



Young Duncan Wasson

Duncan James Wasson was the son of Joseph and Carrie Wasson. He was born in 1885, and raised with his two older sisters on a farm that Joe rented from his parents, John and Jemima Wasson. He married Esther Gensicke in October 1921, and they settled down to farm life the following spring. This note covers the years between his birth and marriage.

Duncan James Wasson was born on April 19, 1885 to Joseph R. and Carrie Sawyer Wasson on the family farm owned by his grandparents just to the west of Onslow in Madison Township, Jones County, Iowa. Joe and Carrie had married on February 5, 1879 at the home of her parents, Samuel and Ellen Sawyer.

- For more about Joe and Carrie Wasson, see [Joe and Carrie Wasson](#).
- For more about Samuel and Ellen Sawyer, see [Samuel and Ellen Sawyer](#).

Duncan was the third of their three children. His two older sisters included the following:

- Ellen “Ella” Jemima Wasson, born April 30, 1880, in Madison Township, Jones County, Iowa
- Jessie (likely short for Jeannette) Gertrude Wasson, born May 27, 1882, in Madison Township, Jones County, Iowa



This cradle originally belonged to Joe and Carrie. It was used by Duncan and his sisters.

Joe and Carrie appear to have named their children after relatives on both sides of the family. Duncan James Wasson was named after a pair of uncles. Carrie's uncle Duncan McNeil served in the Union Army during the Civil War. He was killed in a magazine explosion at Fort Fisher in North Carolina the morning after Union forces captured the fort in January 1865. Duncan's uncle James Wasson – one of Joe's brothers – died from inflammation of the bowels about a year before Duncan was born.

- For more about Duncan McNeil, see [Duncan McNeil \(1839-1865\), Civil War Soldier and His Legacy.](#)
- For more about James Wasson, see [James Wasson \(1852-1884\).](#)

Joe and Carrie lived on the farm that Joe's parents, John and Jemima Wasson, purchased in 1864. John and Jemima retired from farming at about the time that Joe and Carrie got married, and moved onto a small second residence built towards the front of the property. Joe rented the farm from his parents. This included the main house, farm buildings and most of the land, but excluded the second residence and a small amount of land set aside for John and Jemima to use for their garden and orchard. Joe continued to rent this farm from his parents – and then from his mother after his father died in 1888 – until early 1906 when the farm was sold. It was here that Duncan and his sisters were raised.



Andreas Jansen stands in front of his farm, what was the John Wasson Farm that he acquired from the Jemima Wasson estate in 1906. This undated photo was likely taken between 1907 and 1915, after Jansen expanded the main farm house and added a barn.



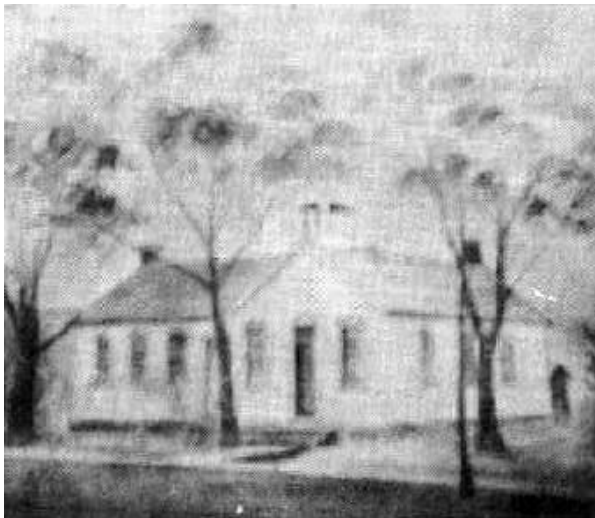
The former John Wasson Farm in 2021

- For more about John and Jemima Wasson and their life in Iowa, see [John and Jemima Wasson in Iowa](#).
- For more about the John Wasson Farm, see [The John Wasson Farm, Madison Township, Jones County, Iowa](#).

Early Years

I have turned up little specific information about Duncan's early years. He would have attended school in Onslow. The one-room Wasson School that had stood across the road from the Wasson farm had closed years before when a consolidated Onslow school district was organized, and was moved to a different location and used for storage.

It is not clear whether Duncan actually graduated from the school in Onslow. He and his sisters were not listed in the known records of those students who graduated from Onslow schools.



The two-room school in town that Duncan would have initially attended (left); a new public school was built in 1898, which is where Duncan would have finished his education (right). However, I haven't found any articles that actually mention Duncan and school.

The Wassons were active in the Onslow Presbyterian Church. Grandfather John Wasson helped to raise money for the church building and for a time served as a church trustee, and grandmother Jemima Wasson worked at the church until her health declined. Aunt Jeannette Wasson Sim taught Sunday School there for more than forty years, and her husband David served several terms as a church elder. Duncan attended this church, and was baptized and confirmed here, although as an adult he rarely attended church.



Onslow Presbyterian Church



Jessie and Duncan, probably in the early 1890s

During these years, social news about the Wassons reported on family birthdays, the purchase of a piano, their hosting an ice cream social to raise money for the church, injuries, visiting relatives, and some of their own travels, all fairly typical of Onslow area families at the time.

Duncan's grandfather John died in 1888. His grandmother Jemima continued to live on the farm with Joe and his family, although she remained in the second house until she became too infirm to live alone. At that point, Jemima moved in with her daughter Mary Gridley, but they clashed, so she moved in with Joe, Carrie and their children in January 1897.

Joe and Carrie Divorce

Not long after, Joe and Carrie separated. In July 1897, Carrie left for nearby Olin where her mother Ellen lived to open a millinery store. Less than two weeks after Duncan's 13th birthday in April 1898, Carrie moved to Stanwood, Iowa, where she bought a house and took in boarders. Carrie filed for divorce from Joe the following month. After ending the first case and refileing a second case, their divorce was granted in October 1899.

Ella had finished high school by the time Carrie left, so she moved to Stanwood to live with her mother. Jessie remained on the farm with her father and Duncan until she finished school at the end of the 1898-1899 school year. Only then did she move to Stanwood. Duncan remained with his father and grandmother Jemima on the farm.

Not long after this, Carrie and her mother Ellen moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, as did one of her boarders, Ralph Miller. Carrie and Ralph married in 1901.

Ella married Benjamin Spear in 1900, and they moved to Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, Canada. Jessie moved to Canada with them. It was there where she met William McBride. Jessie and William married in Cedar Rapids in January 1903 before returning to Canada.

After Ellen died, Carrie and Ralph moved to Portland, Oregon, but they divorced not long after that. Carrie then moved to Canada to live with a daughter, although she eventually ended up back in Cedar Rapids.

While his mother was living in Stanwood and then Cedar Rapids before moving to Portland, there were a number of social news articles about Duncan visiting his mother. But these completely stopped after she moved to Oregon. It appears that for some unknown reason, Duncan and Carrie were estranged for the rest of her life, as I have not turned up any further articles reporting visits between them, Duncan was not mentioned in articles about her death, and there were no articles reporting that Duncan had traveled to Cedar Rapids for her funeral. (During those years, there were a number of such articles regarding his wife Esther's family.)



Duncan's nephew, Russell Duncan Spear, was born in December 1900. This photo includes Jessie, Duncan, Russell and Ella, and was from 1901 when Duncan was about 16 years old.



Duncan with his nephew Russell Duncan Spear



Jessie returned to Cedar Rapids for her January 1903 wedding to William McBride. This photo includes Ella, Jessie and Duncan, and was taken when Duncan was 17 years old.

Comment: Although the baby is identified as Russell Spear in the above photos, Russell was born in December 1900, which would date those photos to 1901. But I think that Duncan and his sisters all look somewhat older in those photos than they do in the photo taken in 1903. Both Ella and Jessie gave birth in 1907 (daughter Leslie Spear and son William Hobart McBride, respectively), and they were both in Cedar Rapids, Iowa for Christmas with their mother at the end of that year. Duncan, now 22, joined them for the holiday, which would have given them the opportunity for joint photos that year

Duncan Grows up

As a maturing teenager and young adult, Duncan made the local news more often.

A 13-year-old Duncan (the 1898 article says he was 14) was mysteriously injured and returned to his home on the farm west of Onslow after attending a dance. No one stepped forward to explain what had happened or how Duncan got back home.

Duncan the 14 year old son of Jos. Wasson came home this morning, with his head badly injured, and could remember nothing that had happened. There had been a dance in town and he had been staying about the hall through the night. It seems that some one living west of town had taken the boy and his horse home and put them inside the gate as indicated by buggy tracks. The bridle had been taken off the horse and the saddle left on. Dr. Scott was called, but so far has been unable to find a fracture of the skull. Mr. Wasson would like very much to learn how the boy received his injuries. Why the parties who helped him home did not take the trouble to go to the door and report is strange.

Monticello Express, October 6, 1898



Duncan as a teenager

Duncan would have had his regular farm chores, but Joe started including him on trips to livestock sales and auctions. They would eventually become partners in livestock and real estate trading as J.R. Wasson & Son. Duncan enjoyed going to livestock sales well into his later years, both for business and for the social aspects.

O. C. Johnson and wife, J. B. Johnson and J. R. and Duncan Wasson took in the stock show in Chicago, last week.

Monticello Express, December 12, 1901

In October 1902, Duncan's grandmother Jemima died. Joe, Duncan and a housekeeper continued to live on the farm, as Joe had renewed his lease with his mother for the farm for another three years shortly before Jemima died.

If Duncan graduated from high school, it likely would have been in 1902. Later that year, he moved to Cedar Rapids to attend the Cedar Rapids Business College. He didn't appear to attend the school for very long, and there was no published indication of what he studied or whether he completed his coursework there.

Ed. Franks has returned to the Cedar Rapids Business College. Duncan Wasson left Monday to enter the same school.

Monticello Express, December 4, 1902

Duncan Wasson and Ed Franks, students at the Cedar Rapids Business College, spent Sunday at home.

Monticello Express, February 5, 1903



Cedar Rapids Business College, corner of 2nd Avenue and 5th Street, 1906

In July 1903, Joe married twice-divorced Lydia Arnold, and she moved onto the John Wasson Farm and became Duncan's stepmother. Duncan had returned to the farm by early 1904. Joe and Lydia divorced in March 1907, and neither was mentioned in the other's obituary. But while they were married, Joe and Lydia appeared in typical social news stories, including when Lydia hosted a surprise party for Duncan's 19th birthday.

A SURPRISE AT ONSLOW.

A very pleasant surprise was played on Mr. Duncan Wasson last Tuesday night, the occasion being his nineteenth birthday. Mr. and Mrs. Wasson had invited in about a dozen of his friends, who arrived about nine o'clock, finding Duncan in his old clothes, thus taking him completely by surprise. At an early hour, after spending a very pleasant evening in music and games, the merry crowd started for home. Particular notice might be taken of this occasion as it was his nineteenth birthday, the nineteenth day of the month and in the nineteenth hundredth year. It is very rare for one to have so many nineteens in writing his age. Mrs. Wasson, assisted by Mrs. W. H. Alexander and Verda Lytton, served a very nice supper about twelve, which was pronounced superb by all.

Anamosa Eureka, April 21, 1904

OLIN ITEMS.

Olin, May 17, 1904.

Frank Gordon, wife and three children, have been visiting with friends and relatives the past few days.

David Hutton is quite sick. Alex Hutton who has been out west was called and arrived here Monday.

Irv. Merritt, of Cedar Rapids, was a business visitor the latter part of last week.

Miss Verva Brainard visited with relatives at Wyoming last Saturday.

Mr. Williams and Duncan Wasson of Onslow, were calling on lady friends in town Sunday.

Harry Hines of Mechanicsville.

Anamosa Eureka, May 19, 1904

Duncan Wasson lost one of his
buggy horses from lock jaw.

Monticello Express, August 11, 1904

Duncan Wasson is at De Witt, at-
tending the fair and visiting his
mother.

Monticello Express, September 14, 1905

Duncan Wasson went to DeWitt last
week to visit his mother.

Anamosa Eureka, January 11, 1906

The Sim-Wasson Farm

Joe had signed a new three-year lease for his parents' farm shortly before Jemima died in October 1902. Her will left the farm to her surviving children who agreed to honor the lease before selling the farm. The lease ran through early 1906, at which point the farm was sold to Andreas Jansen.

Although she had moved into town, Joe's sister Jeannette still owned the Sim Farm east of Onslow, and had been renting it out to Harbison Orr. But Orr bought the Walston Farm next door, and Joe began renting the Sim Farm, moving there on March 1, 1906.

Duncan would move there later, but in early 1906 he and his friend Will Dennison traveled out to Los Angeles, California where they stayed for several months. While they were out there, they served as pallbearers for a young woman from the Onslow area who had died in Los Angeles while staying with relatives.

CLAY VALLEY ITEMS.

Clay Valley, March 14, 1906.

Ethel May Butler was born Feb. 13, 1885, near Onslow, Iowa, and died at the home of Mr. Henry Hoffman, at Los Angeles, Cal., March 5th, 1906, aged 21 years and 19 days. There are left to mourn her loss besides father and mother, one brother, Ralph L., and two sisters, C. Vera and Daisy L.

The life of this lovely young girl, just on the threshold of womanhood, has been mostly passed in her childhood's home. She was always an earnest helper in the church and Sunday school from an early age. She united with the Bethel Presbyterian church about two years ago and was an overwilling helper in her Master's cause, and "by her life alone, gracious and sweet, the better way was shown."

She spent one year at Coe College studying music, and at the end of the year taught amid her home circle, ever faithful and true in the work with her young friends.

In Nov., 1904, she went to California to spend a year with relatives in that state. In the early part of last fall she was attacked by a severe cold which rapidly assumed a serious nature. All that loving hands and hearts could do was done, but of no avail.

"And yet 'twill only be a sleep
When, with songs and dewy light,
She will open her blue eyes,
'Neath the palms of Paradise,
While we foolish ones shall weep.

On Tuesday afternoon of last week funeral services were held at Los Angeles, which were attended by many former Iowa people as well as many Iowa visitors now in the city. The floral offerings were many and beautiful. Immediately after the services, Mr. Butler started with the remains for home, reaching here Friday evening. The burial services took place Sunday afternoon at Bethel. In addition to the California floral offerings were added many from home friends. The pall bearers were Messrs. Will Dennison, **Duncan** Wasson, Arthur McMaster, Perry Scroggie, Forest Hutton and Chas. Green. The choir sang "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere," "Remembered by What I have Done," and "Sometime We'll Understand."

Those in attendance from a distance were Mrs. Celia Tebo, of Narragansett Pier, R. I., an aunt of the deceased, and Miss Emma Shinkle and Mrs. Margaret Shinkle, of Maquoketa, Iowa.

Mr. Butler and family desire to thank the many friends at home and abroad for their many kindnesses shown during the sickness and death of their loved one.

Mrs. Celia Tebo will remain for a few weeks' visit with old time friends, as it has been a number of years since she has visited at her old home.

Anamosa Eureka, March 15, 1906



Duncan Wasson (left) and Will Dennison (right)

A camping party went over to the Maquoketa river last week, composed of Messrs. Ed. Franks and Charles Hutton and wives and Albert Mc Quown, **Duncan** Wasson and Misses Laura Coburn and Carrie Miller

Anamosa Eureka, August 30, 1906; Carrie Miller was Duncan's mother

Duncan Wasson went to Cedar Rapids last week to visit his mother.

Anamosa Eureka, October 11, 1906

When Joe and Lydia separated in January 1907, Joe and Duncan hosted a group of local women for some sewing and a feast.

FESTIVITIES AT ONSLOW.

A Jolly Party at the Home of Joseph Wasson and Son.

Some of the capable ladies of Onslow and vicinity were invited to gather at the home of Joseph Wasson and Son on Thursday last, to tie comforts and hemstitch table linen. They came in large numbers with their needles and thimbles, and so industriously did they work that in a few hours a goodly pile of comforts were finished and ready for use. A delegation of the ladies took possession of the kitchen, where their hosts had provided abundant materials for a substantial dinner, and soon savory odors began to assail the olfactory nerves of the diligent needle workers. Two large tables in the dining room, laden with good things, accommodated the guests. Compotes of assorted fruit formed the central decoration on each table. On being served, the company began to use their knives and forks as assiduously as they had before been seen to ply their needles.

Perhaps it was the timely word of warning from the Doctor, (who was also there), "to be careful," that prevented any from being incapacitated for work after the sumptuous dinner. In the early afternoon all the sewing was finished. Some of the ladies returned to their homes, others remained for an evening's enjoyment. The young people also gathered, seeming to understand it was "At Home" day at the "Wasson Farm." They too were royally entertained, the oysters being very much to their liking.

At the close of the evening one of the ladies present, on behalf of those assembled, in a few well chosen words made it known to their hosts that at any time they needed assistance they would come promptly and willingly and do all "that their hands found to do." This was very gratifying to Mr. Wasson and his son, who thanked them heartily and expressed appreciation of their kindness and all the work they had done that day.

In these farming communities where the homes are scattered, it does us lots of good to gather together in a neighbor's house "once in so often," to break bread and exchange opinions and get better acquainted. It also infuses into our veins a little of that "oil of life," the brotherhood of man spirit, which we all need. Who will have the next "comfort party"? If you invite the Onslow ladies it will surely be a success.

One Who was There.

Anamosa Eureka (left), January 31, 1907

Stock shipments up to Tuesday this week are 10 cars. Namely: Johnston Bros. 4 of cattle and 1 of hogs; Wasson & Son, 2 of cattle and 1 of hogs; S. O. Fowler and N. J. Paul, each 1 car of cattle.

Monticello Express, February 21, 1907

During these years, the social news showed an increased closeness between Duncan and his aunt Jeannette, such as her hosting his 22nd birthday party. I haven't found comparable articles about Jeannette and her other nieces and nephews.

- For more about Jeannette, see [Jeannette M. Wasson \(1847-1914\)](#).

Miss Mame Shultz, the intermediate teacher, entertained the Reading Circle, Friday evening, at the home of Mrs. Jeannette Sim. There were a few invited guests' including several young gentlemen. An interesting program was given by the following young ladies: Miss Shultz, some fine instrumental music, Miss Jessie Brown, a solo, Miss Lou Noyes gave a humorous recitation, receiving an encore. She responded with another. Then came charades followed by refreshments, which all enjoyed. One interesting feature of the evening was the presentation of a purse containing twenty-two dollars to Duncan Wasson, it being the occasion of his twenty-second birthday. It was presented by his aunt, Mrs. Sims.

Wyoming Journal, April 25, 1907

By 1910, Duncan had taken over the ownership of the Sim Farm – what I refer to as the Sim-Wasson Farm – from his aunt Jeannette. I have not turned up any news articles as to whether this was a purchase or a gift. Family lore suggested that Duncan had inherited the farm from Jeannette. But Jeannette didn't die until 1914, and she died without a will. Without a will, a husband or surviving children of her own, the farm would have gone to her siblings rather than to Duncan had she owned it at the time of her death. In any event, Duncan now owned a substantial 200-acre farm.

Joe and Duncan lived on the farm until early 1912, when they “retired” from farming and moved into town. Duncan rented out the farm for the next 10 years, until after he was married.

- For more about the Sim-Wasson Farm, see [The Sim-Wasson Farm, Wyoming Township, Jones County, Iowa.](#)

Duncan as an Adult

Duncan appeared to have an active social life in the Onslow community as a single young man.

Misses Edith Spooner, Ramona Millheim, and Messrs. Duncan Wasson and George Hubbel took in the play at Anamosa, Monday night.

Monticello Express, October 17, 1907

Duncan Wasson has gone to Cedar Rapids to spend Christmas with his mother and sisters, who are there from their home in Canada.

Monticello Express, December 26, 1907

Howard Hall enjoyed a surprise party Friday evening by a number of his friends. The evening was spent by giving charades, playing Boston, and singing. A sumptuous supper was served at 11:30. Those present were Misses Ada and Sybil Walters, Mildred Lamey, Grace Miller, Hazel Schomer and Eva Paul, Prof. Moylo, Messrs. Duncan Wasson, Purl Walters, Armour Gould and Nick House. A fine time was reported by all.

Anamosa Journal, November 18, 1909

Mr. and Mrs. A. D. Jansen, John Sprecken and wife, Duncan Wasson, Nick House and H. A. McMaster attended the stock show in Chicago last week.

Anamosa Eureka December 9, 1909

BASE BALL.

after which they started to play...
 ...plugged all three holes...
 ...their fourth go-slings by...
 ...see Pushy...
 ...between...
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 ...five...
 ...six...
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 ...eighty-nine...
 ...ninety...
 ...ninety-one...
 ...ninety-two...
 ...ninety-three...
 ...ninety-four...
 ...ninety-five...
 ...ninety-six...
 ...ninety-seven...
 ...ninety-eight...
 ...ninety-nine...
 ...one hundred...



The Onslow baseball team, with Duncan Wasson, the lanky man second from the left in the back row, beat the Wyoming team 5-2 in a June 1910 rivalry game.



Duncan Wasson strikes out here, but he had two of the team's six hits and scored two of Onslow's five runs.

Wyoming Journal, June 30, 1910

Duncan and Joe became increasingly active in livestock trading. They also started investing in real estate, acquiring lots in town as well as farms that they would then rent out. Most of these farms were in neighboring townships, but at least one was in Wisconsin.

Duncan Wasson is getting to be quite a noted horse dealer. He attended a horse sale, last week, at Cedar Rapids, where he got some heavy horses. He soon disposed of them and Monday he went to Solon to a sale, where he expects to get some more.

Monticello Express, December 8, 1910

Ira Stimson is here selling Wisconsin lands. He sold J. R. Wasson & Son 200 acres and perhaps others.

Monticello Express, December 15, 1910

Iowans at the Hotels.

Montrose: Harry S. Gray, Des Moines; E. L. Goff, Davenport; Thos. Lambert, Sabula; C. F. McConnehy, Clinton; B. Sudbury, Davenport; H. A. Joiner, Maquoketa; A. J. Abrams, Waterloo; W. W. Fowler, Tama; J. . Russell, Waterloo; Clarence Nichols, Vinton.

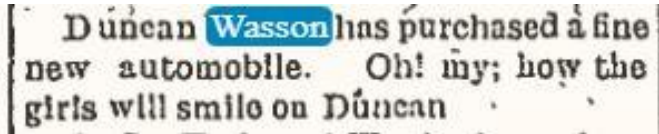
Delavan: C. H. Forsythe, Waterloo; W. F. Speer, Clinton; F. T. Powell, Vinton; H. B. Norton, Sigourney; F. M. Boone, Tipton; A. A. Connor, Iowa City; F. J. Peck, Springville; G. P. Walker, Waterloo; J. B. Lichty, Des Moines; A. J. Davidson, Prairieburg.

Allison: W. C. Hendrickson, Estherville; J. W. nKickerbocker, Cedar Falls; Geo. A. Wagner, Van Horne; C. J. Thompson, Clinton; J. G. Chamberlain, Waterloo; S. Goldblatt, Wellsburg; G. A. Yoakum, Eagle Grove; F. H. Killer, Dubuque; D. J. Wasson, Onslow; J. S. Palmer, Vinton.

Grand: W. P. Markland, Maquoketa; V. H. Buchanan, Oelwein; J. H. Murphy, Parnell; M. G. Gladstone, Bradford; Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Corwin, Anamosa; O. N. Ford, Central City; W. A. Porter, Urbana; J. S. Haylik, Newhall; J. G. Scott, Shipley.

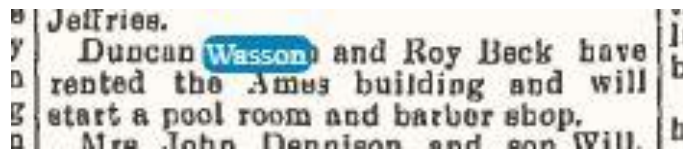
Cedar Rapids Gazette, March 13, 1911

Duncan bought his first car in 1911. That same year, he and Roy Beck rented the Ames Building in Onslow so that they could start a pool room and barber shop. It did not seem to be a going concern, however, as it was not mentioned again in the local news.



Duncan Wasson has purchased a fine new automobile. Oh! my; how the girls will smile on Duncan

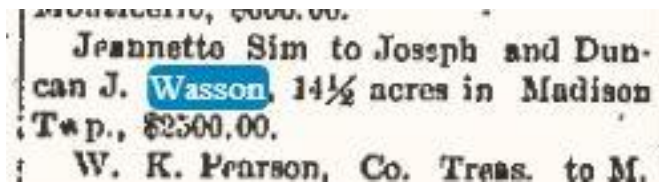
Wyoming Journal, July 13, 1911



Jeffries.
Duncan Wasson and Roy Beck have rented the Ames building and will start a pool room and barber shop.
Mrs. John Dennison and son Will.

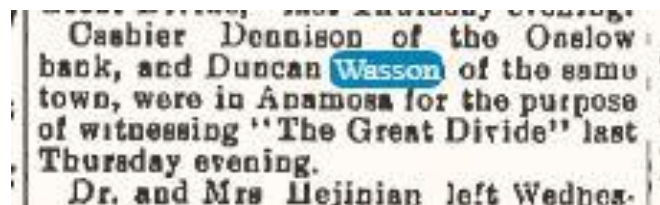
Anamosa Eureka, December 7, 1911

In 1912, Jeannette sold most of the property in Onslow that she and her husband David had purchased years earlier to Joe and Duncan, all but the house on the corner of Anamosa Avenue and 2nd Street where she lived.



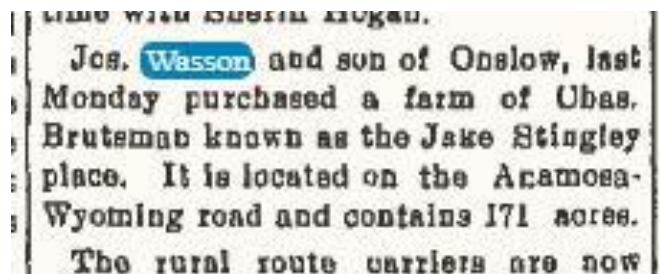
Jeannette Sim to Joseph and Duncan J. Wasson, 14½ acres in Madison Twp., \$2500.00.
W. K. Pearson, Co. Treas. to M.

Anamosa Journal, May 2, 1912



Cashier Dennison of the Onslow bank, and Duncan Wasson of the same town, were in Anamosa for the purpose of witnessing "The Great Divide" last Thursday evening.
Dr. and Mrs. Hejinian left Wednes-

Anamosa Eureka, December 19, 1912



Joe Wasson and son of Onslow, last Monday purchased a farm of Ubas Bruteman known as the Jake Stingley place. It is located on the Anamosa-Wyoming road and contains 171 acres.
The rural route carriers are now

Anamosa Eureka, October 9, 1913

neel.

Wasson & Son are buying horses, and will ship a car tomorrow.

Monticello Express, October 13, 1913

Wasson & Son are doing quite a laud business. They have commenced buying farms, having bought two within the past week, in Jackson township, on the Wyoming and Anamosa road.

Monticello Enterprise, October 16, 1913

Joe Wasson and son Duncan have bought the W. A. Houstman farm north of Olin. The consideration was \$130 an acre.

The Miller & Northey blooded cattle

Anamosa Eureka, October 23, 1913

The auction sale of Mrs A.L. Potter last Saturday was well attended. The old junk sold at good prices. Duncan Wasson of Ooslow bid in the real estate, paying \$516 00 therefor. He afterwards sold the ground to C B. Larkey, the horse buyer, who convert it into a "play ground" for his horses. Mr. Wasson will tear down the buildings and use the lumber on his farm near Ooslow. It was a fair price for the lumber and ground. J. S. Brownell, the auctioneer, is to be commended for the manner in which he conducted the sale.

Wyoming Journal, April 16, 1914



Duncan (left) and his friend Will Dennison in front of his aunt Jeannette Sim's house

About a week before she died, Duncan's aunt Jeannette gave him her house in Onslow. Because she died without a will, John Krouse – the widower of Jane Wasson Krouse who had previously created issues for the family surrounding the estate of Jemima Wasson – recommended Clifford B. Paul to serve as the estate administrator. Soon, Duncan was ordered to appear in court regarding Jeannette's estate. I assume this had to do with how Duncan had taken ownership of Jeannette's house shortly before she died, as the house otherwise would have been the primary asset in Jeannette's estate to be divided among her heirs. But this was soon resolved, and Duncan set about getting the house fixed up before hosting an ice cream social there.

- For more about this house, see [The Sim Town House and Properties, Onslow, Iowa.](#)

Estate of Jeanette Sim. Clifford B. Paul appointed administrator: bond \$3,000. On order of court Duncan Wasson appeared and was examined before the court and official reporter.

Anamosa Eureka, June 25, 1914

Mr. Glick of Anamosa, has been here for some time decorating and painting Duncan Wasson's house. It is also fitted up with very handsome electrical fixtures and is one of the handsomest places in town.

Anamosa Eureka, July 23, 1914

The sociable, we mentioned, last week, to be on Duncan Wasson's lawn, was a success in every way. Duncan furnished the ice cream, and opened the fine home, which his aunt, Mrs. Janet Simm, gave to him, just before her death, to the company. This house is one of the best in town, and recently, Mr. Wasson has had Mr. Glick, of Anamosa, working, for several weeks, on the interior, decorating the walls of the entire house, and it is said to be one of the finest finished in the county.

Monticello Express, August 13, 1914

Duncan Wasson of Onslow, was in town this week, carrying his right arm in a sling. He tore some of the ligaments loose in the wrist while working with some timbers.

Anamosa Eureka, September 17, 1914

Fell Off Wagon.

Duncan Wasson was in town last Thursday, looking a trifle the worse for wear. He fell off a wagon—not a water wagon—that morning. He got the fall as the wagon seat gave way. When he struck the ground he landed on his face. When Duncan reached here his beauty had been temporarily damaged. We have the hope of the fair sex with us in wishing that this damage will not prove permanent. A wagon wheel passed over his hand, injuring it but breaking no bones.

Anamosa Eureka, May 18, 1916

Mrs. Jessie Wasson McBride and son, from Canada, are visiting Mrs. McBride's father, Jos. Wasson, and her brother, Duncan.

Monticello Express, January 27, 1916

Mrs. Jessie McBride and son, Hobart, returned to their home in Canada, last week, after an extended visit with the former's father and brother, Joseph Wasson and Duncan.

Monticello Express, October 26, 1916

Plays and Players

The Three-Quarters Club minstrels occur Tuesday evening, January 2. This will be a novel and down-to-the-minute show, introducing songs, jokes and novelties along the line of traveling minstrels. Seats will be on sale at Bean's drug store tomorrow, and there will be a big free street parade at 7 '30 the night of the show.

The cast includes 35 artists who will entertain with blackface comedy. Mr. Earl Boyer will be interlocutor. The cast and program follow

Cast.

End men—Chas. Tyler, Will Fisher, Dean Lawrence, Don Comstock, Clyde Barker, Jack Edwards, C. A. Craig, and Harry Platt.

Chorus—Fred Althen, L. Berry, Earl Fife, Ray Faragher, E. Fisher, Ben Harrison, Ralph Harrison, Al. Koglin, Ray Mills, Chester Miller, John Johannson, Fay Merrill, Armour Gould, Howard Green, Hubert Metcalf, Fay Shanklin, Jas. Hassell, F. L. Webster, N. Scherlinger, A. C. Robinson, F. E. Carrier, Doc Finnegan, J. A. Corwin, John Foardo, Duncan Wasson, Ernie McDaniel, George Zeuch, Roy Joslin.

Anamosa Eureka, December 28, 1916



Ed Beck, Ed Conley, Roy Beck and Duncan Wasson (right)

Duncan Fathers a Daughter

At some point in the summer of 1915, now-30-year-old Duncan impregnated Minnie June Wilker, the 21-year-old daughter of Wyoming, Iowa hardware store owner William Wilker and his wife Minnie. Duncan and June's daughter, Mary Ann, was born in Kansas City, Missouri on April 3, 1916.

However, Duncan and June never married. Mary Ann was adopted and raised by June's parents as their fifth child. There was no known contact between Duncan and the Wilkers at this point, and Mary Ann was never acknowledged in the Wasson household. Duncan's sons with his wife Esther did not find out about Mary Ann's existence until the 1980s.

- For more about Mary Ann Wilker, see [Mary Ann Wilker \(1916-2020\)](#).

Life in Cedar Rapids

In August 1916, Joe Wasson married Edna Orr Hanna, a widow with three children. They initially moved to Anamosa. In early 1918, Joe bought Duncan's properties in Onslow including the house Jeannette had given him. Duncan moved in with Joe and his new family in Anamosa while they prepared the house to serve as their home.

By 1918, Duncan was working as a railroad brakeman for the Cedar Rapids & Iowa City Railway. At some point after Joe, Edna and her children moved back to Onslow in June 1918, Duncan moved to Cedar Rapids. He was living in Cedar Rapids by early 1919.



Duncan Wasson (back row holding the flag) and the “Jones County Boys”, at the end of the Great War (World War I), November 11, 1918; on November 12, Duncan was appointed assistant leader and special police officer for a group of local Jones County men who were en route to Mobilization Camp at Camp Dodge at Johnston, Iowa near Des Moines.

Duncan’s sister Jessie had married William McBride in 1903, and lived with him in Canada until they separated and then divorced in 1919. She then moved to Cedar Rapids.

In 1919, Jessie and Harbison Orr decided to get married. Because a year had not passed since her divorce, Jessie had to petition the court to allow her to marry again so soon. Once the court granted her petition, Harb and Jessie were married on July 24, 1919 in Anamosa, Iowa.

The newlyweds bought a small property on 23rd (Wilson) Avenue in Cedar Rapids, and moved there once their new home was ready. Duncan moved in with his sister and brother-in-law. By the 1920 U.S. Census, Duncan was working in auto sales or service (the occupation is partially illegible) while still living with the Orrs.

Duncan J. Wasson to Joseph Wasson Warr Deed Lots 1, 2, 3, 16, 17, 18 & 19 Block 11 Also Lots 13, 14 15, 16, 17, & 18, Block 10 Onslow \$1,000.

Olin Record OR, February 21, 1918

Onslow, Iowa, Feb. 19th. 1918
Duncan Wasson of Anamosa spent a few days in town last week.

Wyoming Journal, February 21, 1918

Duncan Wasson of Cedar Rapids is visiting his father and sister, Mrs. H. Orr, at this place.

Wyoming Journal, August 21, 1919

ONSLow.

July 5, 1920.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hansen, Jr., of Idaho, spent several days last week in the M. M. Franks home.

Mr. and Mrs. John Paul and their little son and daughter of Moran, Kansas, visited friends in Onslow and Baldwin recently. They were taking a motor camping trip.

Mr. and Mrs. Will Dennison have gone to Ochevedan where they will make their home.

Duncan Wasson of Cedar Rapids, was at his father's home a few days recently.

The barn dance at Roy Overley's

Anamosa Eureka, July 8, 1920

In September 1920, Duncan found himself in legal trouble when he was accused of the crime of seduction. Seduction as a crime involved consensual sex where the consent was given based on false claims or promises, such as a man promising to marry a woman in order to get her to agree to have sex with him without actually planning to follow through on that promise. The case was presented to a grand jury, but I found no further mentions of this case in the news, suggesting that the grand jury did not recommend charges.

GRAND JURY ON JOB; MANY CASES SCHEDULED

All members of the grand jury were present at opening of court. The seven impanelled were C. W. Biggs, Marion; J. P. Callam, Bertram; F. J. Dvorak, Cedar Rapids; Clem Falcon, Mt. Vernon; George Gilchrist, Walker; J. A. Kriz, Cedar Rapids; C. O. Plumly, Waubek.

Judge John T. Moffit gave them their instructions. F. J. Dvorak of Cedar Rapids was made foreman of the jury. There is a large amount of criminal work to come up. Some of the cases to be examined are: Isaac Anderson charged with lewdness; John J. Kohout, operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated; Jack Neville, threatening to commit a public offense; Earnest O'Deen, desertion; Walter F. Shadle, criminal assault; Tom Merritt, threatening to commit a public offense; Cenek Sysel, operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated; Clifford Oliphant, criminal assault; Lewis Grim, seduction; Ida Silverstein, burning to injure insurance; Joseph James, Negro, intent to commit murder; George Nicholson and Gladys Wormer, adultery; H. C. Beeson, conspiracy; Duncan Wasson, seduction; Frank Midkiff, desertion; William Jones and Edward Corum, assault with intent to murder; Clara Watkins Goodhue, larceny; C. P. Kauffman, embezzlement; Louis Pazdernik, operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated; Charles Carter, Negro bootlegging; Cenek Sysil and Mike Mason, liquor nuisance.

Cedar Rapids Gazette, September 14, 1920

Duncan Wasson is paying a visit at the home of his father and doing some work on the farm.
Mrs. W. E. Smith returned home

Anamosa Eureka, September 16, 1920

ONSLow.

Little Ralph McMaster has been very ill with pneumonia during last week.

St. Valentine day received due attention in Onslow. The little folks in Miss McCune's school room had an exchange box and the Presbyterian young people held a valentine social in the church basement.

Mrs. Charles Rowe was in Monticello, Monday, attending the funeral of Mr. Rynerson.

New babies have arrived at the homes of Minor Bulloc and Tom Starry.

Duncan Wasson was at his father's home several days last week. He has been spending some months in California.

The Bonny Brook company will give

Anamosa, Eureka, February 17, 1921

Marriage

The 1920 U.S. Census record that showed the Harbison Orr household (starting on line 14) also showed on the same page the F.H. Gensicke household (starting on line 40) where Esther Gensicke was living. The Orr household and the Gensicke household were neighbors on the same street, living just a handful of houses from one another.

Esther, a young school teacher, met Duncan in the spring of 1921, and as she put it, "a few months of ardent courtship followed..." When Esther was attending summer school in Ames, Iowa in 1921, Duncan pursued her, and he proposed marriage with a large diamond ring. Esther agreed.

Female teachers weren't allowed to get married in those days, so Duncan and Esther eloped to Galena, Illinois, where they were married in the parsonage at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church on October 6, 1921, but they kept their marriage secret until the following spring.



St. Matthews Lutheran Church and Parsonage, Galena, Illinois, where Duncan and Esther were married

Duncan J. Wasson, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.	Miss Esther Gensicke Cedar Rapids, Iowa.	October 6 1921	B. B. Billings 3 Melie Pagels	7 365
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Duncan and Esther's marriage was recorded in the logs of the St. Matthews Lutheran Church in Galena, Illinois. Note that both listed Cedar Rapids as their place of residence.

- For more about how Duncan and Esther met, see [When Duncan Met Esther](#).
- For more about Esther, see [My Story by Esther Gensicke Wasson](#).

The lease for the last tenant on Duncan's farm near Onslow was up in early 1922. Duncan and Esther moved onto the farm on March 20, 1922, and raised their family there. They sold the farm and retired to Cedar Rapids in 1958.



Esther Gensicke Wasson in her wedding photo, 1921

Duncan Wasson returned from Cedar Rapids, Monday, with his wife. He was married October 6th to Miss Esther Gensicke of Cedar Rapids. They will reside on the groom's farm one mile east of town. They have the good wishes of all.

Wyoming Journal, March 23, 1922

Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Wasson, who were recently married in Galena, Ill., arrived in town Monday morning and after a stay of a few hours at the ~~Joseph or Mrs. Wasson's~~ home left for their home that will see the clouds of gloom re-

Anamosa Eureka, March 23, 1922



Duncan and Esther lived on this farm east of Onslow, Jones County, Iowa, from 1922 to 1958.

Prepared by Mark David Wasson
Last updated November 1, 2024