William Parkin – Early Johnstown Pioneer

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William Parkin immigrated to America in 1881 from England at age 17, travelling on the City of Berlin ship with family friends – the Sansoms. Among them were Mary (13) and her brother John (5). William's family members followed a few years later and settled in Erie.

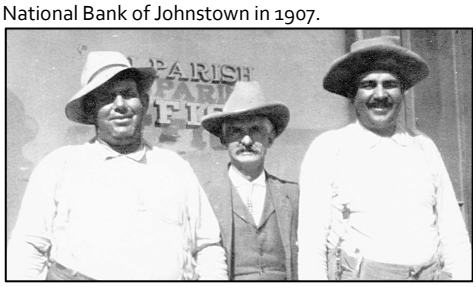
Despite the age difference of about 12 years, William and John became lifelong friends. They became brothers-in-law when William married Mary Sansom on November 30, 1883. Ten years later, William homesteaded 160 acres north of Platteville. He sold the north 80 acres of this land to Samuel Sansom, his father-in-law, and the families each farmed their land and were part of the Platteville community.

Harvey Parish platted Johnstown in 1902, and William and John invested in its four-street footprint, sometimes as partners. In 1905, they purchased three lots on the east side of Main St and built the Eureka Building. The same year William also bought lots around the corner at 11 Rutherford Ave where he built a home, and he and Mary raised their seven children.

William, along with other early leaders including Harvey Parish and Williard Letford were responsible for diverting water from the Big Thompson River through hand-dug ditches into the Johnstown district. In 1907 William served as a Weld County Commissioner. He was one of the initial Johnstown Trustees, and he then served as the mayor from 1913-1916. He worked with Parish and Letford to establish the first bank in Johnstown, and later with its nationalization in 1907. Not long after, he worked to bring the Colorado Condensed Milk Company and a pea huller to town. William had a wide circle of friends and was well-respected in the community as a trusted businessman.

Eureka Building, 1907. William Parkin is on the left in front of his grocery store. His son Sam is on the right in front of his clothing and dry goods store.

L to R: Harvey Parish, William Parkin, Willard Letford. These men worked together to create the town's first bank in 1903, which became the First National Bank of Johnstown in 1907.



William Parkin with two laborers in front of H.J. Parish's office on what was then Main Street.

William and Mary sold their home on October 29, 1918 about the same time the Spanish Flu epidemic crept into Johnstown, and he purchased T.H. Hill's residence on what was referred to as "Capitol Hill" at 612 Charlotte St. in early December. The Parkins moved into the bigger home that month, and by New Year's Day, William was sick with the Flu. He died on January 8 from complications and pneumonia. His funeral was held in the home on January 12, 1919. He was 56 years old.

Sources: Weld County Clerk & Recorder, The Johnstown Breeze, Greeley Tribune, Longmont Call, Kim Edwards family research, Debbie Dawson in England's family research.

The Historic Parish House and Museum

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