

Historical Clippings

Three Lakes Museum

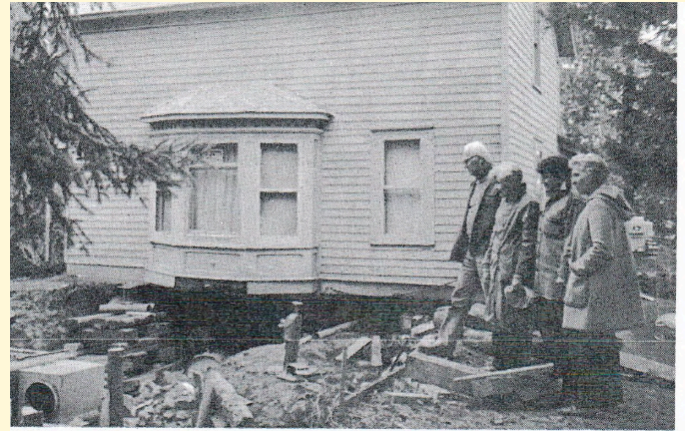
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The Johnson House – phase by phase by phase

TL - 1986

A group of Three Lakes residents have been busy the past months organizing a building fund to raise needed money for an addition to the Three Lakes Historical Society Museum here.

As "phase one" of the campaign, the present structure was moved directly back onto a new foundation to a point that will allow full use of the available land to the west. The recent rains had caused the already crumbling foundation to crumble even further, leaving the structure in a precarious situation for winter.



1986 the sun touched a spot of earth in Three Lakes where the Johnson House had stood for over a century when the Historical Museum was founded. They are, left to right, Walt Goldsworthy, a member of the Board of Directors; President of the Society, Marge Holtorp; Dee Zollar; and Doris Goldsworthy. (Three Lakes News)

Any homeowner will tell you, home maintenance is crucial to structural longevity and in that structure is where the stories of home start and grow. Forty years ago a newly organized Three Lakes Historical Society was just getting into Johnson House maintenance, working to continue the story. "Phase one" of their project was complete and they were moving on to "phase two".

Back then Walt Goldsworthy of the museum board of directors pointed out, "Time now is of the essence if we are to preserve and continue the museum project to its fullest over the next few years."



Available records indicate that the hand-hewn framework in the structure was begun shortly after the coming of the railroad in 1882. The house was part of a homestead owned by Thomas Williams and it was built around 1882 after the railroad reached Three Lakes. Originally there were two just rooms, the present living room and "music room". The sheeting under the siding is 16 inch pine, 1" thick. Windows have wooden pegs and square iron nails.



Mr. and Mrs. Julius Johnson came to Neenah, Wisconsin, from Oslo, Norway in 1879. In 1882 he was employed by the Lake Shore Traffic Railroad Company to build the road from Monico, Wisconsin, to Watersmeet, Michigan. He settled his family at the new Three Lakes station.

In 1890 the Williams property in town was purchased by Johnson and a dining room, kitchen, upstairs bedrooms and a sun porch were added to the small two room house. This house remained in the family until it was sold to the Town of Three Lakes almost 100 years later, in 1982.



Seven children were born to the couple and raised in the home. Included in this picture with spouses and friends - Anna 1883, Frank 1884, Agnes 1886, and Amanda 1888. Born in Three Lakes, Stena 1891, Olga 1895, and Eva 1899.

Notes from the Johnson's hand written abstract:

In 1890 they purchased lots 9, 10 and 11 of block 12 in the village of Three Lakes. This property was first owned by the railroad company, purchased from the United States patent dated September 30, 1882. The three lots with a small house on one, were purchased by Mr. Johnson for \$150.00. Lot no. 11 had been sold by the Forest County treasurer for the delinquent 1888 taxes, amount \$0.68, to Dan Gagen May 21, 1889. Signed by Egbert Wyman, Abstractor of Titles, Crandon, Wisconsin, Forest County. Was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Johnson by Thos x (his mark) Williams and Lizzie x [her mark) Williams his wife the 6th day of November, 1890. Deed executed by F.S. Campbell, Justice of Peace.

Three Lakes celebrated its 100th birthday in 1981. In conjunction with the Centennial Celebration of the community, Sue Williams, Ruth Schwartz, and Doris Goldsworthy successfully set up a display of Three Lakes artifacts in the old CN&W railroad depot. Within a year though the owner of the depot sold the building and the women had to look for another place for a historical exhibit.

In 1982 the Three Lakes Town Board spent \$15,000 for the Johnson property, then belonging to the Eva Johnson estate, located on Huron Street directly behind the Edward U. Demmer Public Library.

The town board's original interest in the property was in the three lots, not the house itself as it was badly in need of repair.

Soon the house was scheduled to be burned by the fire department. When the group of women learned this, the town board was approached with a proposal to lease the building on the premise that within five years time the idea of a museum for Three Lakes would prove a reality.

The Centennial Museum group moved forward establishing a building fund for the Johnson House and in August, 1984, the Three Lakes Historical Society was created pledging to keep Three Lakes "past for the future".

In 1985 the house was used to display all artifacts. The main floor was used for permanent displays with the upstairs eventually opened for additional exhibits. In 1998, the interior of the house was completely renovated. The ceiling was reinforced & the walls were stripped. New wallboard was installed and painted. Windows were reinforced with wooden frames. The carpet was removed and the wooden floors refinished. An exterior staircase was built to exit the upstairs and the bathroom was enlarged and a cast iron tub installed.



Over the next years, with the addition of several exhibit specific buildings on the museum grounds, the focus of the Johnson House once again became that of the Johnson's home and it has been filled with artifacts from Three Lakes to remind visitors of that early time period.



The Historical Society continues to take on the challenges of maintaining this 140 year old building as seen in the necessary exterior restoration currently taking place in the latest project. This three year effort to shore up the building structurally will insure that the Johnson House will be around for years to come.

We welcome everyone to stop by to see the progress and show your support as we continue...

