

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Lloyd Johnson

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project

Interview # AIS-V-L-2008-026

Lloyd Johnson, retired farmer, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Illinois State Museum's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: April 10, 2008

Location: Alton IL

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Michael Maniscalco, IL State Museum Oral Historian

Technical Support: cameraman, Robert Warren, Illinois State Museum

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Michael Maniscalco and Sue Huitt, Illinois State Museum

Video indexed by: James Oliver, Illinois State Museum

Total Pages: 28    Total Time: 2.5 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 08/04/2009.

Interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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# Abstract

Lloyd Johnson, *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture*, AIS-V-L-2008-026

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Lloyd Johnson was born on August 15th, 1938 in Alton, Illinois, one of ten siblings in an African-American farm family. He was born on the farm purchased by his great grandfather in 1850, who crossed over the river as a free man from Missouri. He purchased 200 acres outside of Alton Illinois where the farm exists today. The farm has passed down through the male heirs of the family to Lloyd. Recently, Mr. Johnson has retired and now leases the farmland to others, although he still lives on the property. For much of the farm's history, the farming was done with teams of horses. Lloyd's father (Cyrus) always used Percheron draft horses when working on the farm. Starting in 1941, to make ends meet his father also worked in the local lead works.

Lloyd went to school in a one room school house from first to eighth grade. When he started middle school, he was bused into a town school. He walked one mile from home to the bus stop, a big improvement over the seven or eight miles some of his siblings had to walk to school. The farm was very diversified at the time, with dairy cows, hogs, corn, soy beans and wheat, with a large garden where everything was canned to help feed the family during the winter. Lloyd has been involved in numerous agricultural organizations. As a youth, he was in the Future Farmers of America (FFA). The family's Baptist faith has always played a central role for Lloyd. In this organization, Lloyd learned many different farm business skills.

In his later years, Lloyd joined the Farm Services Agency (FSA) on the county level. In this position, he worked with a committee to evaluate policies. After a 1990 black farmers' lawsuit against the USDA, Lloyd was asked to serve on the State FSA Committee. He maintains his political independence and is the only non-partisan appointee to this political position. Lloyd was also elected as the first black highway commissioner in his county.

**Topics Covered:** Leased Land; Alton; Animals for Labor; Lead works; One Room School House; milking cattle; Guernsey Cattle; Jersey Cattle; Chester White hogs vs. Ohio Improved Chester White hogs; Gardening; Market price; FFA (Future Farmers of America); 4-H; Farm Services Agency; 1990 Black Farmers Lawsuit; USDA (United States Department of Agriculture); State FSA Committee; Political positions; Baptist Church

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