



## FOUNDING FEMALES Female Qualifying Ancestor Index

**Female Ancestor Number : 221**

**Name:** Johnson, Susannah (Willard)

**Dates:** (20 Feb 1729/30 - 27 Nov 1810)

**Colonial Society:** NH

**Date added to ROA:** March 29, 2025

**Service:** Shop Owner, Author of Captivity Narrative.

**Authority:** Blaine, Marcia Schmidt. "Ordinary Women: Government and Custom in the Lives of New Hampshire Women, 1690-1770", 28-44, ([scholars.unh.edu/dissertation/2062/](http://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation/2062/)); Susannah Johnson, A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson Together with A Narrative of James Johnson. Windsor, VT: 1796. Reprint, Bowie, Md: Heritage Books, Inc., 1990.

### **Biography:**

Susannah Willard was born to Moses and Susanna (Hastings) Willard in Lunenburg, MA. The family moved to Charlestown, NH, around 1742, where there was an established fort, a mill, and not much else. On June 15, 1747, she married James Johnson, who had been a captive of the British as a boy.

On Aug. 30, 1754, Susannah (then 9 months pregnant), her husband James, children: Sylvanus, Susanna and Polly, a younger sister, and two men were captured by Abenaki Indians. Susannah gave birth to her daughter Elizabeth Captive Johnson the following day while on the trail. The captured party was moved on to Saint-Francois-du-Lac. Here the Johnson family was separated. Young son Sylvanus was adopted by a Abenaki family. James, Susanna and Polly were sent to Montreal to be ransomed where they were received by the city's high society at first. Susannah and Captive were first adopted by the Gill family, then ransomed to Rene de Couagne. James was allowed to leave Montreal in order to raise funds to pay de Couagne to free his family. In July 1755 he returned empty handed and was imprisoned along with the whole family, except for Susanna, who were sent to Quebec City to be imprisoned.

After more than two years in prison the Johnsons, except for James, were released from prison in a prisoner exchange and sent to England. They eventually made their way back to the New England colonies and were reunited with James who had finally been released from prison.

James died in July 1758 while fighting in the Battle of Ticonderoga.

Susannah eventually made her way back to New Hampshire and opened a shop in Charlestown with a brother to help support her family. During these years she made many arduous journeys to Portsmouth, Boston, and Springfield in the process of settling her husband's estate. She was able to track down her son Sylvanus who had been raised by the Abenaki family who adopted him. In 1759 she brought him home.



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He spoke no English at that time. Susanna, the eldest daughter, was reunited with the Johnson family in 1760 after living with a Canadian Catholic family in Montreal. When she returned she spoke no English, only French.

Susannah successfully petitioned the New Hampshire Assembly for funds to "indemnify my family for losses sustained by our country's enemies."

In 1762 Susannah married John Hastings Jr., another early settler of Charlestown. They had seven children together, but only one lived to marry and have children.

Towards the end of her life Susannah wrote an account of all her experiences, including the family's captivity. *A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson Containing An Account of Her Sufferings During Four Years, with the Indians and French* was published in 1796.

Susannah died November 27, 1810. She left behind thirty-nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.