

Appendix D. Biographical information for Emily Pauline Johnson (1861–1913)

Emily Pauline Johnson was the youngest daughter of George Henry Martin Johnson and Emily Howells. Emily Howells was born in 1824 in Bristol, England and lived there until she moved with her family to the United States in 1832. Her home life was an unhappy one and when her married sister, Eliza Elliott, offered her a home with her family in Canada, twenty-one year old Emily accepted. Eliza's husband, Adam Elliott, was a missionary to the Grand River Indians. He hired George H.M. Johnson to be his interpreter and invited him to live with the Elliott family. George was the son of Helen Martin and John "Smoke" Johnson, who fought along with Joseph Brant in the War of 1812. For his war service, the British government requested that the Grand Council at Six Nations of the Grand River appoint John Johnson a Pine Tree Chief. He served as the Speaker of the Council for over forty years and "the poetry and music of his language in debate" earned him the nickname the Mohawk Warbler (Keller 1981:28). Confederacy Chief Titles are appointed by Clan Mothers to male members of their families. In that capacity, Helen Martin, selected and then fought for George H.M. Johnson's appointment to the Council upon the death of his uncle, Chief Henry Martin (Hale 1885:136).²⁵

During their time together at the Tuscarora parsonage, George courted Emily and eventually the two decided to marry. The marriage between George Johnson and Emily Howells was controversial as both families opposed the interracial union (Johnson 1913:39–41, 50). Irrespective of their families' criticisms and the potential social consequences of their decision, the couple married on August 27, 1853 and within a few short years settled into the new Victorian mansion, Chiefswood, George had built for his bride on the banks of the Grand River. Pauline Johnson's (1913) biographical account of her mother's life, called simply *My Mother*, depicts the marriage as a happy one and over time, their estranged relatives reconciled with the young Johnson family. Emily's and George's thirty-year union produced four children: Henry Beverly Johnson (1855–1894), Eliza (Evelyn or Eva) Helen Charlotte Johnson (1856–1937), Allen Wawanosh Johnson (1858–1923) and Emily Pauline Johnson (1861–1913).

During what has often been referred to as "The Chiefswood Days," the family enjoyed a life of privilege and prestige (Nicks 2009). According to Hartley (1980:17), Chiefswood was a draw for important visitors of the day and Pauline Johnson's life was

²⁵ Helen Martin's selection of her son to a Confederacy Chief title was initially met with approval. However George H.M. Johnson's appointment by Col. Gilkison to the position of Government Interpreter led to opposition by the other chiefs who were concerned that a dual role would present a conflict of interest and they opted to remove him (Hale 1885:137). Strong-Boag and Gerson (2000:48) interpreted (based on comments made Eva Johnson) that the Grand Council chiefs, particularly those traditionalists who were concerned about the "growing power of this Mohawk family with its strong identification with imperial interests," objected to having a father and son on the Council at the same time. In response, Clan Mother Helen Martin, threatened to not appoint an alternative successor, effectively reducing Mohawk representatives from nine to eight. The Council reversed its decision and Johnson was allowed to keep his positions as both Government Interpreter and condoled Confederacy Chief with the concession that he was not allowed to vote while he held his government position (Strong-Boag and Gerson 2000:48).