after two little bodies were found inside the hollow of a tree. The third and oldest child had also died there but the scavengers had pulled him out.

A huge funeral was held and a headstone erected from the donations that were given by Ambrose and other townspeople. No doubt Ambrose and Margherita would have attended along with Bertha, Fritz and Ambrose Junior. The lessons to be learnt would have been drummed into the children for many months to come.

The importance of family and loving each other flooded back to Fritz and the others at the end of June 1869. Ambrose Junior began to complain of a sore throat and feeling unwell. He was sent to bed but his condition became worse and so the local doctor was called early July. His diagnosis shocked the close knit Johnson family. Ambrose Junior had contacted Diphtheria and there was no known cure.

Slowly life ebbed out of the frail little boy and it must have broken Fritz's heart to see his brother and playmate looking so forlorn. On the 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1869 he passed away. His funeral was held the next day and his body interred in the Daylesford Cemetery.

By now Ambrose was becoming disenchanted with Daylesford. He had made enemies, been in numerous court cases, bought and sold land and businesses. He had lost one of his precious sons. It was time to move on. He puts all his possessions, residence and land up for auction and leaves for the Clarence River area. He takes his family with him and that would have been a long and intriguing trip for Fritz and the others.

Fritz would have been delighted with the area that his father had chosen to settle in. More so Ambrose and Margherita as the Clarence River looked very similar to their native Denmark. Ambrose brought

several blocks on the Warregah Island. This island is flat and fertile and surrounded by the Clarence River. Every year floods sweep down bringing alluvial soils that enrich the farmlands.

Fritz is now a teenager and looking desperately for a vocation. Ambrose who is not an overly keen farmer preferring to supervise starts to give Fritz more scope to learn farming. Fritz takes the opportunities and is soon fully involved.

Ambrose is more interested in becoming a local J.P. or magistrate. He spends some time at Grafton where he at times employs Fritz to help him with investigations.

One of these investigations was for a Magisterial Enquiry held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1877 into the drowning of a man in a local dam. Fritz was called as a witness. He affirmed that the deceased had been seen alive on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 1877 but was in a depressed state of mind. On open finding was arrived at as Ambrose could not ascertain with certainty how the drowning had occurred.

Ambrose had a falling out with a ploughman he had employed. According to Ambrose they had settled on a contract for the ploughman to work for 12 months whereas the ploughman believed they settled on one month's notice. The ploughman gave notice and left but Ambrose pursued him through the courts. He arranged for a warrant so that the local policeman could arrest the ploughman.

Fritz becomes involved as his father asked him to pick up the warrant and take it to the police so they could execute it. The magistrate refused to allow Fritz to take the warrant telling him he would only release it to his father. Ambrose sets off and accomplishes the task and the police constable arrested the ploughman and incarcerates him in the Grafton gaol. The ploughman then sues Ambrose for malicious prosecution, wins and Ambrose has to pay him £150. This was no doubt a very good lesson for Fritz to learn if he was going into a business such as dairy farming.

Fritz continues to operate the Warregah Island farms while his father goes back into mining. They separate at this point. Fritz is found again in later years farming at Dunbible near Murwillumbah. He has sold his interest in the Warregah Island land and moved further north.

The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) Tuesday 17 November 1903 lists all the Magistrates who have been given commissions. Fritz Borregard has been appointed to the Condong area.

Not far from his promising dairy farm at Dunbible, lived a large family called Marks. The head of the family is William, an Irishman from Ballyronan, Londonderry and his wife is Isabella Eliza Mackay (nee Gray) from Armagh, Ireland. They have a large family all born in Australia. There are 12 children and only two are sons.

It must have been intriguing for Fritz to find himself next to a bevy of young ladies all around his age or younger. With so many to choose from we will always wonder why he selected Phoebe. She was the 7<sup>th</sup> child in the family having been born on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1863. She was 5 years junior to Fritz.

William was intent on making sure that the joining of his daughter to Fritz Johnson was remembered in the community. The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) Tuesday 28 April 1885 carried the following notice:

“JOHNSON—MARKS.—April 2, at the residence of the bride's parents, by the Rev. J. A. R. Brotchie, M.A., Fritz Borregard, only son of Ambrose Johnson, surveyor, late of Denmark, to Phoebe, daughter of William Marks, Tirzah, Tweed River.”

The first born to Fritz and Phoebe came along later that year and was a daughter they named Ruby Isabella Margherita.

The birth of the first son to Fritz and Phoebe is announced in The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) Friday 3 June 1892: “JOHNSON.—May 9, at Lithgow, the wife of Fritz Borregard Johnson, of a son.” They named their son Burton Borregard Johnson although the Birth Certificate (overleaf) registered the name as Burton Borngard. Interestingly Fritz's second name has the Borngard spelling. The Certificate also lists Fritz as a Council Clerk.

In 1894 the family grew by one more when Keith William was born. His story is further on in the chapter.

In 1895 Fritz is given the news that his dear father is suffering from heart problems. A few months later Ambrose, on 15<sup>th</sup> August, died from valvular disease. Fritz and the other family members attend his funeral in Bathurst. They lay him to rest in the Anglican section of the Bathurst Cemetery. Those big “Aussie” shoulders are no longer there to lean on.

The Brisbane Courier (Qld: 1864 - 1933) Wednesday 24 September 1902 carried the news that the Murwillumbah Shire had accepted the bid of £10 from F.B. Johnston [sic] as the Shire evaluator. This would entail Fritz valuing each parcel of land for the purpose of rates.

Fritz's brother-in-law was William Rogers Isaacs (married to Bertha) and he was involved in the management of the Congong Sugar Refinery for many years. The Northern Star (Lismore, NSW: 1876 - 1954) Wednesday 2 November 1904 carried an obituary to him under the heading:

“DEATH OF MR. W. R. ISAACS. Mr. W. R. Isaacs died on the Tweed River on Sunday last, at the age of 69 years. The late Mr. Isaacs was a son of the late Mr. Robert Mackintosh Isaacs, Barrister-at-Law, and who at one time was Attorney-General of N.S.W. He was also a brother of Mr. Frank Isaacs, S.M., of Sydney. For a great many years Mr. Isaacs had been in the employ of the C.S.R. Company as cane Inspector at Chatsworth, and when the Company decided on opening a mill on the Tweed, Mr. Isaacs was entrusted with the selection of a site for a mill and the management of same. This was 26 years ago last January, and Mr. Isaacs successfully pioneered the Condong mill and the industry on the Tweed to the flourishing positions they occupy today. He retired from management of Condong mill a couple of years back, and went to reside on his holding at Middle Arm, which he recently dis posed of and went to live with his family on the North Arm. He leaves a widow and five grown up sons.”

More sad news greets Fritz in 1905 when his beloved mother Margherita passes away at North Arm of the Tweed. Her funeral is held at Murwillumbah and she was interred in the old cemetery. (Author note: this cemetery has since fallen into disrepair so all headstones were removed and the area made into a lawn park. A memorial has been placed at the old entry with the names of all buried there.)

Under the heading: In the Tweed River District a Veritable Fairyland, the reporter from the Australian Town and Country Journal (Sydney, NSW : 1870 - 1907) Wednesday 30 August 1905 mentions the district and its resources. At one point he adds:





Blanche Flora Johnson and her grandson Keith William Johnson. Photo taken by A.W. Buirchell

“Then we have the cottage hospital, prettily constructed, which was erected in 1904 at a cost of £966, and stands free of debt. Additions are being made to the building costing a further sum of £250. Financially, the Institution is in a sound condition, and at the present time there is a credit balance of over £500. It is evident that the committee are [sic] discharging their duties in a most satisfactory manner, whilst the matron, Miss Rose E. Stuart, has the general welfare of her patients at heart. The committee of management are:-President, Mr. W. S. Arnott; vice-presidents, Messrs. A. A. Loder and P. Street; committee, Rev. J. Keith Wilson, Rev. Father Dalton, Messrs. T. Campbell. R. Campbell, E. H. Johnson, A. Ness, P. Smith, J. B. Newman, R. C. Ewing, and F. B. Johnson; hon. treasurer, Mr. J. Poole; hon. sec., Mr. S. C. Steel; medical officers, Drs. Goldsmid, Bell, and Hart; matron, Miss Rose K. Stuart.”

Here we identify Fritz doing his bit for the community of Murwillumbah by taking on the Hospital Board treasurer’s position.

Another example of the Johnson family’s benevolent nature arises in The Brisbane Courier (Qld: 1864 – 1933) Saturday 11 November 1905 under the heading: TWEED.COTTAGE HOSPITAL MURWILLUMBAH (N.S.W.), Nov. 10. -At the Tweed show yesterday Nurse Graham, Miss Johnson, and Mr. F. B. Johnson collected £14 5s 6d for the Tweed Cottage Hospital funds.

Fritz and daughter Ruby have been busy at the local show collecting funds on behalf of the hospital. A rather princely sum was added to the hospital bank account.

Ruby falls in love with Francis John Eckersoll Holt. He is the son of William Harvey Holt. Holt senior was the owner of a huge cattle station called Glenprairie situated between Gladstone and Rockhampton. There are 8 children in the family 5 boys and 3 girls.

Fritz becomes involved with the Tweed Caledonian Society and takes the secretary job in 1905. The Caledonian Society is a group that celebrate their Scottish heritage through various activities. One of the biggest is the Gathering which is like the Scottish Games.

Fritz spent most of 1905 organising and promoting the Caledonian Society Gathering. This was held at the Murwillumbah Show grounds on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1906. No doubt Phoebe, Ruby, Burton and Keith would have been involved in the initial organising and on the day itself.

It was the sixth annual gathering and created great excitement in Murwillumbah and the surrounding Tweed Valley area. The morning started rather muggy with a high humidity. Over 1000 people had entered the showgrounds and more were expected in the afternoon. Unfortunately at about 2 o'clock a storm broke over the district and very heavy rain tumbled down. A number of events scheduled for later had to be abandoned.

The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) Monday 19 November 1906 noted that the new Caledonian Society committee had been elected with F.B. Johnson as Secretary.

The Brisbane Courier (Qld: 1864 - 1933) Monday 24 September, 1906 shows the returning office nominees. Among the names we find F.B. Johnson.

The Brisbane Courier (Qld: 1864 - 1933) Saturday 24 August, 1907: "At the last meeting of the Tweed Shire Council, Mr. F. B. Johnson (valuer) submitted his valuation of shire properties, which was adopted. The shire has an area of 208,204 acres. The unimproved capital value is £553,922, the improved capital value £1,303,756, and the assessed annual value £85,923. The matter of striking a rate will be considered at next meeting. The Finance Committee have suggested that a levy of one and halfpenny in the £ should be made."

The Brisbane Courier (Qld: 1864 - 1933) Tuesday 19 February 1907 reports that F.B. Johnson has been elected onto the Tweed Cottage Hospital Board for the year.

In 1908 Fritz becomes a happy father-in-law to Francis Holt when Ruby marries. The wedding is one for the district to behold as it is described in the Northern Star (Lismore, NSW: 1876 - 1954) Monday 16 March 1908:

“WEDDING Holt - Johnson

A wedding was solemnised at All Saints Church Murwillumbah, by Rev. H. Laceby Cecil, on February 12, between Francis John Ekersoll [sic], youngest son of the late Mr. Harvey Holt, of Glen Prairie station, (Q), and of Mrs. Holt, The Firs, Parramatta, and Ruby, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Johnson, of Coonamurra, Tweed River. The bride, who was given away by her father, wore a trained gown of white silk, with chiffon and lace over dress, she wore a coronet of orange blossoms and an embroidered tuile veil, and carried a bouquet of white cactus dahlias, rose and asparagus fern. Miss Gladys Holt was the only bridesmaid, owing to the indisposition of Miss Marion Marks, of Benfelora, who was to have been the other bridesmaid : and wore a pretty costume of white Indian lawn, trimmed with lace and insertion over a white silk underskirt, hat of white silk gauze, trimmed with pink roses and wheatears. She carried a spray bouquet of pink roses, and wore a gold brooch set with topaz, the gift of the bridegroom. Mr. Bruno Holt was best man. Mrs. E. H. Johnson presided at the organ. After the ceremony the bridal party adjourned to Andronico's Cafe, where wedding tea was served on small tables. The bridal table was decorated with tall vases of white flowers and sprays of white roses, tied with satin ribbon. The wedding cake made by the bride's aunt, Mrs. W. R. Isaacs, was cut with a gilded cane knife, presented by Mr. Holmes, manager of the C.S.R. Mill, Condong. Among the invited guests were Mrs. Harvey Holt and Miss Holt (Sydney), Mr. Bruno Holt, (Sydney), Miss Lydia Marks (Sydney), Mrs. W R. Isaacs, Mr. and Mrs. O. Marks, Mr., Mrs and Miss Lodge (Lismore), Mr. and Mrs. Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. Allen Howden, Miss Grime, Masters Burton and Keith Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, the Misses Bray, Mr. and Mrs. S. R. Charles, Mr. and Mrs. F.

H. Charles, Messrs. Wray, Goldie, Sior, and Mitchell (Condong). After several toasts had been honoured, the bride appeared in travelling dress of grey and black check tweed, white Leghorn hat trimmed with red roses and foliage; the happy couple left by the C.S.R. Co. launch, which was gaily decorated, for the Tweed Heads.”

In 1911 Ruby gave the Johnson's their first grandchild when she gave birth to Keith John Ryves Holt. No doubt Fritz and Phoebe would have been thrilled.

From good news to devastating news that seems to be the Johnson way. Just as Ambrose and Margherita suffered loss so too did Fritz and Phoebe.

On or about 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1913 Keith William discovers a pimple on his neck. For whatever reason, he scratches the top and thought little more until he began to feel unwell. His family takes him to the Tweed Cottage Hospital in Murwillumbah where the shocking diagnosis is heard. Keith William has blood poisoning and there is little the doctors can do for him. He languishes for a few days before his life ebbs away.

The Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate (NSW: 1876 - 1954) Tuesday 23 September 1913 carried the following notice: “Keith Johnson, 18, died in the Murwillumbah Hospital after a brief illness. It appears that deceased had a bad pimple on his neck. He scratched it, and blood poisoning supervened. Johnson was a corporal in the cadets, and was accorded a full military funeral.”

He was clearly a popular student and one with a bright future. Fritz and Phoebe must have been overwhelmed with grief and his siblings Ruby and Burton in shock. Burton was reliving what his own father had gone through all those years ago in 1869 at Daylesford when his little brother Ambrose (Junior) died unexpectedly from diphtheria.

The reporter of the Northern Star (Lismore, NSW: 1876 - 1954) Tuesday 23 September 1913 attended the funeral and under the heading MILITARY FUNERAL wrote the following description:

“The funeral of the late Keith Johnson, aged 18, son of Mr. and Mrs. Fritz John son, of Dunbible, took place on Saturday afternoon last, when a large number of friends followed the coffin to the grave side. The deceased, who was a very popular cadet of the Murwillumbah trainees, was accorded a full military funeral, and the procession, which left the Tweed District Hospital about 2.p.m., was made up as follows: Federal Brass Band playing the ‘Dead March’ leading, Capt. Ross and officers, and the local half-squadron of the Australian Light Horse, on foot carrying arms reversed, the hearse, covered with wreaths and other floral emblems of love and respect, had two cadet non-com missioned officers on either side, vehicles containing relatives, followed by Major Goldsmid, Lieutenants Bliss and G. A. Smith at the head of the cadets, and then a large number of the general public in vehicles, riding and on foot. Arrived at the cemetery, the Rev. Graham Hart read a few appropriate verses from the Bible, on which he gave a short discourse, exhortation and prayer. The firing party consisted of the Australian Light Horse, who fired the usual three volleys, and the bugler sounded the ‘Last Post.’ As this was the first military funeral ever witnessed in Murwillumbah, naturally the interest taken was considerable, and at its conclusion the consensus of opinion was that it was particularly solemn, and would stand in memory for a very long time.”

The news for Fritz and Phoebe does improve in 1914 when their remaining son Burton Borregard marries Merion Stewart from Bray's Creek. Merion was born on the Bungawalbyn Creek on 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1888 to William John Stewart and Mary Jane (nee Bulley). Her Birth Certificate is overleaf. The name Merion was rarely used and she became known as Merion. She and Hersee Stewart were twins – interestingly twins appear again in the next generation.

They are married on the family farm at Bray's Creek just outside of Tyalgum in 1885 and no doubt many of Merion's 14 siblings would have attended along with her mother, Mary Jane and father



Burton and Merion Johnson's family. L2R Max, Burton (Jun), Marjorie, Madeline, Merion (mum), Rita, Eva, Phyllis, Isobel, Molly and Keith.  
Courtesy of Burt Johnson album.

William John Stewart. The Stewart's were original settlers having moved from the Richmond River and selected a property on Bray's Creek. They were successful dairy farmers.

Burton and Merion stayed in the Tyalgum area through the war years and into the 1920s. Burton appears to be working on local farms and possibly doing some share farming. He is very keen and eager to find out as much as he can about mixed farming and dairying. Eventually they decided to move their growing family of five north into Queensland and then further to the Daintree. By then the family had grown to six children. There were four more born in the Daintree making a total of ten, hence the story of chapter 3 became Burton Borregard Johnson and the Daintree 10.

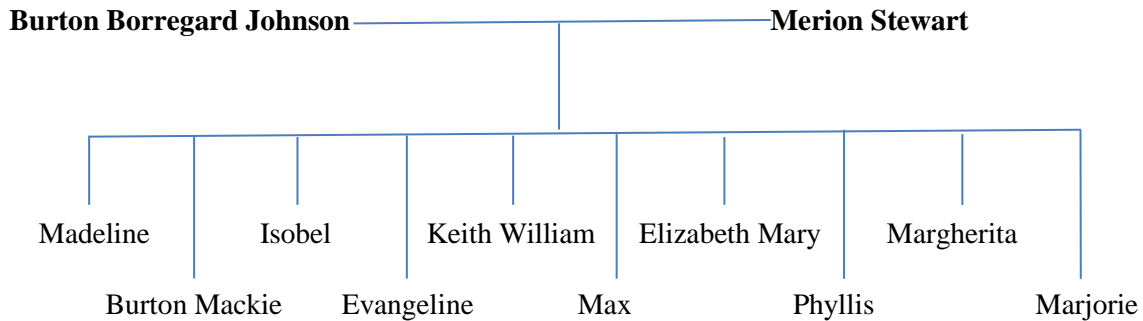
Fritz and Phoebe become grandparents in 1914 when Madeline is born to Burton and Merion. She is the first of 10 children. In 1918 Burton Mackie comes into the world, then followed Evangeline (Eva) 1920, Isobel in 1921, Keith William (Junior) in 1923.

During 1919 the district and indeed most of Australia is hit by an influenza epidemic. The strain is so severe that many people die. Phoebe's eldest sister, Alexandrina Carson Grimes succumbs to the deadly virus. The Northern Star (Lismore, NSW: 1876 – 1954) 23 June 1919 reports this untimely death and indicates that Phoebe is residing in Tweed Heads.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1924 sometime before Keith William (Junior) is born Merion receives the sad news that her father, William John Stewart has passed away. At this point there seems to be some soul searching going on (as will be expanded in chapter 3) because Burton and Merion make a momentous decision to leave the Tweed area and head north seeking out the Daintree as their furthest destination.



## Burton Borregard Johnson Pedigree



Sometime after the death of Keith William, Fritz and Phoebe have sold out and moved into Tweed Heads. What happened to the farm and whether they passed this on to their son Burton Borregard is uncertain. What is known is that Burton moved north in 1926 with his family. What we also know is that Fritz and Phoebe missed out on the births of 5 more grandchildren. Max was born in 1926 at Rockhampton as the family pursued their Daintree goal. Molly was born on the Daintree at Port Douglas, then came twins Margherita (Rita) and Phyllis born 1930 at Port Douglas followed by the final child Marjorie (Marge) born 1933 at Mossman.

After a short period in the Tweed Heads Fritz and Phoebe head north into the suburbs of Brisbane. The 1925 Census shows that they have taken up land at Sunnybank. This is on the southside of the Brisbane River. They live contentedly in Comly Road and no doubt watch as Brisbane begins its urban sprawl towards them.

On 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1937 the following notice is found in The Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954) Thursday: "JOHNSON, Mrs. Phoebe.—The Relatives and Friends of Mr. F. B. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. F J Holt (Mackay), and Mr. and Mrs. B. B. Johnson (Nimbin, Qld.) are invited to attend the Funeral of his beloved Wife, their Mother, and Mother-in-law, Mrs. Phoebe Johnson, to move from her late residence, Comly Road, Sunnybank. This (Thursday) Afternoon, at 2.30 o'clock, to Mt. Gravatt Cemetery. Christadelphians please note."

Phoebe is buried in the Mt Gravatt Cemetery in an unmarked grave.

The next contact comes as a surprise when it is revealed that Phoebe has died intestate (without a will). This necessitates the courts getting involved to determine who becomes the rightful heir(s). The Worker (Brisbane, Qld: 1890 - 1955) Tuesday 20 September 1938 carried the following notice:

“Name of Deceased Proprietor — Phoebe Johnson, late of Sunnybank, Brisbane, wife of Fritz Borregard Johnson. Date of Death — 17th November, 1937. Name of Claimant — Ruby Isabella Holt, of The Cedars, Mackay, wife of Francis John Eckersall Holt, as Administratrix. Description and Situation of Land — Sub- divisions 6 and 7 and resubdivision 3 of sub divisions 8 to 10 of section 5 of portions 32 and 33, and subdivisions 1 to 4 of section 6 of portion 32, county of Stanley, parish of Yeerongpilly. Estate Claimed to be Transmitted — Fee- simple: Particulars of Will or Otherwise — Letters of Administration. Date within which Caveat may be lodged — 25th October, 1938.”

This clearly indicates that all the goods and land owned by Phoebe would be transferred to Ruby, her daughter. Fritz seems to be left out and one may hypothesize that as he is 79 years old his mind may not be sound. What of Ruby’s brother, Burton? He has finished with the Daintree and is now in Nimbin. His place in the case is not recorded. This may be due to the belief that he is undeserving.

The Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954) Saturday 15 January, carries the final decision given by the Supreme Court of Queensland and Ruby receives everything. It does mention that Fritz had renounced his rights to the grant.

Four years later, on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1941 Fritz passes away and is buried beside his beloved Phoebe in the Mt Gravatt Cemetery. He is interred in an unmarked grave.

## Chapter 3



# Burton Borregard Johnson

## 1892 - 1967

### and his Daintree Ten

Madeline	1916 – 1936
Burton Mackie Stewart	1917 – 1992
Evangeline (Eva)	1920 – 1971
Isobel	1921 – 2005
Keith William	1923 – 2003
Max	1926 – 1988
Elizabeth Mary (Molly)	1929 – 1985
Phyllis	1930 –
Rita	1930 – 2012
Marjorie	1933 - living

**B**urton Borregard Johnson was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1892 at Lithgow. His parents were Fritz Borregard Johnson and Phoebe Marks. A newspaper notice in The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 – 1954) Friday 3 June, 1892 herald the news to the community.

Why the family was in Lithgow is unknown because they had been at Warregah Island New South Wales in the 1880s farming. Fritz and Phoebe had met and married in Murwillumbah, New South Wales on the Tweed River on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1885. Fritz's parents Ambrose and Margherita were at Bathurst, New South Wales where the former was involved in deep mining companies in the Sunny Corner area.

Burton already had a sister, Ruby who was born in 1885 at the Tweed River. So it would have been pleasing for him to learn that his little brother, Keith William had arrived in 1895 at Orange, New South Wales.

At about the same time Ambrose, Burton's grandfather, passed away in Bathurst, New South Wales. He was buried in the Anglican section of the Bathurst Cemetery.

When Burton was 16 his sister, Ruby, married Francis John Eckersoll Holt. Francis was the son of William Arthur Holt (dec) the late owner of Glen Prairie Station a huge cattle spread in Queensland. Burton attended the wedding with the rest of the family. It was a grand affair as described in chapter 2 of this book.

The family at some time in the early 1900s took up land at Dunbible, 3 miles outside of Murwillumbah. Father, Fritz ran a dairy farm and at the same time became engrossed in the community taking on roles as land evaluator, Caledonian Society Secretary and Tweed Hospital Board treasurer. He encouraged the children to become involved in collecting money for the hospital and helping out with district activities.

Margherita, Burton's grandmother died at Murwillumbah in 1905. She was interred in the Murwillumbah Cemetery.

Burton and Keith attended the Murwillumbah School for an education. It would seem that Burton was an average student, eager to get out in the community and find work. Keith appeared to be the scholar as he was still at school at 18.

In 1913 tragedy struck the idyllic family setting, just as it did to the Ambrose Johnson family 44 years earlier. In 1859 Ambrose (Junior) was stricken by diphtheria and died. Now Keith was stricken with blood poisoning. He had developed a pimple on his neck and had scratched it. Over a short period of time he became gravely ill and was rushed to the Tweed Hospital where doctors announced their diagnosis and the dreaded news that nothing could be done.

Keith William Johnson died 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1913. He was 18 years old. His popularity in the school was evident when he was given a military funeral (description in chapter 2 of this book). His body was taken from the Tweed Hospital on top of the hill in Murwillumbah, along the main street to the cemetery where it was interred. His fellow cadets formed a guard of honour and marched with him. He was given a three gun salute.

Burton was finding farming jobs and learning as much as he could regarding mixed farming, dairying, share cropping as well as seeking out knowledge and skills needed to be successful. These endeavours would help out in the years ahead.



Burton met a young lady by the name of Merion Stewart. She was 4 years older and from a family of 15 on Bray's Creek (just out of Tyalgum, New South Wales). Her father was William John Stewart and her mother is Mary Jane Bulley. They are dairy farmers who were able to obtain their farm by selection in the 1800s.

Burton and Merion married and began their wedded life living in Tyalgum (possibly with the Stewarts). Burton continued to be a farmer's labourer and was considered highly.

In the same year the hostilities in Europe break out into full scale war. Men from all over Australia heeded the call to arms to help the Mother Country, England. From the Stewart clan four brothers joined the army. These were Rueben Moysey, Hersee, Jack and Donald. All were involved in the fighting with Rueben giving the supreme sacrifice on the fields in France.

Merion and the whole family would have been devastated but proud of Rueben and the others.

In 1916 the Burton and Merion Johnson family began with the arrival of Madeline. She would be the first of ten children. This is a unique family on the Johnson line as the others had only three children each.

The family continued to grow when on the 17<sup>th</sup> July, 1917, as hostilities in Europe raged, Burton Mackie Stewart Johnson was born.

Two years later in 1919 a dreadful influenza swept across Australia killing thousands. The Tweed River District was not exempt. It must have been harrowing for everyone and especially the Johnson's who would have heard the story of Ambrose (Junior) and his ill-fated fight with diphtheria back in 1869.

Burton felt the brunt of this epidemic when he heard the news that his mother's eldest sister, Alexandrina Carson Grimes (nee Marks) fell ill and passed away. Amongst his many feelings would have been one of total protection for his family.

The third member of the family, Evangeline (Eva to everyone), greeted the World on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1920. This daughter was followed by another one year later, when in 1921 when Isobel was born.

Records show that the family continued to live in Tyalgum. With a growing family there must have been talk of finding a place they could call their own.

An article in The Brisbane Courier (Qld: 1864 - 1933) Tuesday 6 June, 1922 may have been the catalyst that wormed its way into Burton's thinking. There is no knowing if he had seen this but no doubt others would have talked about the possibilities that were on offer.

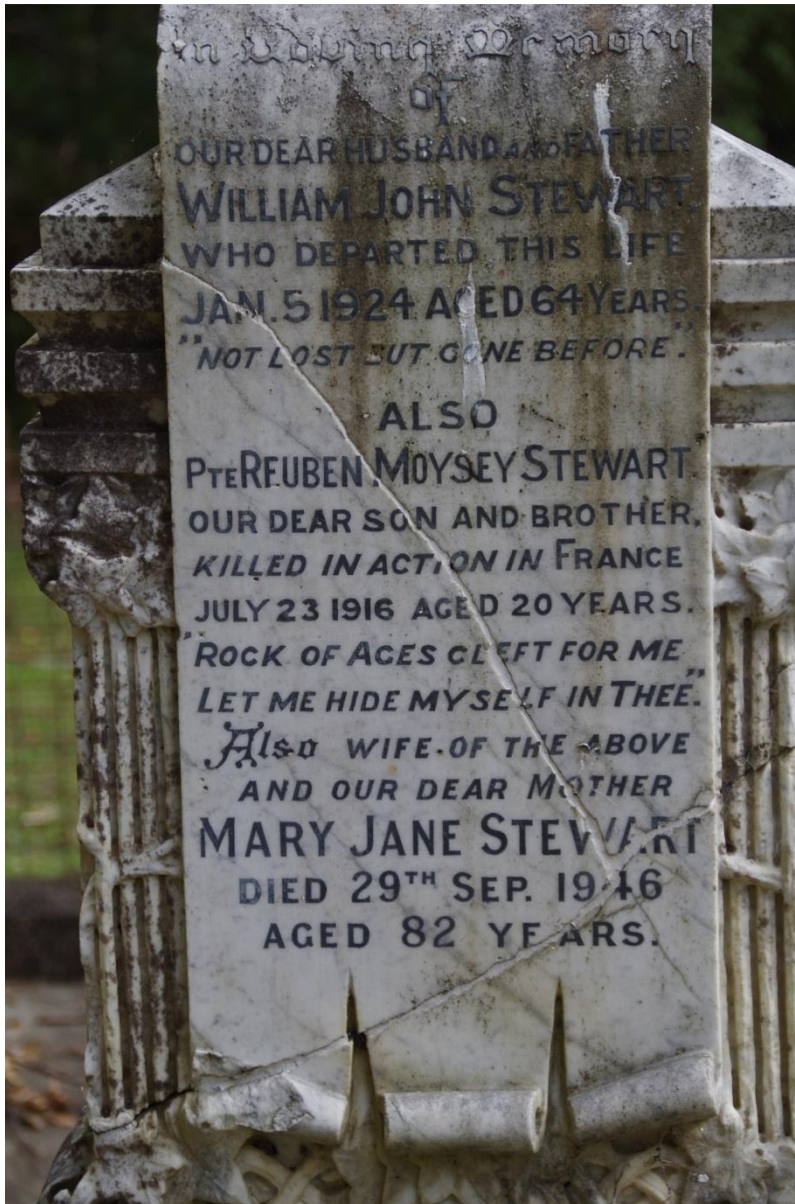
"Daintree River Land.

The prospectus of the Daintree River Development Co. Ltd, has been issued. The first step proposed by the directors is to install a small sawmill to enable the pioneers to carve out their homes from the fine building timber available.

Provision is also made for the installation of a small butter factory as soon as the cream supply warrants it. The directors announce their intention of giving financial assistance to dairy farmers desirous of acquiring herds. It is understood that the considerable amount of capital required has been already subscribed by the promoters of the company, and that shares are held in reserve to provide for an expansion of the scheme should further capital be required. Mr. Lucas Hughes, one of the

principals in the enterprise, is at present visiting Brisbane to place before the Immigration Department the advantages of settlement on the river lands. The Education Department has promised to provide a school when 20 children are available.”

On the 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1924 Merion’s father, William John Stewart died and was buried in the Tyalgum Cemetery.



During that same year a little boy was born into the Johnson family. Keith William is named after Burton’s deceased brother showing that there was a lot of affection and closeness between the two. Now the number of children had grown to five.

Something happened in the time after Keith William was born because the family packed up all their belongings and began a sojourn to the north. The plan and a reason for moving could have come from the newspaper article about the Daintree (mentioned above). The decision was momentous in the fact that they were prepared to take five small children on an odyssey from Tyalgum and to eventually arrive thousands of miles to the north at the Daintree (Queensland).

One can only speculate that they farewelled Mary Jane Stewart (Merion's mother) at Tyalgum and the remaining Stewart clan before setting out for Murwillumbah. Burton's father Fritz was still farming at Dunbible so a farewell at that point would have been appropriate. All may not have been well between the families as we will note towards the end of the article. At this time we can only speculate and like the Burton Johnson family, move on.

How long the trip took in 1924 and the route they took along with the transport used can only be guessed at. We do have 2 definitive sightings through the 1925 Census. For some reason they filled out 2 forms for that census. The first placed them at Mt Bauple in Queensland. Mt Bauple is 400 kms north of Tyalgum. Here they were farming but in what capacity we are not able to say.

The second census of 1925 they filled out, placed them at Mt Larcom in Queensland on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1925. This is a further 300 kms north of Mt Bauple. At Mt Larcom Burton took up an offer from A. H. Serrat to carry out share farming. The Serrat family were large landowners in the Rockhampton District.

A reporter who was travelling through the district wrote the following in the Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld: 1878 - 1954) Friday 13 March, 1925:

"...and the old Mount Larcombe homestead on the right. At the latter place, I learnt later, a Mr. Johnson is now dairy farming on shares for the owner. Mr. A. F. Serrat (sometimes spelt Stirrat), and I hope to give him a call within a few days."

Again we must speculate that Burton showed Serrat that he was a wise farmer and a willing one. On the other hand Burton had chosen wisely in share farming with Serrat as he was not only a big property owner but one with farming acumen as is shown later in this chapter.

All seemed to go well with whatever activities were required in the share farming. Merion and the children lived in the homestead and everyone was getting along.

Disaster then occurred as Burton is cited in the Queensland Supreme Court for insolvency on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1925. His need to declare bankruptcy (file 1064847 QLD Govt Archives) meant that he had overreached himself and that Serrat must have called in loans.

Not long after A. H. Serrat died. The following is his obituary found in The Brisbane Courier (Qld:1864 - 1933) Wednesday 14 October 1925:

"The late A. H. Stirrat, of Euroa, Gladstone, who passed away at a private hospital, at Rockhampton, on October 9, was born at Mt. Alma station, in the Gladstone district, on October 4, 1872. He was educated at Toowoomba, and at Mr. Schmidt's private school, Brisbane. After gaining business experience with Messrs. Parbury, Lamb, and Co., in Brisbane for a few years, he took up grazier pursuits, in January, 1892, when he returned to his old home at Mt. Alma, and worked under his father, the late Mr. David Stirrat. He became manager of Mt. Alma, and retained that position until, owing to pressure of his private business, he handed the management over to his younger brother, Mr. J. D. Stirrat, in January, 1910. He was a keen business man, and a most successful grazier. His first venture in grazing properties was the selection of about 18,000 acres of grazing farms on Dumgree, which he sold to his brother in 1906, and is now known as Mt. Eugene.

In 1903 he purchased the well-known station property, Rannes, which he held for many years. In 1908 he purchased Kroombit station, which is still in his name. Later he purchased Banana station, which he afterwards sold to Mr. Edward Farmer, of Voewood. Of late years he purchased Melrose, near Wondai. Some few years ago he purchased the fine free-hold property, Mt. Larcom, on the North

Coast Railway, between Gladstone and Rockhampton, a property of about 15,000 acres, where he made his home. His intention was to turn Mt. Larcom into a stud and dairying property, and decided to go in for a stud of the Polled Hereford breed. He imported stock from America, on two occasions, the first consignment comprising five bulls, and three heifers, and the second shipment one bull (Bonnie Real) and one heifer. These importations have been much admired at Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Gladstone Shows. A few years ago Mr. Stirrat formed his pastoral interests into a company, known as the Mount Larcom Pastoral Co., Ltd. In.”

On the 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1926 the family grew by one more when Max was born. Merion went to the Rockhampton Hospital when her pregnancy came to term.

At some time between Max’s birth and July 1927 the Johnson’s made the decision to push on to the Daintree. This is another move that defied logic as the Daintree is one of the most remote wildernesses in Australia. It is infested with huge crocodiles, snakes, wild pigs and poisonous spiders. The area is covered in tropical rainforest that is impenetrable. The only way in was by ferry from Port Douglas up the Daintree River. The area around the Daintree Village was partially cleared by the cedar cutters back in the 1800s. It did not present as a safe environment for a family of six small children.

The family entered the Daintree from the Pacific Ocean by ferry. The scene would have been one similar to that of the reporter of the Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Tuesday 29 October 1929:

“TWELVE miles across the horseshoe bay formed by the jutting of Island Point (Port Douglas) to the south and Cape Tribulation to the north with Snapper Island as a prominent and close in sentinel of the latter, the Daintree River winds down to the sea between the foothills of the Alexandra and Dagmar Ranges. Inside the river on the rising tide there is a strong similarity to the Tweed (N.S.W.) in its earlier, stages of development, and one not conversant would consider it a nice deep - waterway: but it is deceptive, in that on the low tides while there are some pretty deep narrow channels close in under the banks it is generally, and particularly the centre, rather shallow.

The river beds comprise nice clean gravel, an indication of the free class of country forming the foothills and ranges of the watershed. In fact, the country, in mining terms, consists of a huge Kaolin formation with soft slate intrusions topped with a nice layer of brown soils derived principally from the heavy wealth of tropical vegetation that almost completely covers the Daintree watershed. The entrance to the river is intricate and shallow, except, of course, on a good tide. The bar entrance breaks through a long shallow spit half-a-length south of the river proper, the channel continuing north to the river between the mainland and the sand spit. Inside the river commences wide with an attractive beach on the north, and judging by the scrubs some patches of good land round the foothills of Thornton Peak. On the south side of the river for five miles mangrove flats and alligator [crocodile] country pre dominate. There are several points of scenic beauty along the river and always there is verdure clad Alexandra, 4,552 feet, though seven miles air line from Daintree, towering majestically overall and apparently near at hand.”

The Daintree River Development Co. Ltd led by Lucas Hughes had bought large tracts of land in the area and subdivided this into small farms ideal for dairying and mixed farming. Hughes was offering land cheap or to share farm with anyone willing to come to the area. All lots were fenced and houses were being built for families. The area was touted as a farming mecca with rich soil, permanent running fresh water and plentiful grasslands.

The offer for Burton had been too good to miss so he packed his family and headed north. They arrived at the Daintree Wharf by ferry on 8<sup>th</sup> July, 1927. The newspaper article reported that they arrived from Rockhampton. They were allotted a farm along the Stewart Creek that the previous



The hazards of the Daintree top L Scarface the crocodile on the muddy banks; top R mangroves to the water's edge; bottom L jungle like environment; cassowary on the move. Photos by D. J. Johnson

owners, the Walwork family, had left. The farm was between the Stewart and the Douglas Creeks some 3 miles from the Daintree Village. There were two ways in and out, by flattie (small flat bottom rowing boat) or by a bush track across the creek and through tropical jungle. Both had their hazards and both proved impassable during heavy rain.

Isobel Dwyer (nee Johnson, one of the Daintree 10) recalled the arrival of the family at the Daintree in her article Daintree Memories; “We arrived in the Daintree ... where dad was to share farm with Lucas Hughes. To get there we had to go by flattie up Stewart Creek to the junction of the Stewart and Douglas Creeks. Then we went by horse and slide up to the Hughes’ farm.”

Somewhere in their travels or maybe in the Daintree itself the family gained an extra hand. A youth of 16 years, from England, newly arrived in Australia by the name of George Whittaker joined the family. George had been born in Essendene Park, Caterham, Surrey . He grew up in England and became a farming labourer. At the age of 15 he paid for a passage on the Jervis Bay headed for Brisbane Australia. The ship departed from London on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1927 arriving Brisbane 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1927.

Burton and Merion treated him as a son and he stayed with the family and was the extra pair of hands with milking and clearing. Being older than the Johnson children he was looked up to as a mentor and brother. No doubt he would have excelled at teaching the younger children to row a flattie, milk a cow, swim and all the other skills needed to survive. Little is mentioned of this lad although he is fondly recalled by Marjorie as “Ginger”. Later on in the book he took on a different role but one that probably was predictable.

Adjusting to life in the Daintree would have been daunting for Merion and her six children. The scenery was spectacular with a ring of mountains and tropical rainforest covering all the land and the slopes with the exception of small pockets cleared out by timber cutters. The Daintree River dominated the area and was the main mode of transport, being ferry for long trips to nearby towns or flattie for short trips to neighbours, town or school. The creeks were also necessary for short trips. The river and creeks would become raging torrents in the rainy season or during heavy downpours. They burst over the banks and swelled their flood plains washing away all and sundry in their paths.

Isobel in her article Daintree Memories wrote: "Every year there were terrific floods, which caused the river beds to change direction. One year a swaggie was camped on the bank and the floods came down overnight, taking the swaggie and his camp with it. He was never seen again. We often picked up pieces of china and cutlery and wondered if it was his."

Floods, flatties and crocodiles were only a few of the natural hazards that the family had to be wary of. Stories about their own adventures, mishaps and near misses are difficult to come by. However, by researching those of others who lived or ventured into the Daintree one gets an appreciation of what confronted the Johnson family in the years they lived there.

One such story was found in the Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Saturday 31 March, 1928,

"Since last writing very little of note has happened, unless I reiterate that we have been having plenty of rain, in fact, more than sufficient for our present needs but not enough to cause any more floods, of which we had quite enough for the one year.

Mr. Peirce, the Bloomfield carrier, had an exciting experience during the last flood, having come from Bloomfield. When he reached the crossing of the Daintree River he drove his horses across and sent a little lad across with the horses, he then stripped off and with the aid of a canvas boat with all his gear and clothing in the boat set off to swim the river and tow the boat. About halfway across he saw an alligator [crocodile], which caused him to deviate from his course and this caused him to have his boat carried against some snags and he then had to leave it and swim ashore. Arriving on the bank he found himself destitute of all clothing, and had nearly decided to make for himself a New Guinea skirt when he found in the grass an empty corn sack. By making holes for the neck and arms he had a dress suit already made, and he declared this is the cheapest suit he has ever had. Upon arrival at the nearest Daintree farm he was soon fitted out with clothing to enable him to reach the Daintree store, where he purchased a new outfit.

This adventure should make Mr. Peirce purchase a small "flattie" and leave it always at the crossing. He could then always cross in safety."

It is on rare occasions that the female line was mentioned or was to be found in reports. The assumption in most cases is that they were behind their men all the way. Merion was afforded a small spot in the Townsville Daily Bulletin (Qld:1885 - 1954) Saturday 31 March, 1928 when they reported that she had taken a trip by ferry to Port Douglas in company with a Mrs. R. E. Sinclair. From a later report it appeared that the two ladies were on their way to hospital for the birth of their next children.

It was also mentioned by the same reporter that the pig trade was increasing on the Daintree because he had counted ten crates of pigs on last week's launch. Burton was a believer in mixed farming and along with dairying he saw pig breeding and fattening as good fits.

The added extras that the Daintree people found grew readily were fruits and vegetables. The necessities of these products would have seen each family organise a plot for the vegetables and an

orchard. Water was not a problem although it had to be hauled from the creek in a slide. Tropical fruits such as mango, pawpaw, bananas, would have complimented the meat diets.

Another product that some of the farmers bred was poultry. Some took on the hens and roosters as part of the mixed farming as opposed to pigs. Wild pigs became a pest as well as an activity of fun. It would not have been encouraging to wake up to the squeals of a mob of wild pigs rooting in your flourishing vegetable patch. The men folk and no doubt many of the teenagers found wild pig hunting to be a very enjoyable time and the festivities of a good pig hunt would have seen the larder full of smoked or salted ham for a few weeks.

Of course the wild pigs sometimes won the battles as a story in the *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (Qld: 1885 - 1954) Friday 2 August, 1929:

“Speaking of wild pigs reminds me of an incident which happened to two Daintree residents last week: Having finished up in the dairy, they were returning home, only a short distance, when they spotted two pigs on the track, they immediately sooled the dogs on to them and of the two dogs each selected a pig and the squeals were deafening, and caused the pigs’ reinforcements to hurry up to the rescue. Another big boar came galloping up and attacked one dog from the rear and caused him to retreat, and, naturally the dogs retreated towards the menfolk — causing the latter to re treat, onto running up a log and the dog behind him. There was shouting from the house, but it was no use following instructions as no weapons were handy but, fortunately the dogs were at last hunted away, and one pig evidently more game than his cobbles, bailed up the man on the log. They had a staring match and at last in desperation he threw his hat at the pig and it ran away up the gully. Thinking they had gone right away, the two men commenced the remainder of the journey only to behold the pigs coming after them again, but having a good start the men won the race for home. It’s always the way when you haven’t got your gun you always have plenty of targets.”

Burton saw that dairy farming and a piggery went hand in hand so he was quick to establish both. He went further with the pigs as he set out to breed these using well-bred boars and sows. As observed in the *Cairns Post* (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Saturday 31 March, 1928:

“... on a boat arriving on Friday last I noticed three pedigree sows for breeding purposes. These were the property of Kilpatrick and Hughes, going to the farm managed by Mr. B. Johnson.”

On 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1928 baby six arrived and was named Mary Elizabeth. From almost the day she was born into the family she was nicknamed Molly. It was reported in the *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (Qld:1885 - 1954) Monday 7 May, 1928 that both ladies had returned home by ferry with their offspring.

Another article in the above newspaper pointed out that Burton had also been in hospital suffering from trouble with his optic nerve. They were concerned that he was far from his usual self. This medical alert caused much anxiety among the family and would be ongoing for quite some time. It must have been a time when everyone needed to draw on all their resilience to pull through.

On June 1<sup>st</sup> 1928 Burton took a turn for the worst. His optic nerve problem was causing so much pain that he decided he had to go south to Brisbane hospital. It was expected that he would need at least a month to recuperate. This left most of the responsibility on Merion and the older children to carry on the farming in his absence. Merion was also looking after a new born which would have taken much of her time and energy. Madeline was now 12 and Burton 11, and they would have stepped up to help their mother cope. George Whittaker, or Ginger, as he had become nick-named, was also lending a vital hand. No doubt the camaraderie among the Daintree community would have ensured neighbours and others would have offered assistance.

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1928 Burton returned to the Daintree much recuperated. It would have taken some time to adjust but with his determination and work ethic this would have been accomplished in less time than most other men.

The vagaries of farming in any place in the world can be heard in any discussion between farmers. The Daintree was no exception but it was far more reliable than most places.

The Northern Herald (Cairns, Qld: 1913 - 1939) Wednesday 3 October, 1928 under the heading,

Rain Needed indicated why Burton and others were keen to farm this otherwise daunting area:

“Although we have had no rain worth speaking of for the past five months the cream supply has held up to standard until the past fortnight but even now the percentage of decrease is very small; in fact, it is not above ten per cent. This shows the wonderful capacity of this, district, especially as a drought resister. I am informed that in other districts when the rainfall is scarce the supply of cream to the factories drops as much as fifty per cent. Although this sounds like boasting up this district, nevertheless statistics will prove my words. Certainly we could do with rain just now, but I suppose we, when the supply commenced to drop, must exercise Job's patience and we shall get rain in due time. We had a couple of light showers a fortnight ago just sufficient to lay the dust, but did no benefit to the grasses.”

The Johnson family seemed to adapt to their new surroundings with exceptional speed. Sage advice from Burton coupled with a firm discipline would have ensured their willingness to participate in daily chores and to do as they were told.

Clearing the dense forest was one of the more difficult chores that had to be done. This was taken on almost single handedly by Burton as the children were still young. No doubt in later years Burton would have shouldered some of the hard work. As Isobel mentioned in her Memories “We lived there (in the Daintree) for eight years and in this time dad felled most of the scrub and grassed the paddocks on the farm.”

Some of the trees would have been floated to the saw mill at the Daintree Village and sawn into planks to be used for building houses, animal shelters, fence posts and the like. Once dried some of the timber would have been burnt in the wood fires that were necessary for cooking and warmth.

Dairying was the staple farming activity of the region. The Butter Factory had been built back in 1924 so that all the milk produced by the incoming farmers could be made into butter. The district proved to be reliable and lucrative due to the lush grasses and fertile soils. The climate was ideal although the rainy season from December to March proved to be difficult.

The dairy farmer and his family was a hardy soul and Burton proved to up there with the best. The daily chores had to be consistent and went on day and evening, seven days a week all year round. The cows had to be milked regularly and correctly so as to avoid any of the complications that may occur if milk is retained.

A typical day would start in the dark before any rays of sun had even appeared. The cows were called in or rounded up, usually by the younger family members. The older ones readied the milking barn with food, cleaning buckets and cans and getting ready for the arrival of the first milker. The Johnson family would have had at least five members who could milk efficiently when they first arrived and up to eight by the time they were leaving the Daintree. This would have given them an advantage to milk several dozen cows each time.



As each cow is moved into the barn the back foot would have been hobbled by a piece of rope, the head trapped by a yoke and feed presented in a trough. All of these things were designed to keep the cow occupied and still. The milkmaid, then would sit upon a wooden stool, place a bucket under the udder, select two teats and begin milking. With the amount of cows that had to be milked at each sitting the efficiency of these people would have been of the highest standard. Once all four teats had given up the deliciously warm white milk the cow was released and the bucket of milk emptied into the ten gallon cans nearby.

Each can had a top that was used to stop and spillage. Once all the milking was complete the cans were taken by slide to the creek, loaded on to a flattie and rowed down the creek, out into the river and down to the wharf. From here the cans were lugged to the nearby Butter Factory. The transport job was likely done by Burton himself although it was probable that Merion and Burton (Junior) had their turns.



Looking from the Stewart Creek across the dairy farms of the Daintree \_ lush and green. Photo by D.J. Johnson

The whole process would begin again at about 5 o'clock in the evening. The milk gained at this time would be stock piled and moved in the morning. With a herd of 40 cows producing one gallon each milking and getting 10p per gallon it was quite profitable especially for a family unit.

One of the biggest concerns for the dairy farmer in the Daintree was the annual floods. The Townsville Daily Bulletin (Qld: 1885 - 1954) Saturday 12 January, 1924 pointed out what every wise dairy farmer needed to do to when floods were impending:

“Everyone has an eye on their cattle at this time of the year, and is prepared to drive them up on to high ground at the first sign of a flood. Many of the farmers already have their hill pad- dock fenced off, so when fetching up the milkers at night, they also run up the remainder of the herd. It is very little trouble, but is most assuredly the safest and best plan, for one cannot rest comfortably at night if it is pouring down, knowing his cattle are on the river flats.”

No doubt there were interesting stories that would have been shared among the family of stubborn cows, kicked over pails, toes trodden on, cows that withheld milk and the like.

Nothing, however, would beat Max's story that he related readily to his family. His job as he grew into a nine year old was to fetch the cows and drive them to the wooden shed used as the milking barn. One evening he found the cows had wandered across the shallows of the creek and were contentedly grazing. He grabbed a long stick of lawyer grass and ran off yelling at the cows that got the message and begun to move. The wiser ones worked out it was milking time so started across the creek and up the banks. A stubborn one was shooed along and Max soon found himself running hard across the creek and towards the highest bank with the cow ahead. He scrambled up the steep, slippery bank with his broad brimmed hat bouncing on his head. As his eyesight reached the level of the bank he was confronted by a huge taipan, one of the deadliest snakes in the World. He froze and stood eye to eye with the monster. His instinct told him to drop, roll and run. As he let his legs collapse beneath him the snake struck. He felt a striking of the top of his hat which flew off. As he hit the lower part of the bank he rolled away, jumped to his feet and ran terrified after the distant cattle.

Accidents were a concern as it caused workers to have time off and in the dairy industry this creates major reshuffling to take up the missing member. Burton experienced this first hand as reported in the Townsville Daily Bulletin (Qld: 1885 - 1954) Saturday 24 December, 1927:

“Mr. Burton Johnson whilst engaged in rounding up a young cow had the misfortune to be gored in the ankle necessitating his seeking medical advice. The incident occurred at a time when Daintree's passenger launches were in other ports, but luckily, upon ringing up Port Douglas it was ascertained that the Echo would be calling at Port that night, so instructions were left for the Echo to proceed to Daintree Heads as soon as possible so Mr. Johnson was conveyed to the Heads by means of the river boat Togo, and it was not long after arrival before the Echo hove in sight and the sufferer was placed on board and conveyed to the hospital at Port Douglas. After medical attention Mr. Johnson was allowed to return home the following day but with strict instructions to take complete rest for the week. Mr. Johnson informs me that the wound is not yet healed and still remains very painful. “

There were plenty of opportunities to let their hair down as shown in the many photographs the family took and the reporting of the social activities they enjoyed. Every year the school sports was a big occasion and one the children waited for and showed considerable athleticism in competing as shown in The Northern Herald (Cairns, Qld: 1913 - 1939) Wednesday 19 December 1928. The results of what was a very successful day at the school sports for the Johnson family:

“The school picnic took place on Saturday last on the Sand Bank at the junction of the Daintree River and Stewart's Creek. There were many interesting events in the way of motor boat races.

The results of the foot races (that the Johnson family competed in) are as follows:

Junior Boys, 75 yards: **K. (Keith) Johnson 1**, T. Hawtin 2, G. Williams 3.  
Senior girls, 100 yards: **M. (Madeline) Johnson 1**, L. Williams 2, J. Hayden 3.  
Junior girls, 75 yards: **E. (Eva) Johnson 1**, B. Hayden 2, **I. (Isobel) Johnson 3**.  
Consolation, boys 100 yards: **B. (Burton) Johnson 1**, D. Turner 2, B. Weinert 3.  
Three-legged, race, girls: L. Williams and J. Hayden: 1, B. Hayden and **E. (Eva) Johnson 2, M. (Madeline) Johnson and I. (Isobel) Johnson.**”



Some of the Sports Day winners from back L2R: Isobel, Madeline, Keith, Eva and Burton and the non-starters L2R Phyllis, Molly, Max and Rita. Photo courtesy Burt Johnson album.

There were also other races including those encouraging adults to join in such as; Single Ladies, 75 yards: Married Ladies, 50 yards Single men, 100 yards Married men, 100 yards.

“The prizes were presented by Mr. Wellard, retiring chairman of the Committee. Much praise is due to Miss M. Pearn, school mistress, and the School Committee for the able manner in which the picnic and races were carried out. A dance was held in the evening at the factory, when the young folk held the floor until 10 p.m. after which hour the adults occupied the boards.”

Merion attended the first wedding in the Daintree as reported in the Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Friday 9 November, 1928:

“On Monday last at 7.30 p.m. Daintree’s first wedding took place when Miss Evelyn Turner, ... was united in the holy bonds of matrimony to Mr. H. A. Porter ...” The article went on to describe in detail all the female guests and what they wore including: “Mrs. B. Johnson, plum colored crepe de chene, and oriental trimmings, hat to match.” Merion was as fashionable as the rest. No doubt Burton would have attended in suit and tie.

During 1929 there were a number of interesting and exciting things happening in the Daintree. Burton was well established. The Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Friday 15 March 1929 reporter gave an insight into life that they Johnson family was enjoying:

“Since my last writing we have had continual rains, with the river running at floods and bankers all the time. Nearly all fencing near the river has been washed away, and it is no use building them again until after the wet season is over. Although no really big floods have been in evidence yet they, are quite big enough, and I am afraid that if ever we get one of the old time floods some houses are going to be washed away.

During the big flood which occurred about a fortnight ago, Mr. S. Turner had a very narrow escape from drowning. After delivering his cream at the factory he was returning home in his "flattie" laden with cream cans full of tucker and goods, when, rounding a bend in the river the nose of his flattie became entangled in the branch of a tree, and before he, knew where he was his boat had swung into mid-stream and there capsized before Mr. Turner could regain control. He immediately swam to the shore and then ran to obtain another "flattie" to go in search of his own, but was unable to procure one, and consequently returned home canless, tuckerless and hungry. Two cans out of the

six were recovered on the following day, but to my knowledge neither boat nor remaining four cans have yet been found.”

Dairy farming had been Burton’s main occupation and he was good at it. So much so that he is determined to expand his land holding. The Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Friday 15 March 1929, told us that: “Mr. B. Johnson has purchased a farm from Messrs. Wellard and Blackwood, this farm is situated on the Douglas Creek practically opposite the farm which Mr. Johnson is now leasing. I also understand he has purchased a forty acre farm, which adjoins, his recent purchase, from Mr Beauman.”

This was exceptional news for the family especially when you couple it with the next piece of good news from The Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Friday 15 March 1929: “Farmers are wearing their please smiles again, for after a long period with the price of butter at a shilling they received the large amount of 1/2 for January and I learn that the same price is to be paid for February. Is it any wonder they are buying motor lorries? We just don't know what do with this dazzling amount.”

The mention of lorries above gave thought to how mechanised the Daintree had become. Lucas-Hughes was the driving force behind the Daintree and he was a man of vision. To have farms mechanised was to everyone’s advantage. Lorries were becoming the second mode of transport but roads were the issue. In 1929 most were mere bush tracks and during the wet impassable. Constant deputations to the Council saw roads begin to develop but in small stages. Even when major efforts were made there was the inevitable hold ups. As reported in The Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Friday 15 March 1929: “The Finns who have the contract for the main road finalised, with the exception of the rolling, are being held up with this continued wet weather, as they are unable to roll, owing to the roller lifting up as much material as it would roll, but given a fortnight or three weeks fine weather this first section should soon be complete.

Although I have been unable to go and visit the Barrett Creek Bridge, I learn from good authority that good progress is now being made, and before too long this also should be completed.

Information to hand says that as soon as the bridge is completed tenders will be called for the next section of the main road. This section practically covers the worst country on the proposed route until Rocky Point is reached; but that, at the rate main roads are built, will not be reached until my "ziff" reaches to my knees.

Several "wash-outs" have occurred on the new cutting on Stewart's Creek road, but willing "working bees" soon shifted the obstructions and have kept the road open. This has been done without the knowledge of the Shire Council, as it is useless waiting for the Council to do these jobs.”

Several of the farmer began to take advantage of the new roads by purchasing lorries. Mr. G. Weinert, purchased a motor truck with which to haul firewood for the Butter Factory.

In later years young Burton Johnson saw his future in heavy haulage develop from buying a lorry and using this to transport goods around the Daintree Mossman area.

By the end of 1929 the Johnson family was well entrenched in the Daintree. Burton was thrilled with his decision to settle in the area so much so he spoke to a reporter from the Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Tuesday 29 October 1929:

“I'm sorry I hadn't come here 10 years ago.’ This was the brief but expressive reply made by a fine type of settler met with on the upper reaches of the Daintree River when asked for his opinion of the prospects of the district. This opinion was not expressed in the bar of an hotel - there are no hotels on the Daintree - nor by a man with land to sell, but by a share farmer who, after a two years' trial, had

recently taken up two blocks on his own account and was then, between milkings, busily brushing the dense lawyer cane and other undergrowth of the rich scrub that mantled his future home. The man was of the right type, the country was of the right sort and soil, and when the isolation of the Daintree is broken down, quite a near possibility, it is easy to visualise this sun-tanned, red-headed, game man and his family as successful and valuable settlers. It was no near-in or town, block, either, that he was developing, but far up one of the winding branches of the river, where the floods and rain falls of centuries laid the deep soiled flats beside its banks as a heritage for those who would develop them...

The Hayden and Johnson families are settled on two of Mr. Lucas-Hughes's farms, and it is the latter's opinion I quoted in the start of this review. Mr. Burton Johnson is from the Tweed River. His ideas on dairying combined with mixed farming and the proper cultivation of fodder crops are right. He not only has the ideas but is putting them into practice."

In talking to the reporter it was evident that Burton had expressed many of the clever ideas he had and the ones he had put into practice to ensure he had a successful farming business. One of the clever moves made by Burton was to clear the blocks of all vegetation and then plant Pinschke grass which was known as Panicum Muticum grass. This was far superior and lush than the original grass growing in the area. It enabled farmers to run up to one and a half cows per acre. Burton was also wise to the need to use rotational methods to get the best out of his land and to keep erosion to a minimum.

On the Daintree the original Australians had been existing for centuries and were confronted by the arrival of the timber cutters. This caused a lot of friction and this did not abate as more and more settlers arrived. Burton took a conciliatory view towards the Aborigines and was always welcoming. As Isobel in her article Daintree Memories recalled: "Every so often the Aborigines would go walkabout from the Daintree River. They would camp up by the creek and King Billy would leave his tribe down on the sand and come up and chop wood for dad. Dad would give him plug tobacco, sugar, tea, flour etc and he would continue up the creek with his tribe. They would be away a couple of weeks then on their way back he would again leave the tribe down on the sand and chop some more wood and get more supplies.

With lots of work required the oldest boy would have been asked to join his father in the field. One of the biggest and hardest jobs was the clearing of the 'scrub'. Although the cedar cutters had taken out the valuable timbers, especially the red cedar, large trees and tropical undergrowth abounded. These had to be cut down and burnt so that the valued grasses that would feed the dairy cattle could be grown. Such back breaking jobs as cutting with an axe through several feet of timber had their hazards. Burton (Junior) came to grieve as reported in The Northern Herald (Cairns, Qld: 1913 - 1939) Wednesday 31 July 1929:

"Young Burton Johnson had the misfortune about three weeks ago to cut himself on the knee with an axe. The wound, not seeming dangerous he was treated at home, but it was later found necessary to send him into hospital where I learn he is progressing very favourably."

Dry spells were a headache for dairy farmers as it usually meant less water, poor grasses and loss of milk production. One of the beauties of the Daintree was that even in dry spells dairying carried on at full production. Of course dry spells were still talk of the district and everyone speculate as to their lengths and when they would 'break'. The reporter of the Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Thursday 14 November 1929: "Since my last writing we have had a continuation of the dry spell, but , it was broken on Thursday last when we had slight showers resulting in a registration of 75 points. This, although not enough, has done some good, but we shall derive no real benefit until we receive a thunderstorm. Several times storms have banked up, but they have passed us by; but there is no doubt that before long we shall get one, for the temperature has remained high for the past fortnight, and on

Tuesday last the thermometer registered 106 degrees, while Wednesday followed up with 105 degrees.

Scrub-felling, which has been the order of the day for the past six months, has now almost ceased and already some farmers have burnt their new fellings, and in some instances have completed the grassing of same.

The advantage of long hot days was that the community could relax and join together for fun and frolic. The Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Thursday 14 November 1929 mentioned several of these social events. The Johnson family seemed to be front and centre in participating. Even Merion ran in a race at one of the picnics:

“Several picnics have been held of late, and at the last, held at the junction of the two rivers, another Daintree lady gave a grand exhibition of diving. She was all dressed up (and nowhere to go) when someone kindly invited her to travel in his motor launch. She accepted the invitation, and was nicely seated, on a box in the bow of the boat preparatory to the engine being started when someone rocked the boat and she took a graceful "header" into the water and mud. The lady's first inquiry was "Where are my glasses?". Being reassured of their safety, she, sporting like, rushed and got changed; and again sailed forth, and was this time successful in reaching the picnic site. As I am I threatened with all sorts of dire punishment if I mention names, and not being a brave man, I dare not.

On Saturday last a dance was held at the private residence of Mrs. Goodsell, when quite a large crowd attended and a merry evening was spent in dancing and games.

A picnic was held yesterday underneath the old Fig Tree at Hayden's landing, when quite a large crowd attended and a most enjoyable day was spent, the children having a great time. The results of the races are as follows:

50 yards flat race, handicap (boys under 14): G. Blackwood, 1; **B. (Burton) Johnson**, 2.  
50 yards flat race, handicap (girls under 14): **E. (Eva) Johnson**, 1; **I. (Isobel) Johnson**, 2.  
25 yards flat race, handicap (boys under 6): **K. (Keith) Johnson**, 1; T. Hawtin, 2.  
Young ladies race, 50 yards, scratch: J. Hayden, 1; **M. (Madeline) Johnson**, 2.  
Married ladies' race, 50 yards: **Mrs.B. (Merion) Johnson**, 1; Mrs. E. Blackwood, 2; Mrs. A. Bamsey "also ran."  
Wheel-barrow race: L. Hawtin and D. Turner, 1; D. Hayden and **B. (Burton) Johnson**, 2  
Blindfolded race (first heat): **I. (Isobel) Johnson**; second heat: D. Hayden.



Fun, picnics and photographs at home in the paddock under a nice shady tree were wonderful times. From L Keith, Madeline, Isobel, Rita, Phyllis, mum (Merion), Eva and Burton.

In the meanwhile the building of roads continued much to the delight of the local farmers. As reported in the Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Thursday 14 November 1929:

“The Stewart's Creek road, you all know this road, I have written so many times about it, is now almost a completed fact, for the contractor has completed all the necessary digging, and I notice a big pile of girders landed on the river bank, which will be used on the culvert building, of which there are quite a good number. Fortunately, we have been able to make use of the road as it was being built, and so every day the little extra bit lessened the distance to be travelled over the road precipitous and dangerous track. When the culverts are built there will only remain a very short distance of cutting to be done to enable us to ride right through and link up with the main Mossman road.”

A special event occurred for the Johnson family in 1930 when Merion had twins. The two little girls were the last babies to be born at the Port Douglas Hospital and were named, Rita and Phyllis.



Isobel married Richard Dwyer and everyone had a wonderful time. The bride and groom lived in Atherton.  
Photo courtesy of Burt Johnson album.

Entertainment in all forms seemed to be the order for the Daintree residents. They loved their picnics, wild pig hunting, dances and swimming but a real highlight reported in the Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Friday 18 September 1931 was the: “Atkinson's buckjumping show....The programme of the evening opened to a full audience ...(after the fun with adult riders trying to stay on the bucking broncos) ...The children were next for consideration when there, was a great roll up to catch and mount the mule or pony, and those people who did not witness this item missed something, and the quadrupeds were always being missed, but quite a number of lads made good efforts. Burton Johnson, jnr., divided the prize with Peter...”

During 1933 Madeline married George Whittaker in the Daintree. It was a community wedding with the whole district invited. A priest performed the wedding vows and as the photograph below shows it was a very enjoyable day for all. The happy couple left to live at Atherton which is further east over the ranges.



Mossman Hospital (left) and the entrance (right). Rita and Phyllis, the twins were born at Port Douglas in 1930 and transferred here. Marjorie was born here in 1933. Photos taken by D. J. Johnson

On 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1933 the family is complete when Marjorie is born in the Mossman Hospital. Merion had to remain in hospital with her newborn for quite some time and it is not until 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 1934 that she returned to the house in the Daintree.

Isobel in her article Daintree Memories recalled: “It was quite an ordeal for Mum to have three children [she actually had four] at the Daintree. She would have to walk to the creek, then be rowed down to the Daintree wharf, then she would have to board the boat, either the Daintree or the Echo, whichever one was there, and go down to the Port Douglas hospital. My father always said that these were her holidays.

My twin sisters Rita and Phyllis, were the last babies to be born in the Port Douglas Hospital. The hospital was closed down the day before they were born, but because there was a very sick patient, the doctor and matron stayed and kept mum there so she could go to Mossman with them the next day. When they arrived at Mossman the next day the twins were the first twins in the Mossman Hospital.”



Burton Borregard was very proud of all his children and had a soft spot for twins Rita and Phyllis. Photo courtesy Burt Johnson album.



Transport around Daintree was mainly by ferry up and down the river as has been noted before. The efforts of the farmers to modernise their operations by using tractors, trucks and cars was severely curtailed by the terrain, isolation and the sloppy tracks caused by torrential downpours and the deep volcanic soils. The average rainfall was over 1000 inches and most of this fell in the December to March period. Sudden and violent thunderstorms swept in and drenched the valleys. The Daintree River would soon become a raging torrent with the water expanding across the flood plains as the high tide made its way inland. Every effort was made to improve roads and bridges. By 1933 things had improved with roads being properly constructed from Mossman and the internal roads such as Stewart Creek Road being made roadworthy. The bridges were constructed and high enough to be above some of the flooding.

Burton was clearly thrilled with all the improvements and in 1935 expanded his thinking to include a motor car for the family and as a transport for his farm products. He bought a Ford Model A Roadster Pickup. The photograph below showed him proudly taking the family for a drive before being captured on film. His ingenuity is clearly observed with the seating that has been specially made to fit over the sides of the car so that all the children could sit in comfort and safety.



Burton at front shows off his Ford Model A Roadster Pickup to the family and George Whittaker (on tray clear face with hat) around 1934 as the baby is Marjorie. From top L 2 R Eva, Twin, Keith, Burt, front of tray L 2 R Isobel, Madeline, Twin and Max. Courtesy of Marjorie Smith (Johnson) album.

In 1934 the family was forced to flee from their house as a cyclone smashed its way inland from the Pacific Ocean. Isobel in her article Daintree Memories described her horror: “The scariest memory of the Daintree was the 1934 cyclone. We had to shelter behind a large fallen tree. We watched trees and cattle floating down the raging river. We saw the roof of Brown’s new house tumbling over and over in the river. We saw Whitehouse’s house on its side when it had been blown off its blocks.”

This would have been horrific for all the family and was even more wide spread than what Isobel saw as the report from The Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld: 1933 - 1954) Thursday 15 March 1934 indicated: “A terrific cyclone struck Daintree on Monday morning, news of which only came to hand to-day. Houses were demolished and the launch Daintree was nearly sunk.

Two families had lucky escapes from flooded homes in the Stratford and Deeral areas.

About 8.30 am the cyclone burst on the town, and the glass dropped very rapidly to 28.88 inches at 10 a.m. Torrential rain ensued for the rest of the day. By 12.30 the district presented a desolate appearance, as whole areas of the scrub had been blown down, huge trees being smashed like matches, and not a leaf being left on the remaining vegetation. Much damage was done to buildings. The houses of Messrs. Mealing, Wienert, and Osborne, senior, were totally demolished. Mr. C. Osborne's house had one verandah roof completely blown away and half of Mr. J. Martin's house was cut right off, the roof, walls, and ceiling being blown over the top of the rest of the house, and scattered about the paddock. Mr. C. Morrish's house was blown off its blocks and turned upside down.

In the town, part of the sawmill roof was taken away. Stacks of timber in the mill yard were blown over, and piled in a tangled mass against the side of the mill. The butter factory escaped damage, as did most of the houses in the town. The roof was blown off a baker's oven, and numerous outbuildings were turned upside down.

From outlying districts little news is obtainable, as the river is in high flood. It is learnt, however, that Eric Blackwood had the roof taken off his house and one wall blown in.

The launch, Daintree, which was loading timber at the wharf, had to leave hurriedly to get to a sheltered creek lower down the river. When going down Osborne's reach it met the full force of the hurricane, and narrowly escaped being blown over, as the deck on one side was right under water.

Had it not been for the load of heavy timber in the hold the launch would have sunk. Mr. Osborne senior, who has resided on the river for 50 years, states that it is the heaviest blow in his experience, and the force of the wind seemed the greatest. Boisterous conditions still prevail."

The Daintree 10 must have had a life that lasted a lifetime while they were in the Daintree. For the younger ones born there the memories would have been fleeting or shored up by reminiscence from the older siblings. For the first six they would have recalled wonderful times, scary times but all in all a time that built them into strong reliable citizens.

Isobel in her Daintree Memories talked about every day chores in one of her paragraphs: "There was no water tank on the farm so all of the water had to be carted from the creek in cans by horse and slide.

Mum would take the washing down to the creek on the slide and wash under the trees on the sand. In those days there were lovely wide sandy banks....mum would hang the washing over the fences or on the trees to dry."

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The memory gives us other insights into the everyday living. The slide was pulled by a horse so keeping horses, brushing them, saddling, putting them in tracers etc would have been part of the way of life. Merion was an expert horse woman from her early days at Tyalgum when she rode around the district collecting for a fund to build a new church.



Horses were used for all types of work. The family had a team that would haul water, goods etc from the creek to the house on a slide. Courtesy of the Burt Johnson album.

Washing, cleaning dishes and bathing would have been done with the least amount of water in small tubs. Bathing would have been a procession of one after the other without replenishment. Whenever the weather was warm enough a good solid bath in the creek would have washed off the working soils and refreshed everyone. While at the water's edge washing Merion would have had one eye on her children and the other on the creek in case of crocodiles.

There was a State School in the township and all the children of school age attended. When they arrived in 1927 Madeline was 11 and Burton 10 so their attendance was probably limited and also because they would be required at home with clearing, milking and helping around the house. This would have involved long hours (up before dawn to get the cows in for milking) and exhausting activities.

The younger ones from six onwards were expected to go to school. This necessitated them learning to row a flattie and to navigate the waters of the Stewart Creek and the Daintree River from the farm to the Daintree Wharf. Later they learnt to ride a horse and this became their preferred mode of transport. Isobel gave us her experiences: "For the first two years we went to school, we had to walk to the junction of Stewart and Douglas creeks, then row a flattie to the wharf, and walk up to the school. Then we got horses and going to school became a lot more fun. When the tide was high, we stripped off our clothes and put them in the sack bag with our lunch and swam the horses across the creek. When a croc was sighted we were too scared to cross the creek so we galloped the horses to the top of the creek and crossed in the shallows, went up through William's place and usually arrived at school around eleven o'clock."

It was not only the learning that Isobel enjoyed but the social life that went with it. She recalled in her article Daintree Memories; "My fondest memories of Daintree were the school picnics. When everything shut down and everyone went off to the picnic. New Year's Eve and Guy Fawkes Night were special because all the neighbours came and we let off crackers. New Year's Day Osbornes provided a boat to take anybody and everybody down to the Daintree Heads for a big picnic. Christmas was extra special because before we left the Daintree, we all believed in Santa Claus. "

Again her Memories contain other aspects of the family's life in the Daintree. It shows they joined in the festivities and special days like everyone else. They enjoyed the company and companionship of others and happily invited them to their farm.



Picnics and other social events were always outings to look forward to. L 2 R back ? Madeline, ? Keith, Burt, Mr William Francis, ? Middle L 2 R Connie Francis (later Mrs Burt Johnson), Mrs Winnie Francis, Twin in Merion's arms. The girl in front of Connie and Winnie is Isobel. Seated L 2 R ? ? ? Max, Molly and Eva nursing twin.  
 Courtesy of Marjorie Smith album.

The school grew gradually and became a focal point as mentioned in The Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Tuesday 29 October 1929:

“The nice little State School capable of seating 50 pupils calls for more than passing comment. It is in charge of Mr. W. J. Cranley lately of the central districts. The present attendance is 25, and includes several likely youngsters. A fine collection of local timber samples adorns the walls and there is also a substantial nucleus of a shell and coral collection, while the collection of pot plants is encouraged and there are many local varieties. Mr. Cranley is a born teacher, reserved, strict, yet with a happy knack of leading or driving as the individual temperaments of his pupils demand. There are new buildings being erected or projected...”

The Townsville Daily Bulletin (Qld: 1885 - 1954) Saturday 23 November 1929 reported that a rather nasty cold was doing the rounds in the Daintree necessitating the ferry Echo to make several trips to the Port Douglas Hospital. One of the children stricken was “little Eva Johnston [sic]”.

Townsville Daily Bulletin (Qld: 1885 - 1954) Saturday 31 May 1930 mentioned: “Mr. Burton Johnstone [sic], had to take a trip to Perth (this is more likely to be Port Douglas), for medical advice, and I learn he went by special boat on Friday night, however, I have so far not heard any further news

of him, but trust he is not seriously ill.” What the affliction was not announced. It may have been more of the same with the optic nerve problem.



Dad (Burton Borregard) joined in everything including swimming at the creek. A healthy and fit man who worked extremely hard.  
Photo courtesy Burt Johnson album.

Burton (Junior) had taken on more and more responsibilities as he grew into manhood. In 1934 he was 17 years old. With the extra work came greater risks as reported in the Cairns Post (Qld: 1909 - 1954) Thursday 28 June 1934: “Mr. Burton Johnson, junior, had narrow escape from a fatal accident on Thursday, when the branch of tree struck him on the head and arm as he was felling timber. He was conveyed to the Mossman Hospital in Mr. Osborne's car, where he is recovering.”

Madeline fell pregnant towards the end of 1935 but as the pregnancy progressed she became very ill. She passed away on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1936 and the cause of death as shown on her Death Certificate was: “Chronic interstitial nephritis (accentuated by early pregnancy), cerebral haemorrhaging and respiratory failure.” She was laid to rest in the Atherton Cemetery.

George Whittaker was left without a wife and child. He had been in the family for over a decade, shared their good times and their bad. Now he was again on his own although no doubt the family still saw him as one of their own. In later years George was to marry Noela Vida Hazel and they went on to have three children Marilyn, Ken and Sandra.



George Whittaker and second wife Noela.

Within a few weeks of Madeline's passing the family appeared to pack up and leave the Daintree for good. If this was the case it is a reflection of what happened with Burton's grandfather Ambrose after the death of his son Ambrose (Junior). That family packed up and left Daylesford for good.

There is no definitive answer to when the family left the Daintree. The above date comes from a newspaper reporter. However, future records place the family in the Daintree until 1939. The 1937 Census filled in by Burton showed the address as Daintree. 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1939 another newspaper report says: "At the last of the month a share farmer took over Johnson's dairy farm. This is Mr B. Truscott of Edmonton. He is accompanied by his wife." Of concern here is there is no clarity as to whether this was Burton Johnson or another Johnson.

It would seem more probable that the family left in 1936 and that the land that Burton had bought was still in his name until a later date. The clear fact remains that the family of Burton and Merion Johnson lived in the Daintree for over a decade with a great deal of success. They raised their family of ten within the confines of one of the most inhospitable areas in Australia. With the exception of Madeline all the others of the Daintree 10 continued to live happy and fruitful lives.

After leaving the Daintree the family continued their nomadic wandering. They spent little time in a number of locations before moving on. George Whittaker, or Ginger as he had been nick-named appeared to split from the family and went off to seek his own fortune. He later married Noella, had three children (Marilyn, Ken and Sandra). He worked in North Queensland before he joined the Australian Army. After his discharge in 1946 he moved to Mackay and lived a long and happy life. He passed away at 90 just a month after his beloved Noela died.

On 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1937 Phoebe died intestate. She is buried at Mt Gravatt in an unmarked grave. Her land and possessions were given to her daughter Ruby after a Supreme Court sitting. Fritz did not contest the decision and Burton was not mentioned.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 1937 a Death Notice for Phoebe indicated that Burton and Merion were farming at Nimbin in New South Wales.

World War II began on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 1939 with the invasion of the Lowlands by Germany. This was to have serious consequences for the family. The boys would have had to make decisions as to whether they would join up or not.

Burton received the sad news that his father, Fritz Borregard Johnson, had died on the 27<sup>th</sup> November, 1941. He was 83 years old and was buried at Mt Gravatt Cemetery in an unmarked grave near his beloved Phoebe.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1941 the news that Japan had attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbour through the allies against Japan. Keith joined the Australian Army on the 2<sup>th</sup> February, 1942 at the age of 19 years and 1 month with his father's blessing. His records show he was from Kapan via Evelyn in Queensland and that he was a farm hand. His army number was QX 27474 and he was in the Field Ambulance. Most of his time was spent in Australia although he did go overseas for over a year to New Guinea. He stayed in Finschhafen in New Guinea from 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1944 to 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1945. This had been a base once held by the Japanese but they had been repelled from here before Keith's regiment arrived.

The family had enjoyed the stability of living in the Daintree. They had stayed for almost 10 years and this was the longest they had stayed in one place in their lives. Now the nomadic life begun as will be noted in the information below. While all this happened and the war raged on, members of the family began to find partners, marry and move off to start their own families. Not all marriage dates are known so the order of the families that were formed will be at the writer's discretion. In placing the families it has not been easy to find the photographs in some instances even though attempts were made. Each family has a pedigree line starting with the Daintree 10 mother or father, then photographs of these people, their spouses and children.

Burton Mackie Stewart found the love of his life and married Constance Fanny Francis. They had 3 children; Burton Frank, Glenda Gladys and Dawn Lenore. Unfortunately Connie was killed in a motor car accident. Burton later married June Gunther and they adopted June's son Gary to make a family of four.

The youngest boy of the Daintree 10, Max Johnson, made the decision to join the army on the 19<sup>th</sup> July, 1944. Max's War records showed that he had nominated his father, Burton as next of kin. It also indicated the family was in residence at Moggill Road in Kenmore, Queensland. He remained in Australia and was part of the essential transport division. He was discharged 16<sup>th</sup> January, 1948.

A change of address is registered on Max's War records on 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1944 showed Burton has moved to Wellington Point in Queensland.

The War years had raged on throughout Europe and many of the Australian soldiers had been in the thick of the fighting. On 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945 Germany surrendered. Although this was a time to celebrate it was also a time to be fearful for Burton. His three sons were still involved in the hostilities with Japan.

So Burton must have been greatly relieved when he heard the momentous news on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1945 that Japan had surrendered and World War II had come to an end. Now he would have looked forward to his sons returning to the family.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> September, 1946 Merion's mother, Mary Jane Stewart passed away. She was buried in the Tyalgum Cemetery with her husband, William John and her son, Rueben Moysey.

Keith had been discharged from the army and was soon engaged and then married to Laura Pryde. A photograph and the following article was in the The Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld: 1933 - 1954) Saturday 18 August 1945: "Johnson - Pryde — In Chapel Hill Methodist Church. Miss Laura M. Pryde Fig Tree Pocket, Indooroopilly), will be married to Mr. K. W. Johnson (Kenmore). The bride will be frocked in ivory satin, and Miss M. Johnson will be bridesmaid. Mr. Burton Johnson will be best man. A reception will be held at the Canberra Hotel, and the honeymoon will be spent in Toowoomba." The married couple went on to have four children; Kenneth, Stephen, Keith and Shane. Keith and Laura separated and Marge Christophlen became Keith's second wife.

The census of 1946 showed that Burton and Merion were living in Arthur Street, Woody Point, Queensland on 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1946.

The 1949 and 1954 Censuses placed Burton and Merion at Woodbridge in Queensland. They were farming on a property in the area.

Apart from the death of Madeline his precious eldest daughter there was another sad chapter in the life of Burton and Merion. This resulted in the estrangement of their youngest son and his mysterious disappearance.

From limited reports and hearsay Max was drawn into an unsavoury situation which resulted in a young lady becoming pregnant. As was the times it was expected that the father of the unborn child should marry the mother.

Burton and Merion came to the conclusion that their family had caused the wrong and demanded that someone set the situation right. Merion had been religiously brought up so she would have expected her family to show compassion and righteousness in any situation.

Somehow it came to Max to be nominated to marry the young lady. He vehemently rejected the idea that he was responsible and at first refused to be the scapegoat. With added pressure from his parents he finally succumbed to their demands.

Max was torn between doing the right thing and accepting his position versus standing by his knowledge that he was innocent. Eventually he could not live the lie he found himself in so he disappeared.

For years he was lost to the family. Burton and Merion were not able to speak about him.

Burton Mackie tried in vain to find out what had happened to his young brother. Rumours abounded and when a skeleton turned up under a bridge in Queensland the conjecture was that it had to be Max.

During the year 1957, Max got a surprise visit from Burton and Merion. How they had discovered his whereabouts at the St Mary Caravan Park in Sydney is unknown. They walked to the caravan and knocked on the door.

In another caravan, nearby lived a young lady from Mildura, Joy Adams. She recalled seeing an elderly couple leaving the park from the direction of Max's caravan. She did not know that they had business with Max.

Her recall of noticing them was that they appeared unhappy and distressed. Later she was hear from Max that they were his parents who had decided to confront him and demand that he return to the wife and child he had abandoned. He refused, pointing out that he felt he was in no way responsible and



that it was unfair of them to push him into situations that were not of his making. He then asked them to leave. They did so and he never heard from them again.

A few months later Max settled a divorce and was then able to begin life with Joy, the young lady from the caravan park. They had a daughter, Deborah and a son, Steven in Sydney in 1959 and 1961 respectively.

In 1967 Max was offered the job of starting up Pioneer Asphalt in Perth, Western Australia. He accepted and moved his family across the continent.

Many years passed and Burton (Junior) had not stopped asking everyone he came across if they knew a Max Johnson. In 1967 Burton (Junior) had arrived in Sydney and when he made enquiries at Pioneer Asphalt he learnt that his youngest brother had just left for Perth. Finally he knew where Max was and that he was alive and well. Their reunion would come a few years later.

The 1958 Census placed Burton and Merion living at 32 Morrow Road, Taringa, Brisbane, Queensland. Burton had taken a job on the railways a far cry from his heady farming days.

Merion, wife of 45 years died on the 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1959. She and Burton had been living at 32 Morrow Road, Taringa, Brisbane, Queensland. Merion was buried in Toowong Cemetery, Map 158 grave N13 989, Portion 25, Section 22, Grave 12. She was laid to rest in a grave on a steep incline. The children erected a headstone in her memory.



The end for a daughter, wife, mother, grandmother and a woman with incredible resilience. She loved Burton Borregard and followed him to the end of the earth and back again. A hardy, pioneering woman who learnt the skills of farming and worked equally as hard on the land, in the household and bringing up her ten children. Marjorie, the youngest and last of the Daintree 10 described her as: “The most wonderful and loving mother anyone could ever wish for.”



Merion Johnson on the right – daughter, wife, mother, and grandmother. Courtesy of Burt Johnson album.

Burton's brother-in-law Francis John Eckersoll Holt passed away on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1960. He was buried at the Morningside Cemetery.

The 1963 Census placed Burton at 1 Floral Ave, Tweed Heads Queensland, living with Marie Florence who was his 2nd wife.

On 19<sup>th</sup> November, 1965 Burton's sister Ruby died aged 72 and was buried at the Morningside Cemetery in the same grave as her husband Francis John Eckersoll Holt.

In 1964 Burton and Florence moved to Nambour where he lived his final years. Burton Borregard Johnson passed away 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1967 at the age of 75. A long and distinguished farming career came to an end. He was buried in the Nambour Lawn Cemetery.



Burton Borregard Johnson.  
Courtesy of Burt Johnson album.



Burton Borregard Johnson was laid to rest at the Nambour Lawn cemetery and the grave stone above marks his place. Photo by D. J. Johnson

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## Index

Accident Mining 15  
Adelaide Reef 26  
Albert Hotel 28-29  
Albert Street 18, 32  
Albion Hotel 29  
Alexandra Ranges 67  
Alexander, Detective 24  
Andronico's Café 57  
Annual Report 42-43  
Archibald 40  
Argus Newspaper, The 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 26, 31, 33, 34, 35  
Armagh, Ireland 54  
Arnold 38  
Arnold, Edward 42  
Arnott, W.S. (President) 56  
Atherton Cemetery 84  
Atherton, QLD 78  
Atkinson Show Bucking and Jumping 78  
Attorney General 22  
Auriferous land 20, 21, 22  
Australasian Insurance Co 34  
Australian Army 85  
Australian Band and Albion Gold Mining Co 47  
Australian Light Horse Brigade 58  
Australian Town and Country Journal 42, 43, 44, 45, 55  
Avoca 22  
Bald Hill 26  
Ballarat 51  
Ballarat Star, The 13, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 28  
Ballyronan, Londonderry 54  
Bamsey, Mrs A 77  
Banana Station 66  
Banco 42  
Barkla, James 16  
Barrett Creek Bridge 75  
Bathurst Cemetery 49, 63  
Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal 45  
Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal 45, 48, 49  
Bathurst, NSW 4, 48, 63  
Bawden T 36  
Beauman, Mr 75  
Beckett's Residence 24  
Bell, Doctor 56  
Belle Vue Hotel Fire 23, 24

Bendigo 51  
Bendigo Advertiser Newspaper 30  
Benfelora 57  
Bennett Mr and Mrs 57  
Big Hill, West Mitchell 48  
Black Springs 44  
Blackwood, Eric 75, 81  
Blackwood, G 77  
Blackwood, Mrs E 77  
Blanket Flat 13  
Bleackley's Hotel 26  
Bleakley Street 13, 14  
Bliss, Alfred 35  
Bliss, Lieutenant 58  
Bloomfield Carrier 69  
Blowhole 51  
Boots Gully 26  
Bourke Street 29  
Bradden 21  
Bray, Misses 57  
Bray's creek 58, 59, 64  
Breakneck Hill Bridge 10  
Brisbane Courier Paper 64, 66  
Brisbane Hospital 70  
Brisbane River 60  
Brisbane, QLD 2, 4, 60, 65, 66, 68  
Brotchie, Rev J.A.R. 45, 55  
Brown, Brierly 29, 32  
Buckley, Mr 46  
Buirchell, Anthony 2, 3  
Bulkeley 44  
Bungawalbyn Creek 58  
Burman, Alfred 52  
Burniston, George 17, 18  
Buscombe, James K. H., 33, 34, 35  
Butter Factory Daintree 71, 72, 81  
Butter Prices 75  
Butterfly Gully 11  
Cadets 58  
Cairns Historical Society 2  
Cairns Post Paper 67, 69, 70, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 84  
Californian Gold Rushes 51  
Camp Street, Daylesford 11, 13, 18, 20, 32, 33, 35, 52  
Campbell 21  
Campbell, D 40  
Campbell, T 56

Canberra Hotel 87  
Cape tribulation 67  
Carlisle, Zalmondah - Manager Daylesford Union Bank 17, 18  
Carraggarragg 19  
Carrington Hall 47  
Cars 80  
Castlemaine Mining Board 16, 21, 22, 23  
Caufield, T Justice of Peace 47  
Cedars The, MacKay, QLD 61  
Chapel Hill Methodist Church 87  
Charles, Mr and Mrs F. H 58  
Charles, Mr and Mrs S.R 57  
Chatsworth Island 37, 39, 40  
Christophlen, Marge 87  
Church of England 49  
Civil Service Regulation (gag) 21, 22  
Clarence Examiner Newspaper 37, 38, 39, 40, 41,42  
Clarence River NSW 36,37, 39, 40, 42, 53, 54  
Clearing the land 71, 77  
Cobb and Co Coaches 43, 51  
Coliban River 16  
Collins Street 20  
Colonial Sugar Refinery Co 37, 39, 40, 41  
Combes, Edward 47  
Comly Road 60  
Commercial Hotel 35  
Comstock Gold and Silver Mines Co 42  
Condong Sugar Refinery 55  
Condong, NSW 54  
Conlon, Mr 40  
Conspiracy for Arson and Murder 29-30  
Constable Price 32  
Copper Mining 43  
Cornish and York Case 29  
Cornish and York Quartz Mining Co 17, 18  
Cottage Hospital (Murwillumbah, NSW 56, 57, 58, 63  
Cottage Hospital Committee 56  
Couch, Henry 15  
Council Meetings Daylesford 13  
Courier Mail Paper (Brisbane) 66, 61, 80, 87  
Court House Daylesford 13, 18,19  
Cox, Mr 45  
Cranley, W.J (teacher) 83  
Croft, Mr 32  
Crowley, James 44, 47  
Crown Land 21, 22



Crown Reef 16  
CSR Company 55, 57  
Curator Gascoine 12  
Cyclones 80-81  
Dagmar Ranges 67  
Daintree Climate and Weather 77, 80, 81  
Daintree Daily Routines 81-82  
Daintree Launch 79, 81  
Daintree Primary School 2  
Daintree QLD 59, 64, 65, 67, 68, 69, 74, 77,79, 80, 81, 85, 86  
Daintree River 67, 69, 75, 82  
Daintree River Development Co Ltd 64, 67  
Daintree State School 82-83  
Daintree Village 67, 68, 70, 71  
Daintree, QLD 2, 4  
Dairy 59, 64, 65, 66, 67, 71-73  
Dalton, Rev Father 56  
Dark Corner, NSW 48  
Daylesford Cemetery 32, 33, 53  
Daylesford Express Newspaper 11, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 24, 29, 32  
Daylesford Historical Society 2, 11, 14, 17, 30  
Daylesford Lake 13, 14  
Daylesford Mercury Newspaper 24, 25, 28, 29,  
Daylesford, Victoria 2, 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 32, 34,  
Daylesford, Victorian 35, 36, 51, 52, 53  
Deep Creek 13  
Deeral Area 81  
Denmark (Kingdom of) 2, 12, 17, 36, 51, 53  
Department of Mines 48  
Department of Mines NSW 42, 43  
Dickie, James 47  
Diphtheria 32, 33, 53, 58, 63, 64  
Dobbie, John Justice of Peace  
Douglas Creek 68, 75, 82  
Doveton, Francis 10  
Drought 71, 76  
Drowning Case Inquiry 41-42  
Drummond William - Police Magistrate for Daylesford 29, 30  
Duke of Edinburgh 32  
Duke of Kent Hotel 16  
Dumgee, 66  
Dunbible, NSW 54, 58, 63, 66  
Dwyer, Mr 34  
Echo (Boat) 73, 79, 83  
Education Department, QLD 65  
Engagement Isaac - Johnson, 37

English Oak tree 12  
Essendene Park 68  
Euroa, Gladstone, QLD 66  
Evelyn, QLD 86  
Evening News 46, 47  
Ewing, R.C 56  
Falconer, John 47  
Farm 2, 3, 4, 6, 36, 63, 64, 66, 69, 70  
Farmer 40  
Farmer, Edward 66  
Ferguson, Widow 18  
Ferry 67, 69, 70, 80  
Fig Tree Pocket, QLD 87  
Finschafen, New Guinea 86  
Fipp, P Mr 40  
Flattie 68, 69, 71, 72, 74, 82  
Fletcher, James Junior 43  
Flood Damage Clarence River 39-41  
Floods 69, 72, 74, 75, 80  
Flour Mill Court Case 33-35  
Foot, Mr 17, 18  
Frankland Road Board 10, 13  
Fraser, D (Senior and Junior) 40  
Fraud 17, 21  
Freehold Property 20  
Galt, William 10, 20  
Geelong Advertiser 20  
Geology Lecture 46  
George Patterson (Mayor) 16, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29,30, 31, 32  
Georgia, USA 51  
Gladstone, QLD 56, 67d  
Glenlon's House 24  
Glenlyon State Quarry Co 13  
Glenprairie Station 56, 63  
Glenton, Mathtew 17  
Gold Exchange 23  
Goldie, Mr 58  
Goldsmid, Major 58  
Goldsmith, Doctor 56  
Goodsell, Mrs 77  
Goodwood Island 41  
Govenor of Victoria 6, 22, 52  
Grafton 38, 40, 42  
Grafton Gaol 54  
Grafton School 41  
Grafton, NSW 4, 54

Grafton, NSW Courthouse 38, 39  
Graham, Warden 42  
Grant Minister for Lands 19, 20  
Grant Street 18  
Grants 48  
Granville street 18  
Granville, W. E., 41  
Grimes (nee Marks), Alexandrina Carson 64  
Grimes, Miss 57  
Gunther, June 86  
Gurnie Creek 42  
Haarlem, Netherlands 6  
Hallenstein, Councillor 14  
Haphazard Hill Co 15  
Harper 44  
Harper's Hotel 25, 28, 30  
Hart, Doctor 56  
Hart, Rev Graham 58  
Hart, W.G. Town Clerk 16, 17  
Hart, William George 10, 20  
Havelock Quartz Mining Co 16  
Hawdon, Mr MP 41  
Hawtin, T 77  
Hayden D 77  
Hayden, J 77  
Hayden's Landing 77  
Headstone for Lost Boys 53  
Henderson, Mr 26  
Henderson, Robert 34, 35  
Hepburn Council 13  
Hepburn, Victoria 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 22, 51, 52  
Hiland, W 40  
Hill Street, Daylesford 11, 20, 35, 52  
Hobson Bay, Victoria 2  
Hodge 24  
Holland 6  
Holmes, M. D. 21  
Holmes, Mr and Mrs 57  
Holt- Johnson, Wedding 57-58  
Holt, Bruno 57  
Holt, Francis John Eckersall 56, 57, 60,61,63,89  
Holt, Keith John Ryves 58  
Holt, Miss 57  
Holt, Miss Gladys 57  
Holt, Mrs Harvey 57  
Holt, William Arthur 63

Holt, William Harvey 56, 57  
 Horses 82  
 Hough-Smyth K.T.F. Secretary of Mines 22  
 Howden, Allen and wife 57  
 Hudson Brothers and Co Ltd 46  
 Hughes, Rev and Mrs 13  
 Hughes, Lucas 64, 67, 68,76  
 Hunter River General Advertiser 36  
 Hurley, George 44  
 Hurley, John 44  
 Hurley, William 44  
 Immigration Department, QLD 65  
 Influenza Epidemic 59, 64  
 Insolvency 66  
 Irish sea 13  
 Isaacs, Alison 15, 16  
 Isaacs - Johnson, Pedigree 37  
 Isaacs Pedigree 37  
 Isaacs, Frank SM 55  
 Isaacs, Mrs W.R 57  
 Isaacs, Robert Mackintosh 55  
 Isaacs, William Rogers 55  
 Italian Hill 11, 16  
 Jameison, George Henry 14, 24, 25, 28, 31, 34, 35  
 Jameison's Dramatic Hall 24  
 Jameison's Hotel 16, 23, 26  
 Jay, George 33, 34, 35  
 Jervis Bay (ship) 68  
 Jim Crow Diggings, Victoria 6, 51  
 Jockey Death 48  
 Johnson, Ambrose Shire Surveyor 13, 16, 33  
 Johnson, Ambrose Naturalisation 6, 7, 8, 52  
 Johnson, Burt Mackie 62, 64  
 Johnson, Elizabeth (Molly) 60, 70  
 Johnson, Evangeline 60, 73  
 Johnson, Isobel Pedigree Chart 60  
 Johnson, Isobel 64, 68, 69, 71, 73, 76, 77, 79, 81, 82  
 Johnson, - Marks Pedigree 45  
 Johnson, - Marks Wedding 45, 54-55  
 Johnson, - Pryde Wedding 87  
 Johnson, (nee Adams) , Joy 87  
 Johnson, (nee Francis), Constance Fanny 86  
 Johnson, (nee Pryde), Laura M 87  
 Johnson, Ambrose Citizenship Memorial 7, 8  
 Johnson, Ambrose Justice of the Peace 41,  
 Johnson, Ambrose Magistrate 37

Johnson, Ambrose Manager 44

Johnson, Ambrose (Junior) 4, 6, 10, 12, 32, 33, 52, 53, 63, 64, 85

Johnson, Ambrose 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54

Johnson, Ambrose Bankruptcy 48, 63

Johnson, Ambrose Death 48, 85

Johnson, Ambrose Farming 2, 3, 4, 6, 36, 63, 64, 66,69-70

Johnson, Ambrose Fracas 28

Johnson, Ambrose Gold Mining in USA 2, 9, 51

Johnson, Ambrose Justice of Peace and Magistrate 37, 41

Johnson, Ambrose Land Purchase 33

Johnson, Ambrose Life in Denmark 2, 12, 17, 36, 51, 53

Johnson, Ambrose Mining Surveyor 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, 29, 33, 42, 57

Johnson, Ambrose Silver Mining at Sunny Corner 43-48

Johnson, Ambrose V Ploughman 38, 54

Johnson, Ambrose 3 Lost Boys 25-27

Johnson, Ambrose Clarence River 36-37

Johnson, Annis 6

Johnson, Bertha Fritzena 4, 6,10, 12, 32, 37, 51, 52, 53

Johnson, Burton Borregard Accident with cow 73

Johnson, Burton Borregard Birth 63

Johnson, Burton Borregard Change of Address 86

Johnson, Burton Borregard Daintree 67

Johnson, Burton Borregard Dairying 72

Johnson, Burton Borregard Dairying at Moggill Road, Kenmore 86

Johnson, Burton Borregard Dairying, Land Purchase 75

Johnson, Burton Borregard Death 89

Johnson, Burton Borregard Death of Wife Merion 88

Johnson, Burton Borregard Eye Problem (Optic Nerve) 70

Johnson, Burton Borregard Farming Innovations 76

Johnson, Burton Borregard George Whittaker 'Ginger' 68

Johnson, Burton Borregard Leaving the Daintree 85

Johnson, Burton Borregard Marriage 64

Johnson, Burton Borregard Medical Advice Trip 83-84

Johnson, Burton Borregard Moved to Woody Point, Woodbridge 87

Johnson, Burton Borregard Northward Journey 66

Johnson, Burton Borregard Pedigree 60, 61

Johnson, Burton Borregard Pig Farming 69-70

Johnson, Burton Borregard Railway Supervisor Taringa, QLD 88

Johnson, Burton Borregard Return to Daintree 71

Johnson, Burton Borregard Second Marriage 89

Johnson, Burton Borregard Transport 80

Johnson, Burton Frank 86

Johnson, Burton Mackie 59, 64,70,72, 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 84, 86, 87, 88

Johnson, Dawn Lenore 86

Johnson, Deborah 88

Johnson, E.H 56  
 Johnson, Elizabeth Mary (Molly) 60, 70  
 Johnson, Evangeline (Eva) 64, 73, 77, 83  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Birth, Profile 51  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Birth and 9 years old 52  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Birth of Children, Employment 55  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Childhood 53  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Cottage Hospital Committee, Treasurer, Caledonian Society 56-57  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Death 61, 86  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Death of Son 58  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Death of Wife Phoebe 60  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Married, Land Eval, Caledonian Society Secretary, Hospital Board 63  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Shire Valuer 57  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Teenager, researcher, farming, Dunbible, JP 54  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Wedding 54-55  
 Johnson, Fitz Borregard Will 85  
 Johnson, Florence 89  
 Johnson, Gary 86  
 Johnson, Glenda Gladys 86  
 Johnson, Keith 87  
 Johnson, Keith William (1895 -1913) 49, 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 63  
 Johnson, Keith William (1924 - 2007) 65, 77, 86, 87  
 Johnson, Kenneth 87  
 Johnson, Madeline 62, 64, 84-85,  
 Johnson, Madeline 59, 64,70, 73, 77, 78, 84, 85, 87  
 Johnson, Margherita (Rita) 60, 78, 79  
 Johnson, Margherita Charlotta Blancheflora 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 32, 49, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 63  
 Johnson, Marjorie (Marge) 2, 60, 68, 79, 88  
 Johnson, Marjorie 2, 68  
 Johnson, Max 60, 62, 67, 73, 86, 87  
 Johnson, Max Moved to Western Australia 88  
 Johnson, Mrs E. H 57  
 Johnson, Phyllis 60, 78, 79  
 Johnson, Rita 60, 78, 79  
 Johnson, Ruby Isabella Margherita Birth 55, 56, 57  
 Johnson, Shane 87  
 Johnson, Stephen 87  
 Johnson, Steven 88  
 Johnston, Mr - Draper 26  
 Jones 40  
 Jowet, Edward 17  
 Kelle's Hotel 13  
 Kilpatrick Property 70  
 King, Billy 76  
 Kirk, D 40  
 Krause, Ferdinand - Geologist and Civil Engineer 16

Kroombit Station 66  
Kyneton Observer Newspaper 16  
Land Act 20, 21  
Land Act Withdrawal of Sale 21  
Land Ballots 19  
Land Department 19  
Launceston Examiner Newspaper 24  
Law Report in Supreme Court 33  
Lenihan, Sergeant 41  
Leyshon, William 15  
Libel Case 30-32  
Lithgow Location 4  
Lithgow Hospital NSW 63  
Liverpool 13  
Lodden River 17, 21  
Lodge, Mr, Mrs and Miss 57  
London, England 68  
Long Tunnel Gold Mine 42  
Lost Boys' Monument 27  
Mack Creek 27  
MacKay, QLD 85  
Magisterial Inquiry 48, 54  
Maitland Mercury Newspaper 36  
Malmsbury - Daylesford Railway Line 16  
Marks Family 54  
Marks, Miss Lydia 57  
Marks, Miss Marion 57  
Marks, Mr and Mrs 57  
Marks, Phoebe 45, 49, 50, 54, 57, 59, 60, 61, 85, 86  
Martin, J 81  
Master and Servants Act 38  
McAulay, J 40, 41  
McAusland 20, 36  
McCulloch 21  
McDonald, Mr 48  
McInnes, A Mr 39  
McIntyre, Doctor 15, 16  
McNicoll, Dr James - Magistrate and Coroner 24, 29, 31  
Meadow Flat 43  
Mealing, Mr 81  
Melbourne Gaol 35  
Melbourne, Victoria Court Case 30  
Melbourne, Victoria 4, 13  
Melrose Station 66  
Mercury Newspaper 19, 20  
Meymott, Judge 42

Middle Arm Tweed River 55  
Military Funeral 58  
Miller, Peter JP 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 24, 29  
Miners 6  
Mining Board 21, 22  
Mining Board 23  
Mining Registrar  
Mining Surveyor 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, 29, 33, 42, 51  
Mining Surveyor's Report 11, 12  
Minister for Mines 11, 22  
Minister for Mines Victoria Mr Sullivan 16, 20  
Mitchell, Mr (Condong) 58  
Mitchell's Creek 43,44  
MLA for Creswick, Mr Fraser 16  
Moggill Road, Kenmore 86  
Moore, T.J. 43  
Morning Bulletin Paper 66  
Morningside Cemetery 89  
Morrish, C 81  
Morrison, George 41  
Mossman Hospital QLD 79, 84  
Mossman, QLD 60, 80  
Mount Alma Station 66  
Mount Bauple 66  
Mount Eugene 66  
Mount Gravatt Cemetery 60, 61, 85, 86  
Mount Lambi 43  
Mount Larcom Pastoral Inc Co Ltd 67  
Mount Larcomb, QLD 66, 67  
Mount McDonald Mine 48  
Murray, Donald 41  
Murwillumbah, NSW Location 2, 4, 49  
Murwillumbah, NSW 55, 56, 58, 63, 66  
Murwillumbah, NSW Cemetery 49, 63  
Mutimer, Heather 2  
Nambour Lawn Cemetery 89  
Nambour, QLD 4  
National Bank 28  
Ness, A 56  
New England Advertiser Newspaper 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42  
New Wombat Hill Co 15  
New York, USA 51  
Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate 58  
Newman, J.B 56  
Newton, Frederick A., 42  
Nicholson, Mr



Nicholson, R 41  
Nimbin, NSW 60, 85  
North Arm of Tweed River 36, 37, 39, 55  
North Coast Highway 66-67  
Northern Herald Paper (Cairns) 70, 73, 76  
Northern Star Paper 55  
NSW Colonial Secretary 39  
Osborne, C 81, 82  
Osborne, Mr (Senior) 81  
Pacific Ocean 67, 80  
Parbury Lamb and Co 66  
Parish of Harwood 36, 41  
Pasker 44  
Pearn, Miss M School Mistress 74  
Peirce, Mr 69  
Perrins, Mr 26  
Perth, WA 2  
Perth, WA 88  
Pigs 69, 70  
Pioneer Asphalts 88  
Pitt, Sam 16  
Ploughman Case 38-39  
Polled Hereford Cattle 67  
Poole, J (Secretary) 56  
Poolman 40  
Port Douglas, QLD 60, 67, 69, 73  
Port Melbourne 51  
Poultry 70  
Poverty Point 41, 42, 43  
Prince of Wales 12  
Prince's War 51  
Princess of Denmark 12  
Property Auction 36-37  
Prospecting Board 48  
Public Gate 41  
Purchase 44  
Quailey 40  
Racecourse, New 24, 29  
Rannes Station 66  
Rath 32  
Red Cedar 67,76  
Red Cedar Timber Cutters 67, 76  
Reilly, Mr 16  
Reward 26  
Richmond Examiner Newspaper 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42  
Richmond River 59

Richmond, Messr 26  
Road Maintenance 75, 78, 80  
Rockhampton, Hospital 67  
Rockhampton, QLD 56, 60, 66, 67  
Rocky Mouth 39  
Rooms Grafton 36  
Ross, Captain 58  
Royal Charter Ship 13  
Royal Hotel, Rydal 43  
Royal Levee 32  
Royal Marriage 12  
Ruthven Street 33  
Rydal 43, 48  
Sailors' Falls 51  
Sandgate 19  
Sandhurst Region 18  
Sands, Robert 47  
Saw Mill Daintree 71, 76, 81  
Schmidt's Private School 66  
School Picnic 73-74  
Scottish Games 56-57  
Secretary of Mines and Agriculture 48  
Shepherd, John 46, 47  
Shepherds' Flat, Victoria 9, 10, 51  
Shire Surveyor 13, 16, 33  
Silver Mining 44  
Sinclair, Mrs R.E 69  
Sior, Mr 58  
Sirrat, A.H 66, 66-67 (Obituary)  
Sirrat, J. D 66  
Sluicing 51  
Smith, G.A. Lieutenant 58  
Smith, Inspector 24, 25, 26  
Smith, P 56  
Smyth, R. M. 16  
Snapper Island 67  
Social Life Daintree 73, 77, 78, 82  
Sommerville, Andrew 40, 41  
South Grafton Hotel 37  
Specimen Hill 26  
Specimen Hill Works 25  
St Mary's Caravan Park NSW 87  
Stanbridge, Mr 26  
Stanbridge Street 16  
Stanley, Yeerongpilly, QLD 61  
Stephen, Mr 34

Stewart Creek 67, 68, 72, 82  
Stewart, Don 64  
Stewart, Dora 65  
Stewart, Hersee 58, 64  
Stewart, Jack 64  
Stewart, Mary Jane 58, 64, 66, 86  
Stewart, Merion 58, 59, 67, 69,70, 72, 77, 85, 86, 87, 88  
Stewart, Reuben Moysey 64, 86  
Stewart, William John 58, 59, 64, 65, 86  
Stratford Area 81  
Street, P. (Vice President) 56  
Stuart, Matron Rose E 56  
Sturt, Mr 30  
Sunny Corner Post Office 46  
Sunny Corner Progress Committee 44, 45, 47  
Sunny Corner, NSW 4, 43-44, 45, 46, 47, 63  
Sunnybank 60, 61  
Supreme Court 42  
Supreme court, QLD 61, 66  
Surface Hill Sluicing Co 42  
Swaggie 69  
Swan, George - Jockey 48  
Sydney Morning Herald Newspaper 37, 45, 46, 47,54, 57,63  
Table Hill 26  
Tartar (ship) 51  
Tattersall's Hotel 48  
Taylor, Mr - Police Magistrate 26  
The Race Course, Hepburn, Victoria 9, 51, 52  
Theatre Royal 26  
Three Lost Boys 25-27, 52-53  
Timbara, New England 42  
Tirzah, Tweed River 45, 54  
Togo (Boat) 73  
Tompkinson, Mr of Carcooar 46  
Tonkin and Co Silver Mine 44  
Tonkin, Bathurst 46  
Toowong Cemetery 88  
Toowoomba, QLD 66  
Townsville Daily Bulletin Paper 69, 70, 72, 73, 83  
Tractors 80  
Tropical Fruits 70  
Trucks 80  
Truscott, B 85  
Turner, Mr S 74  
Tweed 21, 55, 56  
Tweed Caledonian Society 56

Tweed Heads QLD 4  
Tweed Heads, NSW 60  
Tweed River 63, 64, 76  
Tweed Shire Council 57  
Tyalgum Cemetery 65, 86  
Tyalgum, NSW 2, 58, 64, 66, 81  
United States of America (USA) 2, 9, 51  
Upper Murray District NSW 42  
Valentine 24  
Varley 44  
Victorian Government 13, 16,20  
Victorian Government Gazette 18  
Vincent Street, Daylesford 13, 33, 35  
Voewood 66  
Walker, Detective 24  
Walwork Family 68  
Wardle, Mr 16  
Warregah River, NSW 4, 36, 39, 41, 42, 54, 63  
Watson, Inspector of Telegraph Department 46  
Weinert, G 75, 81  
Wellard, Mr 74, 75  
Wellington Point, QLD 87  
Wellington, NSW 43  
Wheeler, James Henry MLA 17, 18, 24, 29, 30, 31  
Whittaker, George (Ginger) 68, 70,78, 84, 85  
Whittaker, Ken 84, 85  
Whittaker, Marilyn 84, 85  
Whittaker, Noela Vida Hazel 84, 85  
Whittaker, Sandra 84,  
William's Property 82  
Wilson, Rev. J. Keith 56  
Wombat flat 13, 52  
Wombat Hill Botanical gardens 12, 52  
Wondai 66  
Worker, The (Brisbane) 61  
World War II 86  
Wray, Mr 58  
Yandoit 18  
Yandoit Road Board 10, 11, 13  
Yankee Grab' 28  
Zuill, John JP 38

## Photographs

Ambrose Johnson with the English Oak tree at Daylesford, Victoria in background front cover  
Heather Mutimer and Deb Johnson at the Daylesford Historical Society 2  
Ambrose Johnson 5  
Hepburn, Victoria Race Course 9  
Shepherds' Flat near Hepburn, Victoria 9  
News Article about 'Break Neck Hill Bridge' 10  
English Oak planted by Ambrose and his wife on top of Wombat Hill, Daylesford, Victoria 12  
Lake Daylesford Causeway 14  
Peter Miller one of Ambrose Johnson's adversaries in Daylesford, Victoria 14  
William George Hart, Daylesford Councillor who worked with Ambrose Johnson 17  
Daylesford Courthouse 18  
Daylesford 2014 looking from the Courthouse 19  
Jameison's Hotel Daylesford 23  
Gold Exchange, Daylesford, Victoria 23  
Cairn marking spot where the 3 lost boys began their ill-fated journey 25  
Cairn marking spot where the bodies of the 3 lost boys were found 27  
Monument in the Daylesford Cemetery for the 3 lost boys 27  
Albert Hotel in Daylesford, Victoria 28  
James Henry Wheeler MLA for Hepburn 30  
George Patterson friend and foe of Ambrose Johnson 30  
Grave in Daylesford Cemetery for Ambrose Johnson (Junior) 33  
Properties in Hill Street, Daylesford, Victoria owned by Ambrose Johnson 35  
Warregah River NSW where Ambrose Johnson farmed after leaving Daylesford 36  
Grafton Courthouse 39  
Sunny Corner near Bathurst, NSW 45  
Honour Board at the old Murwillumbah Cemetery 49  
Fritz and Phoebe Johnson 50  
Deb Johnson at the old Murwillumbah Cemetery Honour Board pointing out relations 56  
Burton and Merion Johnson family 59  
Burton and Merion Johnson 60  
Grave of William John and Mary Jane Stewart and son Reuben Moysey at Tyalgum, NSW 65  
Environment and animals of the Daintree River 68  
Area of the Johnson Dairy Farm between the Douglas and Stewart Rivers 72  
Johnson family in the Daintree 74  
Johnson family enjoying a picnic in the Daintree 77  
Isobel (nee Johnson) and Richard Dwyer wedding 78 (title in book incorrect)  
Mossman Hospital two angles 79  
Burton Johnson with twins Rita and Phyllis in the Daintree 79  
Burton Johnson's Ford Model A Roadster Pickup with family on board 80  
Horse working in the timber industry 82  
Burton Johnson family with friends in the Daintree 83  
Burton Johnson after a swim in the Stewart Creek, Daintree 84  
George Whittaker (Ginger) and second wife Noela 85  
Merion Johnson headstone in the Toowong Cemetery, Brisbane, QLD 88

Merion Johnson 89

Burton Johnson 89

Burton Johnson's grave in Nambour Lawn Cemetery 90

### **Diagrams and Maps**

Map of East coast of Australia showing main areas the Johnson Family moved between 4

Citizenship Petition from Ambrose Johnson to Governor of Victoria in his own hand 7, 8

Map of land owned by Ambrose Johnson in Daylesford, Victoria 11

Diagram of Bertha (nee Johnson) and William Isaac's Pedigree 39

Diagram of Fritz and Phoebe Johnson's (nee Marks) Pedigree 45

Diagram of the Burton and Merion Johnson's Pedigree 60