

## **Johnson, William Ransom** <sup>[1]</sup>

# **Johnson, William Ransom**

by [William S. Powell](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, 1988

**1782–18 Feb. 1849**



William Ransom Johnson. Image courtesy of the National Museum of

Racing, Hall of Fame. <sup>[3]</sup>William Ransom Johnson, legislator and horseman, was born in [Warren County](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, the son of Marmaduke and Elizabeth Ransom Johnson. He probably attended Warrenton Academy, of which his father was a trustee. Johnson represented Warren County in the [General Assembly](#) <sup>[5]</sup> from 1807 to 1814. Between 1803 and 1813 he raced the noted horses, [Sir Archie](#) <sup>[6]</sup> and Pacolet, winning \$30,000. Soon afterwards he moved to Virginia and began raising racehorses at Oakland. He was a member of the Virginia House of Delegates for Petersburg from 1818 to 1820 and from Chesterfield County in 1821–22. He was reelected to the house but resigned to serve in the senate from 1823 to 1826. He again held a seat in the house during the periods 1826–30 and 1833–37. By common consent he was the manager for the South in the South-North Races held in Washington, D.C., in 1823. From then until 1834 he managed nearly thirty other races of which the South won seventeen. For a generation Johnson was regarded as the leading American turfman, and he came to be known as "Napoleon of the Turf."

Johnson's wife, whom he married in 1803, was Mary Evans. He died in Mobile, Ala., and was buried at his Oakland plantation.

### **References:**

John L. Cheney, Jr., ed., *North Carolina Government, 1585–1979* (1981).

Charles L. Coon, *North Carolina Schools and Academies* <sup>[7]</sup>, 1790–1840 (1915).

Henry T. Shanks, ed., *The Papers of Willie Person Mangum*, vol. 3 <sup>[8]</sup> (1953).

*Who Was Who in America*, Historical Volume (1967).

### **Additional Resources:**

William Ransom Johnson. Image courtesy of the National Museum of Racing, Hall of Fame. Available from <http://www.racingmuseum.org/hall-of-fame/horse-trainers-view.asp?varID=28> <sup>[3]</sup> (accessed June 21, 2013).

"Sir Archie." N.C. Highway Historical Marker E-83, N.C. Office of Archives & History. <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=Markers&k=Markers&sv=E-83> <sup>[9]</sup> (accessed June 21, 2013).

A Guide to the William Ransom Johnson Papers. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library: <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=uva-sc/viu00773.xml> <sup>[10]</sup> (accessed June 21, 2013).

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### **Subjects:**

[Biographies](#) <sup>[11]</sup>

Public officials <sup>[12]</sup>

**Authors:**

Powell, William S. <sup>[13]</sup>

**Origin - location:**

Warren County <sup>[14]</sup>

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