

50 Years of Wrong Does Not Make It Right

by Jeffrey A Bockman

We currently live in a world of Fake News and Fake Genealogies. We are even beginning to see Fake Books generated by A.I. (Artificial Intelligence). False information can now be transmitted and shared much faster and easier than ever before.

Unfortunately fake information and genealogies have existed for centuries and some of it has been passed around for so long that many now consider it fact.

When someone is getting started working on their family history and they find an ancestor in an online family tree and it was referenced to a published source they often think that they are done with that line. Unfortunately that is not the case.

The information in an online tree or a published source needs to be treated as a clue and not as proof. The facts need to be verified.

Early family history publications were usually about the descendants of a colonial settler, a famous person, or a particular family surname. Many publications often tried to tie them back to families with the same name in Europe or to Royalty.

They were often compiled and published by descendant societies, local genealogical or historical societies, or by an individual.

- Many were well documented based on the records that were available at that time. Unfortunately the sources used were not often cited.
- Surname books were often compiled by collecting information from various family members with that surname, occasionally limited or grouped by location. Some included research sources. A few examples are:
 - o *The Genealogy of The Olmsted Family in America* by Henry K. Olmstead, 1912.
 - o *The Noble Lineage of the Delaware-West Family of Virginia* by Ann Woodard Fox, 1958
 - o *Ancestral Roots of Sixty Colonists* by Frederick Weis, 1951.

Some were compiled with an educated guess or wishful thinking, for example Lorand V. Johnson's various publications between 1935 and 1988 on the Johnson family especially his 1972 book: *Selected references relating to the ancestry of William and John Johnston, colonial Friends (Quakers) of Virginia; an account of the connections of the family of Johnston of Caskieben, and of that ilk, of the Garioch, Aberdeenshire, Scotland*

My personal opinion is that Lorand Johnson occasionally looked at the tree to see where he could hang a *particular* family, sort of like hanging Christmas ornaments, and then moved it to that spot for the next edition.

Some errors to watch for when evaluating whether a source is credible:

- Is the information about a person of interest to you should be clearly cited as to its source.
- Read the Preface, Introduction, and Bibliography. They can contain valuable information about how the publication was created. Fortunately some of the older publications are online and can be downloaded.
- If the bibliography shows publications that are questionable then the contents of this publication must be reviewed closely.
- Later editions of a publication are a clue that prior editions contain errors or are missing information.

Two Wrongs do not make it Right

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1

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When the same incorrect publication is used as a source for many other articles it does not substantiate the claim. People think that if four or five publications all say the same thing then it must be correct. If they looked closely at the sources they may find that the same original incorrect source or informant was the basis for all of the publications.

An Uninformed Informant

Suppose someone without family nearby died and an employer or neighbor was the only person around to be the informant. Such people are often not fully informed about the history of the person they knew. If they made guesses or mistakes when reporting the date and place of birth, parents' names, etc., that false information will then appear on the Death Certificate, Obituary, Funeral Home records, and the Tombstone. It looks as if four different records all support the incorrect facts.

Research Rule: Work From Known to Unknown

Working Upward or Downward?

- An individual working on their own family should work upward proving their parents, grandparents, and then continue working backwards.
- Publications are usually going downward from a specific famous person or an early settler looking for all of their descendants. A good example of this is the Mayflower Society Passenger publications.
- A publication about a title or peerage being passed down for a family requires working downward until a line dies or daughters out then they have to work back upward to find the next born that has a living descendant.
 - Many peerages in Scotland may pass to a woman in families with daughters but no sons. The Chiefs of Clan Johnstone of Annandale, for example, goes to the first born male or female.
 - Some hereditary peerages, such as the Laird of the Caskieben Johnson Clan, descend only down the male line. This is known as male primogeniture. A Y-DNA test of a proven descendant would represent the entire male line, provided that there was never a “non-paternal event”.¹

Treat it as Clues not Proof – Verify It!

After finding a possible helpful source you should search the internet for the publication name and author.

- See if there is a newer edition or version of the work with a discussion of changes.
 - The preface of the Sixth Edition of *Ancestral Roots of Sixty Colonists* by Weis acknowledges that the earlier editions were based upon “material sent to him by correspondents whom he trusted – material that he did not or could not verify due to illness or unavailability of cited material.” It admits that it contained many errors.
 - It goes on to warn that it is not a reference work and should NOT be cited as evidence. Go to the source material. Any sources mentioned will help you find the proper references.
- Read the preface of the book you are citing. It may provide important information (such as in the example above) that is essential to evaluating the source's reliability..
- See if there are discussions online about the validity of the publication. These may appear in places like Ancestry's Message Boards, which are available to read even if you are not an Ancestry subscriber.
- Narrow down or sort the search results by time period. See if there are comments or updates since the last publication date.
- The search might also point out other publications that used the original source.

¹ A non-paternal event (NPE) is a situation where someone who is thought to be a person's father is not their biological father.

Cited sources should be viewed and evaluated. If there are no sources listed then the records for each event needs to be found.

Sources

- Original Records – Images of many older records may now be available online
- Original Indexes – was it part of the record book or in a separate book?
 - o Was it indexed at the time of the event or at a later date?
- Published transcriptions of some records are often easier to find but be sure to look at the original record image if possible, especially if the data proves an important link in your genealogy.
- Published Indexes – can help to locate the original record.

Use the indexes and other searchable sources to identify the record and locate it. Then look at the original record if possible. Remember

If You Didn't Find It in the Index it only means that

You Didn't Find it in the Index.²

Just because it might have been incorrectly indexed or never indexed at all does not mean that the record does not exist. If you can't find in the index the record someone else claims to have found then browse the actual records around the date of the event. Hopefully you can find and review the original record image.

Evaluate it to see if it is really for the correct person or people in question. If it is for a common name then there were probably many people with the same name in the area.

Family Histories are not always wrong!

Published Transcriptions and Indexes are not always correct.

One case where the very well accepted *Barbour Collection - Vital Records for Connecticut* was incorrect and the family history was correct was with the birth of Esther Olmstead on June 11, 1787 in Ridgefield, Connecticut. *The Genealogy of The Olmsted Family in America* said that Esther's mother was Sarah Morris, Samuel Olmstead's second wife.

The physical Barbour index card file in Hartford, CT showed that Esther's parents were **Samuel and Martha**. The published and online versions (at FamilySearch) show the same.

After creating a timeline with the records for Samuel and his family it clearly shows the error since Martha died and 1784 and Esther was not born until 1787.

- Martha Rockwell married Samuel Olmstead Feb. 24, 1767 Ridgefield v1 p 150
- Martha Olmsted w Samuel died Jul 29, 1784. Ridgefield v1 p 203
- Samuel Olmsted m Sarah Morris Oct 23, 1784 Ridgefield v1 p 153
- Esther Olmsted dau Samuel and **Martha**, b June 11, 1787. Ridgefield v1 p 31

² See the article *Didn't Find it in the Index?* at "Genealogy According To Jeff"
<https://sites.google.com/site/jeffbockman/jeffrey-a-bockman/genealogy-according-to-jeff>

<p>Barbour Collection - Index Cards</p> <p>ROCKWELL, Martha m. Samuel Olmsted, 3rd, Feb. 24, 1767</p> <p>RIDGEFIELD VITAL RECORDS Vol. 1 Page 150 53</p>	<p>GENEALOGY OF THE OLMSTED FAMILY IN AMERICA</p> <p>EMBRACING THE DESCENDANTS OF JAMES AND RICHARD OLMSTED AND COVERING A PERIOD OF NEARLY THREE CENTURIES</p> <p>1632-1912</p> <p>(4110) SAMUEL OLMSTED, Ridgefield, Conn. b. Oct. 29, 1746; d. Oct. 14, 1816; m. (1) Feb. 24, 1767, Martha Rockwell; b. May 12, 1746; d. July 29, 1784; dau. of Thomas and Ruth B. Rockwell, of Ridgefield, Conn.; (2) Oct. 28, 1784, Sarah Morris; b. abt. 1757; d. Nov. 30, 1830. He represented Ridgefield in the General Court in Nov., 1778. Nov. 17, 1778, he was appointed one of a committee to procure clothing for the Continental Army. He was Moderator of a committee to procure salt for the people of Ridgefield, Mar. 3, 1778.</p> <p>1st marriage: 4417, THADDEUS +. 4418, ISAAC +. 4419, JONATHAN; b. Dec. 27, 1772; d. Feb. 27, 1784. 4420, SAMUEL KETCHUM + (see 4454). 4421, EBENEZER ROCKWELL +. 4422, DORCAS; b. May 26, 1779; d. Dec. 7, 1869; m. May 12, 1799, William Henry Pickett; b. Nov. 30, 1777; d. Sept.</p> <p>FIFTH GENERATION 209</p> <p>22, 1831; son of Ezra and Elizabeth (Benedict) Pickett, of Norwalk, Conn. 4423, SARAH; b. Feb. 10, 1781; d. 1867; m. (1) Reuben Bennett, of Wayne, Mich.; (2) abt. 1847, Jonathan Jackson. 4424, SETH +. 2d marriage: 4425, ESTHER +. 4426, CATHERINE; b. Mar. 11, 1790; m. Benjamin Northrop, of Jonesville, N. Y. 4427, JONATHAN +. 4428, CYRUS; b. Dec. 14, 1795; d. June 12, 1796. 4429, BETSEY; b. Mar. 2, 1798; m. Oct. 16, 1816, Curtis Betts; b. Apr. 15, 1797.</p> <p>SIXTH GENERATION 235</p> <p>(4425) ESTHER OLMSTED. b. June 11, 1787; m. Jonathan West, of New York.</p> <p>5173, CATHERINE; m. Thomas Slag, of Pound Ridge, N. Y. 5174, LAURA. 5175, JONATHAN. 5176, JANE +. 5177, SARAH; d. aet. 3 years.</p>
<p>OLMSTED, Martha m. Samuel, d. July 29, 1784</p> <p>RIDGEFIELD VITAL RECORDS Vol. 1 Page 203</p>	
<p>OLMSTED, Samuel, 3rd m. Sarah Morris, Oct. 23, 1784</p> <p>RIDGEFIELD VITAL RECORDS Vol. 1 Page 153</p>	
<p>OLMSTED, Esther d. Samuel & Martha, b. June 11, 1787</p> <p>RIDGEFIELD VITAL RECORDS Vol. 1 Page 31</p>	

In 2002 at the Ridgefield, CT Town Clerk's office I found a very fragile old document (probably a church record) showing Samuel's family by each wife. Unfortunately they would not let me copy or photograph the page.

There were also two indexes of birth records: the Arnold Collection and the Barbour Collection. They both showed Martha as the mother.

In reviewing the history of the Barbour collection I learned that Barbour had hired several individuals to transcribe the vital records of many Connecticut towns. The most well-known was James N. Arnold, who had published the Rhode Island vital records. As it turned out the two sources are really only one.

Indexes to the Virginia Quaker Records are another very good example with issues.

- Digital images of the Original Quaker Records are now available at Ancestry.
- They have been transcribed by various individuals and added to online trees.
- The most well known is *Hinshaw's Index to Selected Quaker Records, 1680-1940. Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy. Vol. VI: (Virginia)*³
- They were compiled by various volunteers. They are very useful to help find the actual record, but they are not perfect.

In the Preface to the 1973 book *Johnson-Moorman Family Connections; The unpublished records of the late Jesse Bryan Lorand* states:

³ This source is available on the Hathi Trust website. Search for Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy, vol. 6.

In 1930, William Wade Hinshaw, knowing of my interest of Virginia Quaker Johnson's requested that I give assistance to the preparation of the Virginia volume of his "Encyclopedia of Quaker Genealogy" by identifying the various Johnson's which were so confusing to his copyists.

Unfortunately this was not mentioned in Hinshaw's publication or the changes noted.

Many of the Quaker marriage records only list the groom and bride while others list the groom, son of his father and the bride, daughter of her father. They usually mentioned if the father was deceased.

This record of Ashley Johnson (shown here as it appears in the Hinshaw index) was listed as part of the records of the Cedar Creek meeting and has been cited as proof that Ashley was the son of John & Lucretia (Massie) Johnson.

This was a record that Lorand Johnson had edited. The name Lucretia Johnson has never been found in any of the Quaker records or anywhere else except the publications of Lorand V. Johnson or those he influenced.

JOHNSON	
----	Benjamin & Agnes, of Louisa Co.
Ch: Sarah	b 1728, 1, 30
Christopher	" 1731, 11, 22
William	" 1734, 4, 25
Benjamin	" 1736, 8, 24
Penelope	" 1738, 2, 27
Collings	" 1741, 6, 28
Edward	" 1744, 2, 23
Agnes	" 1746, 12, 11
1734, 10, 12.	Ashley, s John & Lucretia
	(Massie), St. Peter's Parish, New Kent
	Co., Va.; m Martha WOODAY
Ch: Robert	b 1737, ---, --- m Virginia
	Cicilia ELMORE
Thomas	m Millicent
HARGRAVE	
James	m Sarah
MOORMAN	
Ashley	m Judith
MOORMAN	
Elijah	b 1747, ---, --- m Elizabeth
WATKINS	
Martha	m David
Terrell	
Cecilia	m George
BELL	
William	
Susanna	m William
JOHNSON, s Benj. & Agnes (Clarke)	
Samuel	
Benjamin	m 1761, 10,
10 Sarah BENBO (E) Comfort WALLS	

Suzanne Johnston stated "I know that Lorand got hold of that record after Hinshaw had had it transcribed but before it was published, because I talked to the person who wrote (transcribed) it [Douglas Summers Brown]. When she died at almost 100 years old, she was still frustrated that he (Lorand) had sullied her writings.

The actual record, shown on the next page, reads: "Ashley Johnson and Martha Woody having declared their intentions ... were married on the twelfth day of the tenth month in the year 1734." The names of their parents were not mentioned.

With a common last name like Johnson there were many children named John, Ashley, and James and they were often confused, especially if every son named their first child after their father or grandfather. Fortunately the Quaker marriage records list witnesses who might include their parents or other close family members, helping distinguish one family group from another.

Getting To The Truth

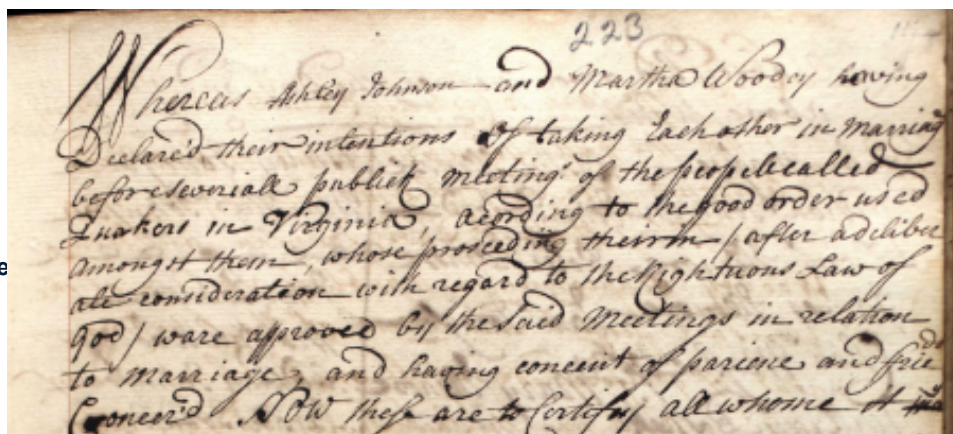
As Henry Louis Gates Jr often says on **Finding Your Roots** "DNA Does Not Lie." Many Y-DNA Surname Projects are trying to prove

or disprove some of these old claims.

The West Family DNA Project was able to prove that Francis West of Duxbury was not related to the Thomas and Francis West (de La Warre) Family in Virginia. I was a bit disappointed but if you don't really want to know then don't test.

The Terrell DNA Project has not been able to prove or disprove that William Richmond Terrell (1659-1744) was a descendant of the Walter Tirel III who "accidentally" killed William Rufus, King William II of England, in 1100.

Cloud-sourced public family trees such as: FamilySearch FamilyTree, WikiTree, Geni, etc are frustrating. One can go in and make corrections to an incorrect version, adding citations to document the information.





Quaker marriage record of Ashley Johnson and Martha Woody. Witnesses to the marriage record of Ashley Johnson include John and James Johnson, likely his brothers, and Nathan and Gideon Johnson, possibly cousins.
(Ancestry.com)

Then someone
it back to the
version.
they even
documentation.
does not let you undelete it. (You can copy the old one and repost it.)

merges or edits
old incorrect
Sometimes
delete the
FamilySearch

I am very familiar with the Johnson DNA Project. DNA has disproven many of the claims of Lorand V. Johnson and his early Virginia connections to the Caskieben Johnsons.

Lorand V Johnson's Johnson Family Publications

The main publication that caused me to write this article is the "Selected references relating to the ancestry of William and John Johnston, colonial Friends (Quakers) of Virginia; an account of the connections of the family of Johnston of Caskieben, and of that ilk, of the Garioch, Aberdeenshire, Scotland" published by Lorand Victor Johnson, in 1972. He had other similar publications from 1940 to 1988.

Lorand detailed his Johnson family and then described their supposed immigration to Virginia. He claimed that they were descendants of the Caskieben line via Thomas of Craig's youngest son James. Over the years this has become the de facto resource on the Johnson Family in Early Virginia.

He claimed that descendants of John & Lucinda, Michael the son of Edward, William, and Benjamin along with Presidents Andrew Johnson and Lyndon Baines Johnson were all related and descended from the Caskieben line.

The last line of his Introduction reads:

“It is my desire that familiarity with these references will stimulate further individual reading and research for a better appreciation of this greater family.”

Unfortunately only a select group of researchers over the years have questioned some of his claims and worked to prove or disprove his claims, and many are no longer with us.

The Johnson Y-DNA Project originated in June of 2001 with Suzanne Johnston testing a descendant of John Johnson (kit #717 – that now matches others in the Olive Group) and two of Edward Johnson (kits #416 & #417 now in White Oak). They did not match, so they do not have a common male ancestor as claimed by Lorand.

Suzanne Johnston’s comments about Lorand

*For both of us, this has been a long saga over many years. I first began the search for the Johnson family in 1958. George and I were engaged and planning a wedding, and when I had asked my father-in-law what he knew about his family, he said that he knew his name, and that of his father because it was written in a book his grandfather had written. I went from there, and was very happy when I discovered Lorand's book. However, like the rest of us, **what started to be a blessing became a big problem.***

As I have been thinking about it, one thing that I would remark about is Lorand's age when he came up with this idea of Caskieben being the guys. He had to have been a teenager. He wrote his first book when he was in college, and had been doing this for some time. I know he was named after someone he knew from history, and that his family had evidently been interested for some time, although I never found any evidence that his father himself was interested. Lorand was at the very least a very strange guy. He saw his mission to identify his lineage and did everything he could to make it as wonderful as possible. As you saw when you went through the Aberdeen records, he passed up things that didn't make sense, such as birthdates and things that couldn't have been, and fantasized in his head about how things probably were, and then made them real by sending out notices to all sorts of people

*He was earnest and spent most of his life involved with this, and yet **he had no sense of proof**, and in his mind was happy to have been able to make up a story that made sense. People believed him because they wanted to, and once he got enough pieces of paper around the world with his data on it, it was impossible to change people's minds.*

As far as I am concerned, I knew before our first DNA tests were done that he was making this up, and I had proof that he was not correct when I discovered in the Quaker records that John Johnson and his wife Elizabeth and Benjamin Johnson and his wife Margery were appointed by a committee of Quakers to make sure that one of the members of the congregation was worthy for marriage. That was a correct record from I think the 1700's. or at least early 1800's. [1721-22]

I know that Lorand got hold of that record after Hinshaw had had it transcribed but before it was published, because I talked to the person who wrote it. When she died at almost 100 years old she was still frustrated that he had sullied her writings.

Further Testing

About 2010 I wanted to use DNA to see if our family, as claimed by my grandmother, was descended from James “Seneca” Johnson and Millie Moorman. I found a fourth cousin who agreed to be tested and he matched with several others that claimed descendant from John & Elizabeth or Ben & Margery and one descendant of Anslem, a son of James & Millie.

I was looking for other candidates descended from James & Millie. I found and contacted a living descendant of a published individual with a specific location. I verified everything from the published individual down to the contact and he agreed to take a test. I then sent him a report going upward from him on the male line and he wrote

back with a cemetery photo showing that his ancestor had the same name and location as the one listed by Lorand but that he had a different wife and parents. The published location was incorrect.

Note: If you are going to be spending money on a DNA test there is an added incentive to make sure that your research is documented and you have the correct line.

Eventually descendants from all four male children of James & Millie were tested and they all matched.

In 2020 I was able to get two proven descendants of the Caskieben Johnson line to test and they did not match any of the Virginia Johnson lines. One of the tests was upgraded to a Big Y by Project Contributions and the terminal SNP (R-FT8869) traced back to Scotland near Aberdeen. A second cousin's test was upgraded to Y-111 with only one mutation.

A closer look at Lorand's claimed Caskieben connection was also disproved by church records that are now available online. When the dates did not fit he created an extra generation using the same names.

Tests of descendants from the families of both Johnson Presidents did not match each other or with any of the other claimed groups.

Early Virginia Johnsons DNA Groups – at the Family Tree DNA Johnson Project

- White Oak Group - descendants of Michael & Edward Johnson - Facebook (Closed) Group - ALLIED FAMILIES OF Johnson, Jonston, Johnson ...
- Caskieben – two descendants of the proven line.
- President LBJ - descendants with kits 132728 & 132729
- Scarlett Oak – related to President Andrew Johnson's family
- Olive Group - descendants of Benjamin & Margery and John & Elizabeth⁴
- Mulberry Group - somewhat related with some claiming descent from William Johnson & Sarah Massie
- Johnstons of Annandale – a Facebook group - Their claims are not documented and that is not a male patriarchal line.

Johnson Family Y-DNA Results⁵

White Oak → I-M253 → 13-22-14-10-13-15-11-16-11-12-11-28-15-08-09-08-11-23-16-20-30-12-14-15-17 > Eng-/Scotland?¶
~~Caskieben~~ → R-M269 → 13-23-14-11-12-15-12-12-12-13-13-29-17-08-09-11-11-25-15-19-30-15-15-17-17 > Scotland¶
E1b1 Family → A-E-M35-13-24-13-10-15-18-11-12-12-13-11-31-15-09-09-11-11-26-14-20-32-16-16-17-18 > Pres-I.B.I¶
Olive-R → M269 → 13-24-15-10-12-14-12-12-12-14-13-30-17-09-10-11-11-25-14-20-30-14-16-17-17 > England¶
Mulberry → M269 → 13-24-14-11-11-14-12-12-12-14-13-30-16-09-10-11-11-24-15-19-31-14-15-16-17 > Ireland¶
Scarlett Oak → I2a2a → 15-23-15-10-15-16-11-13-11-14-12-32-14-08-10-11-11-25-14-20-27-11-14-14-16 > Pres-A.J.¶

It is difficult to tell which Immigrant's descendants are in what group. Obviously they are not all descended from a common ancestor and none of them match the Caskieben Line.

Is it Possible to Correct Incorrect Information?

Practically, it is almost impossible. Posting the correct information on key websites might help but there is too much misinformation floating around.

Correcting Online Trees

- Public Tree that you control - post the correct information and the sources.

⁴ See the "Olive Group" website at <https://sites.google.com/site/jeffbockman/johnson-dna-project/olive-group>

⁵ See the Johnson project at <https://www.familytreedna.com/public/Johnson?iframe=ycolorized>. Data is based on Big Y tests and SNP Tracker <http://scaledinnovation.com/gg/snpTracker.html>.

- Crowd sourced Trees – correct it, attach or link sources, and hope for the best. Keep copies since it will probably be “corrected back.”
- Document it as a pdf or ebook and post it on webpages, blogs, & project comment sections.
- Post book reviews: Worldcat now uses the reviews at Goodreads.com.
- I am considering creating an e-book with similar search terms as Lorand’s publications. Hopefully if someone is actually looking things up they will find it.

In reality once people find the information that they really want they will probably use it and unfortunately they will often change it back to what they want it to be.



Appendix – Links to Websites for Johnson Genealogy

- “Johnstons of Annandale: Descendants of the Ancient Clan Johnstoun Chiefs”
<https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/johnsto-nof-annandale/about/background>
- The lineage of Sir Thomas Alexander Johnson of Caskieben, 12th Baronet
<https://www.thepeerage.com/p48809.htm>
- Johnson DNA Project -
<https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/johnson>
DNA Results - <https://www.familytreedna.com/public/Johnson?iframe=y&colorized>
Olive Group – <https://sites.google.com/site/jeffbockman/johnson-dna-project/olive-group>
- Online versions of Lorand’s Books – for ease of reviewing but *definitely* not for reference.
 - “Johnson-Moorman Family Connections; The unpublished records of the late Jesse Bryan.”
https://www.google.com/books/edition/Johnson_Moorman_Family_Connections/yCRWAAAAMAAJ?hl=en
 - “Descendants of William and John Johnson – with Terrell Family Inter marriages”
Partial view includes the text and comments with some references *but not the charts*. It still includes many of his unsubstantiated claims, although there were many changes and comments.
http://www.terrellsociety.com/genealogy/documents/L184_LVJohnson_S.pdf
 - “The Johnstons from Caskieben to Missouri”
Author Randy McConnell copied Lorand’s line down to the family of Benjamin and Margery. The rest of the publication goes three generations down from their son Gideon. There are lots of details and some references. Treat most information as clues.
<https://christiancomogenealogy.org/family-histories/122-johnstons-the-johnstons-from-caskieben-to-missouri>