



## The Missing Wasson Iowa Farm(s)?

*Census reports and plat maps show that John and Jemima Wasson rented a farm in Monmouth Township, Jackson County, and then in Clay Township, Jones County before buying their Madison Township, Jones County farm. I suspect that there may have been at least one more farm.*

Because we rely on census reports and plat maps to identify the places where John and Jemima Wasson lived in Iowa, we're limited to just a couple snapshots of where they lived between their arrival in Canton, Iowa in 1854 and their buying their own farm Madison Township in 1864:

- The 1856 Iowa Census puts them on a farm in Monmouth Township, Jackson County.
- The 1860 U.S. Census puts them on a farm in Clay Township, Jones County.

We also know that when their son Joseph was born in September 1857, they still lived in Jackson County.

What we don't know is whether they were still living on the Monmouth Township farm when Joe was born, or whether they moved directly from the Monmouth Township farm to the Clay Township farm. I have not yet found any new information that might clarify either of those.

However, a couple family events raise questions about the period between 1860 and 1864.

First, there is the birth, death and burial of their son, George L. Wasson. George was born in November 1861 and died in July 1863. Because he was born between census years, and there are no birth or baptism records currently available for him, about all we know about George is from his grave marker, which tells us when he died and how long he lived, and where he was buried – Wyoming Cemetery towards the southeast corner of Madison Township. His was the first burial in the Wasson family plot.

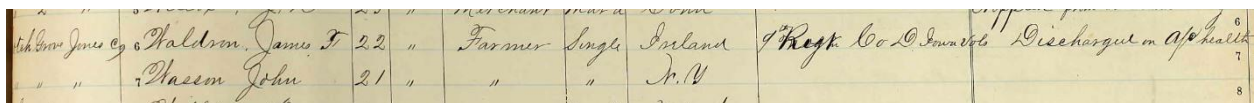
The question here is why Wyoming Cemetery? If the Wassons were still living on the Clay Township farm, Clay Cemetery could have been a reasonable option. As would Mineral Creek Pioneer Cemetery or South Mineral Cemetery, both located near that farm. Because the 1860 U.S. Census suggested that their Clay Township farm was within the scope of the Johnson Post Office, Johnson Town Pioneer Cemetery could also have been a reasonable option, especially as it was much closer to the Clay Township farm than Clay Cemetery. The family also belonged to the Scotch Grove Presbyterian Church. Scotch Grove Cemetery is adjacent to that church. But George wasn't buried at any of these five cemeteries. Instead, he was buried in a cemetery some distance to the south in Madison Township.

Some sources suggest that John and Jemima Wasson bought their Madison Township farm in 1863, and the selection of George's burial site would support that. However, two different obituaries for John Wasson, Sr., and the news account several years later of Jemima Wasson's death all have them moving onto the farm in 1864.

It is possible that after living on a farm in Clay Township in 1860, they rented or bought an unknown Madison Township farm where they lived through 1863 before buying the Madison Township farm that we know as the John Wasson Farm in 1864.

So far, I have turned up only one useful document from this period, and it suggests that they may not have been living in Clay Township in 1863. John and Jemima Wasson's son John, Jr. turned 21 in 1863, and he registered for the draft for the ongoing Civil War. Draft registrations were documented in June and July of 1863, about the same time that George died. When he registered, John, Jr. reported his residence as "Scotch Grove".

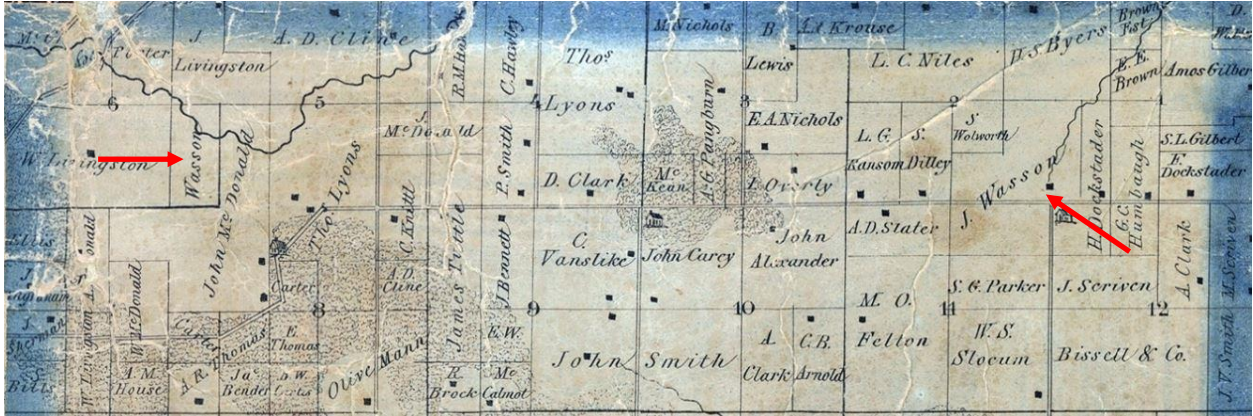
Although there was a Scotch Grove post office at this time, the village of Scotch Grove itself was not laid out until 1872. Some others who registered did specify "Scotch Grove Township".



*John Wasson, Jr.'s 1863 draft registration shows Scotch Grove as his address.*

At 21, John, Jr. was old enough to be living as a hired hand on someone else's farm, perhaps one near the Scotch Grove post office. But he would also have been useful at home on the farm because John and Jemima's second oldest son, William, was just 13 years old that summer. U.S. Census records for both 1860 and 1870 show that John, Jr. was living at home with his parents those years.

I'll also note that the 1867 plat map shows a farm in the northwest corner of Madison Township in section 6 owned by an unspecified Wasson. Plat maps are often 1-2 years out-of-date by the time they are published.



1867 plat map of the northern sections of Madison Township. The John Wasson Farm is in sections 1, 2 and 11. Who owned the Wasson farm in section 6?



The "Wasson" farm in section 6, Madison Township

The section 6 farm was fairly close to the Scotch Grove post office, but it was also fairly close to the village of Madison (Center Junction did not exist at the time). A check of 1860 U.S. Census records suggested that farms in that corner of Madison Township were within the scope of the Madison post office. Would someone living there reasonably reply “Scotch Grove” if asked for their address?

And because a family living there is living in Madison Township, if one of their children died, it could be reasonable to bury their child in a Madison Township cemetery, such as Wyoming Cemetery.

The same 1860 U.S. Census records showed that living near John Livingston and John McDonald in section 6 of the northwest corner of Madison Township was Matthias Watson, his wife and their four children. Was “Wasson” on the 1867 plat map supposed to be “Watson”? I’ll note that when Matthias Watson registered for the draft, he also specified “Scotch Grove” as his residence. “Wasson” was misspelled as “Warson” on that year’s Scotch Grove Township plat map for Charlotte Wasson’s farm, so misspellings of names do occur on the plat maps.

George’s burial in Wyoming Cemetery and the 1867 plat map raises some questions that remain unanswered.

- Did John and Jemima Wasson rent or own a farm in Madison or Wyoming Township when George died? There are at least five more logical cemetery choices for burying George if they were still living in Clay Township.
- Did John and Jemima really buy their Madison Township farm in 1863 instead of 1864? All the obituaries and coverage of their deaths would have to be wrong if that were true.
- Why did John, Jr. specify that he lived at Scotch Grove in his 1863 draft registration?
- Did John and Jemima or perhaps John, Jr. own the “Wasson” farm shown in section 6 of Madison Township on the 1867 plat map?
- Did Matthias Watson own the section 6 farm with “Wasson” on the plat map?
- Did Charlotte Wasson own the section 6 farm? It is possible that the section 6 farm may have belonged to William S. and Charlotte Wasson (no relation to us) of Scotch Grove. William died in 1861, but Charlotte lived until 1873, so it is possible that she would have still owned it after her husband died. The 1867 plat map for Scotch Grove Township showed that she owned a farm in that township near the Scotch Grove post office, with the owner’s name spelled “C. Warson” on the plat map.

Prepared by Mark David Wasson  
Last updated October 31, 2021