

SELHS

Newsletter of the Sterling Eureka and Laketown History Society

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Memory Room – Cushing Community Center

January, 2012

Email selhs@gmail.com

Website <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~wiselhs/>

Peter Wahlin Johnson—Civil War Veteran Cushing WI

We have been working on our Civil War project of identifying and remembering local veterans from that war. In the neighborhood



around Bass Lake (two miles northwest of Cushing on Hwy 87) there was, a hundred and

twenty five years ago, a little settlement called Petersburg.

The founder and owner was Peter Wahlin Johnson, a native of Sweden and a Civil War Veteran, according to his gravestone in the Cushing Cemetery. Most of the Scandinavians in our area came here after the war, so it seemed interesting to try to trace him.

Wahlin enlisted in the 15th Regiment Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, more popularly known as the 'Scandinavian Regiment' as most of its volunteers and officers were from Scandinavia.

Nina Borup Malmen has written about Peter Johnson in her own family history. "The cost of transportation for the Borup family to come to America was furnished by a relative by the name of Peter Johnson. He was married to one of my great grandfather's sisters (Annie Borup). Peter Johnson owned several farms. One of the farms was on the north shore of Bass Lake. It was later owned by Walter Gullickson. Cornering this farm was another farm (along Hwy 87 on the east side north of 275th Av). The Borups rented this farm for a number of years."

"In February of 1875 the Borup house burned to the ground. There was three foot of snow on the ground. The neighbors came to their aid and within two days another house was constructed. They lived in a root house during this time." (This site seems to have been near Wolf Lake – south and west along the creek coming from the south).

"This farm was also the site of a town which Peter Johnson built and named Petersburg. It was an average town with a mercantile store, livery stable, bank, boarding house and even a

post office. Eventually a main road was established between St. Croix Falls, Cushing and Grantsburg. During the 1930's it became State Highway 87.

The highway bypassed Petersburg and eventually this once thriving town faded into history with the exception of the sawmill. The acreage was eventually sold and the new owner kept the saw mill business until he lost his life in an accident. “

It was difficult to find Peter W. Johnson in the military companies listed above—no such name. The 1890 US Veterans Census for Sterling, Polk County Wisconsin lists “Peter W. Johnson, alias Peter Wahlin.” Peter Wahlin was listed as a soldier in Company B, 15th Wisconsin. He originally enlisted from Fox Lake Wisconsin, Dodge County. He was listed as a carpenter by trade at enlistment.

Vesterheim Museum in Decorah Iowa has a list of soldiers in the Scandinavian Regiment. “Peter Wahlin. Residence: Fox Lake, Wisconsin, Enlistment Date: 15 Nov 1861. Side Served: Union, State Served: Wisconsin. Service Record: Enlisted as a Corporal on 15 November 1861. Enlisted in Company B, 15th Infantry Regiment Wisconsin on 15 Nov 1861. Transferred out of Company B, 15th Infantry Regiment Wisconsin on 1 Nov 1863. Transferred into Regiment U.S. Veteran Reserve Corps on 1 Nov 1863. Mustered Out Regiment U.S. Veteran Reserve Corps on 22 Nov 1864.”

Peter Wohlin, recovered from an injury, enrolled December 2, 1864 to serve one year and discharged from the 16th Regiment of Kentucky Volunteer Infantry July 15, 1865 after the end of the war

Peter J Wahlin became a citizen of the United States on October 17, 1868 in Chautauqua County New York. March 28, 1870, he married Anna Greta Borup in Jamestown NY. She came to American in 1869 from Sweden.

Sometime in 1871 they came to Wisconsin and bought two farms; one from John Doty on

Bass Lake, and one from Robert Doty, along Hwy 87 south of Wolf Lake—a total of 265 acres, for which Johnson paid cash.

Peter and his wife Anna are buried in the Cushing cemetery. Anna is listed as Born 1840, died October 14, 1925) Census information indicate the Johnson's had a daughter Mary Amelia who married neighbor August Albert and a son, Samuel Johnson who, at the time of Peter's death, was a telegraph operator. Samuel inherited the Hwy 87 farm to the north and Mary and her husband the Bass Lake Farm (the Walter Gullickson farm.

An interesting story was passed along by Nina Borup Malmen coming down through the family. “When my dad wrote his account of the family history in 1967, he mentioned that a Peter Johnson, who was married to his grandfather's sister, furnished the transportation when the Borup family came from Sweden to the United States. There is a little more to that statement. After arriving in this country, Peter Johnson joined the army and became a soldier in the civil war. One of his army buddies (I will call him George) was also from Ostergotland, Sweden. During the course of the war George was seriously injured in a battle. It was at this time that he told Peter Johnson the following story.

“After arriving in the United States, George found that Times were hard and jobs were very scarce. Finally in desperation he robbed a bank in southern Wisconsin. He was afraid of being caught and fled to northern Wisconsin. At this point, he buried the money in a certain spot near Bass Lake, close to the town of Cushing, and then joined the army. George told Peter Johnson that if he did not survive his battle wounds....he wanted Peter to dig up this money and send for George's parents and a sister who were still living in Sweden. George did not survive his wounds and when the war was over Peter Johnson followed George's directions to a certain spot on the shore of Bass Lake. He found the money. and what did he do with it??? He used it to bring his own relatives over from Sweden.

“Among these relatives were Carl Magnus Borup, his wife Louisa and their family...and so it is because of stolen money that we Borup descendents are citizens of the United States. My dad claimed that his dad told him and Chris this story back in 1919. After my dad told me this story (1980) I asked if it was okay to repeat it...he laughed and said, "after all this time, I guess it wouldn't do any harm."

Note: Some 40 years ago, on the Ernest Swanson farm, on the NE edge of Bass Lake, while doing some construction digging, Ernest found three gold pieces, two \$10 and one \$20 coin. The \$20, in possession of Ernest's daughter is dated 1859. It is on a farm across the road from one of the two farms that Peter bought for cash when he came to Sterling, from NY, in 1871. One might speculate about the two events; and even about who the actual robber from Southern WI was.



Florence Albert

Another Old Soldier Answers Last Roll Call

Peter W. Johnson, a veteran of the Civil War became stricken with paralysis some time ago and died at 12 m. April 1st, 1912 at his home on the north shore of the beautiful Bass Lake. From the time of the stroke Mr. Johnson was unable to speak and had to make known his wants by signs. His relatives and many friends did all in their power to bring the old gentleman back to health and make his suffering lighter as he fought his last battle with death and passed to his reward on the night of April, 1st.

Peter W. Johnson was born in Vermland, Sweden, Oct. 22, 1828; emigrated to America about the year 1858; enlisted as a private in Co. B 15 Regiment Wis. Volunteer infantry at the start of the Civil War in 1860; was promoted corporal of 45 Co Md. Battallion of Veteran Reserves as a mark of merit for faithful service after three years' service. Mr. Johnson was amongst the patriotic spirits who re-enlisted after which he served until the close of the war as corporal and private of Co. H 16th Regiment Kentucky Volunteer Infantry. He came to the town of Sterling as one of the stalwart pioneers who hewed a home out of the virgin forests in 1871, where with his wife and two children Samuel and Mrs. August he has resided ever since.

Sam was attending a meeting of the Telegraphers' Union of which he is chairman, out in Colorado at the time of his father's death but managed to be present at the funeral which was held Saturday, April 6th at Cushing Rev. Dyson and Rev. Risvold officiating.

In Mr. Johnson one recognized the ideal military man—straightforward in his speech and dealings, honest and square with all. To know him intimately was to be his sincere friend. We all join in extending our sincere sympathy to the bereaved wife and family and they desire to thank in turn the many kind friends and neighbors who so considerately helped to lighten their burden in the hour of affliction.—R. H.

Know ye that Peter Wahlin
has been Honorably Discharged from
the service of the United States this
18th
day
of October
1865

May future generations never forget the
Debt of Gratitude
they owe to the Brave Boys in Blue, who on land
and sea, volunteered their services during the Dark
Days of Rebellion, Suffering and Bloodshed which
marked the years from 1861 to 1865
and may our motto always be
"Liberty and Union; Now and Forever One and Inseparable."

To all whom it may concern
— Know ye, that —
Peter Wahlin

Enlisted from Dane County, Wisconsin, November 15, 1861, and
mustered into United States service at Camp Randall Madison
of Wisconsin Feb'y 13, 1862 as a **Corporal**
of **Co B. 15th Regt Wisconsin Vol Infantry**

under Capt Ole Johnson and Col Stans. C. Slego to serve
three years or during the war. The Regiment was assigned
to the 2 Brig 1 Div 14 Corps Army of the Cumberland and
participated in the following engagements: Siege of Island
No 10, Smith, Union City, Chaplin Hills, Lancaster, Knob Gap
on Stone River, Shelbyville Pike, Chukamauga, Mission
Ridge, Charleston, Tunnel Hill, Rocky Face Ridge, Resaca
Adamsville, Cassville, Sumpkinsville Creek, New Hope Church
Dallas, Pine Mtn, Newnan Mtn, Chattahoochee River Beach
New Creek, Siege of Atlanta, Jonesboro, Lovejoy Station, in 1864

The said Peter Wahlin was **Discharged** and
honored also 22. 64 at Louisville Ky on account of expiration
of term of service. **Reenlisting** in Dec 1864

as a Private in Company "D"
16th Regt Kentucky Vol Infantry

under Captain John W. Wood and Colonel White

Promoted to Sergeant.

Honorably Discharged

in August 1865 at Louisville Ky on account of
close of the war.

Presented by Peter Wahlin to his
wife **Anna**. Oct 15, 1897.

This design for a National Monument
was Dedicated to the
Grand Army of the Republic and kindred Societies
— by the Basel Monument Association and by them —
to be erected to the
Rank and File of the Union Army.
October A. D. 1898.

The Peter Johnson House (now the Gullickson house on Bass Lake)



Sam and Adelaide Johnson



August and Mary Johnson Albert



From the President by Russ Hanson

A change took place at the at the November meeting of SELHS. Each November, we vote on new officers for the coming year. We have been lucky in having officers who have served for term after term.

Donna Blair has been our superb secretary and treasurer since the start of the group. Mark Johnson has been the Vice-President for many terms and a source of many good ideas. Marcie Marquardt has served as our superb President for the last several years. Mostly our elections are re-electing the same folks who have been wonderful in taking on the responsibilities.

This year, Marcie insisted that she wanted to take a break in being President. We tried to talk her into doing it another year, but she was firm.

The group then asked me. Having never taken any official role in SELHS, mostly because my view of retirement is not being responsible for anything including Margo, in a weak moment, I let my friends talk me into taking over the job for one year.

So, as of Jan 1, 2012, I am starting to feel the pressure of being responsible! However, it should not be too hard, as we have a very good core group who all work together on any projects we do and make the whole effort fun and efficient! My goal as president is not to offend any of our excellent volunteers and members and to keep up the good work that Ione Christenson, President #1 and Marcie, President #2 have done since our initial start in 2000.

In 2000, Donna Blair, Louis Goulat Swenson, and I met at Louise's home starting this group. We were bothered that the Town of Sterling had just burned down the 1888 town hall building. We agreed that our goal would be to work together to preserve local history, by being a group that advised the community about what was historic and should be preserved if at all possible.

We began to have meetings regularly at Louise's house. Alice Swenson, Allan Swenson, Linda Harris, Ione Christenson, and others came as we met to discuss items of local interest.

Soon we realized that more people were interested than we had room for in Louise's living room, and so moved to the Cushing Community Center.

Betty and Sherman Jensen came to the meetings and advised us to form an official historical society, with by-laws and officers and organize as a sub-chapter of the Polk County Historical Society. Betty and Sherman had helped found and shepherd the St. Croix Falls HS through the same process and made it all easy for us to accomplish.

Moving into our 12th year, we have moved in directions we hadn't planned, but welcomed. Folks kept offering us items of local history—old record books and artifacts. With a great deal of help from Betty Wilson, an early member, we soon were able to use a room in the upstairs of the Cushing Community Center (the 1956 school building) and turn it into what we called our "Memory Room."

We have maintained an excellent relationship with the Community Center Board, contributing nearly \$800 to replace the building locks; money to build a podium for the gym meeting room; contributing to the sound system; and this year purchasing energy efficient bulbs for the board room and memory room to replace the 300 watt old bulbs.

We were very short of money in the early days. Sherman and Betty convinced us to commission 300 Red Wing beater jars to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Polk County in 2003. We made enough profit to establish a small bank cd and some working money—and since then have pretty much broken even on our yearly budget.

SELHS has sponsored four collections of local history put together by Stanley Selin and me. We have several hundred printed up and then sell them locally. Last year's book, volume 2 of Stories of the Trade River Valley is within \$400 of breaking even (cost \$2100 for 300 copies).

The out-of-print books are now back in print through Amazon.com or through SELHS. See the order blank in this newsletter.

A few years ago we joined with the Sterling Old Settlers (now called the Sterling Picnic) board to assist them in putting on the event each June (1st Sunday after Father's day).

We participate in events in the area, including Cushing Fun Days, Memorial Day, and last year, Doc Squirt Day. We sponsor a fall tour called the "River Road Ramble," a tour of the old River Road and Hwy 87 between St. Croix Falls and Burnett County.

In the first few years of our existence, we had regular programs where the public was invited to come and hear speakers tell about teaching in the old days, creameries, railroads etc. We haven't done that recently, but as one of the things I plan to change is to try to revive a few programs each year.

Our first meeting, a planning meeting for the rest of 2012 will be the 3rd Thursday of March at the Memory Room (back entrance) of the Community Center. A new furnace system put in the Community Center allows us to turn up the heat and warm the room in a few hours!

Mark Johnson has been nudging us to take on a project of refurbishing the local historical sites signs in our area. I am hopeful we can start a team who can make the wooden signs and take this on in 2012. Possibly we can set up temporarily in an empty room in the Community Center.

Many of our early members have passed on since we started. I remember Louise Swenson, Alice Swanson, Allan Swenson, Jamie Swanson, and Linda Harris off the top of my head. There are more so please forgive my poor memory.

We have about 30 members who paid dues in 2011. Normally we have most of our renewals at the Settlers Picnic in June, however, if you haven't joined for awhile, please consider sending \$10 bucks to SELHS for a membership for 2012.

Our goal in 2012 is to continue with our efforts to preserve local history and to have a fun time doing it!

Thank you for your support!

Russ Hanson *The River Road Rambler*

Elected Officers and Board Members, Sterling
Eureka and Laketown Historical Society
November 2011

Chair - Russ Hanson

2519 285th Ave. Cushing, WI 54006

(715) 488-2776 or 507-356-8877 Jan-Feb

russ_hanson@grantsburgtel.com.net

Vice-chair - Mark Johnson

Secretary/Treasurer - Donna Blair

Emeritus Chair – Marcie Marquardt

Board Members

George Laier, Russ and Dottie Adams,

LeRoy and Marlys Hedberg, Joan Swanson,

Justin Swanson, Marcie Marquardt and ?

Order a book from SELHS

Postage included in price

\$13 A History of Making Maple Syrup

\$18 St Croix River Road Ramblings 2010

\$18 River Road Ramblings 2011

\$18 The St Croix River Road

\$18 History of Cushing Wisconsin I

\$18 Stories of the Trade River Valley I

\$18 Stories of the Trade River Valley II

Check to SELHS, Box 731, Cushing, WI 54006

Or find some of these on amazon.com



Marcie, Russ and Margo Memorial Day Cemetery Walk

The date after your name on the address label indicates the last time we have your membership updated. A 0, or 3000 means live member.

Meetings are the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm at the Cushing Community Center Back Entrance
No Meetings December, January and February

Remember us in your will

With this simple sentence in your will you can donate money to the Sterling Eureka and Laketown Historical Society

I give the sum \$ _____ to the Sterling Eureka and Laketown Historical Society. Our address is

SELHS P.O. Box 731 Cushing, WI 54006.

The Polk County Genealogical society is at the Luck Museum the second and fourth Mondays of each month from noon until 3 pm. They will help you do research on your family history. No charge and no appointment needed. Email us at polkgen@gmail.com and check our website at www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~wipolk/

**OFFICERS AND LEADERS OF POLK COUNTY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETIES
“DO MORE TOGETHER”**

**1 PM – 3 PM, THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2012
LUCK MUSEUM, 301 SOUTH MAIN STREET LUCK, WISCONSIN**

The Luck Historical Society invites all area history interested groups to join together in a social time of learning from each other. Our Northwest Regional district representative, Janet Seymour, and the new director of Polk County Historical Society will be with us. LHS asks each historical society to bring brochures, pictures, mission statements, etc., to set up tables. What has worked for your society? Be prepared to introduce yourself and share two or three sentences about your affiliation. Contact Chuck Freeman at 715-472-4378 if you have any questions.

Sterling Eureka and Laketown Membership Form

Send completed form to

SELHS.
P.O. BOX 731
Cushing WI 54006
(LOOK AT THE
DATE AFTER
YOUR NAME
On mailing label
For the last time you
Joined (i.e. 2011)

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State ____ Zip _____
Phone _____
Email _____

Annual Membership Levels

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Student</i>	<i>Life (individual or couple)</i>
\$10.00	\$5.00	\$100.00

All memberships in excess of \$10 as well as any additional donations to the SEL Historical Society are fully deductible.



Mystery Person of 2012!

SELHS
Box 731
Cushing, WI 54006