

Godschall Johnson Archive

The Godschall Johnson Family was a pioneering family in North Queensland. Ralph Edward Godschall Johnson, was the eldest son of Godschall Johnson, by his first wife, Lucy Bishop. He was born in England, though he claimed to be born in Antwerp, in 1812, whilst his father, Godschall Johnson, was serving as His Majesty's Consul to Antwerp. Ralph and Eleanor Godschall Johnson had seven children. Ralph Edward Godschall Johnson sailed to Australia in 1854 with his two eldest sons and died at Tank Street, Brisbane on 8 July 1876. On the Death Certificate, his father's name was shown as Godschall Johnson, British Consul, Antwerp. His mother's name was not shown. It was also stated that he was born in Antwerp, Belgium, and had spent 22 years in the Colony. It was also stated in the Death Certificate that he had been married in London, at age 20 years, to Eleanor Sarah Butler, and that he was survived by Ralph Cholmondeley Godschall Johnson, aged 38, Ellen Elizabeth Ann, aged 35, Fanny Lucy, aged 34, Frank O' Neill Godschall Johnson, aged 32, Frederick Flower Godschall Johnson, aged 30, and William Butler Godschall Johnson, aged 27, and that 1 male child was deceased. A second wave of the Godschall Johnsons came to Australia in 1860: Ellen came with Frances, William, and Frank, aboard the *Vimiera*.

John Godschall Johnson, who became prominent in the family as a violin maker and socialist, was born in Townsville. At a Communist Party meeting he met his wife Phyllis; they married in 1939 and had three children. In the early 1940s Johnson began building violins (despite the fact he could not play them). Using traditional materials and methods, he became well known for his instruments. Always inscribed with the letters TIMBFGNBOS ("this instrument may be freely given, never bought or sold"), they were given to promising young musicians who otherwise could not afford them. In 1992 he estimated that he had built 60 violins. He was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in 1991 for 'services to arts, in particular, music instrument making', complementing the OAM Phyllis had received in 1989 for 'services to women's affairs and consumer rights'. He died in 2003, aged 90, survived by Phyllis and two of their children, Peter and Alice. Another son, Ralph, died before him.

Reference:

"Grace Notes from a True Believer," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 2003,
<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/05/25/1053801273410.html>.

Archive Location: 163R

Detailed Listing

GJR/1

Xerox copies of records relating to the Godschall Johnson family - includes the history of Ralph Cholmondeley Godschall Johnson who was a records clerk for the Dalrymple Shire Council and held various positions of surveyor, valuer, rate collector, etc. in the Townsville region.

The archive also includes a copy of Marie Irvine's biography of Ms Glen Atkinson (nee Godschall Johnson).

GJR/2

298 page Word document that is described as a 'fuller version' of the above.