French Canadian Immigration to Vermont and New England (1840-1930)  
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Postscript: Andrew Harris at the University of Vermont  
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Spiritualism in Brattleboro, 1886-1889: One Man’s Contact with the Afterlife through Letters  
Jerry Carbone
About the Cover Illustrations
Rev. Olof C. Johnson Photographs

Life in Rutland County in the late 1930s and early 1940s was documented in a remarkable collection of approximately 800 2” x 3” photographs taken by Rev. Olof C. Johnson (1909-2000). Johnson’s collection is particularly strong in images of activities in which he was involved – church life, country fairs, and 4-H activities – and life in Cuttingsville and Shrewsbury where he lived. Country life in Vermont also interested the professional photographers of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) during the same period. Johnson’s work is a valuable supplement to that stunning, well-known body of work.

Johnson was an amateur working in the community in which he was an active participant. Because these are snapshots that were a sideline to Rev. Johnson’s ministry, they are more spontaneous than the images captured by the trained photographers hired by the FSA. In Johnson’s work we see young people lounging on a wall next to a cemetery, gathered in a circle in a field, playing a game of baseball in their good clothes, and horsing around with each other, perhaps as part of a youth group meeting. He documents at least two children’s birthday parties – one at a fancy dining table and another one for young children outside under a tree. In other images we see a

Fancy Birthday Party.
Photo by Olaf C. Johnson.

Youthful Hijinx.
Photo by Olaf C. Johnson.
woman using a manual clothes wringer, getting mail from the mailbox, and doing accounts at the dining room table with other family members.

Johnson enjoyed attending fairs. He took pictures at the World’s Fair in New York City in 1940, but he also attended fairs closer to home, including the Rutland Fair. There he saw stunt cars and motorcycles doing tricks on the track. He also photographed an auto race in 1939 which may have been in Vermont or nearby New York State. One photo from that dust-filled contest graces the front of this issue and represents the subject on an exhibition at the Vermont History Center in Barre entitled “Anything for Speed: Auto Racing in Vermont.”

Olof C. Johnson grew up in Gloversville and Northville, New York. He received a Master of Divinity degree from Andover-Newton Theological School in 1942 while working in three Methodist churches in Shrewsbury and Cuttingsville, Vermont. He was active in the Rutland County 4-H where met his future wife, Elizabeth Hager. He also served Methodist parishes in Pittsfield, Stockbridge, and Gaysville, Vermont, for about five years, and then served in Castleton, Mendon, and Hubbardton from 1946-1963. During this time, he also served in the volunteer fire department and managed the hot lunch program at the Castleton schools. In 1963, he returned to New York State where he continued to preach until he was forced to retire under Methodist church policy in 1979.

Rev. Johnson was meticulous about storing his photograph collection: each of his negatives is marked with a date and stored in a separate paper envelope with the corresponding print attached to the outside of each envelope. Unfortunately, only a few of the images are identified beyond the date that they were taken. His images have been arranged according to the Vermont Historical Society’s picture collection subject categories and stored in archival boxes in our temperature controlled vault.


Paul A. Carnahan, Librarian
Vermont Historical Society

Front cover: Auto Racing, September 22, 1939, Rutland (?). Photo by Olaf C. Johnson.
Back cover: Wringing Clothes. Photo by Olaf C. Johnson.
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