

News from Nan

DICK'S FAMILY HISTORY

JOHNSON/MOSELEY FAMILY EMPLOYMENT BEFORE WORLD WAR II

JULY 19, 2021 | DICK

In this post I describe the employment of some of my ancestors and relatives in the Johnson and Moseley family between 1900 and the beginning of World War II. During this time period they were all living in New York state. The information provided here comes from research I have done into my family history and from conversations with my parents in the 1960s.

The lives of my family during this period were heavily influenced by two major world events:

- World War I, from July 1914 to November 1918
- The Great Depression, from 1929 to 1939

A major fact about employment during this era is that very few women had jobs, so in the comments below none of my female relatives are mentioned. Some did work on a temporary basis outside the home, however; for example, before she was married my mother Lillian was a checker at the A&P grocery store, and my grandmother Eva baked and sold pies during the Great Depression.

The Johnsons and Robbins (my father's family)

Alfred Johnson (my paternal grandfather)

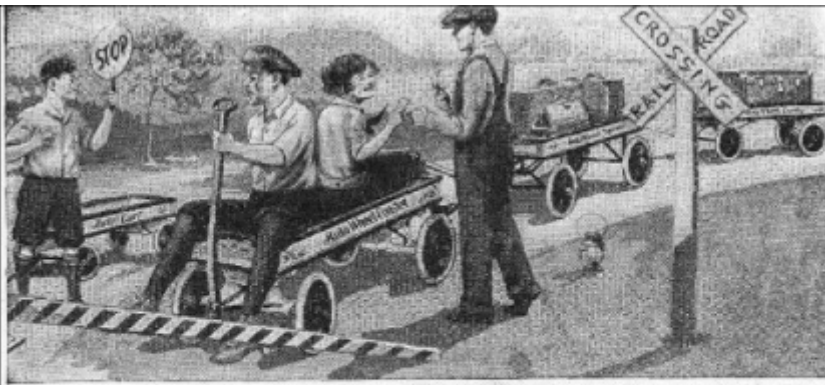
My grandpa Alfred's major career was as a machinist, but he tried out various other occupations along the way.



Alfred Johnson and granddaughter Karen

For example, the early 1920s, Alfred worked on a farm in South Dorchester (now Malahide), Elgin, Ontario, Canada. My Aunt Evelyn was born in Canada in 1922, and by 1923 the Johnson family returned to Tonawanda, and Alfred went back to work as a machinist. In 1927 he opened a hotdog stand, and in 1929 he bought a gas station.

In 1930 he worked again as a machinist at the Auto Wheel Coaster company, and by 1932 (my father's first year of high school) he declared bankruptcy. In 1933 Alfred got a job as a machinist at Spaulding Fibre and as late as 1940 he was still there.



All Aboard—Auto-Wheel R. R.

Coasters Free in Big Prize Contest

Open to all boys and girls under 14 years of age, whether you own an Auto-Wheel or not. Ten grand prizes of articles from the Auto-Wheel line—coasters, speeders, scooters, etc. And 300 special prizes. Also a free subscription to the Auto-Wheel Spokes-man to every contestant.

All you have to do is to write an essay on "Why Narrow Tires Increase Speed and are the Best Tires for Coaster Wagons."

Get in this big contest. Write us for full details or ask at the Auto-Wheel dealer near your home. You can see the wagons at his store.

Here is a fine game to play. Pick out a good stretch of sidewalk with cross walks running into it. Each cross walk is a wagon road or another railroad track. You must have a watchman or a gate at each one. (You can easily make crossing gates or signs like those in the picture).

One boy can be conductor *** another a watchman. You can be the engineer, and your Auto-Wheel the locomotive.

You and your friends will have lots of fun playing train with an Auto-Wheel. If Dad hasn't given you one yet, show him this advertisement and tell him all the fun you are missing.



The Auto-Scooter

Stands alone; sturdily built of metal; maple footboard; disc wheels; rubber tires; retained bearings and optional brake. Two sizes, with and without rear wheel stand.

Auto-Wheel

Coasters, Speeders, Carts, Scooters, Pedal Cars

are built to stand good hard play day after day. Be sure the name "Auto-Wheel" is printed on the sides of the wagon you buy.

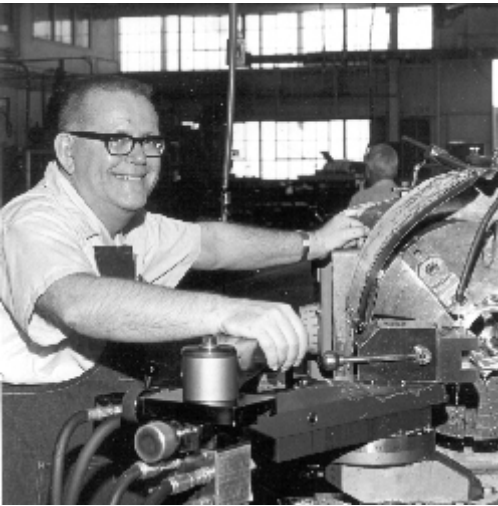
Write for catalog illustrating all models of the Auto-Wheel line. Also ask about our big prize contest.

AUTO-WHEEL COASTER CO., INC.,
North Tonawanda, N. Y.

Auto Wheel Coaster, North Tonawanda

Harold Johnson (my father)

My father graduated from high school in 1936, right in the middle of the Depression. He had done well in school, but his only option after graduation was to go to work. He became an apprentice machinist at Spaulding Fibre company in Tonawanda, New York. By 1940 he had risen to be a lathe hand at the same company, and eventually rose to become a tool and die maker. He was proud that he "could operate all the machines in the shop."



Harold Richard Johnson working as a machinist

Kenneth Johnson (my paternal uncle)

In 1933 my uncle worked as a bartender at Rudzinski's in North Tonawanda. By 1940 he was a machinist at Spaulding Fibre.



Kenneth Johnson and family

John Robbins (my paternal great-grandfather)

In the early 1900s, John had a farm in Ontario, Canada. By 1920, he had moved to Tonawanda (partially to escape debts in Canada). In the 20s and 30s he worked as a carpenter, a teamster and a millwright at Spaulding Fibre in 1935.



John Robbins and family

One cannot fail to notice that almost all the men in the Johnson family worked at Spaulding Fibre in Tonawanda at one time or another. It was the largest employer in the Tonawanda Twin Cities area and had up to 3000 employees. It has since been closed and became infamous for being a toxic waste site.



Resists the Most Rigid Tests

H EAT and weather changes, that play such havoc with rubber, are powerless to affect **Spaulding** Bakelite-Duresto panels which have never been known to warp, shrink nor split.

Highest in dielectric properties, and tensile strength, these panels saw, drill, engrave without chipping—retain indefinitely a beautiful mirror finish—all made possible by the special **Spaulding** process of fabrication.

Insist on Bakelite-Duresto. Your dealer can furnish standard sizes from stock, special sizes to order. For a sign of quality apparatus, look for **Spaulding** Bakelite-Duresto panels in each set you buy.

Write nearest office for descriptive circular

SPAULDING FIBRE COMPANY, Inc., TONAWANDA, N. Y.

Manufacturers

who desire to build quality into their products and who insist on speed and economy in their plants should write to our nearest office for complete information on **Spaulding** Bakelite-Duresto.

Factory: Tonawanda, N.Y.
Sales Offices—Warehouses

484 Broome St., N. Y. City
659 W. Lake St., Chicago
310 E. Fourth Street, Los Angeles
141 N. Fourth St., Phila.
15 Elkins St., Boston
171 Second St., San Francisco
509 First Nat'l Bank Building, Milwaukee

Spaulding
BAKELITE-DURESTO
Panels-Sheets-Tubes-Rods

Spaulding Fibre Tonawanda ad from 1924

The Moseleys (my mother's family)

Edward Moseley (my maternal grandfather)

From 1903 to 1907, Edward (who was known as "Shorty" due to his short stature) served in the US Navy, first as a musician (did my mother get her musical talent from him?) and then as a carpenter's mate. He served on ships during the Philippines Insurrection that followed the Spanish-American War. He was never in combat.



Edward Moseley

In the 1910s, he worked as a carpenter in Auburn, New York. In the 1920s to the 1940s he worked as a carpenter at Lake Erie Engineering in Tonawanda making shipping crates for hydraulic presses.



Lake Erie Hydraulic Press

William Moseley (my great-grandfather and Edward's father)

William came to Auburn, New York, from Birmingham, England. He lived and worked in Auburn the rest of his long life. He was over 90 years old when he died in 1952.



William and Catherine Moseley

In 1900 William was a carpenter. By 1910 he had prospered quite a bit. He had been elected as an Alderman for the city of Auburn and he owned a general contracting business. My mother once said that for a time he had “mucho money.” In November of 1929 his company was awarded a contract to build St Alphonsus Catholic Church in Auburn. Of course this was just a few months into what became the Great Depression. The church was built, but William lost a lot of money doing it.

**Moseley Gets Contract
for New Catholic Church;
Will Start Work at Once**

The William Moseley Company, carpenter contractors of this city, has been awarded the contract for the construction of the new St. Alphonsus' Church to be erected in East Genesee Street, it was learned today. The contract was awarded late yesterday in Rochester.

The Moseley concern was low bidder. William Moseley, president, told The Citizen today that the cost of construction would be in the neighborhood of \$80,000.

The contract for mason work has been sub-let to the William B. Reilly Company of Auburn. Mr. Moseley said.

Work of demolishing the Coburn homestead on the site on which the church is to be built will be started immediately, possibly tomorrow, it was stated by Mr. Moseley.

William Moseley Contract 1929

- ◀ 2021 ◀ ALFRED JOHNSON ◀ AUTO WHEEL COASTER ◀ EDWARD MOSELEY ◀ GREAT DEPRESSION ◀ HAROLD JOHNSON
- ◀ JOHN ROBBINS ◀ KENNETH JOHNSON ◀ NEW YORK ◀ NORTH TONAWANDA ◀ SPAULDING FIBRE COMPANY
- ◀ TONAWANDA ◀ WILLIAM MOSELEY