

QUICK HISTORY

From an eighteenth-century Germantown home to a nationally significant site of resistance, preservation, and community action.

A HOUSE OF CONSCIENCE • EST. 1768



Why this place matters. The Johnson House is a rare surviving site tied to the Underground Railroad and to generations of abolitionists whose choices challenged the institution of slavery.

1768 A HOME IN GERMANTOWN

Built between 1765 and 1768 by John Johnson Sr. for John Johnson Jr. and Rachel Livezey, the stone house remained a Johnson family residence for five generations. A family tannery supported its early economy.

1805 onward A FAMILY TAKES A STAND

Samuel Johnson and Jennett Rowland Johnson carried forward Quaker antislavery commitments. Their children, including Rowland and Israel H. Johnson, became active in abolitionist societies and organized resistance to slavery.

1800s THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Enslaved Africans risked their lives to escape bondage, supported by free Black communities and networks of abolitionists. The Johnson House served as a place of refuge and assistance within that wider struggle for liberation.

1850 RESISTANCE UNDER THE FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT

The 1850 law increased dangers for people escaping slavery and for free Black communities. Members of the Johnson family participated in antislavery and vigilance networks alongside Black abolitionist leaders such as William Still.

1917–today PRESERVATION AND PUBLIC PURPOSE

The Woman's Club of Germantown acquired the house in 1917. It entered the National Register in 1972, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1997, and came under the sole ownership of Johnson House Historic Site, Inc. in 2002.

THE STORY CONTINUES

Today Johnson House connects historic interpretation with youth education, cultural programs, preservation, and the Center for Social Advocacy.

Explore the archive: johnsonhouse.org/archive/



Historical sources: National Park Service landmark nomination and Johnson House Historic Site history & archive.