

TENNESSEE BIOGRAPHY: THE SAGA OF JOHNSON HAMPTON,  
PIONEER, EDUCATOR, AND ENTREPRENEUR

by Florine Julian Garland

Johnson Hampton, the son of James and Rachel Freeman Hampton, was born in 1775 in Wilkes County, North Carolina. His grandfather, Jacob Hampton, lived in Halifax County, Virginia. Johnson married Sarah Baker on December 13, 1799. The Bakers were of German descent and had resided in Wilkes and Ashe Counties for many years. In the 1800 census we find Sarah and Johnson living in Ashe County, North Carolina.

We have been told that Johnson was attracted to Sarah because of her great physical strength. This was a valuable asset for a pioneer woman. A part of the entertainment of the times was a contest in which the winner was the one with the greatest strength. Sarah could stand in a half-bushel measure, pick up two bushels of wheat, and put it on her shoulder. Johnson boasted that she ran the mill and the still, and carried a blacksnake whip with which she could take care of any discipline problems that might occur while he was away. Most families had a still. Each member of the household received a dram of whiskey every morning. Even the slaves were not excluded from this ritual.

Johnson Hampton, like many others, may have left Ashe County, North Carolina because of the hard winters and poor land. We were told that he came into Carter County by way of the Occannchi Path, which was a well-established buffalo and Indian trail. This trail came from the waters of the Catawba River to the Yadkin River, up Buffalo Creek through Day's Gap, past the present site of Boone, North Carolina, through a gap between Zionville, North Carolina, and Trade, Tennessee, and then to the Watauga River near Shouns Crossroads, down the Watauga to Carden's Bluff and to Hampton, Tennessee.

The first evidence of Johnson Hampton in Carter County is in 1804. County records show that he witnessed a deed from Benjamin Tompkins to Sam Burns in that year. He purchased a farm of 104 acres on Roan Creek from Richard White in 1806. Richard White's son, Lawson, was a close friend of Johnson Hampton. They were closely associated in politics, for both were active in county government. Johnson's son, Lawson White Hampton, was named for this friend. Johnson was running a gun powder mill on Roan Creek by 1815. Roan Creek is now in Johnson County, but at that time Johnson County was a part of Carter County and remained so until 1836.

There are several records that let us know that Johnson Hampton was a slave owner. In 1808 he sold to Joseph Vaught a "girl for \$350." In 1808 we find a bill of sale for four Negroes that George Williams sold to Johnson Hampton. The bill of sale reads "the following negroes to wit: Tan about two years of age, Anne about four years of age, Susie about thirty five years of age and Hiram about 8 years of age for the sum of one hundred and forty four dollars and fifty cents." The 1840 census lists Johnson Hampton as having seven slaves and his son Hamilton as having 6 in the 2nd district of Carter

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County. There is a slave graveyard on Hampton Creek.

In 1809 Johnson Hampton was appointed magistrate in Carter County. In the year 1836 the first justices of the peace were elected by the people. Johnson Hampton was elected and became chairman of the court. He was elected to three consecutive terms of 6 years each, thus serving from 1836 to 1854. In 1838 he was also elected by the people of the 3rd district to serve as a district common school commissioner along with his son Johnson Hampton, Jr., James F. Cass, John W. Hyder, and William Snyder.

In 1815, the Tennessee legislature passed an act that provided that a tax could be levied on property and polls to educate "poor orphans who have not property to support and educate them, and whose fathers were killed, or have died in the services of their country in the late war" (War of 1812). This period was known as the period of "Common Schools." Many attended the common schools, which received state support, but many thought them to be "pauper schools," so they did not attend at all if they could not afford private schooling. During the years 1838-39, the 2nd district, Crab Orchard (now Roan Mountain) had only 59 pupils. Tiger and Simerly Creek and Doe River Cove (now Hampton) had only 85 pupils. At this time (1830s) the school law provided that schools were to operate "at the most leisure seasons of the year" or at a time when it was most convenient to the children of a particular community.

One of Johnson Hampton's many enterprises was the raising of horses. He was said to have especially good taste in teaming or pairing them. These horses were driven to South Carolina where they were sold to wealthy planters and others who needed them for their carriages. Tradition tells us that David Crockett went on some of these "droves." David Mast Hampton, a grandson of Johnson Hampton, became so fond of David that he became known as Crockett Hampton.

Hampton's interest in the iron ore industry brought him into the Hampton-Roan Mountain area where he acquired much land. He had a home on Hampton Creek and also a tavern at Allentown (present day Hampton). We have been told that he owned about 30,000 acres, some of which he bought for 25 cents per acre. According to county records, as early as 1824 he petitioned the court for 3,000 acres of land for the iron establishment he intended to build in Crab Orchard. At that time there was a state law providing that if one became owner of an iron works he could obtain 3,000 acres by filing an entry for the land. It was non-taxable providing you built and operated the iron works within two years. Extensive land holdings were needed by iron manufacturers to supply the timber necessary to make charcoal for which certain kinds of wood were preferred, namely oak, beech and poplar. Many people earned their livelihood by selling cordwood to ironmakers.

Hampton operated the iron works for some time before 1854. The will of Johnson Hampton dated February 17, 1854 states: "to my sons Hamilton B. and Lawson W. I give my forge and six thousand acres of land." In the year 1856 the iron works was leased to the firm of Jenkins and Pierce which produced twenty tons of bar iron during that year.

During the operation of the iron works by Johnson Hampton, he owned a small factory in which guns and knives were made. Iron commodities were in

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great demand in every community. Among those needed items were plows, hinges, horseshoes, nails, hoes, wagon tires and cooking utensils. Lack of transportation made conditions favorable for development of local industry in Carter County.

The iron bars, guns, knives and skins were taken to Mauktown on the Nolichucky River where flatboats fashioned from logs were made. When the spring tide came, these products were taken to Knoxville, Tennessee to be sold. It was there this enterprising man met a teacher, James Norman Julian. He invited Julian to his home with the understanding that he would teach Hampton children and grandchildren. (There were no common schools in the area until 1836.) The children of Sarah and Johnson Hampton were Highlah, Matilda, Clarissa Harlow, Hamilton, Johnson, Jr., Eliza, Lucinda, Lawson W., and Delilah. About 1833 James Norman Julian married Delilah Hampton, the youngest daughter of Johnson and Sarah Hampton. She bore him seven children: Caroline, Marion, James Johnson, Lafayette, Henry, Eliza, and Betsy. Julian continued to teach school and his father-in-law continued as a school commissioner. A favorite story at the Julian family reunions was that the going wage for a teacher was \$10 per month, but that Julian was such a good teacher that he was paid \$12 per month.

Another story goes that as James Norman became established in the community he was tagged (labeled) a braggart. When the local hunters had heard enough of his bragging they decided to plan a surprise for him. They loaded the gun with which he was to hunt with several times the normal load of powder and shot. Then they placed him on a deer stand. As the hounds ran the deer by James' stand a terrific boom was heard. After an anxious wait James' friends decided to see if James was dead or just knocked out. When they arrived on the scene James was gutting the fourth dead deer. His only comment was, "If you had half-loaded this damn gun, I would have killed all seven of them."

After Delilah's death in 1849, James Norman married his wife's niece, Eliza Heaton (daughter of Clara Harlow and George Washington Heaton.) To James Norman and wife Eliza were born seven children. They were John Wesley, George, Lou, Elkanah, Mary, Clara and Hannah.

James Norman Julian was among the first teachers in the Roan Mountain area and well may have been the first. Some of his descendants who have taught school are:

Clayton Bowman	Jim Boone	Pierce Julian
Crandall Julian	Austin Julian, Sr.	James Norman Julian
Frank Julian	Fred Julian	Cain Julian
Oscar Shell	Mabel Julian Campbell	Janette Julian
James Johnson Julian Jr.	Myrtle S. Slaughter	Pauline W. Wagoner
James Woodruff	Maxine C. Freeman	Homer Garland
Mary Julian Hoss	Grace Julian Mauk	Florine Julian Garland
Jewel C. Heaton	Bernice B. Shoun	Florence Julian Barnett
Florence B. Posey	Randy Julian	Jerry Shoun
Wayne Blevins	Ethel Julian Wolfe	Patricia Dishman
Linda Jarrett	Lynn Julian Greene	John Austin Julian
Warren Ellis	William Greer	Reece Boone

## THE SAGA OF JOHNSON HAMPTON

Lisa Freeman  
Lynnea Vandyke  
Kelli Ann Kerley  
Julian Caldwell  
Vista Julian Clark  
Ivan Tipton  
John Alfred Hopson  
Herman (Tip) Boone

Carroll Ellis  
Janet Kerley Davis  
Carolyn Hoss Cloyd  
Donald Julian  
Sonny Smith  
Maxine Gross  
Sally M. Buckner

Jo Kerley Buchanan  
Bob Kerley  
Ronnie Vance  
Kathy Alexander  
Kermit Tipton  
Thelma Hanabas  
John Blevins, Jr.

### SOURCES:

The above information has been collected over the past forty years. Some of the people who have given me information are: my mother, Betty Ellen Julian; Herman Hampton; my uncle, Frank Julian; Crandall Julian; Clayton Bowman; Robert Nave; and Pierce Julian. I have also taken material from the following:

Robert Nave, "A History of the Iron Industry in Carter County to 1860" (unpublished thesis).  
Martha Chambers, "The History of Carter County Schools" (unpublished).  
Frank Merritt, Early History of Carter County, 1760-1861.

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### FROM EARLY KNOXVILLE NEWSPAPERS

(p. 4, col. 1)

The TRUSTEES of **Blount College** having directed the President to open the business of Tuition, as soon as a sufficient number of students can be engaged; those who wish to be admitted are desired to apply before Thursday the 22 of January next.

**December 15, 1794**

**Samuel Carrick, President**

NOTICE. All manner of persons who are indebted to **Alexander Cunningham**, for ferriages, from the first of December 1793, to the present date, are called on to settle the same within forty days from this time with the subscriber. Their punctuality will save costs.

**Benj. Rogers, ferryman, for Alex. Cunningham**

STOLEN from the subscriber, October 1793, one brown mare, about 16 hands high, three years old, trots natural, neither docked nor branded, when stolen, a large blaze in her face, both eyes somewhat glassy, one rather more so than the other, and to the best of my knowledge she had four white feet; supposed to be stolen by Indians. Any person finding said mare, and will fetch or contrive me word, so that I get my mare, shall receive five dollars reward.

**William Gregory**

**Buncombe county, Flat Creek, within ten miles of the Court-House, Nov. 12, 1794.**

**ALSO, STOLEN** from **William White**, near the same place, a sorrel mare, about 13 hands and an half high, branded on the near shoulder S, and under the main with the same, a small white star in her forehead, one white hoof, a small white sport on her near side, six years old, a natural trotter. A handsome reward will also be given to any person who will deliver said mare to

**William White.**