

# PIONEERING FAMILY – JOHNSON FAMILY CONTINUES TO SERVE BALDWIN COUNTY AGRICULTURE NEEDS

By John Underwood  
john@gulfcoastmedia.com

SILVERHILL — The Baldwin County Cattle and Fair Association is pleased to honor the Johnson Family of Silverhill as the 2021 Pioneering Family at this year's Baldwin County Fair, which will be held Sept. 21-25 at the Baldwin County Coliseum and Fairgrounds in Robertsdale.

A native of Door County, Wisconsin, located north of Green Bay near the Sister Bay Community, John Emery Johnson was the youngest of three children, the son of John Carl and Lena Johnson, both born in the vicinity of Stockholm, Sweden.

The Johnson family, which included older siblings Mabel and Carlolgot, moved to Chicago in 1897, then to Baldwin County in 1899 by way of Mobile, traveling by rail, boat, and horse and wagon.

The elder Johnson was in the timber business before moving to Chicago, then later became a carpenter by trade and had a hand in building many of the residential and commercial structures in the early days of Silverhill.

He was also a farmer with extensive holdings and raised cattle.

John Emery Johnson was educated in Silverhill area schools and worked on his father's farm until, at the age of 19, he purchased a cotton gin in Silverhill from Charles and Patrick Norman that had been established in 1906.

"He established himself in business at a young age with the purchase of the cotton gin," said his son, Carl Johnson, "then later expanded that into a grist mill."

That same year, just one day before leaving for World War I, he lost his right arm in an accident at the plant.

"He ended up not serving in the War," Carl Johnson said. "He learned to do a lot of things with one arm that seemed difficult or impossible for somebody with one arm to do. I remember he would reach down and wiggle his hand above his shoe and somehow manage to tie a knot. I never did figure out how he could do that."

In 1923, back in Wisconsin Johnson married Alice Movine Seaquist, whose parents were also from Sweden and they had four children, Mildred, Lois, Helen and Carl.

In 1924, Johnson established the Robertsdale Grist & Feed Mill on the east side of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

**Carl Emery Johnson around 1920.**



**Carl Emery Johnson and employees in front of the Robertsdale Grist & Feed Mill which was established in 1924 along the old L & N Railroad line.**



Photos show the expansion of the Robertsdale Grist & Feed Mill.



Carl Emory Johnson with employees inside the mill.



The original gristmill on the family's property in Silverhill, taken in the summer of 1983.

Before World War II, Silverhill was the site of the Baldwin County Fair, sponsored by the Silverhill Chamber of Commerce, which Johnson served as president.

He served as past chairman of the Chamber, was active in the Baldwin County Farm Bureau (today known as the Alabama Farmer's Federation or Alfa), and was active as treasurer of the Parent Teachers Association.

In 1928, Johnson was elected to the Silverhill town council, then became mayor in 1934, an office which he served until his death in 1960. The business was sold in 1963.

Carl Johnson was born on the family's property in Silverhill near the original mill and cotton gin and still lives on the farm property today with his wife Sharon. Their children, Brian, Paul, Amy and their families also live on the property.

Carl Johnson's son, Carl Brian Johnson, owns and operates Robertsdale Feed, Seed & Supply, which was established by J.W. Clark in 1961 and has recently been named to serve on the Board of Directors for the Baldwin County Cattle and Fair Association.

