

June 2, 1926

Biography of Andrew Johnson
--Edward Johnson

The parents of the pioneer were Anna and John I. Johnson. The name of the pioneer is Andrew Johnson. He was born on December 24, 1862. The place of his birth was "Gulbrandsdalen," Norway. The town nearest to his home was "Vaage."

The pioneer left for the United States because he had a sister there who wrote home telling of how much more you could earn and the better working conditions; and also because there were many at home and not much work to do. He thought that in the United States there were greater opportunities to earn something for himself. His sister was in North Dakota so he also went there. This was the place she had told of in her letters. It was better to be where you had one that you knew than to be among total strangers. His sister had written to him that he could get work where she was and among Scandinavian people.

It took about one month from the time he left his old home until he arrived in North Dakota. He had to wait in Oslo because the ship was four days late. It took about nine days and ten hours from the time he left Oslo until he arrived in New York. The weather was fairly nice except for one day when there was a storm. All the people were ordered off the deck because the waves washed over the deck. The greater portion of the people became sick. Most of the passengers being newcomers, they were taken to a large building where they were kept until the trains arrived which were going to take them west.

The pioneer arrived at Wahpeton, Richland County, North Dakota on June 30, 1883. He worked in the vicinity of Wahpeton doing farm work and also carpenter work. In the fall of 1885 he came up to Steele and Griggs County. He worked at the S. H. Nelson farm hauling wood from the Sheyenne river when the thermometer registered as low as 40 degrees below zero and the snow piled up over the top of the low stables, so that they could not enter through the door but had to make a hole in the roof through which they entered.

In the summer of 1886 the pioneer worked at the R. C. Cooper ranch. In the haying about twenty men were employed. Eight men were in the stack and the others mowing and hauling hay. In the harvest they had twenty binders and twenty shockers. R. C. Cooper had three threshing machines threshing on his own land. The pioneer worked on the ranch from haying through threshing. When he received his pay he got his money in twenty dollar gold pieces.

In the spring of 1888 Mr. Johnson bought the homestead-right on one quarter of land. It was the northeast quarter of section 6 in Riverside Township. He bought it for \$250. He lived in a small shanty. The first spring he was on the land, it was so cold that the bread froze so hard he had to chop it with an axe before he thawed it up for breakfast.

One day the pioneer was out plowing with the oxen. As he was coming in to lunch, the oxen followed him and went through the stable and tore down the whole stable. The stable was made of poles and sticks taken from the Sheyenne valley. It was covered with straw to keep it warm and tight. He did not have a stable then for two or three months. He tied

the oxen out in the prairie. He then built a sod stable which he had for two or three years. The roof was made of slough hay covered with sod. Mr. Johnson went to Hope and Cooperstown for his provisions. He went mostly to Hope because Cooperstown was not very large and did not always have all he wanted. Hope was eighteen miles away from his home, and he could not always come home the same day. He started out with a team of oxen and a load of oats about 4 O'clock in the morning and returned about dark.

Some of the near neighbors were: Henry Bemis, E. C. Butler, S. H. Nelson, Gunderson Bros., Ole Halvorson, Ole Bolkan, Knute Hagen, Mrs. Anna Halvorson and C. C. Piatt.

The first crop froze so he got only a few bushels of oats. Mr. Johnson and his brother-in-law bought a binder which they used together and also a mower and rake. They bought the first binder that Hammer and Condy sold in Cooperstown. The price of the wheat ranged from 40¢ up to 50¢ per bushel and oats from 18¢ up to 23¢ per bushel.

The fuel that Mr. Johnson used was wood. This he got from the Sheyenne Valley. He bought it from the people living along the river. He sawed down the trees and hauled them home in the winter when there wasn't much else to do, and then burned it up during the summer.

Many times the snowstorms were so bad that the pioneer could not come away from his shanty, and he was thought to be frozen to death by his neighbors. Many times the pioneer lost the track or road and drove around for half the night before he could find any house.

One evening when Mr. Johnson and his sister were coming from town, a snowstorm came up. His sister's place was a mile and a quarter from his. He took his sister home, but the storm was so terrible that he could not come to his home. He had to stay at his sister's place from Thursday evening until Saturday morning.

In the fall of 1891 Mr. Johnson had the best crop he ever raised. Due to the rain and shortage of threshing machines, he could not get it threshed. In the late fall he stacked the grain with snow on it. The next spring before seeding, the grain was threshed but due to the grain being wet and rotted, he did not get much out of it. He sold some of the wheat to R. C. Cooper for 15¢ a bushel and also to some of the neighbors for the same price. He gave away some of it and used the rest himself. All that summer he worked for W. W. Archer to pay the threshing bill.

At one time when Mr. Johnson came from Hope, he got out in a hail storm. He was about seven miles from the nearest house. The hailstones were larger than marbles. His hands were sore for a long time due to the hailstones hitting so hard.

The first shanty that Mr. Johnson had burnt down in the fall of 1894. He then bought a house which he fixed up and repaired. This house burned down in the spring of 1905. He had no insurance on it and not much was saved, so it was a great loss. The house was as good as anyone had at that time.

Mr. Johnson was married that same spring to Miss Mary Brosten. They were married in Griggs County at the home of Andrew Brosten.

Mr. Johnson has three sons now living. They are Rudolph, Arthur, and Edward. They are all at home on the farm in Steele County. The pioneer is still living on the farm for which he bought the homestead right in 1888. This farm is in Riverside Township, Steele County. It is $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles southeast of Cooperstown, North Dakota.