

The Brooks Family Part 4 – *Some Johnson (and Brooks) Family Stories*

Returning to Earl Chester Brooks. He and Leona Anderson had five children including Giovanna (1917), Yvonne (1920), Juanita Faye (1922), Frances Leona (1925), and Goldie (1926). Yvonne married Estes Smith, while Juanita married into the Salmon family, Frances into the Carrington family and Goldie into the Sharpe family.

Giovanna Brooks married Marcellus Johnson, the son of Peter Johnson, and the couple lived in Harrow. Marcellus and Giovanna had four children: Sheila, Gloria (Amos Gilmore), Barbara (Bradley) and Glenn (Sharon). The book *Some Johnson Family Stories, From Slavery to Present*, shares information on Marcellus, who was born in 1906. It says “He and his wife of over 50 years, Giovanna (nee Brooks) occasionally grow produce at home, where they have lived over 30 years together ... Marcel operated an independent wrecking business with his son Glen for several years, and has worked in farming, in factories, and doing janitorial labour.” The book adds that Giovanna was an active Board Director here at the Museum and loved to read.

Some Johnson Family Stories also includes Marcellus’ memories of his grandfather’s stories of escaping enslavement and says “When they left the South they had to go by night and they said when they were getting ready to go they had to walk by two old, bad, white dogs – and said they never made a move, and they don’t know how on earth they didn’t, because if they did they would’ve been in trouble. Then they got to the river and some people told them which way to go. And they followed the North Star.”

Marcellus continues by telling what life was like growing up without electricity and transitioning from a horse and buggy to a car. According to Marcellus “And we did some of that too ... light an old lamp, had to carry it around – no electricity. [You] couldn’t go to the wall and

snap on a light. [You'd have to] put kerosene in an old lantern and light and go outside to do your chores – you would have to have an old lantern ... Well, you know [there's been] a change from the horse and buggies and wagons, things like that. Look up and see an airplane going by ... I never saw one of those while I was young. Didn't know what an airplane was ... If you went to church on a Sunday they would tell you what's going to happen in the middle of the week. When the social is going to come or anything like that. That's the way we got [news] – no radio – no telephone, I mean ... No telephone. No. Didn't know what a telephone was. I don't know – I was a man before I had a telephone ... Made a lot of difference, you know. If you want something you could call somebody. Before, if you wanted anything in Harrow, you couldn't call anybody. So, [later] ... if you wanted anything in Harrow you could call, or if you wanted to talk to anybody about anything, whether they wanted to do this or do that – it helped. Yeah, old telephone made a difference, that was a big difference.”

What we publish is not a complete history of any family and is based on the documents that are available. We welcome photos and information to fill in the gaps. See you next week where we will celebrate another amazing family.