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**MS 0463  
Johnson Family  
Papers, 1813-1894****DESCRIPTION**

Letters from two generations of Johnson family members; chiefly letters from Albert Jacob Johnson, 1856-1857 and 1869-1887, to his parents describing his activities, some letters from his step-brother Charles to his family, 1813-1844, and letters from Charles' nephew, George Alonzo Johnson, 1856-1857. Topics include steamship and ferry business, descriptions of the Los Angeles area and the ranch of Don Pio Pico, and the local Vigilante Committee's activities as well as their own activities. Also present is an autobiography by George about his ferry and steamship experiences.

1 box, .25 linear ft.

**ACCESS**

Original restricted due to fragile condition; transcripts are available for patron use.

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Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be addressed to the Arizona Historical Society.

**PROCESSING**

The collection was processed by Kim Frontz, 1997.

**ARRANGEMENT**

The collection is arranged chronologically within four series: Charles Johnson letters, 1813-1844. Albert and George Johnson letters, 1856-1857. Albert and Eliza Johnson letters, 1869-1887. George Johnson autobiography.

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Charles Johnson was born about 1795 in New York. He left home at sixteen and moved from place to place throughout his life. He was a hatter by profession, and was a member of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, and was one of a party of trappers who were captured and imprisoned in Mexico, ca. 1842. He died in Illinois in 1844. Two of his nephews were George Alonzo Johnson and his half-brother Albert Jacob Johnson. Beginning in 1850, George was involved in establishing a ferry near Ft. Yuma with Louis Yaeger and others, was captain of steamships on the Colorado River and was affiliated with the Colorado Steam Navigation Company. His half-brother, Albert Jacob Johnson, worked with him on steamships from 1856 to 1857 then returned to school and returned to southern California with a law degree. Albert worked many years as business manager for Don Pio Pico, who

was George's father-in-law and the last Governor of California while under Mexico. Don Pio Pico had a ranch near Los Angeles called Ranchito where many of Albert's letters were written from.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The collection is chiefly comprised of letters from Albert Jacob Johnson, dated 1856-1857, and 1869-1887. The earlier letters, from Ft. Yuma to his family back east, describe his life working on the steamships which navigated the Colorado River. His later correspondence, to his family, concerns his life in southern California including descriptions of the Los Angeles area and the Ranchito of Don Pio Pico, and the Vigilante Committees' activities. He also occasionally mentions Arizona. A few letters are from his wife, Eliza.

Letters from Charles to his parents, dated 1813 to 1844, occur approximately once every five years and describe his activities and family matters. He relays information about new places in which he has settled including Ohio and Texas and briefly tells about the Santa Fe expedition and encounters with the Cherokee Indians. Also, he gives an account of a traders' expedition to Santa Fe and their arrest by Mexican authorities. An autobiography by George Alonzo Johnson describes the establishment of a ferry company near Ft. Yuma and the early navigation of the Colorado River. A few letters from George, 1859 and 1891, relate current events.