

Farmingdale Head Paid Two Salaries

**Johnson Got \$5,000 a Year
From State and \$2,250
From Government**

**Personal Expenses Also Added to
Account—Has Had an Inter-
esting Career**

By Harold A. Littledale

Mismanagement of the New York State Institute of Applied Agriculture at Farmingdale, L. I., must be laid at the doors of its director, A. A. Johnson. Responsibility also rests with the board of trustees, but their acts will be dealt with in a subsequent article. To-day, Johnson!

Entirely a self-made man, Johnson's rise is a striking chapter in the history of Farmingdale. Indeed, it is more than that, because Johnson fashioned Farmingdale and inflated it and left it what it is to-day. So that his connection is more than a chapter; it is the whole book.

Born forty-two years ago in Dane County, Wis., Albert A. Johnson, upon the death of his father, moved as a boy to Day County, S. Dak. Out there the opportunities for education were so limited that schooling did not greatly enter into his life until the age of fifteen, when during the winters he lived with an uncle at Elbow Lake, Minn., and attended school there, returning in the summer to his prairie home in South Dakota. This continued for two years when, after the declaration of war with Spain, he joined the army, eventually being sent to the Philippines. Upon his return and discharge he went to the South Dakota State Agricultural School at Brookings, and he was on his way there last week when the charges made by the *Evening Post* prompted his recall by telegraph.

Was an Athlete

With something of a reputation as an athlete Johnson went from Brookings to the College of Agriculture of the University of Wisconsin. He was on both the football and track teams and was graduated in 1907 at the age of twenty-seven. He then joined the faculty of the North Georgia Agricultural College and a year later accepted the principalship of the County School of Agriculture and Domestic Economy at Marinette, Wis. Another year and he was organizing the County School at Wauwatosa, Wis. He had married Miss Anna E. Glenn, daughter of the president of the Georgia school, to which he had first gone, when in 1912 he received an offer to organize the Farmingdale project.

At that time Farmingdale was only a project. The law had been passed in 1912, and that same year negotiations had been opened with Johnson to become supervising director. He was still head of the Wauwatosa school and receiving a salary, when on December 12 the trustees of the Farmingdale project wrote to him informing him that by unanimous vote he had been appointed supervising director at a salary of \$2,500, to be paid from January, 1913, to March 1, 1914, "with the understanding," the letter read, "that you shall make five trips to New York." He was to continue at Wauwatosa, and he remained there until January 1, 1914, when he came to Farmingdale. That seems to have been the beginning of the two-salary idea.

Salary matters did not run smoothly, however, even before Johnson came to Farmingdale. The trustees found

that they could not pay as agreed. They could not pay Johnson out of moneys appropriated by the State previous to May 25, 1913. They therefore offered him \$300 a month for nine months beginning June 1, 1913. That was the first of Johnson's money difficulties. Later he was engaged as director at \$5,000, but that, too, came in for a cut and for some time Johnson had to take the lower salary until the \$5,000 rate was restored. He did not sit idly by, however. He decided to sue the State for the unpaid moneys. He induced Assemblyman Thomas A. McWhinney to introduce a bill permitting him to sue. That bill passed the Legislature, but the Governor vetoed it in 1921—and Johnson lost.

New Source of Income

But Johnson found other means of increasing his salary. The school had been opened in 1915 and his salary had been restored to \$5,000 when the Federal Government asked the Institute to train disabled soldiers. A contract was entered into in which the Federal Government agreed to pay \$25 a month for each man in face of the fact that residents of the State get tuition free and non-residents pay only \$150 a year.

Had the moneys received from the Federal Government been turned into the State Treasury in the way other State agricultural schools turn them in, Johnson would not have been able to pay himself a second salary. But he obtained from the Attorney General an opinion that these moneys under certain conditions would not have to be reported. Thereafter, the payrolls show he paid himself another salary of \$2,250 in addition to the salary of \$5,000 from the State, and this second salary came from the funds paid by the Federal Government for the special tuition of disabled soldiers.

Johnson's salary was now \$7,250 a year. He had been paid nothing like that out in Wisconsin. But, in addition to this \$7,500, he received advantages that practically made a \$10,000 job out of a \$5,000 job. He still has those advantages. He is housed by the State, he is fed by the State, he gets fuel from the State, light from the State, expenses from the State, his private automobile is kept up at the expense of the State, and in addition to all that he places his personal servants on the payroll as "laborers".

Proof that Johnson's private automobile is kept up at the expense of the State is to be found in the records. The vouchers show it. Under date of June 30, 1920, he was paid \$172.41 for this purpose; on October 30, 1920, \$437.76; on June 30, 1921, \$241.78. Johnson admits those payments. He explains them by saying that his car is used for State purposes, just as he explained that his servants did so much work for State officials that they are a proper charge against the State! He explains his telephone bills in the same way. He says they are for tolls in connection with the institute, and so each month he submits the bill and the trustees order it paid.

State Pays Many Salaries

Not only has Johnson placed himself on a second pay roll at the expense of the Federal Government, but his private stenographer, Mrs. Myrtle Hinman, is on that pay roll; the institute bookkeeper, M. B. Dugan, is on that pay roll as well as being on the State pay roll, and Miss Grace Tabor is also on that pay roll. None of these persons do anything for the disabled soldiers. Miss Tabor's job is that of publicity agent and she gets out the institute magazine—also with funds paid for the disabled men.

With these increases in salary Johnson's ambitions grew also. He had had the name Agricultural School changed to Institute of Applied Agriculture, which sounded better. He was determined now to have a college and to be president of it. Accordingly, there was introduced at the last session of the Legislature a bill that would permit Farmingdale to give degrees, and it changed Johnson's title from "director" to "president." At the same time there was a plan on foot in the board of trustees to increase Johnson's salary from \$5,000 to \$6,500—and in addition to that, of course, there was the second salary of \$2,250 taken from the Federal funds. All this might have happened had not the State De-

partment of Education run across the bill. That department knew what Farmingdale was doing, because it supervised its courses of instruction. It knew the work was not of college grade—and it killed the bill.

Built to accommodate 1,000 students, Farmingdale, offering free tuition, has less than 200 students six years after its opening, and one-third of those are the disabled soldiers paid for by the Federal Government. Not only has it fewer than 200 students, but last year it turned in only \$31 in tuition fees to the State, as against \$6,272 turned in by the smaller State Agricultural School at Cobleskill. Furthermore, the moneys received by the State for farm produce were \$6,483 from Cobleskill in 1921, as against \$361 from Farmingdale.

Tireless as a worker, Johnson nevertheless has failed.

(Another article on Farmingdale will be published to-morrow.)