

Biography of Anna Greta Anderson Johanson (Johnson)

My mother, Anna Greta Anderson Johansen (Johnson) daughter of Anders Gabrielson and Margaret Peterson, was born April 20, 1832 in the Parish of St. Per near Vadstena, Sweden. She was the second child in a family of four. Her father died when she was three years of age, so she has no recollection of her own father. Her mother married again about three years later and had four children by her second marriage. Not much is known of the activities of my mother during her childhood and girlhood. She used to tell me that she was a very robust girl; that she used to go into the grain field and help with the work on the farm and that she gathered berries in the woods near her home. Her recreation was dancing and also skating on the rivers near her home, in which art she became quite proficient.

She lived with her mother and stepfather until she became eighteen years of age when she went to live with a wealthy family in Stockholm. As I remember my mother telling me about them, they had their maids, butlers and footmen. Mother was the cook and in charge of the kitchen. She was an excellent cook, specializing in pastry and fancy dishes. When her mother (my grandmother) came to Utah she brought with her many of my mother's favorite and special recipes, together with moulds for salads and jellied meats, cookie cutters and pie cutters etc. These articles are in my possession today.

In giving me training as a child, she would often tell me about her kitchen in Sweden. How they didn't have linoleum but that the floor was scrubbed so clean one could eat off it; her kettles and pans were hung in a row and each day were polished so that they were always bright and shining. Mother was very particular about cleanliness and would not tolerate slovenliness.

Her leisure time was spent in making pin cushion lace which was one of the arts of that day. She and her mother won many prizes for their lace, both in Sweden and here in Utah. Her mother brought to Utah the pin cushions and bobbins on which the lace was made, and my sister and I were taught this art. We became quite proficient in this art also, winning a prize at the state fair, when we were ten and eleven years respectively. I well remember this for we received a shaving cup as our prize. Imagine our disappointment in getting a shaving cup for our hard work. However we presented the cup to our father for his birthday and thus the cup really served two purposes.

It was during my mother's residence in Stockholm with this wealthy family that she first heard the Mormon elders, and my recollection is that Mother remained with this family until she emigrated to Utah. Mother was of a studious nature and was a great reader of the bible. She belonged to the Lutheran Church. Just how she came in contact with the Mormon elders and heard their gospel I do not recall her telling me. I remember her saying that this wealthy family [was] Lutherans and she had to be very careful about saying anything concerning the Mormons. She and some of her friends used to meet occasionally and discuss the new religion. Mother had met and fallen in love with my father who was already a member of the Mormon Church and was called a "local missionary". He wanted mother to marry him in Sweden but she had heard of the Endowment House in Utah and did not want to be married until she could be married in that house in Zion. She consented to marry him when they arrived in Utah.

Mother was baptized Dec. 26, 1863 in Stockholm when she was 31 years of age. She immediately began to make preparations to come to Zion but as she was also desirous of bringing her younger sister with her, it was necessary that she save enough money to pay the passage for the two of them.

Two years elapsed before she had saved sufficient money and clothes. She had fitted herself and sister with plenty of clothes – in fact a trunk full, but on arriving at the steamer she was forced to leave most of it behind. She could only take just what she and her sister would actually need, and these things were put into a knapsack. Mother felt terrible about this for she had yards and yards of handmade lace on her underclothes as well as considerable embroidery work.

She left her native land (Sweden) April 25, 1865 for Hamburg, Germany, where she sailed on the vessel B.S. Kimball on May 9, 1865 for the United States. She arrived in New York June 14, 1865 having been 36 days in crossing the ocean. I have no record of what transpired from the time she landed in New York until her arrival at a camp near Nebraska City in Wyoming. My mother had told me of the incident just prior to their starting across the plains – that of cutting off her hair. Her hair was quite long, thick and curly and those in charge of emigrant trains told her it would be impossible for her to take the time to comb it each day, and that she had better cut it off. She disliked doing this, but being of an obedient nature she complied with the request. They remained about five weeks at this camp in Wyoming near Nebraska City, preparing teams and provisions for the long and strenuous journey by foot and team to Utah. Mother and her sister did not have a team and wagon but were allowed to pu[t] their few things in a wagon belonging to someone else.

The company left this camp July 28th with 400 saints, among them, Mother, her sister Amelia [Amelia Augusta Petersdotter] and mother's sweetheart (my father) and the three of them commenced their long journey on foot eleven hundred miles – enduring the hardships and trials and thrilling adventures of the wilderness, common to the emigrants in those early days. Capt. Miner G. Atwood was in charge the company. One sad and unforgettable tragedy occurred on this memorable trip, an account of which is stated in Capt. Atwood's journal as follows:

“Friday, Sept. 22, 1865 the company arose early and after having assembled for morning prayer we rolled out. The roads very rough and dusty, passing through Bluffs. We traveled ten miles and camped for dinner at Cottonwood Creek. We had just unyoked, the mules and oxen were being driven to water when about fifteen Indians came riding down amongst the cattle from the hills, hooting and yelling. Some of them had firearms and some arrows. They fired on the herders trying to stampede the cattle but the cattle all ran for the corral, the mules leading the way and the Indians did not succeed in driving one away. Seven Danish men were wounded and one sister taken away. What her fate is none of us can tell. The names of those wounded were John Swenson, Swen Neilsen, J.C. Petersen, P.O. Holmgren, Peter Christensen, Anders Erickson and Frantz C. Grundtvig. This brother's wife was captured; her name was Jensine Grundtvig. This all happened in less time than it takes to write it and though some of these brethren were wounded very badly, they soon recovered.”

My mother witnessed the Indian lasso this woman and draw her up on the saddle. To mother's knowledge the woman was never returned.

In addition to this distressing fact, much sickness prevailed in the company and many died on the way. The hardships thus encountered cannot be fully told.

Mother walked the eleven hundred miles and forded every river they came to but the Green, which was raging so at the time, she and her sister had to be carried across. Her sister Amelia [Amelia Augusta Petersdotter] was very frail and was ill during considerable of the journey. While she was nearly twenty years of age she was so slight that when she became too tired to walk further, mother

would put her on her back, Amelia's arms around her neck and her legs over her hips and Mother would thus carry her. It took one hundred days to cross the plains and on November 8, 1865 they arrived in safety at the Eighth Yard Square in Salt Lake City. Six months and fourteen days having elapsed since she left Sweden.

One month after arriving in Zion my mother and father were married December 8, 1865. Four children were born to this union, of which I was the second. They at first lived in one small room with furniture which my father made from dry goods boxes, etc. They had to be very economical – butter was \$1.00 per pound, sugar the same and eggs \$1.00 per dozen. They suffered the privations incident to that early day, but through it all they were optimistic and happy for the gospel meant so much to them. Mother did all she could to help build and maintain the home, even assisting in making adobes. My grandmother (mother's mother) and another of Mother's sisters, Charlotte, [immigrated] to Utah in 1868. Soon after arriving Mother's sister, Charlotte, married my father in polygamy, and to this union [was] born three children. She died nine years later in August 1877 and from that date Mother took the three children and cared for them as her own until they married. Mother always taught us not to say we were half-brothers and sisters, but we were all brought up as one family. Mother also took five other children into her family. These were children from two different families where the mothers had died and Mother took care of these children until their fathers married again. My father had a tailoring establishment and when business was a little slow my mother would find work to do in order to care for all of these children that had come into her family. My father died in 1890.

After my husband's death in 1901 my mother made her home with me and cared for my five children, while I was out earning the livelihood. She was greatly loved and respected by my children who have never forgotten her wise counsel and advice. Her life had been an exceedingly active one. She was an ardent Relief Society worker and also a worker in the temple. In addition to caring for my children, she found time to do over five hundred charity names for the temple. She was a very industrious woman, neat in her appearance. She abhorred safety pins being used in place of hooks and eyes. Her sewing was as neat as her cooking was good. She died in her seventy-ninth year and a few months prior to her death, made nearly all of her burial clothes, putting in seventy-five little tucks in the waist of her dress. Also prior to her death, she made all of her funeral arrangements.

She had a lovable disposition, with a smile for everyone. She made friends easily and had a host of them when she passed away. She was a strict tithe payer. In later years when she was not able to earn money she would keep an account of every cent of money given her and she would also make a note of every gift given her and of the approximate cost of said gift, and then would pay one tenth as tithing.

She passed away Dec. 16, 1910 and I realized that I had lost my best friend who had stood by me in my joys and sorrows.

Written about
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For Daughters of
Utah Pioneers of
Highland Park Camp.

(Manuscript not dated. Copy received from Patt Hotchkiss, 2003. This history was probably written by daughter Anna Johnson Nicholls).