

Biography of Ben Johnson
--Inga Johnson

The parents of the pioneer are John and Kari Engen. The pioneer's name is Ben Johnson. He was born in 1867 on the first of December in Allamakee County, Iowa, near Dekorah.

The pioneer left his former home because of the chinch bugs which had destroyed their crops for several years. When they left they sold their land for thirteen dollars per acre, and it would have been worth \$300. today. Ben Johnson came to North Dakota instead of any other state because there were free homesteads to be gotten.

When Ben Johnson was coming to this state he had many hardships to endure. One thing was that they ran short of supplies so the pioneer's father had to go into Fargo and get some things but he could not get back that night and so Ben Johnson and his brother did not know where to put themselves so they crawled upstairs in a barn. It was real cold. The police had noticed them go upstairs and he was searching for them but they were very quiet and afraid ~~to~~ so they lay quite still, and he didn't find them. They traveled in lumber wagon up here.

Ben Johnson came to North Dakota, that is to Fargo, on the 20th of April, 1881, and up to this part of the country on the 20th of June, 1881. The reason Ben Johnson could not get here before was because of the great flood caused by the Red River. The water was up to the front street of Fargo so he stayed down there with relatives until it went down to normal size again.

When Ben Johnson was up here the first few years the mosquitoes were a great pest. They would have to make a ^{smudge} fire to get them away. Mr. Johnson said that he would usually take a big kettle along if he going away and set it right in the wagon box and make ^{smudge} fire in it so as to keep them away. The mosquitoes were just as bad to the animals as they were to the people. A little while later most of them disappeared. The nearest town at that time was Valley City. Mr. Johnson usually went there once a year and it was a long distance when he used oxen. That same spring he got short of flour, coffee, sugar, and tobacco. Early that spring he had to go to Valley City again and it took a whole week to make the trip. There came a large snowstorm and Mr. Johnson had to stay out in the storm one night. There was also another party that happened to have a load of lumber that got caught in the snowstorm. They burned the lumber so as to keep warm and to keep alive.

When Mr. Johnson was here the first years there was government land he settled down on. He had to go to Valley City to file a petition for homestead. Mr. Johnson lives in Washburn Township number 146 and Range 58.

The first home Mr. Johnson had in this state was sort of a dugout. It was built in a hill and had a sort of roof extending outward. They had one room which was not very large. Here they had to both sleep and do their cooking. There was also another little room in which they kept the things cooked in. The whole room was white washed.

Mr. Johnson had to go to Valley City for provisions as I have men-

Biography of Ben Johnson
--Inga Johnson

tioned. It was the closest town. It took about a week and often had very hard times getting there and coming home again.

The names of Mr. Johnson's nearest neighbors were Arney Arneson, Mr. Seim, Ole Bjugstad, John Qualey, and Omund Nelson Opheim.

Mr. Johnson's early farm machinery were the cradle, flail and walking plow then which took a great deal of time. Instead of the cradle now he uses a binder. The cradle would do very slow and poor work. The flail was used then for threshing machine. A little later they had the threshing machine and power was gotten by using horses and they had to keep on going in a circle. It was very hard work for the horses. Mr. Johnson did not use oxen very much because just a little while after he came he got horses.

Mr. Johnson had quite good success with his crops. The seeds which he usually seeded were wheat, oats, barley, and rye. In wheat Mr. Johnson's fields would yield up to 45 bushels to the acre. The other crops also would be good. The market prices were not so very high at that time but there was such an abundance of it they could make pretty good.

The fuel that Mr. Johnson used in early days was wood. He had quite a good space of trees and therefore had usually plenty of wood for the fire so as to keep that going.

There were some prairie fires but these did not bother very much because of the Sheyenne River. There were quite bad snowstorms. One year there were great big snowstorms in May. Mr. Johnson said they would not be very harmful but the worst was to come from the house to the barn.

Mr. Johnson was married to Ingre Gurina Midstokke on the 7th of January, 1909, at Sharon, N. Dak. Mr. Johnson has three girls whose names are Cora, Gladys, Inga. Cora is 15, Gladys is 9, Inga is 13. He also had a boy who died when four years old.

The present home of Mr. Johnson is 9 miles northeast of Cooperstown in Washburn Township number 146, Range 58, Section 12.

PIONEER BIOGRAPHY
Ben Johnson

The parents of the pioneer are John and Kari Engen. The pioneer's name is Ben Johnson. He was born in 1867 on the first of December in Allamakee County, Iowa, near Decorah.

The pioneer left his former home because of the chinch bugs which had destroyed their crops for several years. When they left they sold their land for thirteen dollars per acre, and it would have been worth \$300 today. Ben Johnson came to North Dakota instead of any other state because there were free homesteads to be gotten.

When Ben Johnson was coming to this state he had many hardships to endure. One thing was that they ran short of supplies so the pioneer's father had to go into Fargo and get some things but he could not get back that night and so Ben Johnson and his brother did not know where to put themselves so they crawled upstairs in a barn. It was real cold. The police had noticed them go upstairs and he was searching for them but they were very quiet and afraid so they lay quite still, and he didn't find them. They traveled in lumber wagon up here.

Ben Johnson came to North Dakota, that is to Fargo, on the 20 of April 1881, and up to this part of the county on the 20 of June, 1881. The reason Ben Johnson could not get here before was because of the great flood caused by the Red River. The water was up to the front street of Fargo so he stayed down there with relatives until it went down to normal size again.

When Ben Johnson was up here the first few years the mosquitoes were a great pest. They would have to make a fire to get them away. Mr. Johnson said that he would usually take a big kettle along if he was going away and set it right in the wagon box and make fire in it so as to keep them away. The mosquitoes were must as bad to the animals as they were to the people. A little while later most of them disappeared. The nearest town at that time was Valley City. Mr. Johnson usually went there once a year and it was a long distance when he used oxen. That same spring he got short of flour, coffee, sugar, and tobacco. Early that spring he had to go to Valley City again and it took a whole week to make the trip. There came a large snowstorm and Mr. Johnson had to stay out in the storm one night. There was also another party that happened to have a load of lumber that got caught in the snowstorm. They burned the lumber so as to keep warm and to keep alive.

When Mr. Johnson was here the first years there was government land he settled down on. He had to go to Valley City to file a petition for homestead. Mr. Johnson lives in Washburn Township, number 146 and range 58.

The first home Mr. Johnson had in this state was sort of a dug-out. It was built in a hill and had a sort of roof extending outward. They had one room which was not very large. Here they had to both sleep and do their cooking. There was also another little room in which they kept the things they cooked in. The whole room was white washed.

Mr. Johnson had to go to Valley City for provisions as I have mentioned. It was the closest town. It took about a week and often had very hard times getting there and coming home again.

The names of Mr. Johnson's nearest neighbors were Arney Arneson, Mr. Seim, Ole Bjugstad, John Qualey, and Omund Nelson Opheim.

Mr. Johnson's early farm machinery were the cradle, flail, and walking plow. Instead of the plows he has now he used the walking plow

Ben Johnson (continued)

then which took a great deal of time. Instead of the cradle now he uses a binder. The cradle would do very slow and poor work. The flail was used then for threshing machine. A little later they had the threshing machine and power was gotten by using horses and they had to keep on going in a circle. It was very hard work for the horses. Mr. Johnson did not use oxen very much because just a little while after he came he got horses.

Mr. Johnson had quite good success with his crops. The seeds which he usually seeded were wheat, oats, barley, and rye. In wheat Mr. Johnson's fields would yield up to 35 bushels to the acre. The other crops also would be good. The market prices were not so very high at that time but there was such an abundance of it they could make pretty good.

The fuel that Mr. Johnson used in early days was wood. He had quite a good space of trees and therefore had usually plenty of wood for the fire so as to keep a-going.

There were some prairie fires but these did not bother very much because of the Sheyenne River. There were quite bad snowstorms. One year there were great big snowstorms in May. Mr. Johnson said they would not be very harmful but the worst was to come from the house to the barn.

Mr. Johnson was married to Ingre Gurina Midstokke on the 7 of January, 1909 at Sharon, N. Dak. Mr. Johnson has three girls whose names are Cora, Gladys, and Inga. Cora is 15, Gladys is 9, and Inga is 13. He also had a boy who died when four years old.

The present home of Mr. Johnson is 9 miles northeast of Cooperstown in Washburn township, number 146, Range 58, Section 12.

--Inga Johnson

Biography of Ben Johnson
--Cora Johnson

The parents of Ben Johnson were Mr. and Mrs. John Johnson. He was born December 1, 1867 in Allamakee County, Iowa near Decorah.

His parents left Iowa because of the cinch bugs which destroyed the grain for many years. They came to North Dakota because of the free homesteads they could get.

Ben Johnson was only thirteen years when they came up here. His father, mother and children came from Iowa to Fargo by train. From there they drove by team, and it took about from 3 to 6 days. They came here about the 6th of June, 1881.

When they got here, the land they took was ready for the plow, but it was harder to get fodder for the horses and cattle. The land was located near the Sheyenne river.

Their first home was made of logs plastered between crevices, the size being about 14x14 and 6 feet high. The roof was made of bark peeled from elm trees which made a good tight roof if the bark was laid right. The barn was made of sod, size 40x24.

The neighbors they had were Omund Opheim, John Qualey, and Iver Seim. Their nearest town was Valley City where they went twice a year for provisions. The trip took from 3 to 6 days, six days with oxen and three days with horses.

The early farm machinery consisted of a home made drag. At first they seeded by hand, but at last they got a self raker reaper. The prices of crops were good for the first two or three years, but then the people had so little land in condition to be cultivated that there was not much grain to be sold. In the later years the wheat went down to about 50¢ a bushel. The crops were also good at first, but it became so dry and the gophers were so bad that it destroyed the crops.

The pioneers fuel consisted mostly of wood which was found in great amount along the river and which could be purchased cheap.

Some of the hardships were diseases in great number. One of the worst was diptheria which at that time had no cure. The unsanitary conditions made it worse. Mr. Johnson had two brothers who died in this and no doctor to even take the pain away because the closest doctor was in Valley City. Another hardship was the storms at times so bad people couldn't get out for two days.

Ben Johnson married Gurina Midstokke on January 7, 1910 at Sharon, North Dakota. He has had four children whose names are, Cora Johnson, Inga Johnson, Gladys Johnson, and Alf Johnson who died at the age of 4, in 1919. The pioneer's present home is 9 miles northeast of Cooperstown, North Dakota, 3/4 of a mile from the Sheyenne river in Section 12, Washburn township.

PIONEER BIOGRAPHY

Ben Johnson

by Luga Johnson

- * The parents of the pioneer are John and Karl Engen. The pioneer's name is Ben Johnson. He was born in 1867 on the first of December in Allamakee County, Iowa, near Dekorah.
- * The pioneer left his former home because of the chinch bugs which had destroyed their crops for several years. When they left they sold their land for thirteen dollars per acre, and it would have been worth \$300 today. Ben Johnson came to North Dakota instead of any other state because there were free homesteads to be gotten.
- * When Ben Johnson was coming to this state he had many hardships to endure. One thing was that they ran short of supplies so the pioneer's father had to go into Fargo and get some things but he could not get back that night and so Ben Johnson and his brother did not know where to put themselves so they crawled upstairs in a barn. It was real cold. The police had noticed them go upstairs and he was searching for them but they were very quiet and afraid so they lay quite still, and he didn't find them. They traveled in lumber wagon up here.
- * Ben Johnson came to North Dakota, that is to Fargo, on the 20th of April, 1881, and up to this part of the country on the 20th of June, 1881. The reason Ben Johnson could not get here before was because of the great flood caused by the Red River. The water was up to the front street of Fargo so he stayed down there with relatives until it went down to normal size again.
- * When Ben Johnson was up here the first few years the mosquitoes were a great pest. They would have to make a fire to get them away. Mr. Johnson said that he would usually take a big kettle along if he was going away and set it right in the wagon box and make fire in it so as to keep them away. The mosquitoes were just as bad to the animals as they were to the people. A little while later most of them disappeared. The nearest town at that time was Valley City. Mr. Johnson usually went there once a year and it was a long distance when he used oxen. That same spring he got short of flour, coffee, sugar, and tobacco. Early that spring he had to go to Valley City again and it took a whole week to make the trip. There came a large snowstorm and Mr. Johnson had to stay out in the storm one night. There was also another party that happened to have a load of lumber that got caught in the snowstorm. They burned the lumber so as to keep warm and to keep alive.
- * When Mr. Johnson was here the first years there was government land he settled down on. He had to go to Valley City to file a petition for homestead. Mr. Johnson lives in Washburn Township number 146 and Range 58.
- * The first home Mr. Johnson had in this state was sort of a dugout. It was built in a hill and had a sort of roof extending outward. They had one room which was not very large. Here they had to both sleep and do their cooking. There was also another little room in which they kept the things they cooked in. The whole room was white washed.
- * Mr. Johnson had to go to Valley City for provisions as I have mentioned. It was the closest town. It took about a week and often had very hard times getting there and coming home again.
- * The names of Mr. Johnson's nearest neighbors were Arney Arneson, Mr. Seim, Ole Bjugstad, John Qualey, and Omund Nelson Opheim.
- * Mr. Johnson's early farm machinery were the cradle, flail, and walking plow. Instead of the plows he has now he used the walking plow then which took a great deal of time. Instead of the cradle now he uses a

Ben Johnson (continued)

binder. The cradle would do very slow and poor work. The flail was used then for threshing machine. A little later they had the threshing machine and power was gotten by using horses and they had to keep on going in a circle. It was very hard work for the horses. Mr. Johnson did not use oxen very much because just a little while after he came he got horses.

Mr. Johnson had quite good success with his crops. The seeds which he usually seeded were wheat, oats, barley, and rye. In wheat Mr. Johnson's fields would yield up to 35 bushels to the acre. The other crops also would be good. The market prices were not so very high at that time but there was such an abundance of it they could make pretty good.

The fuel that Mr. Johnson used in early days was wood. He had quite a good space of trees and therefore had usually plenty of wood for the fire so as to keep that a-going.

* There were some prairie fires but these did not bother very much because of the Sheyenne River. There were quite bad snowstorms. One year there were great big snowstorms in May. Mr. Johnson said they would not be very harmful but the worst was to come from the house to the barn.

Mr. Johnson was married to Ingre Gurina Midetokke on the 7th of January, 1909 at Sharon, N. Dak. Mr. Johnson has three girls whose names are Cora, Gladys, Inga. Cora is 15, Gladys is 9, Inga is 13. He also had a boy who died when four years old.

* The present home of Mr. Johnson is 9 miles northeast of Cooperstown in Washburn Township number 146, Range 58, Section 12.

--Inga Johnson