

# Descendants of “tobacco king” visit Albion homestead

By Jeff Brown  
Reporter staff

*This article includes information from Mrs. Oren Hammes that first appeared in an article in the July 25, 1979 issue of the Reporter.*

Four Norwegians who traveled to Wisconsin for a family reunion arrived in Edgerton on Friday, June 27 and made a pilgrimage to the Halvor Jacobson house on Kellogg Road in Albion Township.

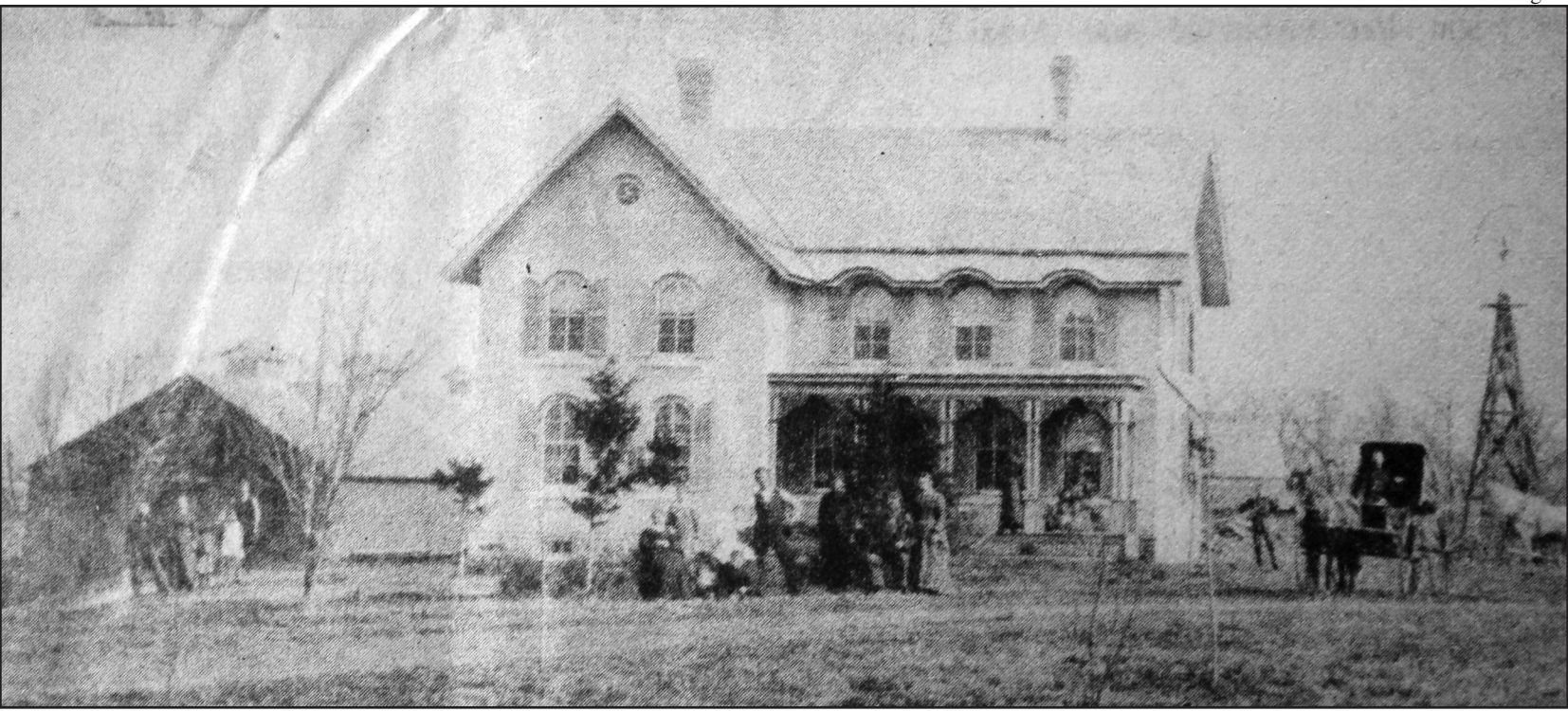
Leading the delegation from Norway was Monica Heggliid Berthelsen; the other members were her son Kris-

tian and her parents Mr. and Mrs. Berthelsen.

Berthelsen hails from Bamble, a coastal city of 14,000 that’s located approximately two hours south of Oslo, the Norwegian capital. Ocean fishing and agriculture are the mainstays of the local economy, according to Berthelsen.

Berthelsen works as a registered nurse, but genealogical research has become almost a second job for her. “I’ve been doing this for a while,” said Berthelsen, “I’ve been searching for my ancestors for a long, long time.”

One of those ancestors is Halvor



This photograph, probably taken in the 1880s, shows the south side of the Jacobson house. At that time, the south side of the house was the front (hence the porch visible in the photograph), because Kellogg Road, which today passes by the house on its north side, hadn’t been built yet. Instead, the house was reached by traveling a wagon road that ran north from Craig Road and curved to the northeast over Koshkonong Creek before meeting up with Aarback Road just west of where Aarback Road meets Rockdale Road.

(Photo courtesy of Mrs. Oren Hammes)



Descendants of Halvor Jacobson pose along the south side of the house he built on the Albion prairie in 1879. From left: Rick Hannemann and his wife Vicki Hannemann, Monica Heggliid Berthelsen and her son Kristian, Mrs. and Mr. Berthelsen (Monica’s parents).  
(Edgerton Reporter/Jeff Brown)

Jacobson, a prosperous tobacco farmer who lived in Albion Township during the second half of the 19th century and was known locally as “the tobacco king.”

Jacobson’s great-great-grandson Rick Hannemann, an insurance agent who lives in Sturgeon Bay, served as the tour guide for the Norwegians during their stay in Wisconsin, accompanied by his wife Vicki. “I found Rick and his family four years ago,” said Berthelsen.

Halvor Jacobson was born in 1829 near Bamble, then emigrated to the United States in 1854. Jacobson’s father was Jacob Halvorsen, so Halvor took the surname “Jacobson” and took the first part of the name “Halvorsen” as his first name.

One year after arriving in America, Halvor married Johanne Johnson. Johanne was born in 1836 near Kragero, Norway and in 1844 she and her parents, her four sisters and her brother came to the United States after crossing the Atlantic Ocean aboard a sailboat that had only two small rooms below deck. Pastor

Dedrickson, the first Norwegian Lutheran pastor to preach on the Koshkonong prairie just north of the Jacobson house, also came over on the sailboat.

The Johnsons lived with the Lein family until Mr. Johnson was able to build a sod house, where the family lived until the summer of 1845, when Mr. Johnson finished building a log cabin.

The nearest town was Janesville, nearly 20 miles to the south. The Johnsons used to walk to Janesville to buy supplies and haul the supplies home on their backs. They used tallow candles to light the log cabin at night and used a section of hollowed-out tree trunk as a pail for water.

Johanne’s father died in 1845; six weeks later her mother gave birth to her fifth daughter. Circumstances forced the three oldest Johnson girls to work outside the home. When Johanne was 13, it was common for her to haul water pails of water from a nearby spring with her baby sister tied to her back.

At home, Johanne had to watch the

younger children and help in the kitchen too. The family didn’t have an oven, so Johanne baked bread using a round kettle, placing the dough inside the kettle, then building a fire beneath the kettle and placing hot coals atop the lid.

An Indian trail that connected Madison to Lake Koshkonong wound its way past the Johnson’s log cabin and Indians often stopped and begged for food, leaving as soon as they got what they wanted.

Halvor Jacobson married Johanne Johnson in 1855. Johanne gave birth to ten children during their marriage, nine of whom survived, five girls and four boys.

Johanne knitted and sewed all of the family’s clothes by hand. At first, the family’s furniture was crude — the beds were made of wooden poles lashed together with rope and they had only wooden benches to sit on.

But as the years passed the family prospered and they bought new furniture and in 1879 built the grand blonde-brick farmhouse that today still stands on a hill overlooking Kel-

logg Road, one-half mile north of Rice Lake.

The family’s prosperity came from tobacco. Halvor Jacobson and his boys grew 20 acres of the sweet, noxious, profitable weed in neatly cross-checked fields. Planting was done totally by hand (the patent for the first tobacco planting machine wasn’t filed until 1890) and couldn’t begin until the first good rain of the spring had primed the rich black soil.

The tobacco plants Halvorson grew were destined to become cigar wrappers, so each plant was planted 19 to 23 inches apart to give the leaves room to grow as broad as possible without tearing (the tobacco that was later grown in the Edgerton area for chewing tobacco was planted only 15 to 17 inches apart).

The Norwegians and their American hosts drove out to the Jacobson house after dropping by The Reporter’s offices. They toured the grounds of the old Jacobson farm and listened to the caretaker who lives in the house explain the various changes to the house since 1879.



Halvor Jacobson and his wife Johanna pose with their ten children in a photograph taken something during the 1870s. Back row, from left: Aasine, Karen, Jacob and Johannes. Front row, from left: Mathee, Julius, Johanna, Havalor, Hanna, Maren and Nelius.

(Photo courtesy of Mrs. Oren Hammes)



The Jacobson house today, as seen from the lawn on the north side of the house.

(Edgerton Reporter photo/Jeff Brown)

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and the Edgerton community  
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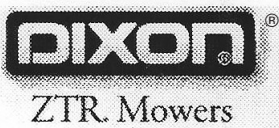
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