

"HISTORY OF THE JANSON FAMILY"

by Thomas H. Leahy

(Excerpts from paper given at reunion held at Cook homestead on North Cleveland Ave., Canton, Ohio in 1910)

Now the first authentic trace of a Janson is about the year 1690. About fifty years prior to that, a large army under Gustavus Adolphus went south from Sweden into Germany and overran the country in an effort to quiet the revolution or 30 years war. Altho their leader, Adolphus, one of the greatest generals of all time, was killed, many of the Swedes returned. They had many stories to tell of the grand and beautiful country along the Rhine River in Germany. After the war, many settled there with their families. Others, later on, advised their sons to go there, where at about the year 1700, the social and industrial conditions had improved and were better than at home in Sweden.

It is fair then to presume, and is a logical solution of our ancestral problem, that the father of Agustas Janson (of whom I will refer later) was one of the soldiers who visited the Rhine Valley and who, after returning, advised his son to settle down there with the many other Swedes who were migrating to Germany.

We have no record of the name of this Swedish soldier, but as near as we are able to figure out, the son Agustas, who came into Germany, was born about 1680. Whether this Agustas was married in Sweden, or whether he took unto himself a wife of German birth, we are not able to ascertain; but it is certain that he had settled in Germany by the year 1720. Altho he may have been a tiller of the soil, if judging from the line of Jansons after him, who were cabinet makers, it is fair to think that he was something of a carpenter himself.

This man had three children, one son and two daughters. The son's name was Valentine and was born in 1728. He was the grandfather of the now two oldest surviving members of the family who are with us today and well remember him. They, of course, knew him in but a very few years of the latter part of his life. This Valentine Janson's description, as I have it from Grandma Cook and Uncle Mathias Johnson, is that he was a very portly built man and never sick a day in his life until his death, which came in his 100th year. Peculiar to the times, he wore leather breeches and shoes adorned with silver buckles. He was a cabinet maker by trade, at which he worked in the village of Wendlesheim, which is near Darmstadt, the principal city of the province of Hesse. It was in the town of Wendlesheim that the first Jansons who came to this country were born.

The family of this "grand old man", Valentine, consisted of two sons, Nicholas and Anthony. The younger son, Anthony, was born in 1738. Of the older son, Nicholas, we have no record of his birth, but we know, however, that he was considerably older than Anthony. We know further that he was well up in 30 years of age when he entered the famous army of Napoleon, who was one of the greatest generals of the world and the most ambitious man since Julius Caesar. This Nicholas Janson was with Napoleon on his famous march to Moscow in his effort to add Russia to his idealistic world empire. Moscow was burned by the Russians, however, and on that memorable retreat, Nicholas Janson was one of the 125,000 men who died of hunger and cold.

The latter was his fate, as he froze to death while seated on his horse's back. This man was never married, but was survived by the father and brother Anthony. This younger son, Anthony, was, as his father and grandfather before him, a cabinet maker. He married in about the year 1815 to Elizabeth Althouse and to them were born 7 children, 6 of whom grew up and came to this country. These 6 were namely: Agustas born 1818, Barbara 1820, Nettie 1822, Henry 1824, Mathias 1826 and John 1828. Of these, two, Barbara and Mathias are still with us at the ages of 90 and 84 respectively.

The family of Anthony were all together in this little German village until the year 1835, when the oldest son, Agustas, came to America. One year later Barbara came over. She came on a sail boat, it taking her 56 days to cross the Atlantic Ocean. In 1842 the rest of the family followed over into this, then new country.

There is an interesting incident connected with the departure of Agustas to this country, and had it not been for that incident, the Janson family might today be holding their reunion on the banks of the Rhine, which was but a few miles from Wendlesheim, the abode of our forefathers. The incident that changed the background of our history from the other side of the ocean to this broad land, was the German drafting system for army service. Agustas, having reached the age of military service, was called upon by drawing No. 70 to enter the Kaiser's finely trained, but slave-like army. But he, being a person with ideas more like those of the leaders of our revolution, he revolted against this involuntary army service. But to stay there and revolt would be useless, so he ran away to France, and although pursued, he reached a seaport and took a boat to America. After being in this country one year, he sent for Barbara, who but 16 years old, crossed the ocean alone.

Not wishing to have the family so separated, Anthony came with his wife and the rest of the children in 1842 to this country. The family remained in New York City until about 4 years later, when they moved to Sullivan Co. in the same state, where they engaged in farming. They later moved to Ohio where the father, Anthony, died in VanWert at the age of 75. The mother died some years later at the age of 86 in Canton. (On a tombstone in Westlawn Cemetery is this inscription "Elizabeth Janson 1785-1866")

This brings us down to the children of Anthony and Elizabeth Janson, who were enumerated before and who have come within the personal acquaintance of the majority of us here today. Agustas, the eldest and the one who came to this country first, was married in New York to Elizabeth Wherry. Agustas engaged in the trade of "cabinet maker" while in N.Y. and later in Ohio and Tenn., at which later place he died. They had 5 children, Agustas, Jr. of Canton, and Louis, Josephine, Laura and Wm. of Tenn. The later one, Wm., died some years ago.

Barbara, the oldest girl of the family of Anthony at present, and who is with us here today, was married in New York to Henry Cook. They later moved to Sullivan Co., N.Y., and still later to Canton, where Mr. Cook died in 1882. There were 10 children, of whom 4 survive, Henry and Wm. Cook and Mrs. Eliz. Huber and Mrs. Julia Leahy, all of Canton. Agustas, George, John and Chas. died some years ago. The later, Chas, was killed in the Civil War. Two children died in infancy.

The second oldest daughter of Anthony, Nettie, was married in N.Y. to John Leininger. They later moved to Stark County, Ohio, where they died. They were the parents of 6 children, of whom John Leininger and Mrs.

Barbara Shriener of Canton survive. Agustas of Canton and Mrs. Elizabeth Rhein of Cinn. died several years ago. Two sons died in infancy. Henry Janson, who was also an expert cabinet maker in Canton, at which place he lived until his death, was married in N.Y. City to Fredricka Heintz. They had 7 children, of which the only son died in infancy. Of the 6 daughters who live in Canton are Mrs. Eliz. Schneider, Mrs. Amelia Undy, Mrs. Carolina Jackson, Mrs. Carrie Kimley, and Minnie and Rose Janson.

Mathias Johnson, the oldest male representative living and who has lived in Canton for the past year, is with us here today. In his early manhood after returning to N.Y., from which place he ran away while serving as an apprentice, he was married to Mary Wise. While in the east, he was engaged in the hotel business. They had 7 children, of whom the following survive: Agustas and Edward of Huntington and Fort Wayne, Ind. respectively, John of Montana, and Theodore of New York City. Andrew, Henry and Mathias died some years ago.

John Janson, the youngest of the family of Anthony, was a farmer until his death a few years ago. He came to Ohio with his parents and located in Pike Twp., where he was married to Josephine Surbey, who survives him. Their children are John, Chas, Mrs. Britzley and Mrs. Wapner of Pike Twp. and Jackson of Carthage, Mo., and Henry and Agustas of Calif., and Mrs. Ollie Downs and Daniel Janson of Canton. *W. Britzley & Co. Can.*

This ends the enumeration of the members of Anthony's family, and which is as near to the present as I need carry the history. Taken altogether, we have one of the greatest family trees in existence. You frequently find persons of the same name who are not related, but the Janson's are all related and all sprang from the same source. This great root dates as far back as we are able to find to Agustas Janson, who lived before 1700.

This copy of the original document in 1910 by Thomas H. Leahy was typed by his daughter, Martha Leahy Paul (Mrs. John A. Paul) in 1971.

(NOTE: The information contained in the above was furnished principally by the grandmother of the writer, Barbara Janson Cook, who was blessed with a wonderful memory and was always glad to discuss her ancestry, of which she was very proud.)

Augustus - 1690
JANSON SWEDEN - in Army of Gustavus
Adolphus

AGUSTUS 2 SON of AUGUSTUS (FARMER OR CARPENTER)
SETTLED IN GERMANY 1720

VALENTINE
JANSON (1728 - DIED 1828)
CABINET MAKER

1788
ANTHONY JANSON (CABINET MAKER)
ELIZABETH ALTHOUSE (MARRIED 1815)

NICHOLAS JANSON
DIED IN NAPOLEON'S
MARCH ON RUSSIA

AGUSTUS

BARBARA

CABINET MAKER
HENRY JANSON
FREDRICK HEINZ
~~REMOVED FROM FAMILY~~

MATHIAS

PETTIE

JOHN, SR.

JOHN, JR.

WIFORD

RICHARD

RAYMOND

STEVEN