



On Friday, September 14, 2007 the Historical Society of Dayton Valley celebrated the life of Mervin C. Johnson and his pioneering Dayton family.

Mr. Johnson was born in Dayton in 1895, served in World War I, and died in a California veteran's hospital in 1931. His cause of death was lingering effects of that war—possibly from exposure to poison gas or from contracting the Spanish flu in the worldwide pandemic. He was laid to rest in Mountain View Cemetery in Reno, the town of his former residence.

In 2004 a headstone for Mr. Johnson was found in a Sparks, Nevada, street excavation. The headstone was turned over to the Sparks police department, who held it for a possible report of vandalism. After two years the police took it to the Sparks Museum, where Dick Dreiling, a volunteer at the museum, took charge of finding its origins.

Soon he learned that Mr. Johnson had a headstone on his grave, so he then worked to track down the family of Mr. Johnson. (It is likely that the "extra" headstone was discarded after being replaced by one showing Mr. Johnson's World War I military service.) Tracing Mr. Johnson's life and learning that he was born in Dayton, he contacted the Historical Society of Dayton Valley. Together they sought newspaper publicity, which successfully led to finding Don McDermott, Mr. Johnson's great nephew, who lives in Carson City.

Working with other family members and the Historical Society, Mr. McDermott arranged to place the headstone, along with a plaque explaining its origin, in the historic Dayton Cemetery at the foot of the graves of his father and older sister. His father, Manly Johnson, is well known in Dayton history—famous for successfully standing up to Comstock "Silver King" and later railroad baron Jim Fair.

On September 14, 2007, members of the extended Johnson family and the Historical Society of Dayton Valley dedicating the placement of this headstone with a ceremony attended by numerous members of the Johnson family—some of whom came in from out-of-state—three Lyon County Commissioners, members of the Historical Society and the northern Nevada community, and an honor guard from the Dayton Valley Post of the Veteran's of Foreign Wars. After the ceremony the Historical Society hosted a reception at the Dayton Museum.

