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The Clayton ♦ Deer Park Historical Society's

Letters, Email, Bouquets & Brickbats

— or —

Bits of Chatter, Trivia, and Notices
— all strung together.

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Several Names Associated With The Elk Mercantile Company.

— Wally Lee Parker —

I recently ran into a few family names that intertwined for a short period of time within the history of the community of Elk — Elk being the embryo of a town resting along the banks of the east branch of the Little Spokane River in northern Spokane County. Little is left of what was once intended. The fragments of memory collected here are far from complete, but they do hint at the possibility of a deeper tale to tell.

... Mark Wallis ...

This segment begins with a gentleman that appears to have been first mentioned in the "City in Brief" column of the *Spokane Chronicle's* October 12th, 1900 edition. The newspaper simply notes, "Mark Wallis was given his first papers today, declaring his intention to become a citizen of the United States." Said papers — an image of such drawn out of Washington State's digital archive — notes that Mr. Wallis, a "native of Canada," was "renouncing all allegiance" to "Queen Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland."

In December of 1901, the *Spokesman-Review* notes that "Mark Willis, general merchant of Elk, is in the city," the city being Spokane. And in early January of 1902, several similar notices appeared, one indicating that he was "registered at the Pacific Hotel."

The likely reason for these visits was suggested in this short notice from the *Spokane Chronicle's* January 22nd, 1902 edition. "Smith,

Wallis, and Engle, who have until lately conducted general merchandise stores at Elk and at Camden, have sold out a part of their interests, and their business is now run by the Elk Mercantile Company, which is composed of the Spokane and eastern men. The management is still in the hands of Mr. Wallis."

In a list of hotel arrivals, the June 25th, 1902 issue of the *Spokane Chronicle* noted that "Miss Engle of Elk is at the Pacific." And a little further down, that "Mark Wallis of Elk is at the Pacific. Mr. Wallis is interested in the Elk Mercantile Company." The young lady's presence in the Pacific Hotel at the same time as Mr. Wallis becomes more significant a bit later.

On June 28th, under the heading "Court Notes," this appeared in the *Spokesman-Review*. "The Elk Mercantile Company, to do a general merchandise business, was incorporated yesterday by W. C. Edwards of St. Paul, Mark Wallis of Elk, Wash., and G. H. Curtice of Spokane. The capital is \$5,000. The store will be located at Elk, Wash."

Regarding the above noted Edwards and Curtice, an understanding of how these gentlemen became entangled in Elk's history can be found in the January 29th, 1902 edition of the *Spokane Chronicle*. Under the headline "Bought Much Timber Land," the newspaper reported, "G. H. Curtice, manager of the Consolidated Milling Company of Spokane, today completed a deal for the purchase of 9,000 acres of timber land from the Northern Pacific Railway Compa-

ny situated north of Spokane. The purchase was made for W. C. Edwards, who has bought into the Elk mills.

"W. C. Edwards, by the last purchase, has secured over 20,000 acres of timber land in Washington and Idaho. The firm in which Mr. Edwards is interested has bought a number of mills throughout the county, and the timber land is now being bought up for future use."

Regarding the above Mr. George Howard Curtice, this was found in the July 26th, 1906 issue of the *Spokane Chronicle*. "The funeral of G. H. Curtice, the prominent Spokane lumberman and Baptist worker who was drowned in the Great Northern wreck at Diamond Lake Monday afternoon, will be held at the family residence 1417 Sixth Avenue at 4 o'clock this afternoon."

The above catastrophic derailment occurred on July 23rd.

In reference to the identity of W. C. Edwards, this from the May 29th, 1910 edition of Minnesota's *Minneapolis Tribune* states, "William Chalmers Edwards, a well-known Northwest lumberman, died yesterday at his home, 1325 Summit Avenue, St. Paul. Death came from the effects of a second paralytic stroke suffered six weeks ago in Washington, D. C."

For a degree of confirmation that we have the right W. C. Edwards, there's this from 1918's *Cyclopædia of American Biography* (Appleton's *Cyclopædia*), Volume VIII. In part, the book states "In addition to his other business interests, he was connected with the Kansas Lumber Company, and Noble, and Edwards and Westcott; The Montana Lumber Company at Billings, Mont., the Edwards and Bradford Lumber Company at Bismarck, N. D., and the Knife Falls Lumber Company. In 1883 the Kansas Lumber Company disposed of its Topeka yards, after which Mr. Edwards moved to St. Paul, Minn., making that city his home and base of operations for extensive business interests in the Northwest. Mr. Edwards was also organizer of the Edwards and Bradford Lumber Company, Three States Lumber Company, Consolidated Lumber Company, and other corporations operating sawmills and lumber yards, and was a large owner and developer of lumber and agricultural lands in Missouri, Arkansas, Washington, and other States, and in Central America."

Several years earlier, under the headline "Notice to Stockholders," this was found in the August 13th issue of 1902's *Spokane Chronicle*. "To the Stockholders of the Elk Mercantile Company: Please take notice that a meeting of

the stockholders of this company will be held at the office of the company, Elk, Washington, on the 14th day of September, 1902, at 2 o'clock p. m. for the purpose of taking into consideration increasing the capital stock of said company from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and to transact such other business as may properly come before the meeting at that time. Mark Wallis, Secretary."

On Wednesday, October 8th, 1902, a signed and sealed "Certificate of Marriage" was registered for Mark Wallis of Elk, Washington, and Bettie Fern Engle of Red Oak, Iowa.

The last mention of Mark Wallis located to date was in the June 6th, 1903 issue of the *Tacoma Daily Ledger*. Under the column heading "New Northwest Postmasters," this appeared. "Washington — Elk. George H. Currie, vice Mark Wallis, resigned."

The word "vice" in the above quote is apparently drawn from the Latin "vicis," which can be translated as "replacing." And with his resignation as Elk's postmaster, Mark Wallis seems to have disappeared from Elk's history.

... David Clarence Johnson ...

Under the headline "Bride is Snow-bound," the following appeared in the January 12th, 1911 edition of the *Spokane Press*.

"One serious difficulty was unearthed yesterday apropos of the stalling of the G. N. passenger train in the Rockies. L. A. Wold of Elk, who was to act as groomsman at the wedding of his friend, David Clarence Johnson of the Elk Mercantile Company, has been at the Halliday Hotel for three days now, and expects to stay a day or two more, for the reason that the bride is held up on that passenger train in the snowbound Rockies, and there can be no wedding until the train is released."

Regarding the location of the above noted Halliday Hotel, according to the December 29th, 1904 *Spokesman-Review*, as of that date the 125-room hotel was "at the southwest corner of Sprague Avenue and Stevens Street," in downtown Spokane.

Elk's L. A. Wold — Leonard Alfred Wold — was, at the time of Mr. Johnson's wedding, an employee of Elk's Edwards & Bradford Lumber Company. Just a few years later Leonard would lose his single status as well, marrying a young lady then residing in the nearby community of Mead — Mabelle Holtzman.

Returning to David Johnson's story, according to the marriage license — a copy obtained from Washington State's digital archive — David and Leone were married in Spokane on

Saturday, the 14th of January. Under the dateline “Elk, Wash., Jan, 15,” the next day’s issue of the *Spokesman-Review* carried the following.

“David Clarence Johnson, who was cooped up in a Spokane hotel from Wednesday until yesterday waiting for Miss Leone Hall, his bride to be from St. Paul was met at the train when the happy couple arrived in Elk last night.

“About all the citizens in town, fully 150 of them, were at the depot and extended a happy greeting to the new couple. Willing hands on the arms of the male inhabitants of Elk took possession of Mr. Johnson, placed him under arrest, and marched him before Justice of the Peace Hannan, where he was given a speedy trial on the charge of ‘infringing on the rights of a newly married couple.’

“The evidence — facts in the case — were at hand, and Johnson was convicted almost before he realized what was being done to him. His sentence was ‘one night in a local lodging house.’

“The prisoner then became somewhat obstreperous. He resisted. But Elk is a town of peace and a dozen of its leading citizens seized him, acted as a bodyguard of constables, and marched him to the lodging house, where the spirit of the law was lived up to. Strenuous resistance on the part of the prisoner was of no avail.”

Since editors should understand rather than guess the meanings of the words they’re printing, I consulted my massive *Random House Dictionary* — one of the old-school print-on-paper types. Along with that, I used Google’s online translation program. It turns out the English word “obstreperous” is drawn from the Latin word “obstrepere” — the Latin version meaning “to make noise.” As for the meaning of the modern word, since the author of the piece likely assumed many of his or her readers would be a bit puzzled, the very next sentence of the article consisted of the then current English meaning. To quote, “He resisted.”

The material datelined “Elk” continued, “Bride and groom are receiving congratulations today. Sympathetic women friends consoled the bride during the court proceedings last night.”

We do have a few other bits of data that suggest a deeper accounting of D. C. Johnson and family. For example, a hint at old acquaintances back in the little town of Kasota, Minnesota, was found in the August 4th, 1911 issue of the *Mankato Free Press*. To quote the Kasota correspondent’s column, “Mr. and Mrs. Swen Johnson and daughter have just returned from a pleasure trip to Spokane, Seattle, Tacoma, and

Portland. They called on ... Robert Walker of Tacoma and David Jonson of Elk, Wash., and other old acquaintances. All of them are getting along fine and enjoying the west.”

And then on December 22nd the Kasota correspondent added, “Mrs. David Johnson of Elk, Wash., is expected to spend Christmas with relatives.”

Kasota is a small town 9 miles north by northeast of Mankato, Minnesota, and some 60 miles southwest of Saint Paul. As for the town’s name, its origin and meaning is suggested by the translation found in the snippet pasted below — this from 1852’s *Smithsonian Contribution to Knowledge, Volume IV: Grammar and Dictionary of the Dakota Language*.

ka-son’, cont. of kasota; kason iyeya, to use all up.

ka-so’-ta, v. a. to use up by striking; to kill off, as cattle; to cut all off, as trees, to make prairie of woodland; to use up,—wakasota, unkasotapi.

ka-so’-ta, v. n. to clear off, as the sky, be clear from clouds: kasota au, it is clearing off.

The Kasota column in the January 5th, 1912 edition of Mankato’s newspaper noted that, “David Johnson of Elk, Wash., is here spending a few days with friends and relatives. Mrs. Johnson, formerly Leone Hall, who was a former resident of this place, thinks there is no place like the west.”

Life changed radically for the still newlywed couple when, on the 18th day of September, 1913, they became parents to a son — Robert Hall Johnson.

Also in 1913, “David C. Johnson, Elk, Wash.” was the contact person mentioned in at least three real estate ads appearing in the *Spokesman-Review* throughout the year. The first, from the March 14th, 1913 issue read, “Cheap — 20 acres choice land: 5 acres bearing orchard: 2 miles from town: all fenced. Will take \$500 auto as part trade. \$450 down, balance to suit. Price, \$1400.” The second, appearing on March 16th, offered, “80 Acres: 7-room house, barn, 4 chicken houses, 375 chickens, horse and buggy: 14 acres cleared: 1½ miles from town. Price \$4,000: half down, balance to suit.” And then from December 2nd, “Buy a home cheap — 4-room house and lot, chicken house, barn, well: Chattaroy, Wash. Party forced to sell. Price, \$325 cash.”

In 1914, the *Spokane Chronicle*’s April 10th issue reported that “Mrs. D. C. Johnson, wife

of D. C. Johnson, manager of the Elk Mercantile Company of Elk, Wash., is at the Halliday (Hotel)."

It does appear that David was doing both — managing the Elk Mercantile Company's Elk store and selling real estate — at least early on. The real estate ads continued to be published over the years. In fact, a hotel arrivals list published in the March 5th, 1917 edition of the *Spokesman Review* confirmed such when it noted that "D. C. Johnson, a real estate man of Elk, is at the Halliday."

There was a piece in the May 31st, 1914 issue of the *Spokesman-Review*'s coverage of nearby communities that prompted some collateral research. Under the dateline "Elk, Wash., May 30," the article noted that, "Miss Gleasing, who taught school at Vera last year, is visiting Mrs. Earl Griffith before her return to Wisconsin. Mrs. D. C. Johnson entertained at a kensington. Miss Gleasing was guest of honor."

That raises the question, what the heck is a kensington? It's possible the name is derived from London's Kensington Palace, and the sumptuous dinner parties historically given there. It appears the term became popular in the Spokane area around 1908 and remained in vogue through 1916. In the society sections of Spokane's papers, the word apparently denoted an afternoon gathering often involving various charitable activities and featuring a lunch or supper.

One such was announced in the *Spokane Chronicle*'s November 7th, 1911 edition. "Thirty have been invited to an afternoon kensington party to be given on Thursday afternoon by Mrs. H. W. Gardiner at her home, 515 Cotta Avenue. The affair is in the nature of a 'mitten shower,' and is for the benefit of the Episcopal Church home for orphans of Lidgerwood. The afternoon will be spent at sewing, and at 4 o'clock luncheon will be served."

On January 23rd, 1915, the *Spokesman Review* carried this bit a news from Elk. "The Elk band (has) reorganized with the following officers: D.C. Johnson, president; Henry Sudhoff, vice president; E. G Griffith, secretary and treasurer; Will Simpson of Milan, director."

We've yet to find notation of exactly when David Johnson and his family left the community of Elk. We do have this bit from an article apparently composed by Elk's correspondent to the *Spokesman-Review* and published in that paper's November 5th, 1922 edition. "Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Johnson of Spokane spent Sunday at the R. D. Kimzey home."

As to where in Spokane the family might have moved, I found mention of "Mrs. D. C. Johnson, W3122 Glass," in the January 1928 edition of the *Spokane Press*. And then, the October 9th, 1932 edition of the *Spokesman-Review* printed this blip. "Robert Johnson, son of Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Johnson, 3122 Glass, spent the weekend at home. Mr. Johnson is a freshman at W. S. C."

West 3122 Glass is located just a block and a half west of Spokane's Audubon Park. The house at that address was, reportedly, built in 1927 — suggesting, but not confirming, that such wasn't the family's first residence in Spokane.

And then there's this from the February 28th, 1966 edition of the *Spokane Chronicle*. "Mrs. David C. (Leone) Johnson, formerly of Spokane, died recently in St. Paul, it was reported here today. Services were set for today in St. Paul."

"Mrs. Johnson and her husband left Spokane two years ago after living here for 52 years. He was in the insurance and dry-cleaning business here."

"She is survived by her husband and a son, Dr. Robert H. Johnson, Tulsa, Okla."

Newsletter Proofreaders Needed!



As usual, the newsletter's editor is in desperate need of proofreaders. Drafts of each pending issue will be forwarded to volunteers in both PDF and Microsoft Word format. The PDF is the complete magazine in galley form. The Word copy will include all the text found in the issue. Proofers can use either or both of these formats, whichever they feel most comfortable with. Email the editor for more details.

According to the “*Find a Grave*” website, Leone Johnson passed away in Minnesota on the 25th of February. Her age, 76. Her husband, David Clarence Johnson, died on July 9th,

1975. His age, 88. Both are interred at the Resurrection Cemetery, Dakota County, Minnesota.

When Glaciers Crushed the Clayton & Deer Park Neighborhood.

— Wally Lee Parker —

Volunteer Proofreaders for this Issue: Bill Sebright, Lina Swain, and Ken Westby.

If you have any interest in the geological history of the mountains surrounding the Little Spokane River, as well as what lies unseen deep beneath the area’s fields and villages — well then, if you haven’t already had the pleasure, I’d like you to make the acquaintance of Nick Zentner, Professor of Geology, Central Washington University at Ellensburg.

The professor earned his Bachelor of Science in Geology at the University of Wisconsin — Madison — in 1986. And then his Master of Science in Geology at Idaho State University — Pocatello — in 1989. He’s been teaching geology at CWU since 1992.

Professor Zentner’s ongoing series of television programs, carried on both PBS and YouTube, have been recognized with two Emmy awards, and he’s also received a national award for “*exceptional delivery of Earth Science to the*

general public.” Among the prior recipients of that award — the James Shea Award — is one of my other heroes, paleontologist Jack Horner.

Anyway, among Professor Zentner’s recent videos is an investigation of the evidence suggesting that the entire Little Spokane River drainage basin was buried at the very least a sizable fraction of a mile under an ice sheet some 150,000 years ago — a good portion of the evidence for such having been washed away by the much more recent series of Glacial Lake Missoula outburst floods — those events responsible, at least in part, for carving central Washington’s hauntingly beautiful scablands.

The further reading box below contains links to Nick’s webpage, Facebook page, and one of his video lectures regarding this subject.

Further Reading Links to Nick Zentner’s Materials:

Nick Zentner’s Webpage: <https://www.nickzentner.com/>

Nick Zentner’s Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/nick.zentner.9>
“What Happened to the Spokane Ice Sheet?”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xu0RK4Po3iw>

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