

# Backman Ancestry



The story of the Backman, Nilsson/dotter,  
Oberg, and Petersson/dotter families in Sweden  
and their journey to America

*Written by Chris Kirkpatrick from research and pictures  
by Doris Backman Kirkpatrick*





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# Swedish Ancestry

This brief history explores the Swedish ancestry of the Backman family – Donald Leroy, Raymond Frithiof, Doris Marie, and Frederick Myron. Their parents, Fritjof Backman and Emma Mathilda Oberg, were born in the United States.

But, their grandparents, Johannes Andersson (aka John Backman), his wife Lisa Maya Nilsson (aka Mary Nelson), Aron (Johannesson) Oberg, and his wife Anna Lisa (Elisabeth) Petersdotter were all born in Sweden and immigrated to the United States.

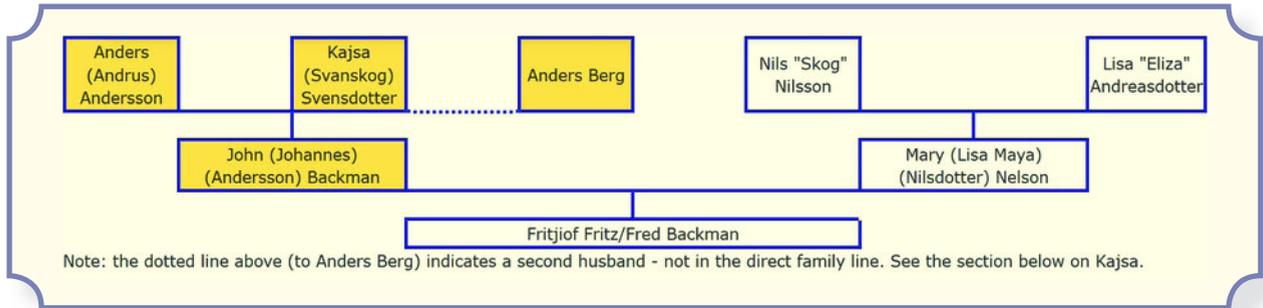
This is a look at those four lines of immigrant families: Backmans, Nilssons/dotters, Obergs, and Petersson/dotters. It is a look at where they lived in Sweden, how and when they came to the United States, and a bit about the families after they arrived.

Note that the Swedish naming tradition did not often use family names. So these “family names” are used in this book for ease of reference. In Sweden, during that time, the “last name” was formed from the father’s first name plus “son” for sons or “dotter” for daughters. Thus, Johannes Andersson would be the son of a man whose first name was Anders. Lisa Maya Nilsson would be the daughter of a man named Nils.

So, let’s begin with a look at each family in Sweden.



# John Backman's Ancestors



The last name of “Backman” was taken after John arrived in the United States. This name was adopted by John, his mother, his step-father (Anders Berg), and John’s step-siblings.

John’s ancestors were from the Sillerud Parish in Årjäng Municipality in the western part of Värmland province. The early history of this province was strongly influenced by its proximity to its western neighbor Norway. Most of John’s ancestors came from in (or near) the towns of Tenvik and Snarkil. Both of these towns appear to be close to Årjäng



John was born on 2 Apr 1852 at Snarkil, Sillerud Parish, Värmland to Anders (Andrus) Andersson and Kajsa Svensdotter. John married Mary Nelson 18 Jan 1880 in Eksjo Church, Lake Park, Eglon Township, Minnesota.



This map shows where Tenvik is in relation to Årjäng and Järnsjön (Sjurntion) which means “Iron Lake”

## Anders (Andrus) Andersson

Anders Andersson (John Backman's father) was born in Tenvik, Sillerud Parish, on September 9, 1820. The year 1852 was a fateful year for him. He married Kajsa (Svanskog) Svendsdotter on February 20th, their son John was born on April 2nd, and Anders died on December 6th!



The picture below is of Snarkil - the Andersson house in Sillerud Parish. Photo taken 6/16/1986. At that time, it was said that the house dated back over 150 years! John Backman (Johannes Andersson) may have been born in this house.



The family moved from Snarkil to Tenvik - Starkebakken - the house in Tenvik where John Backman (Johannes Andersson) lived. This photo was taken by Poppa during his 1957 trip to Sweden. Thirty years later, Doris found the site but the house had been torn down.



View from Anderson house in Tenvik.  
Picture taken by Doris in 1987.

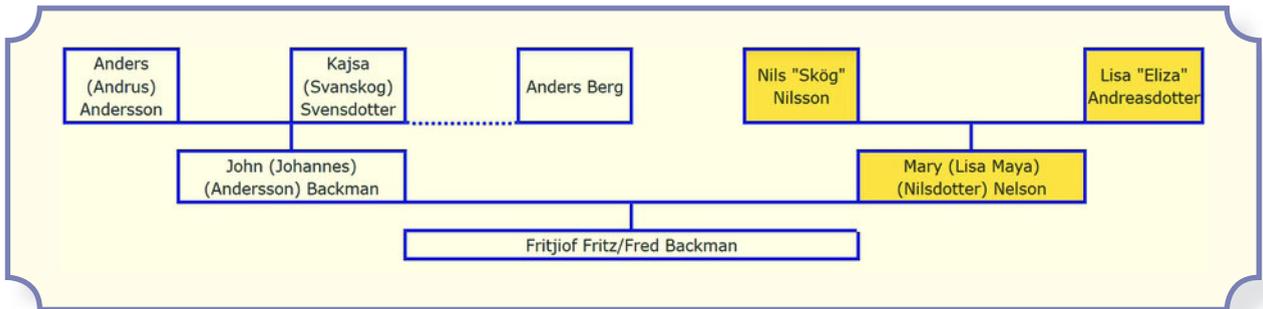
## Kajsa Svensdotter

Kajsa (John Backman's mother) was born in Sillerud Parish, near Årjäng, Sweden on December 25, 1823. The Eksjo Cemetery book gives her maiden name as Swenson (anglicized from Svensdotter)

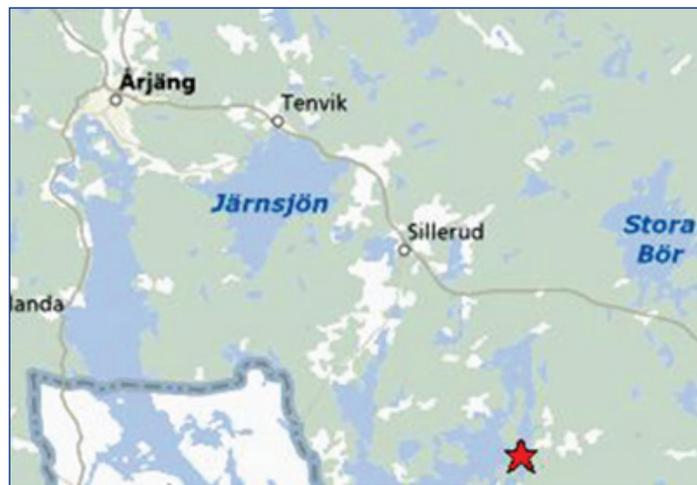
Her first husband was Anders (Andrus) Andersson. They had only one son: John (Johannes Andersson) Backman. Anders died when his son was eight months old. Kajsa's second husband was Anders Berg. Kajsa and Anders had five children (Anna, Gustav, Johanna, Maya Stina, and Sara Lisa) all of whom immigrated to the United States in 1881 - taking the name of Backman.

Kajsa's death certificate in Detroit Lakes Courthouse, Becker Co., MN gives "Exhaustion" as the cause of death.

# Mary Nelson's Ancestors



Mary and her ancestors all came from the Sillerud Parish of the Värmland province of Sweden. They lived in the small towns of Skogen and Rök. Mary was born on January, 24 1861 at Rök, Sillerud Parish.



The star shows where Rök is compared to Årjäng and Sillerud. Skogen must have been near there as well. Skogen means “forest” and so was probably applied to many sparsely inhabited, wooded areas. It was certainly along the shore of Lake Östra Silen (East Lake Silen) - the same lake that Rök is next to.

Doris received a lot of family notes from Aina Reuter of Rök, Sillerud Parish, Värmland, Sweden. Aina is a step-descendant of Nils "Skög" Nilsson. Nils's daughter, Anna Cajsa Nilsson, was the second wife of Aina's grandfather, Carl Andersson (If you followed that, you are GREAT at paying attention!). Here are some of the notes:

Nils Svensson (Skög's father): As a young man he worked on several farms such as Hogstaka and Skogen. Later (before 1822) he became the owner of a farm in Skogen. For several years about 1840 he was a member of a jury. In their old age (from 1834) his parents (Sven Bryngelsson and Maria Ersdotter) occupied the same house with him. He was married with Kajsa Svensdotter.

Sven Bryngelsson (Skög's father's father): He probably lived the greater part of his life in Skogen. There he was first a farm worker and then owner of a farm. Sometime between 1783 and 1794 (the exact time is missing) he married with Maria Ersdotter

Maria Ersdotter (Skög's father's mother): Before she was married she was a farm maid in the household of Bryngel Nilsson who became her father-in-law. She had severe gout which began about the 1830s which made her bed-ridden for 20 years.

Bryngel Nilsson (Skög's father's father's father): He had probably been a share-cropper before settling in Skogen. He was married to Ingri Svensdotter. Reason for his death is given as "Alderdom" (old age - 77 1/2 yrs)

## Nils “Skög” Nilsson

Poppa told Doris that his mother (Mary Nelson) and her family had to row 12 miles up this lake near Årjäng (oor-yang) to go to church. I (Chris) wonder about the accuracy this story because normal rowing speed is about 4 miles per hour – making it a 3 hour trip each way!



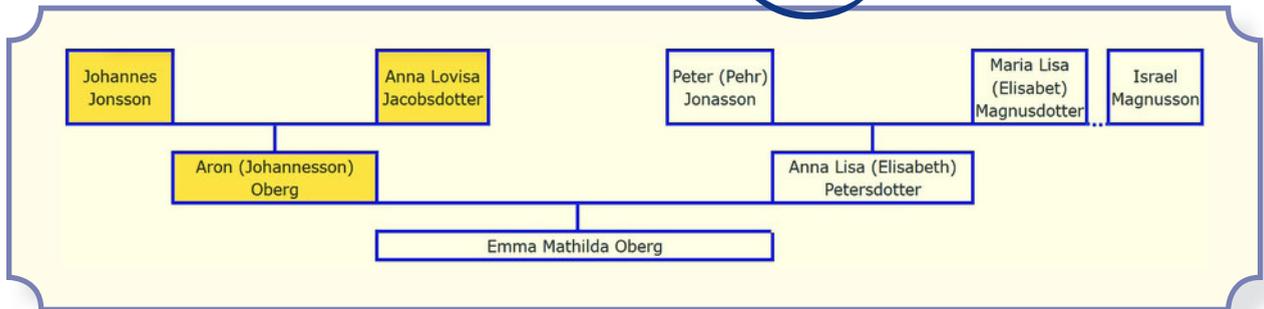
As Doris related her own visit to the area:

Beach near Gamla Kyrke - Sillerud. The Nilssons would row up East Silen Lake to this beach just below the old Sillerud Church

Pastor Dahle took us (Wayne and Doris) around to show us Sillerud Parish, he said – this is where the old church was. There was a gradual slope to the lake. He said that boats would come and be beached there. Then they would trudge up the hill to this church. In the summer time, he said, on Wednesday nights they (the current congregation) had communion there.

You can see the rocks that had been the foundation for this church. When Pastor Dahle's first wife died, he had a memorial built to her. He had a bell tower built in one corner of the old church location. So, Poppa's story was not too far off. I couldn't imagine rowing 12 miles. But, that's what it was. That's why grandma's father was named Skög, which means “woods”. That family lived at the south end of the lake, Järnsjön (Sjurntion). It means “Iron Lake”. They (the local residents) had a smelter there, at that location ever since early Iron Age time because it had a lot of deposits left by the retreating glaciers. That had been under a lot of pressure from the ice from up north. When it retreated, it left the open pit places. Iron was very easy to get to then. I don't know if you ever saw them – the eyeglasses that I had that Poppa (had gotten from his family) ... Swede and Janet took those glasses to the Nordic Museum in Seattle. It's over in Ballard.

# Aron Oberg's Ancestors



Aron was born on November 7, 1853 at Lindehult Farm, Algutsboda Parish, in the county of Kronoberg. He married Anna Lisa Petersdotter on December 11, 1877 at the Vasa Lutheran Church in Welch, Goodhue County, MN.

The area where Aron was born and raised, Kronoberg, is part of the traditional landskap (province) of Småland in southern Sweden (see map to the left). Småland consists of a rolling plateau of woods and marshland. Industries are based largely on forest products. The town of Kosta is a well-known glass-manufacturing center.



Aron's father and his ancestors all came from the area of Lindehult, Algutsboda Parish or Madesjo (near Nybro).

Aron's mother's family came from Algutsboda parish, Älgult parish, and Herrberga parish.

Johannes Jonsson (Aron's father) and his wife (Anna Lovisa Jacobsdotter) came in 1850 to Algutsboda from Madesjo Parish and settled at first on the farm Lindehult where Johannes was listed as a tenant farmer. They moved in 1856 to the farm Waccamo and in 1859 to Åby Södergård, the mill, where Johannes is listed as miller. He and his wife were still living at the mill of Åby Södergård in the last volume of

Clerical Surveys kept at Landsarkivet and relating to 1875-80;

Married on June 9, 1849 in Madesjö parish, Johannes Jonsson, farmhand and future crofter (tenant farmer) from Gransjö (he is the son of the late farmer Jonas Svensson and Cajsa Svensdotter) and Anna Lovisa Jacobsdotter, daughter of former parish shoemaker Jacob Josephsson and his deceased wife Christina Nilsson from Godeshults Backagård of Elghult (old spelling for Älghult) parish.

Jonas Svensson (Aron's father's father): according to archives in Vadstena, was a tenant farmer. The family lived on the farm Lindehult in Algutsboda Parish. He died Dec. 14, 1834 in Algutsboda Parish of "Pulmonary consumption". His first wife was Annica Carlsdotter who died about 1806. His second wife was Cajsa Svensdotter who had been a farmmaid in Gransjö

Jacob Josephsson (Aron's mother's father) was born in Herrberga Parish, died in Älghult parish. He was the parish shoemaker (cobbler). The family lived at the cottage Nymala in the grounds of the farm Godeshult Backegård in Älghult.

Sven Olsson and his wife Annica Jonsdotter were the parents of Cajsa Svensdotter (Aron's father's mother). They came from Gransjö.



Åby Södergård - the house where Aron (Johannesson) Oberg's family lived when he left for America in 1871.



*Above:*

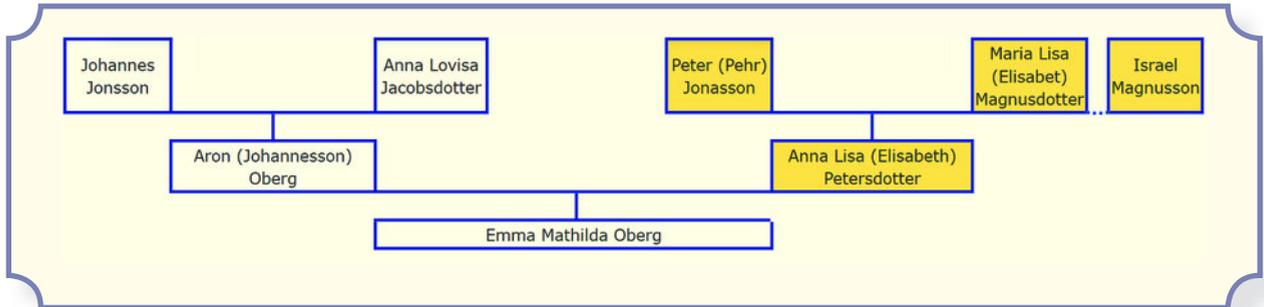
Farm Lidehult - Algutsboda Parish.  
This is the oldest house on the farm - in  
1987 it was said to be at least 200 years  
old. Johannes Jonsson was a tenant  
farmer here from 1850 to 1856.

*Right:*

Algutsboda Church - attended by the  
Johannes Jonsson family.



# Anna Lisa Petersdotter's Ancestors



Anna Lisa Petersdotter was born July 2, 1857 in Nottebäck Parish in Kronoberg county.

Her ancestors came from Sjosas Parish, Nottebäck Parish, and Grannastamma in Drev Parish. All of these are northeast of Växjö in Kronoberg.



Peter (Pehr) Jonasson (Anna's father): Vadstena archives say he was a farm owner. The family lived on the farm Skruf Sodergard in Nottebäck. He died 26 May 1858 in Noteback parish "suffered for several years from pains".

Maria Lisa (Elisabet) Magnusdotter (Anna's mother): Church records show that the family moved in 1863 from Skruf Sodergard to Vitthult Vastergard. On May 4, 1870 Israel Magnusson, wife and the children Anna Lisa, Amanda, Albin and Christina Cathrina left Nottebäck for America.

Maria Simonsdotter (Anna's father's mother): Vadstena archives state that the family lived at the time of birth of Pehr (Anna's father) at Grannastamma Torp in Drev Parish

Magnus Jonasson (Anna's mother's father) was a farmer at Skruf Sodergard in Nottebäck. Married twice: first to Lisa Andersdotter then to Lena Stina Patersdotter



Nottebäck Church - The “new” church - circa 1837. Anna Lisa (Elisabeth) Petersdotter, her parents and siblings attended this church.

# Coming to America

This section talks about the four families as they left Sweden, came to America, and settled.



# The Andersson/Berg/Backman Family comes to America

Declaration of Intention and Clerk's Certificate.

Detroit Record Print.

United States of America,

District Court,

STATE OF MINNESOTA.

ss.

COUNTY OF BECKER.

*John A. Backman* personally appeared before the subscriber, the Clerk of the District Court of the Eleventh Judicial District for said State of Minnesota, being a COURT OF RECORD, and made oath that he was born in *Sweden* on and about the year eighteen hundred and *Fifty two* that he emigrated to the United States, and landed at the port of *New York* on or about the month of *June* in the year eighteen hundred and *seventy* that it is bona fide his intention to become a Citizen of the United States, and to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatever, and particularly to the *King of Sweden & Norway* whereof he is a subject.

Subscribed and sworn to this *6<sup>th</sup>*

day of *December* A. D. 18*85*

*E. G. Holm* Clerk.

*John A. Backman*

United States of America,

STATE OF MINNESOTA,

ss.

COUNTY OF BECKER.

I, *M. J. Morrow* Clerk of the District Court of the Eleventh Judicial District for the State of Minnesota, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a copy of a Record now in my office.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Seal of the said District Court, this *28<sup>th</sup>* day of *November* 188*5*.

*M. J. Morrow* Clerk.

This is the "intent to become citizen" statement for John Backman

John arrived before his parents or siblings. He arrived at the port of New York around June of 1870, possibly traveling with two of his uncles. His Uncles, Olaf and Daniel Andersson, had children born in 1869 in Sweden and in 1871 or 1872 in Minnesota. So, they probably all come at the same time.

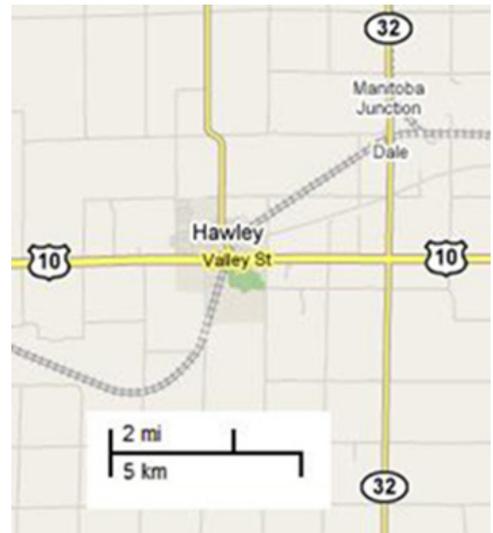
John's mother, step dad (Anders Berg), and the rest of the family came out in 1881.



First house on Backman homestead. According to Doris, at first they built this little house that later became just a storage shed. Poppa said that they slept on boards on the floor in the loft. The downstairs was two rooms – one that was Grandpa and Grandma's and any babies at that time and the other was the kitchen and eating place.



Backman farm house at Dale Minnesota



Location of Dale, MN

## John Backman

John Backman was born Johannes Andersson on 2 March 1852 (The Eksjo Cemetery book says he was born 2 April) at Snarkil, Sillerud Parish (near Årjäng) in Värmland according to the Goteborg Archives. He was the son of Anders Andersson from Tenvik (Sillerud) and Kajsa Svensdotter. Anders Andersson died 6 Dec. 1952 when Johannes was only eight months old. His mother, Kajsa Svensdotter, remarried to Anders Berg.

As Fritjof related to Doris:

My parents came from Värmland, Sweden. My father came to Upper Michigan and from there – one winter in St. Paul. And from there he worked on the NP (Northern Pacific) when they were laying railroad going west. They were as far as Brainard and, no doubt, he walked up to where some uncles lived west of Lake Park. Then he homesteaded in Eglon Township where he built the log home and the other farm buildings. And, of course, broke ground for fields and started farming. He was good at building log houses so he built log houses and barns for other people at the time.

Doris related additional information about John, his immigration and homesteading:

My dad told me that his father was only around 8 months old when his father (my great grandfather) died. Grandpa came to America with his cousins (probably uncles and cousins). My guess is that, because it was the 1870's (John came in 1870. The rest of the family that made the trip came in 1881) that they came. That was when they had all that turmoil between Sweden and Norway. The king of Sweden was being very ambitious to acquire other territory including things along the Baltic. They were having a lot of conscription. I guess it was similar to guys going to Canada recently because all young men were being conscripted. He (Doris's Grandpa John) went over to Norway. He had some relatives over there. Grandpa caught a ship to go to York in England. Went across and took another ship from Liverpool or someplace like that. My guess is that he came to either eastern Canada or to Boston.

Chris – do you know how old he would have been?

Seventeen. I heard Hulda telling one of the family that Grandpa, because he didn't have much money and I guess his step-father was on the ship (other notes say that his step-father came over in 1881), they had gotten provisions for them to take for

meals while they were on the ship. The ship seemed to be becalmed at some point west of Greenland. Grandpa, when he got off the ship, was just as skinny as a rail because he hadn't been eating. There was some concern about his health. They were supposed to bring enough for themselves and there wasn't anything else that you could beg, borrow, or steal from anybody else. So, that is what his problem was. He just didn't have enough food. There were a lot of trains that left New York City and places on the Canadian coast to bring people over to the Midwest at that time. It was the lure of open land that brought most of those people.

Chris – So, did he know anybody in Minnesota?

Yes, he was coming with these cousins (and uncles). Somehow he had ... I think it is on Poppa's tape ... that there were some people with him that had been over before and had gone back to Sweden. My dad told me that they rode to the end of the train track. It was somewhere in south central Minnesota. Above that was just snow because they arrived in the winter. He told me that, luckily, they were going by this group of little houses, slogging away in this snow and a dog barked. They decided – well, let's find out what's going on there. It turned out that it was some people that he indirectly knew. They put them up a few days until they could go on north. They were going to a specific place up by Eksjo. Somebody had gone there before and said that there was land available. That was how Grandpa came. He was with an uncle. Then, of course, he wanted to get married and have a homestead. I'm sure that there must have been some correspondence with Sweden because, even though Grandma was quite a bit younger than Grandpa, they must have known each other or their families knew each other in Sillerud Parish. That's the parish that they joined. My dad said that there was quite a settlement there after a while. People from that part of Sweden had come. Anyway, they staked out claims there in Minnesota. He must have sent for Grandma because she came with her family to Michigan. He went over there and brought her back to Eksjo. They got married there and started that number of kids. Fritjof was the only boy for a while. There were a series of girls and he had to wait until the little boys, Carl and Henry and August – that they were the little boys. He had to wait for them to get old enough to help Grandpa (the other boys were 10, 12, and 16 years younger than Fritjof).

Chris – You think that your Grandpa and Grandma or at least their families knew each other so that he basically said “I'm looking for a bride” and so is Mary old enough?



John Backman - homestead document dated July 5, 1883

Chris – so he probably bought that from the government then?

Yes. All this open land was being sold off by the government.

Chris – Looking for pioneer stock to go in there so that the Canadians wouldn't come down to take it?

I guess, and of course it was not easy breaking ground. You know, they had to have some tools and equipment. Without much money, they shared a lot of this.

Chris – So the neighbors would get together

Some were better at hunting so they bartered.

Chris – What did they raise on this farm?

Because part of it was pretty primitive, they had cows for milk and cheese and butter and, eventually, some meat. They later planted vegetables, wheat, hay, and corn. Corn was not known in Europe. It was an American thing that the Indians had had. When you look at the prices for some of these things, they practically indentured themselves for years just to pay \$12 on a seeder of some kind. I think in my things I have a promissory note that my grandfather did to buy this meadowlark brand seeder of some kind. I don't know if it was for corn or for hay. I think it was for only \$12 or \$16 and they were very afraid of prairie fires. You could insure your whole property – again for about \$12 a year.

Chris – John (Johannes) (Andersson) Backman was born in 1852, was married in 1880. He was 28 and Mary Nelson (Nilsdotter) was 19 at the time that they got married. The marriage was January 18th of 1880 and Minnie was born October 23rd of 1880.

## John and Mary's Family

Husband: **John (Johannes) (Andersson) Backman**

Born: 02 APR 1852 in Snarkil, Sillerud Parish, Värmland, Sweden

Married: 18 JAN 1880 in Eksjo Church, Lake Park, Eglon Twp, Minnesota

Died: 27 APR 1943 in home farm, Dale, Clay Co., MN

Father: Anders (Andrus) Andersson

Mother: Kajsa (Svanskog) Svensdotter

Wife: **Mary (Lisa Maya) (Nilsdotter) Nelson**

Born: 24 JAN 1861 in Rök Skogen, Sillerud Parish, Värmland, Sweden

Died: 25 MAY 1950 in home farm, Dale, Clay Co., MN

Father: Nils "Skog" Nilsson

Mother: Lisa "Eliza" Andreasdotter

Children

01 (F): Augusta Wilhelmina (Minnie) Backman

Born: 23 OCT 1880 in Backman farm, "Dale", Eglon Twp, Minnesota

Died: 18 MAR 1972 in Portland, Multnomah Co., Oregon

Spouse: Lorenzo (Rennie) Porter Minor

02 (F): Ida Backman

Born: 18 JAN 1883 in Backman farm, "Dale", Eglon Twp, Minnesota

Died: about 1945 in Ida's house, Marguerite Ave., Washougal, Washington

03 (M): **Fritjof Fritz\Fred Backman**

Born: 19 APR 1886 in Backman farm, "Dale", Eglon Twp, MN

Died: 31 MAY 1978 in W.Sea.Gen.Hosp., West Seattle, King Co., WA

Spouse: Emma Mathilda Oberg

04 (F): Mathilda Backman

Born: 19 MAR 1889 in Backman farm, "Dale", Eglon Twp, Minnesota

Died: about JAN 1943 in MI

Spouse: Elmer Pierson

05 (F): Olga Backman

Born: 11 MAY 1892 in Backman farm, "Dale", Eglon Twp, Minnesota

Died: 23 OCT 1942 in St.Ansgar's Hosp, Moorhead, Clay Co., MN

Spouse: Forrest Ralph Cameron

06 (F): Hulda Olivia Backman

Born: 01 JUN 1894 in Backman farm, "Dale", Eglon Twp, Minnesota

Died: 23 JUL 1990 in Emm.Nursing Home, Detroit Lakes, Becker Co., MN

07 (M): Carl J. Backman

Born: 31 MAR 1896 in Backman farm, "Dale", Eglon Twp, Minnesota

Died: 18 FEB 1976 in St.Mary's Hosp., Detroit Lakes, Becker Co., MN

Spouse: Olga Anderson

08 (M): William Henry Backman

Born: 12 DEC 1898 in Backman farm, "Dale", Becker Co., MN

Died: 08 DEC 1984 in St.Mary's Hosp., Detroit Lakes, Becker Co., MN

09 (M): John (Johan) August Backman

Born: 11 FEB 1902 in Backman farm, "Dale", Becker Co., Minnesota

Died: 02 FEB 1997 in Manor Care, Fargo, Cass Co., ND

Spouse: Alice Sophia Laite

## Kajsa Svensdotter and Anders Berg

John Backman's mother and step-father, Kajsa and Anders Berg, had five children (Anna, Gustav, Johanna, Maya Stina, and Sara Lisa) - all born in Sillerud Parish, Sweden. The family took the name Backman when they came to the US around 1881. They came to Highland Grove Township (Becker County) and settled on 40 acres near the old Northern Pacific Depot in Dale. There are no buildings left on the Anders Berg Place now.

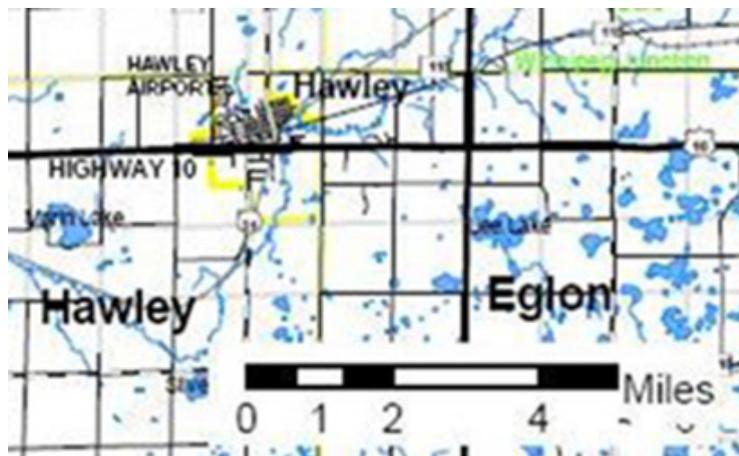
# The Nelson family comes to America

The family came to America (Michigan) in 1873. Mary must have been 12 at the time.

According to Poppa:

My parents came from Värmland, Sweden. My mother's parents immigrated – came to Upper Michigan – Negaunee and Ishpeming. And from there got to Minnesota where they homesteaded just East of Hawley. Then they homesteaded in Eglon Township where he built the log home and the other farm buildings. And, of course, broke ground for fields and started farming. He was good at building log houses so he built log houses and barns for other people at the time.

Doris thought that the Nilsson's emigrated from Sweden to the United States through Canada. One of these days, someone will have to check out Canadian ports of entry for around 1873 to see if there is a record of them arriving.



Eglon Township is just east of Hawley Minnesota

# Nils “Skog” Nilsson family

Husband: Nils “Skog” Nilsson

Born: 17 DEC 1821 in Skogen, Sillerud Parish, Värmland, Sweden

Married: about 1844 in Sillerud Parish, Värmland, Sweden

Died: about 1899 in Eglon Twp, MN

Father: Nils Svensson

Mother: Kajsa Svensdotter

Spouses:

Wife: Lisa “Eliza” Andreasdotter

Born: 08 MAR 1820 in Laxarby, Sillerud Parish, Värmland, Sweden

Died: 15 OCT 1918 in Eglon Twp, MN

Father: Andreas ??

Mother: ??

Spouses:

Children

01 (F): Kristina Johannesdotter

Born: 23 APR 1842

Died:

02 (M): Nils Nilsson

Born: 05 JUL 1845 in Nilsson home, Sillerud Parish, Värmland Lan, Sweden

Died: in Rade, Ostfold, Norway

Spouse: Berthe Helene Augensdatter

03 (F): Anna Cajsa Nilsson

Born: 29 MAY 1847 in Sillerud Parish, Värmland, Sweden

Died: 18 AUG 1930 in Torp, Gillberga Parish, Värmland, Sweden

Spouse: Carl Andersson

04 (M): Anders (Andrew) Gustaf Nilsson

Born: 16 OCT 1853 in Sillerud Parish, Värmland, Sweden

Died: 23 MAY 1885 in drowned, near Hawley, Eglon Twp, MN

05 (M): Gullick\Girlick (William) Nelson Nilsson

Born: 13 DEC 1855 in Sillerud Parish, Värmland, Sweden

Died: about 1903 in St.Louis Co., MN

Spouse: Bertie D. ??

06 (M): Carl Nilsson

Born: 29 JUN 1858 in Sillerud Parish, Värmland, Sweden

Died: 25 JAN 1859 in Sweden

07 (F): Mary (Lisa Maya) (Nilsdotter) Nelson

Born: 24 JAN 1861 in Rök; Skogen, Sillerud Parish, Värmland, Sweden

Died: 25 MAY 1950 in home farm, Dale, Clay Co., MN

Spouse: John (Johannes) (Andersson) Backman

08 (F): Augusta (Nilsdotter) Nelson

Born: 25 APR 1863 in Sillerud Parish, Värmland, Sweden

Died: 19 DEC 1950 in St.Ansgar's Hosp, Moorhead, Clay Co., MN

## Additional Notes

Nils "Skog" Nilsson: Landsarkivet, Goteborg - household examination roll 1856-1861 of Sillerud, Vol. AI:29, page 510 for marriage and household listings of persons

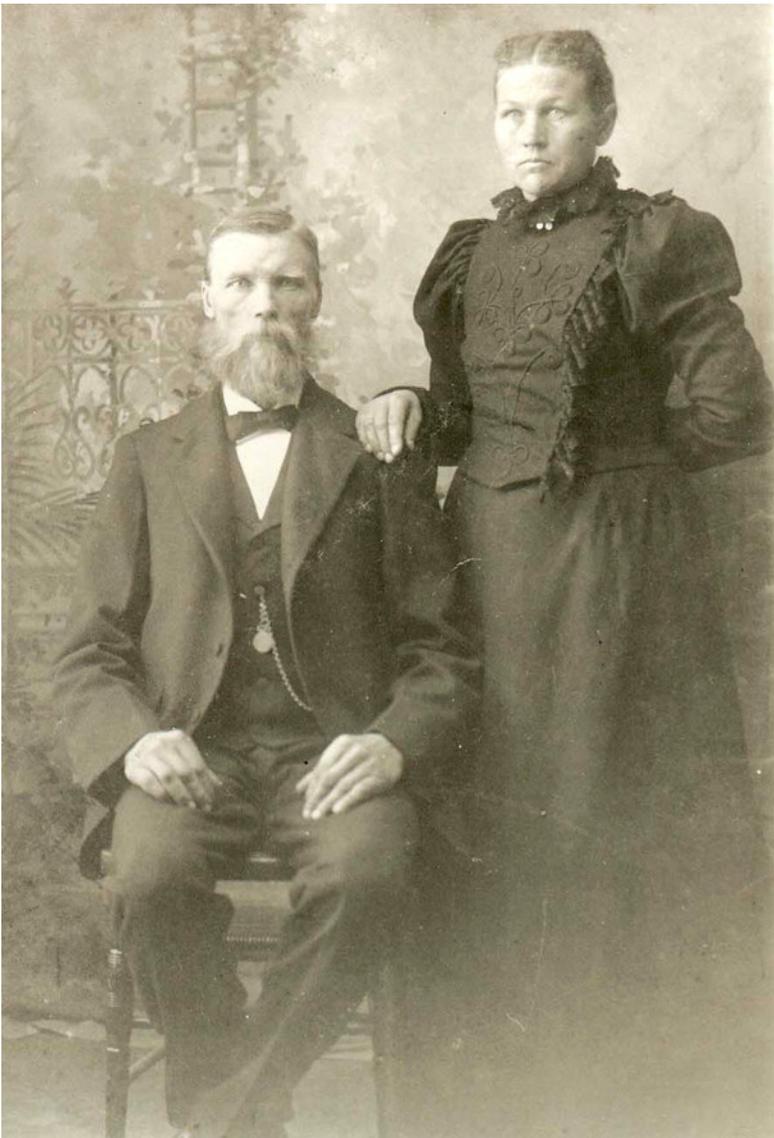
The family came to America (Michigan) in 1873. They came to Eglon twp and farmed in section 8. He farmed there until his death in 1899.

Lisa "Eliza" Andreasdotter: Lisa Nilson was considered to be the oldest woman in Eglon twp. She died in 1918 at the age of 98 years, 7 months and 1 day.

Anecdote: Uncle August recalls that she would walk to the Backman family farm on Saturday evenings to spend the night in order to ride in the family farm wagon to church on Sunday morning. August said that his grandmother would add sugar to the last of her coffee, pour this into her hands and then use it as a hair dressing (to hold her hair in place) as the family left for church.

# The Oberg family comes to America

Aron and Anna (Petersdotter) Oberg



Aron (Johannesson) Oberg left for America by ship from Goteborg, Sweden (Contract #5:437:11) on 16 June, 1871. He changed his name to Oberg sometime about the time of arrival. Aron came to the Red Wing/Hastings, Minnesota, area first before homesteading in Milnor, North Dakota, area in 1887 or 1888.

Church records show that Aron's parents, Johannes Jonsson and Anna Lovisa Jacobsdotter, left Algutsboda parish for the U.S on April 7, 1883 (contract #892:1309). They left from the port of Malmo on April 19, 1887 - destination Red Wing; on the ship Ceres (a steamer).

# Aron Oberg

Birth year in question: given as 1853 and 1854 in Algutsboda parish records.



Homestead - first house - Milnor ND



Oberg Farm - new house - 1900

From Goodhue County Courthouse Marriage records: Aaron Oberg married Anna Elisabeth Petterson on December 11, 1877 at Vasa Lutheran Church in Welch, Goodhue County, Minnesota by A. Anderson, minister of the Gospel, witnesses P.S. Peterson and A.P. Peterson. [Book 6, page 590] {A.P. Peterson was probably Anders Peter Peterson, Anna's brother}

Conversations between Doris and Orville Oberg (Doris's cousin) in March 1983

Orville: In talking with Uncle Leonard some years ago - he related that when they first homesteaded in North Dakota then grandpa Oberg and his brother were there. Apparently the brother wasn't really interested in homesteading or farming. At that time, something caused him to want to go back to Sweden. He went back and never did return to the United States. It was about that time that grandfather changed his name from Åberg to Oberg. I'm not sure why, other than they thought that it was easier to spell.

This doesn't seem to add up, because they originally came to Welch, Minnesota, and bought a farm. In fact, the farm is right on Highway 61 as you go towards Red Wing. It was apparently a good farm except that the rolling countryside was kind of frustrating for a farmer with horses. He then got the idea that he should look at the farmland up in North Dakota since they were homesteading up there. When he went up there and saw the wide open prairie and level ground, he got all excited and came back to Red Wing and wanted to pack up the family and go up there to homestead. Well, Grandma Oberg, as I understand it, didn't like the idea of being buried out in the wilderness of North Dakota so she put up some weak resistance, but they eventually went up there anyhow. That was the start of the homestead.

One of the things that Grandpa Oberg did in Red Wing and also the Welch area was to build barns - he was a carpenter, along with his farming. Then he built a few houses that are still standing and numerous farm buildings as well. I have seen a couple of them, and I'm sure that I have driven by others not realizing that they were part of his work.

In the North Dakota area he continued with his carpentry work and his farming. As Uncle Leonard and my dad, Oscar, got old enough to do farming, he would ride his bicycle out to the various building projects to do his work. I was told that one day, on his way out, he had an attack of appendicitis. His appendix ruptured, and he died from that. I believe that he was only 45 at that time.

As we look at these dates - the change in name must have been made when they came

over from Sweden because Grandpa Oberg's brother was actually visiting them in North Dakota when they had actually homesteaded. He stayed on the homestead with them for a year or two, and then returned to Sweden. The change in name, if there is any validity to it, had to come when they came over from Sweden (in their early married life).

When you ask the questions, I realize how little I know about these people who have gone on before us. This is true about my mother's side of the family, as well. I find that my Aunt Nora, having traveled in Sweden, was able to find the Moberg family and the location where they lived. Their family had been in merchant operations and banking. It seems strange that they would leave a profitable business to go over to the "Land of Milk and Honey" in North Dakota. But this they did and I was told that they went through Alexandria, Minnesota, in a covered wagon. My mother's older brother was the only one of the kids at that time. The rest of them were born on the homestead in North Dakota. Both families, I was told, lived in sod huts. The validity of this, I don't know, the timing would certainly indicate that there was very little lumber around at that time. They may have used the sod huts until they could get something built. Of course, my dad and his father had no problems with construction if they could get the lumber.

**Husband: Aron (Johannesson) Oberg**

Born: 07 NOV 1854 in Lindehult Farm, Algutsboda Par., Kronoberg Lan, Sweden

Married : 11 DEC 1877 in Vasa Luth.Ch., Welch, Goodhue Co., MN

Died: 02 MAR 1903 in Oberg farm, Milnor, Sargent Co., ND

Father: Johannes Jonsson

Mother: **Anna Lovisa Jacobsdotter**

Wife: Anna Lisa (Elisabeth) Petersdotter

Born: 02 JUL 1857 in Notteback Par., Kronoberg Lan, Sweden

Died: 24 AUG 1945 in Oberg farm, Milnor, Sargent Cty, ND

Father: Peter (Pehr) Jonasson

Mother: Maria Lisa (Elisabet) Magnusdotter

**Children**

01 (M): Oscar William (Willard) Oberg

Born: 28 DEC 1878 in Oberg farm, Red Wing, Goodhue Co., MN

Died: 20 JAN 1953 in St.Mary's Hosp., Minneapolis, Hennepin Co., MN

Spouse: Mary Anna Mohberg

02 (M): Axel Leonard Oberg

Born: 17 FEB 1883 in Oberg farm, Welch, Goodhue Co., MN

Died: 16 SEP 1961 in home, 1526 9th N., Fargo, Cass Co., ND

Spouse: Emelia (“Millie”) Emma Peterson

03 (F): Alice Louise Oberg

Born: 14 OCT 1885 in Oberg farm, Welch, Goodhue Co., MN

Died: 24 JUN 1909 in see notes, Fergus Falls, Otter Tail Co., MN

Spouse: Manfred L. Swanson

04 (F): Esther Elizabeth Oberg

Born: 29 AUG 1888 in Oberg farm, Milnor, Sargent Co., ND

Died: 11 OCT 1935 in Portland, Multnomah Co., OR

Spouse: Earl Charles Bailey

05 (F): Mabel Alida Oberg

Born: 13 JUN 1891 in Oberg farm, Milnor, Sargent Co., ND

Died: 13 MAY 1985 in Fargo, Cass Co., ND

Spouse: Arthur Edward Sandberg

06 (F): **Emma Mathilda Oberg**

Born: 14 JAN 1894 in Oberg Farm, Milnor,  
Sargent Co., North Dakota

Died: 04 MAY 1930 in St. Luke’s Hosp.,  
Fargo, Cass Co., North Dakota

Spouse: Fritjof Fritz\Fred Backman



Note – the town of Milnor (where the Oberg farm was located) is in lower left corner of the map

# The Magnusson family and Anna Lisa Petersdotter come to America

Anna (Petersdotter) Oberg



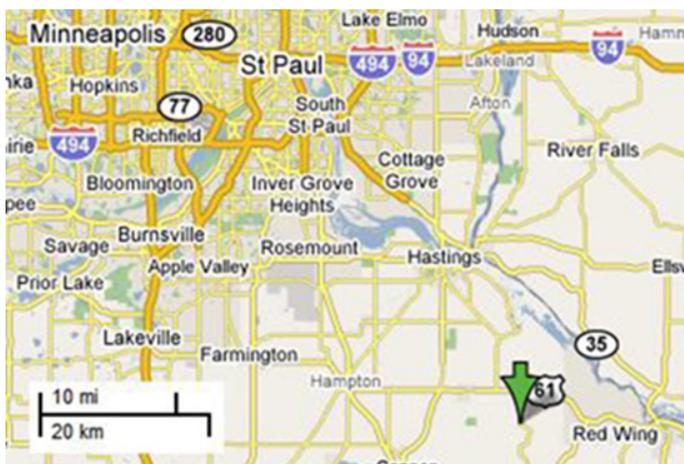
Goteborg passenger lists show that Maja Lisa Magnusdotter departed July 1, 1870 from Goteborg (contract #4:23:25557) to New York on the ship Rollo to Hull with Amanda Magnusdotter (age 9), Albin Magnusson (age 7), and Chatrina Magnusdotter (age 3). On the same ship, but under a separate contract is Anna Lisa Petersdotter (contract #4:23:1839).

Church records show that the family moved in 1863 from Skruf Sodergard to Vitthult Vastergard (page 461) and on 4 May 1870 Israel Magnusson, wife and the children Anna Lisa, Amanda, Albin and Christina Cathrina left Notteback for America.

## The Magnusson family and Anna Lisa Petersdotter



Israel Magnusson house near Welch Minnesota -  
Grandma Oberg's mother and stepfather's house



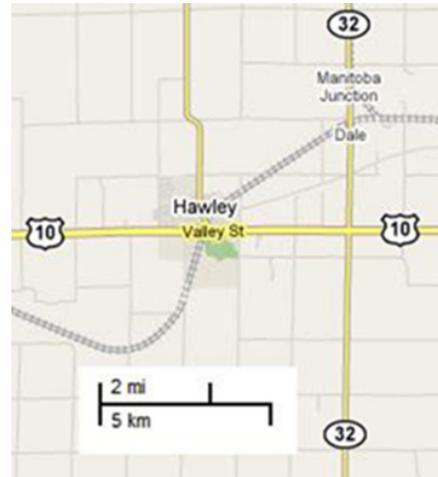
The arrow shows the location of  
Welch, Minnesota where Israel  
Magnusson settled his family

# Fritjof and Emma

The following are bits and pieces about Fritjof and Emma and their lives in North Dakota and Minnesota. The conversations with Doris were in 2006. Those with Poppa (Fritjof) were in 1971.



The Star shows the location of Hawley and Dale Minnesota. Fargo is just across the border in North Dakota.



Map of Dale Minnesota - site of Backman farm.

## Fritjof Backman and the Backman farm in Dale, Eglon Township, Minnesota

Poppa (Fritjof):

This will be kind of a record as far as I can remember and my time begins when Cleveland was President of the United States. My earliest recollection is of the home we lived in. It was built of logs. It was, oh, about 18 by 20, one and one-half story, the top story was about 4 feet high at the sides. Of course, it was high enough for walking in the center. At the sides was where we had our beds. The house below had two windows – one to the East and one to the South and the outside door was, oh, about four feet from the corner and there was a lumber shed on the outside of the door to protect the

door and a porch. The chimney was in the West end. Of course, that's where the stove was – a rather small cook stove that served for cooking, baking and heating the house, of course. And there was a dugout cellar below and a trap door and stairs to get down to the basement or – to the cellar where the vegetables and potatoes were stored.

Our first school was the usual one-room school house. It had 16 seats – the smallest seats in front and the larger at the back and quite often it was just about filled. And the water supply, of course, was – a couple of boys came down to the farm and filled the water pail and it had the usual dipper.

At first when I worked away from home one of the early jobs was firing steam engines. We fired with straw, of course, because that was cheap and plentiful. It was rather a strenuous job to keep up the steam for the steam gauge at 145 pounds and to keep the water level in the boiler just at the half-way mark. So a great deal depended on the fireman for the day's start of working. I usually got up at 4 o'clock in the morning, had a lantern and found my way out to the steam engine, cleaned the flues and fire box under the grates and so on and started the firing so I could blow the whistle at 7 o'clock when the first bundle teams pulled up to the separator. Those were long days for the men that hauled the bundles because they had to be out in the fields and have their load on and drive them up to the separator at 7 o'clock. So this kept going. Of course, there was a coffee break in the forenoon about 9 o'clock which was very welcome to everybody, and an hour at noon and then in the evening. They usually kept on until dark because the weather conditions might not be very good if it got too late in the season.

The crop was usually a mixed crop: there was the wheat – that was the biggest part of the crop – then there was oats and some farms had flax.

Then in winter time it was the time we had to haul wood. We had a piece of timber – about 15 acres about 4 miles from our place. So when we went out there and got a load of logs on the sled – it was almost a day's trip in the short winter days. Of course, they had to be sawed with a two-man saw for the big logs and the branches and so on cut so we'd be sure to have a full year's supply of wood – mostly oak timber on that place. There was some ash and poplar but mostly oak and when that dried it was very good heating wood.

About that time – oh, about what they called the “Gay Nineties” it was the time when the ambition of most anybody was to own a bicycle. So that was easier than walking anyway.

When we went to Sunday School– the Sunday School was in the church before services – about 10 o'clock. So we walked the three miles to church and, of course, after services the older people were there and the kids got a ride home. Often we had company for Sunday dinner – almost always my grandparents. They lived further west, so they were invited in so they spent the afternoon at our place. Or at other times we were invited out for Sunday dinner. In those days dinner was about one or two o'clock instead of 6, 7 o'clock as it is out here. So we enjoyed the afternoon. Kids would play together and the older people would have their discussions on different things.

The Sunday dinner usually was a chicken dinner or it was a smoked ham or beef. They also in winter time ground up and made meat balls which they put in jars and poured hot lard over them and that preserved the meat perfectly for winter use. There was no way for anyone to go to the meat market there like it is now. For dessert they probably had rhubarb pie or something. Rhubarb was very good and appreciated. In the fall there were a lot of wild plums. There were many places where they were large as tame plums. We used to go out to the woods about a mile or two southeast of our place and gather, each one of us, about a milk pail full of plums. That was made into sauce and preserves that lasted all winter. There were also wild grapes and chokecherries – and that made wonderful wine! Either wild grape wine or chokecherry wine. Chokecherries were so called because eating chokecherries – they were very tasty when they were plump and ripe but they puckered up the mouth inside – that's why they were called chokecherries. That wine was served in small glasses very sparingly during the winter when there was company.

We always had a big garden because we had to be self-supporting as far as vegetables went. We raised cabbage, carrots, beets, and rutabagas. Of course, there were tomatoes also during the summertime and ground-cherries – they made real good sauce. The cabbage in the fall was hung up in the basement from the ceiling joists and the carrots were put away in the sand as were the onions. Then we had lots of peas – green peas – all summer and in the fall the large patch of peas we left ripen and threshed it out in the wagon box – shook out the vines and then the peas and chaff were gathered up and when there was a strong south wind we'd pour the peas with the chaff – holding it up above a tub and the chaff being light would blow off so we had all clean peas in the tub. Sometimes we'd raise a bushel or two for winter use. When they were soaked in the evening and cooked for soup next day they were just delicious.

Poppa seemed to be very mechanically inclined from early on.

Doris - August said that my dad worked on farm equipment for years and wanted to get into automobiles. He even took a job in Fargo so that he could go to the North Dakota Agricultural School that was there. There must have been another name for it. What it was, was teaching about mechanics and repairs I guess. Apparently this fellow, who had an auto agency, hired my dad to have the repair part to it. Apparently, my dad took maybe one course through the North Dakota Tech. School that was in Fargo.

## Auto Garages, Lake Park 1913-1917, Fargo 1918-1930



Johnson and Backman garage in Fargo - August Backman is 2nd from right

Poppa worked in a garage in Lake Park starting in the fall of 1913. He worked there 4 years. During that time, he had room and board at Mollerstrom's restaurant (which had rooms upstairs) for \$30 per month.

April 15, 1918, Poppa started work for Doyle Motor Company in Fargo, ND. He worked on Overland cars six days a week. His wages started at \$22.50 per week. From 1918 until he and Emma were married, Poppa stayed at Dahlgren's in Fargo.

Poppa: After leaving the farm I worked in a garage in Lake Park. There was not much choice of occupation in those days so I had to take what I could get. Then eventually I had a chance to get to Fargo to start working for Doyle Motor Company. They were selling Overlands at the time and then later on they changed and sold Hudson-Essex. So then about 1923 another fellow who worked there and myself, we took over the Hudson-Essex service that we had until 1930 when Doyle quit so we were out of it also.

## Fritjof and Emma



*Above:*  
Fritjof and Emma at a picnic - Could this be the picnic at which they met?

*Left:*  
Fritjof and Emma (Oberg) Backman

Conversation with Doris in 2006:

Chris – Your parents were married in 1920 in Fargo. Your mother was the ripe old age of 26 and your dad was 34. Do you know any stories about how they met?

Doris - Yes. Apparently my mother was a skilled seamstress. She worked in Moody's Department Store as an alterations lady. A lot of people bought garments that were tacked together and they had the alterations lady personally fit it to them. Men's suits came partly put together and so men's tailors were all over. One summer, Moody's had a company picnic for all of the employees. My aunt Ida needed a ride. Ida was in the alterations department also. The story goes that Ida said that there was this kind of pretty Swedish girl that is in my department. She doesn't have a way to get to the picnic.

Chris – Ida the matchmaker!

Doris - Yes. We have some pictures that look like picnicking around lakes in southern Minnesota that may be that picnic.

Chris – I noticed that Ida never got married. She was good at finding a match for somebody else.

Doris - But not for herself. I don't know if she was too picky or didn't start looking until she was too old. A lot of guys didn't want to marry someone in their late 20's or anything because, it was a tough life.

Doris - That's what my dad told me – that it was Ida that played the matchmaker there.

Chris – Well, thank you Ida!

Doris - After the marriage, he and Emma lived in an apartment over a grocery store in downtown Fargo. They lived there until 1921 when Poppa built a house at 1329 10th Ave. South in Fargo. He started in May - had a man with a team dig out a basement. Poppa put in the footing and had a man lay the concrete block basement. They moved in October 1, 1921.

Doris - In 1923, Doyle offered Andy Johnson and Poppa a chance to take over the shop. They ran the shop until 1930. That was when Doyle closed his Hudson-Essex dealership - the result of the depression. This put their shop out of business.

## 1930 - A very bad year

Emma died May 2, 1930.

Doris – I don't remember anything about that initial move – after my mother died. My understanding is that she had been in a hospital for a long time and really had drained Poppa's finances. He kept working. That was the only thing - that auto agency – it was a luxury car – equivalent to a Cadillac agency today. It was called Johnson and Backman and I remember using that stationary to scribble on as a kid. Who this Johnson was (I believe it was Andy Johnson - not a relative), I don't know. But, Poppa was the Backman. When the agency couldn't sell any more cars – nobody had any money left after the fall of 29. Then, of course, there was no need for that agency to have a repair type place there. Besides, they were selling the building.

## Hawley 1933-1936

In 1933, Poppa bought a house in Hawley.

Doris – I remember my dad taking the money (and he told me this later) from the sale of the auto shop building and that is what bought the piece of property in Hawley – in this little suburb of Hawley – that somebody doing research on it – what it was there – called “Little Stockholm. This east side of the Buffalo River that went right through Holly. My dad built a barn-like structure that, I remember, had a concrete floor. He had a lot of his tools from Fargo there. He would take automobiles or trucks that had been wrecked. He wanted the frame for the wheels and the transmission and so forth. He would make farm wagons that he would sell for about \$15 only. I know that they didn’t have a very high price on them. He was ingenious and made do with every little scrap he could get. I can remember one time that his cousin (actually, first cousin once removed – Mathilda Anderson) Tilly Anderson and her sister or her cousin had a dress shop in Holly. It was when the automobiles had kind of a little floating ball that would tell you how much gasoline you had left. I remember the he got all of twenty-five cents for fixing that for Tilly. And I thought, twenty five cents – is that all you got for all (that work)? Maybe it was cut-rate because she was a relative. I remember twenty-five cents because somebody told me that he got about five dollars for a farm wagon. After other expenses, he got about five dollars for his labor. This piece of property was not a productive farm property – left over from that big glacier from Lake Agassiz. All through that area of Minnesota are sand dunes and gravel bars left over from the melting glacier coming down from Canada. Poppa had two levels of productivity of this land. He had the high land that the house was on. Then sloped off to the north where this little Buffalo River had an elbow in it – it had very choice silt. So, that was productive there. I remember the front half – down to highway 10 where the little Buffalo River joined another one – they eventually went up to the Red River of the north – the one that went on up to Canada – that was all gravel and rock. I can understand why it didn’t have any lawn. It had a very sturdy, two-story house on it. No indoor plumbing. There was a toilet out in the back. If one of us kids had to go at night, we had a chamber pot in the house. Somebody took care of it in the morning – I didn’t have to do that. I remember thinking – Forrest and Olga Cameron (Olga – Poppa’s sister) they had the first indoor toilet in their house. I was probably four or five when I stayed there when I had the measles. I had gotten them from Phyllis. Minnie had me stay with Forrest and Olga. So, the house, in order to have

a bath on Saturday night, Poppa had to put, in those days you could have round or oval wash tubs. We were having this round wash tub in the kitchen on the floor. There was a pump at the sink. But, the water had to be heated on the wood stove. Because I was a girl and I was cleanest, I could have clean water. Then Fred came. Then next would be Donald. I guess he would be the last one there. I don't know when my dad ever bathed. Probably after Donald even because he was a very private man. I can remember the layout of that house – I could draw you pictures of how it was because I was strongly interested in how it worked because other people had houses that were hap-hazard. But, this one was a nice, sturdy house.

Chris – Was it there when he moved in?

Doris – Yes. He did not build it.

In July 1936, Poppa was out to Washougal and put \$100 to hold a 40 acre ranch up on Forest Hill. After staying there a short time, Poppa built the house in Midland Acres. Moved in Nov. 1936.

# The Second Big Move

The move from Minnesota to the state of Washington wasn't as long a move or as major of an uprooting as Poppa's parents and some grandparents had experienced.

But, it was a big change for the Backman clan.

## Before the Move

Living at Auntie Minnie's House - 1933 Poppa bought the property in the "Little Stockholm" part of Hawley, Minnesota

## Why Move?

Doris - I said "Poppa, why did you pick Washougal? He said "Two things: It was close to power. It had good roads already. There were jobs because of the paper mill and the woolen mill. He figured that, because Donald was 12 or so old going on 13, it wouldn't be long before he would be needing a job. He was looking ahead.

Chris – So was the main reason to move out economic?

Doris - As much as anything. I think that he had some cousins – some Ericksons that were in Tacoma. There was sort of a westward movement. ... They were looking for available, cheap land. There was a little bit of the spirit of adventure there too. Mostly, it was improvement of their monetary situation. That's what brought their fathers over to America – because of the free land. I think that wanting to own your own property was a big factor for a lot of Scandinavians. It was a land of opportunity. Little did they know that, in a couple of years, they would have a dust bowl there [in Minnesota and North Dakota]. That was a disastrous time. Grandma Oberg's place out there ... Uncle Leonard survived, I guess, one reason or another, he had saved back enough money that I know that they had a big house – had been prosperous for a couple of years. That's the Oberg side. I was told, I didn't see this myself, that there were places that people had planted corn in rows and it came up and tasseled out before it was more than like six inches high. They let those little kernels that were on there mature. To harvest it, they just pulled up the whole thing. There just wasn't enough water there for a while. Then, when the rains returned, those that had stuck it out turned out very well. It was nip and tuck for some of them. Of course, I was so young – it didn't make sense to me. After all, if you've got a farm, you've got a farm. You've got cows and horses. Not knowing that there was some money exchanged in there someplace.

## The Scouting Trip

Doris - Do you want me to talk about the trip out from Minnesota? Apparently my Dad had been talking about it for quite a while. He had even, that summer of 1936, helped a family (Mr. Gunderson, his wife and her sister) wanted to go out to someplace just above Spokane. Maybe Newport? It was on the border there. That's where some other family lived or something. My dad was asked if he could come along and be the other driver because neither one of the ladies drove. Not only was my Dad the relief driver but he was, of course, a mechanic.

Doris - When they were out in North Dakota, some place out west of Bismarck, there was a flash flood that had gone through the roadway. That was when highway 10 was just being built all the way from Minneapolis to Seattle. Apparently, in this one place, it

washed out the road right at the time that somebody's car was coming along and there were down in the ditch off to the side. According to the story I got, my dad and another guy waded into this flash flood and saved two ladies. And so, what did they do? They went back to their car and went on their way.

Chris – When would this have been?

Doris - It would have to be (19)36 I think. You might be able to look at old newspapers from that era and see. But it would have been 36, I think. Because, it was not very long after that that Poppa announced that we were going.

Chris – So, getting back to the scouting trip with the Gundersons. After he reached Spokane with them, then what?

Doris - Then he took the SP&F – the Spokane, Portland, to Seattle train down to Washougal. I guess Earl must have met him there and taken him around. He even went down in the Willamette Valley but the property was quite a bit more expensive. This other seemed to be an appealing prospect.

## The trip out to Washougal

Starting on August 11, 1936 (a Tuesday) the trip to Washougal took 10 days (including two spent repairing the truck) to cover the 1500 miles.

In Poppa's own words:

“Coming out, we left Hawley the 11th day of August, 1936. And, of course, with the loaded truck and all that we had to come by easy stages – Valley City, the first stop because of a late start. From Valley City to Medora – of course, that is spectacular Bad Lands – Teddy Roosevelt's town. And from Medora to Billings where the weather was very hot and with the hot weather and lots of vegetation and irrigation – it smelled like boiling cabbage

From Billings to Butte was the next stop and from Butte to Thompson Falls went very good. So from Thompson Falls we remember having dinner [noon] in Newport, Washington. And then in the afternoon we got as far as Ritzville. And from Ritzville we went

down through Pasco and to Goldendale. But outside Goldendale, coming up a long hill, the pinion shaft bearing went out. So getting towed into Goldendale, it delayed us two days while I made the repair. And from Goldendale the final leg of the trip to the farm house on that ranch I had bargained for.

Deciding not to go through with the deal for the ranch, I went down to Washougal and bought a piece of land which was a very good move to make. In the late summer and fall I built the house which was ready enough to move into from the ranch so we had our first Thanksgiving dinner in the new house.

With our moving out here it made so many changes for many of us – because Richard came with us out and, eventually, Winnie came out and they were married. And also, my sister Minnie and her Alice came to Portland. And with the many houses I built, it made a lot of changes for a lot of people.

Washougal, of course, is just a small town and it dates back from the time of Lewis and Clark. On their way west they stopped off before proceeding to Astoria. Washougal at the time we were there was not very progressive but they had a Woolen Mill where about a hundred and fifty people worked. And then many of them worked at the Paper Mill, just two miles to the west. So there wasn't much unemployment and that's why it looked good to me to settle there. Schools were quite good so they all got through the grades and high school and from there chose their own way to go."

Doris added a few memories of that trip:

We came out in a Model A and an aging Chevy truck (no cover on the back) that Poppa had bought just for this trip. Driving was either my dad, Dick Minor, Uncle Carl or, in an emergency, Donald. They traded off.

We stayed the first night in Badlands of ND - the first time I was in tourist cabins. Most of the trip was on Highway 10 which was just being constructed - lots of detours - sometimes miles long that jolted the teeth out of you. This became Interstate 94 through North Dakota and part of Montana and I 90 from there through Spokane. In those days it was called number 10.

Stayed in Billings - they were having a rodeo - first time I had ever seen a real Indian. Stayed in a tourist cabin not far from the rodeo grounds - we could hear the shouting

from the competition.

We tried to follow highway 10 across Montana. Poppa was told that the southern route was best. My dad didn't have much confidence that the truck could make it. We left behind a lot of good stuff because there was no way of taking it along. To spare the truck we went by routes with lower passes so went over a pass near Newport, Idaho because it was considered easier.

Up to this point we had been cooking our own meals to save money. So, we always stayed at tourist cabins - with kitchens. Poppa and Donald would have one bedroom, Dick and Carl would have another, Fred and I would be on cots.

After we left Newport, we went due south to Spokane. On a Sunday, around Spokane, we had breakfast in this place. It tasted so good - because we were eating out. Pancakes and berries - the fresh berries tasted so wonderful!

The next day, headed for Goldendale and something went wrong with the truck. We were in a tourist cabin park for a couple of days because my dad had to fix the truck. Seems to me he went ahead to Goldendale and ordered parts. Just like you would see in 3rd world countries - the mechanics working out in the driveway - that was my dad

I can remember that it was quite hot. There wasn't much for Fred and me to do. I can remember Fred and I wandering around wondering "what should we do today". It was hot - I can imagine how hot it was for Poppa working under this truck. With the help of Dick and Uncle Carl, they took apart the back end of the truck to fix it.

Everybody warned us about the Goldendale hill because it was so steep - make sure your brakes work - Poppa did a lot of downshifting, I'm sure.

Poppa got it fixed - Fred and I knew he could - we had great faith in his abilities. That windy hill coming down from Goldendale - I think Poppa went down that at about 5 miles per hour. Of course, that was our first view of the Columbia River. We were so excited to see the Columbia River, the biggest river we had ever seen. Of course, it got even bigger as we wend downstream.

Goldendale was the last motel we stayed in. Apparently the Oregon side of the river was a straighter highway but we stayed on the Washington side. We came down the Washington side. We marveled at the size of the river. Up by Beacon Rock there were trees

that were so big that we could hardly believe that they were real. He had messages from Uncle Earl telling what route to take. It wasn't very far from there to Stevenson, then Washougal.

## Washougal

Doris - I don't remember where we stayed when we first got to Washougal. Somebody had talked to these two old ex-prospectors, Bob and Walt Bedelle. They were related to the Baileys. Uncle Earl had discovered that there was this piece of property up on Forest Hill. Charles Bedelle owned it but because it was tied up in bankruptcy, Poppa worried about getting clear title. Poppa rented this place until the new house was built. My dad and Uncle Earl Bailey built the house in the Midland Acres area of Washougal and we moved in just before Thanksgiving 1936.

# Appendices

Extra material -  
transcripts of taped conversations.

## Conversations between Fred (Fritjof) Backman and Doris Backman Kirkpatrick August 1971

This is a transcript of taped conversations between Doris and her father, Fritjof Backman, in August of 1971. He was 85 years old at that time. Parts of this show up elsewhere in these pages. In those other places, there may be changes to reflect better guesses at “truth”. However, this page is exactly as recorded and transcribed.

### Early Life

DK I have asked my dad to tell about things of early life and things that have happened in his life and about our family so that we will have a record of this.

FB This will be kind of a record as far as I can remember and my time begins when Cleveland was President of the United States. My earliest recollection is of the home we lived in. It was built of logs. It was, oh, about 18 by 20, one and one-half story, the top story was about 4 feet high at the sides. Of course, it was high enough for walking in the center. At the sides was where we had our beds. The house below had two windows – one to the East and one to the South and the outside door was, oh, about four feet from the corner and there was a lumber shed on the outside of the door to protect the door and a porch. The chimney was in the West end. Of course, that's where the stove was – a rather small cook stove that served for cooking, baking and heating the house, of course. And there was a dugout cellar below and a trap door and stairs to get down to the basement or – to the cellar where the vegetables and potatoes were stored.

FB My parents came from Varmland, Sweden. My mother's parents immigrated – came to Upper Michigan – Negaunee and Ishpeming. And from there got to Minnesota where they homesteaded just East of Hawley. My father had also come to Upper Michigan and from there – one winter in St. Paul. And from there he worked on the NP (Northern Pacific) when they were laying railroad going west. They were as far as Brainard and, no doubt, he walked up to where some uncles lived west of Lake Park. Then he homesteaded in Eglon Township where he built the log home and the other farm buildings. And, of course, broke ground for fields and started farming. He was good at building log houses so he built log houses and barns for other people at the time.

## Early Schooling

FB Our first school was the usual one-room school house. It had 16 seats – the smallest seats in front and the larger at the back and quite often it was just about filled. And the water supply, of course, was – a couple of boys came down to the farm and filled the water pail and it had the usual dipper.

FB My first teacher's name was Mrs. Storla (sp?) and her daughter lived at our home in a room that had been built as an addition on the west part of the house. So in those days taught all of the grades. Our playground was the road in front of the school because the school house was just a small jog in the fence on the side of the road. We were very fortunate to have so many good teachers. Emma Erickson was our second teacher and then

up to 1900 when Emma Carlson, a good friend of ours ever since she stayed at our place while teaching several terms of school. The teacher's pay was \$50 a month and they were very happy to get that much.

## Farm Work

FB In the early spring about the first work was to have the lumber wagon and I'd gather up all the rock that had been turned up by the plow the fall before in the fall plowing. And from there on when the weather moderated the fields were harrowed and seeded to grain. Then later on potatoes were planted – about 2 acres of potatoes and cultivated with a one-horse cultivator. Haying would start usually the day after the 4th of July. And then for the next two or three weeks it was “haying time” – usually trying to provide two loads of hay for each grown farm animal – cows and horses. And some extra for the sheep and smaller livestock. Then came harvest. And when the fields were cut with the binder and shocked and when they were dried out – usually in about two weeks, then in shock threshing there were about 8 or 9 farmers together in the shock \_\_\_\_\_ as it was called. And that provided about 10 bundle teams and two grain teams. Of course, the threshing outfit had their own crew – the engineer and separator man, fireman and the man to haul the water for the steam engine.

FB So when the fall work was done, it was about the time that there was frost and, sometimes, the lakes would freeze over with very nice ice and that's when young people would gather for skating until snow came and skating would not be any good any more.

FB Then, of course, when Christmas came there was Jul \_\_\_\_\_ . That's usually 6 o'clock in the morning and the second day of Christmas \_\_\_\_\_ . And this went on – people had their company come in for dinner and so on– the older people in the afternoon and the young people in the evening for enjoyment.

FB At first when I worked away from home one of the early jobs was firing steam engines. We fired with straw, of course, because that was cheap and plentiful. It was rather a strenuous job to keep up the steam for the steam gauge at 145 pounds and to keep the water level in the boiler just at the half-way mark. So a great deal depended on the fireman for the day's start of working. I usually got up at 4 o'clock in the morning, had a lantern and found my way out to the steam engine, cleaned the flues and fire box under

the grates and so on and started the firing so I could blow the whistle at 7 o'clock when the first bundle teams pulled up to the separator. Those were long days for the men that hauled the bundles because they had to be out in the fields and have their load on and drive them up to the separator at 7 o'clock. So this kept going. Of course, there was a coffee break in the forenoon about 9 o'clock which was very welcome to everybody, and an hour at noon and then in the evening. They usually kept on until dark because the weather conditions might not be very good if it got too late in the season.

FB The crop was usually a mixed crop: there was the wheat – that was the biggest part of the crop – then there was oats and some farms had flax.

Now – the threshing rigs were usually big steam engines and what they called a 36 inch separator. That was a separator that had a 36 inch cylinder. So it could handle anything that was pitched into it as fast as the men could pitch in when the straw was dry. The engine had large drive wheels – usually, oh, about 6 to 8 feet tall and the engines I ran after I sort of graduated from fireman to engineer had – it was a Reeves, the biggest one – had 24 inch wide drive wheels with a 10 inch extension because it was necessary to have wide wheels because many places the ground was soft. And so with 8 foot high wheels and 34 inches wide – it made quite a big machine. We also used that for steam plowing – pulling 8 bottom plows.

DK Were they self-propelled?

FB Of course, they were self-propelled. Because the very earliest were small engines, they were pulled with a team from rig to rig. But these big ones, they pulled the separator and everything from one job to another.

FB The last crop to be harvested was potatoes – the 2 acres of potatoes. But even so – that small amount when we had to pick potatoes was quite a back-breaking job. So we were always glad when potato picking was over. The potatoes when they were ripe – it was rather late in the fall – they were turned up by the ordinary plow that we used for plowing the fields because that was before the days of potato diggers.

DK Then somebody came along and picked them out?

FB So then that meant that when a long row of potatoes was plowed up it was for us kids to have a basket and pick potatoes and put in sacks to be hauled to the basement for

winter storage.

FB Then in winter time it was the time we had to haul wood. We had a piece of timber – about 15 acres about 4 miles from our place. So when we went out there and got a load of logs on the sled – it was almost a day's trip in the short winter days. Of course, they had to be sawed with a two-man saw for the big logs and the branches and so on cut so we'd be sure to have a full year's supply of wood – mostly oak timber on that place. There was some ash and poplar but mostly oak and when that dried it was very good heating wood.

## Home Life

FB About that time – oh, about what they called the “Gay Nineties” it was the time when the ambition of most anybody was to own a bicycle. So that was easier than walking anyway. When we went to Sunday School– the Sunday School was in the church before services – about 10 o'clock. So we walked the three miles to church and, of course, after services the older people were there and the kids got a ride home. Often we had company for Sunday dinner – almost always my grandparents. They lived further west, so they were invited in so they spent the afternoon at our place. Or at other times we were invited out for Sunday dinner. In those days dinner was about one or two o'clock instead of 6, 7 o'clock as it is out here. So we enjoyed the afternoon. Kids would play together and the older people would have their discussions on different things.

FB About that time Father bought the organ that's still out at the farm. He bought that for \$45 from Lawrence Pederson – the man that had the farm where he organized the Children's Home. That farm is about two miles west of Lake Park. There were many underprivileged children that grew up in that place. They had their education and also learned to do the farm work. So many fine citizens came from there. To have an organ in the house was quite a prestige because there were very few places where they had an organ.

The Sunday dinner usually was a chicken dinner or it was a smoked ham or beef. They also in winter time ground up and made meat balls which they put in jars and poured hot lard over them and that preserved the meat perfectly for winter use. There was no way for anyone to go to the meat market there like it is now. For dessert they probably had rhubarb pie or something. Rhubarb was very good and appreciated. In the fall there

were a lot of wild plums. There were many places where they were large as tame plums. We used to go out to the woods about a mile or two southeast of our place and gather, each one of us, about a milk pail full of plums. That was made into sauce and preserves that lasted all winter. There were also wild grapes and chokecherries – and that made wonderful wine! Either wild grape wine or chokecherry wine. Chokecherries were so called because eating chokecherries – they were very tasty when they were plump and ripe but they puckered up the mouth inside – that’s why they were called chokecherries. That wine was served in small glasses very sparingly during the winter when there was company.

We always had a big garden because we had to be self-supporting as far as vegetables went. We raised cabbage, carrots, beets, and rutabagas. Of course, there were tomatoes also during the summertime and ground-cherries – they made real good sauce. The cabbage in the fall was hung up in the basement from the ceiling joists and the carrots were put away in the sand as were the onions. Then we had lots of peas – green peas – all summer and in the fall the large patch of peas we left ripen and threshed it out in the wagon box – shook out the vines and then the peas and chaff were gathered up and when there was a strong south wind we’d pour the peas with the chaff – holding it up above a tub and the chaff being light would blow off so we had all clean peas in the tub. Sometimes we’d raise a bushel or two for winter use. When they were soaked in the evening and cooked for soup next day they were just delicious.

DK Did you also do beans that way too?

FB We raised beans also the same way. We had a great variety of beans. Some for summer use and some for dried beans for winter use. When we needed flour we’d take, oh, a small load of wheat in to the grist mill. They had one in Lake Park where we usually went. And from a bushel of wheat we got 32 pounds of flour, 8 pounds of bran and 3 - 4 pounds of what they called midlings.

DK That was made into bread then?

FB Of course. Home grown wheat and baked like the good farm women knew how to bake bread – it was delicious! It was far different from the bakery bread of today. It was more firm and nutty flavor. Of course, we had to churn our own butter in dash churns. And of course we had a small flock of chickens so we had our own eggs.

## Social Life

DK What about social life?

FB The big social event of the summer was the Mid-summer Picnic – usually at the church but many times they decided to have it at different farm places. There was even one year at our home. And, of course, then a week later there was the Fourth of July when the small towns all put on celebrations. Or, at least, Hawley and Lake Park would alternate so there would be a good attendance at either place. My first recollection is that of a platform where the band was. In the very early days there were even Civil War veterans in their blue uniforms – probably five or six. Each town, of the small ones, had a very good band because that was their biggest enjoyment to get together and play the band. Of course, there were no cars in those early days.

Then there was the event of going to Fargo for the State Fair once each summer. And then, maybe, once a year there was the big circus – Barnum and Bailey or Ringling Brothers' circus. And they were really big circuses in those days. A lot of elephants and when the big parade came down Broadway – elephants first, then the big animal cages – gilded and dressed up real nice – the bands and the very last was the clowns' band which was very amusing. We saw the three-ring circus for fifty cents. We went there on the train in the early morning and came back in the late evening.

## Mechanic

After leaving the farm I worked in a garage in Lake Park. There was not much choice of occupation in those days so I had to take what I could get. Then eventually I had a chance to get to Fargo to start working for Doyle Motor Company. They were selling Overlands at the time and then later on they changed and sold Hudson-Essex. So then about 1923 another fellow who worked there and myself, we took over the Hudson-Essex service that we had until 1930 when Doyle quit so we were out of it also.

# Emma

DK Tell me about how you met my mother.

FB In 1920 there was a church picnic at a small town about 20 miles south of Fargo and that's where I met the children's mother Emma Oberg. So we were married in 1920. Of course, in 1930 sickness set in so that terminated that. After that I bought the place in Hawley – on the east side of the river there – at that time they called it “Stockholm”. And that's where we lived while the kids were small and went to school.

## The Trip west

DK How did you decide to move to Washougal in 1936?

FB Then I saw no future in staying there for any of us so I made the trip alone West in July and located the farm where there was a good house and I invested a hundred dollars to hold it until we came out. And luckily I did because I went back and prepared for moving West – bought a truck and then we loaded on the most necessary items on the truck – leaving the rest and made our way west. It took us about 10 days but we finally got there. Then we had this house on the ranch to move into – but I decided against going through with the deal so I built the house in Washougal where we lived while the three – Donald, Doris and Fred – went through the grades and high school. And from there on they were on their own. So as each one graduated and they left. I was then working at the twine factory.

My first work after getting there [Washougal] was in the following spring and was carpenter work. So that kept us in food and clothes and necessities. Then I worked a month or so at the Woolen Mill. But I found a better job at McLaughlin Heights, Vancouver, where buildings were built for the shipyard workers. So I stayed with them during the summer. Then in the fall of 1942 I got a job at the Paper Mill in the machine shop where I stayed then until 1945. This was during the Second World War. And from there I was at the Twine Factory for four years until they moved to Vancouver, Washington, in the shipyard building. It made it quite far to be driving back and forth so I went to Seattle where I have been ever since.

DK Tell me about the trip out in 1936. FB Coming out, we left Hawley the 11th day of August, 1936. And, of course, with the loaded truck and all that we had to come by easy stages – Valley City, the first stop because of a late start. From Valley City to Medora – of course, that is spectacular Bad Lands – Teddy Roosevelt's town. And from Medora to Billings where the weather was very hot and with the hot weather and lots of vegetation and irrigation – it smelled like boiling cabbage.

From Billings to Butte was the next stop and from Butte to Thompson Falls went very good. So from Thompson Falls we remember having dinner [noon] in Newport, Washington. And then in the afternoon we got as far as Ritzville. And from Ritzville we went down through Pasco and to Goldendale. But outside Goldendale, coming up a long hill, the pinion shaft bearing went out. So getting towed into Goldendale, it delayed us two days while I made the repair. And from Goldendale the final leg of the trip to the farm house on that ranch I had bargained for.

Deciding not to go through with the deal for the ranch, I went down to Washougal and bought a piece of land which was a very good move to make. In the late summer and fall I built the house which was ready enough to move into from the ranch so we had our first Thanksgiving dinner in the new house.

With our moving out here it made so many changes for many of us – because Richard came with us out and, eventually, Winnie came out and they were married. And also, my sister Minnie and her Alice came to Portland. And with the many houses I built, it made a lot of changes for a lot of people.

Washougal, of course, is just a small town and it dates back from the time of Lewis and Clark. On their way West they stopped off before proceeding to Astoria. Washougal at the time we were there was not very progressive but they had a Woolen Mill where about a hundred and fifty people worked. And then many of them worked at the Paper Mill, just two miles to the west. So there wasn't much unemployment and that's why it looked good to me to settle there. Schools were quite good so they all got through the grades and high school and from there chose their own way to go.

After moving to Seattle in winter time there was time to relax some. At one time Doris lived in Oakland so I went there for a lengthy visit. And then when they lived in Hayward I was there two winters, I think it was. Then Fred was in Monterey one year so I

went there for a lengthy visit and also when he was in San Diego I was there twice during the time when he was stationed down there. So I went with him over to Coronado where they had their Navy base and saw the big carriers. I was able to visit on the big carrier.

## Sweden 1957

DK Tell me about your trip to Sweden.

FB Then in 1957 when I mentioned taking a vacation they suggested and I agreed that a trip to Sweden would be interesting – to see where my folks came from and how people lived there.

So I made arrangements for a trip – getting to New York by plane. In those days there was a slower “prop” plane – where it was enjoyable riding because it was like a sight-seeing tour all the way. They flew not so fast or so high and I could even take pictures out the window and it was a real pleasure to see the country all the way.

Left Seattle about 11 o`clock, picked up some more passengers at Portland, got into Minneapolis at daylight, and from there saw the country all the way to New York, and stayed overnight at the Commodore and the next day boarded the Gripsholm for Gothenberg and got to Gothenberg 8 days later. It was a very enjoyable ride on that ship. I met many interesting people who were all going tourist class, which is very informal. When I got to Gothenberg I rode a train for Amal – to the only persons I knew in Sweden – Martin and Mrs. Hult where I made my first stop – and from there I traveled around quite a bit. Martin Hult and I went to Oslo one day riding the bus and another time down on the train to a landing place where there was an excursion boat going up the Dalsland Canal which goes through some beautiful scenery. That canal was built in the middle of the 19th Century by Nels Ericson, the brother of John Ericson that designed the Monitor in the Civil War days. It was marvelous engineering because the gates were still operated by hand. After all these years they still worked perfectly.

Then I traveled alone up north to Sunne where Selma Lagerof’s home is preserved as a museum just as it was in the days when she lived there and wrote the books.

And later on went to Stockholm where I was fortunate enough to get a good guide and saw the most interesting places of Stockholm. Old Stockholm, for instance, with its

churches, centuries old, museums and even parts of the Royal Palace which was open to the public.

Sweden, of course, is a beautiful country which is forests and lakes. I got acquainted with some Ericsons that lived about 2 miles out in the country where I often went and they were doing the oat harvest in those days – partly with an old McCormick mower and also cut the grain with a scythe.

The homes over in Sweden – especially the older homes – could stand a lot of improvement. For instance, the plumbing was very crude. Also about the housing – a permit had to be gotten from the city government and the floor plan had to be approved. And, of course, the number of people that were going to be living in the house governed the size of the house they were permitted to build. Even the color of the house had to be according to state control. With the advance in electricity it was surprising that at that time there were so few TV sets that if a TV set was going in a store window it drew a big crowd watching from the outside. The TV in homes – I did not see a single one. They had radio and that came from the state operated radio stations so they were very monotonous.

I went to Skanson, that's a park and a museum and an amusement place – and they have the old houses that have been restored. It seemed that people must have been very short in stature in those days because even I had to bend over going through the doorways. Thresholds – they were anywhere from 4 to 6 inches high, even between rooms.

In traveling on the boat and also all the way through Sweden at hotels there I found the food almost identical with the United States food and served the same way. In Sweden the hotel rates were very reasonable. And getting around in Stockholm the taxi drivers were very helpful. Because when I got there I tried the hotels and they were full so at the depot they had a list of available rooms for travelers, I picked out one and gave the address to the taxi driver who took me there. It was quite a distance and the street on where that apartment building was was Tiltigaten. I found that lower 3rd floor and came back down and paid off the taxi driver. From there the guide I had took me around and (I) saw the best parts of Stockholm. Also, by chance, Adolph Danielson knew of a man in Vallingby. That is one of the brand new towns built 3 years before I got there – Where an Axel Larson had an export/import business. This was in the forenoon. I told him I knew that he was busy so if he would come to where I stayed we would go out for dinner that night. Which he did and he showed me around Stockholm's interesting places. And

we had dinner around 11 o'clock that night. He was very interesting and he liked to meet people also.

It was the same way in Sunne. There was a man who had a bookstore. I often went to visit with him. He liked to practice his English so we got along just fine.

## Visits

While I am narrating this I am with Doris over in Wenatchee where Wayne and Doris had their 25th Wedding Anniversary – an open house with many guests and friends. It was a beautiful day and very moderate temperature so everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. They also made good use of their pool in the back yard where so many enjoyed themselves. Of course, we had punch and there was a lot of visiting. Next we'll be going back to Seattle and finishing up on my clock building hobby – Grandfather's clocks and table clocks and other hobby works, and see how the garden has gotten along and the corn will soon be ripe.

Last summer in June – Donald, Janet, Eric and I went east to Minnesota for the Eksjo Centennial. The Church had its charter just 100 years earlier and it is still going strong. The new church was built in 1900 and one of the most beautiful churches in the state of Minnesota. It was so well built. It has had minimum repairs and the only improvements had (end of tape)

# Conversations - March 1983

These are the transcripts of taped conversations between Doris Kirkpatrick and her cousin, Orville Oberg.



Orville Clayton Oberg is the son of Oscar William (Willard) Oberg (Emma's brother) and Mary Anna Mohberg.

## Early Years in the USA



Obergs July 31 1943  
- Oscar, Orville,  
Maurice, Adeline,  
Phyllis, and Chloe

Orville: In talking with Uncle Leonard some years ago - he related that when they first homesteaded in North Dakota then grandpa Oberg and his brother were there. Apparently the brother wasn't really interested in homesteading or farming. At that time, something caused him to want to go back to Sweden. He went back and never did return to the United States. It was about that time that grandfather changed his name from Åberg to Oberg. I'm not sure why, other than they thought that it was easier to spell.

This doesn't seem to add up, because they originally came to Welch, Minnesota, and bought a farm. In fact, the farm is right on Highway 61 as you go towards Red Wing. It was apparently a good farm except that the rolling countryside was kind of frustrating for a farmer with horses. He then got the idea that he should look at the farmland up in North Dakota since they were homesteading up there. When he went up there and saw the wide open prairie and level ground, he got all excited and came back to Red Wing and wanted to pack up the family and go up there to homestead. Well, Grandma Oberg, as I understand it, didn't like the idea of being buried out in the wilderness of North Dakota so she put up some weak resistance, but they eventually went up there anyhow. That was the start of the homestead.

One of the things that Grandpa Oberg did in Red Wing and also the Welch area was to build barns - he was a carpenter, along with his farming. Then he built a few houses that are still standing and numerous farm buildings as well. I have seen a couple of them, and I'm sure that I have driven by others not realizing that they were part of his work.

In the North Dakota area he continued with his carpentry work and his farming. As Uncle Leonard and my dad, Oscar, got old enough to do farming, he would ride his bicycle out to the various building projects to do his work. I was told that one day, on his way out, he had an attack of appendicitis. His appendix ruptured, and he died from that. I believe that he was only 45 at that time.

As we look at these dates - the change in name must have been made when they came over from Sweden because Grandpa Oberg's brother was actually visiting them in North Dakota when they had actually homesteaded. He stayed on the homestead with them for a year or two, and then returned to Sweden. The change in name, if there is any validity to it, had to come when they came over from Sweden (in their early married life).

When you ask the questions, I realize how little I know about these people who have gone on before us. This is true about my mother's side of the family, as well. I find that my Aunt Nora, having traveled in Sweden, was able to find the Moberg family and the location where they lived. Their family had been in merchant operations and banking. It seems strange that they would leave a profitable business to go over to the "Land of Milk and Honey" in North Dakota. But this they did and I was told that they went through Alexandria, Minnesota, in a covered wagon. My mother's older brother was the only one of the kids at that time. The rest of them were born on the homestead in North Dakota. Both families, I was told, lived in sod huts. The validity of this, I don't know, the timing would certainly indicate that there was very little lumber around at that time. They may have used the sod huts until they could get something built. Of course, my dad and his father had no problems with construction if they could get the lumber.

I should have something around on Milnor, North Dakota - when the town was first started and some of its history. This could be incorporated into the scope of the Obergs and the Mobergs and maybe enlighten us a little more on what was available to them once they got into homesteading in the area.

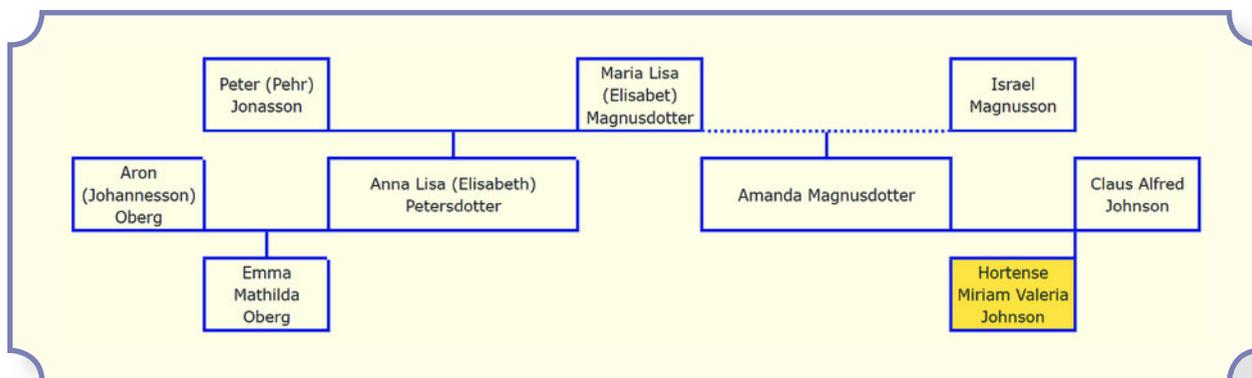
We were talking about the marriage of my mother and dad. We thought that they were married in Minneapolis. I recall that my dad's cousin was their best man. I remember him talking about his cousin Robert - and I did meet him when he was probably in his fifties or sixties. They stayed in Minneapolis for a while. I assume that they intended to live here and found that they did not like it. I recall now that I think back, they loaded up a boxcar with lumber and furniture and what-not and sent that up by railroad to Milnor. Then they started farming - It was probably west of where Uncle Leonard's farm was - it was down the road toward Hoving, anyhow. I suppose that they did grain farming - corn and wheat. Wheat farming was the big thing during World War I. They were able to sell all that they could grow. I believe that even before or during WWI my dad gave up farming and went into Milnor and worked in the lumber yard. At that time we lived in a small house just across the railroad tracks - off the main street of Milnor. I was the youngest and was born at that location - my sister, Adeline probably too - but I think that sister Eleanor, my brother Morie, and sister Myrtle were all born on the farm, or, at least before we got to Milnor. And then in 1925 they had a big tornado (or cyclone) in Fergus. There was quite a bit of work down there. My dad decided to go down there to get some of the construction work. We moved down there when I was one year old.

That was in 1920 and we left there when I was six years old because I had finished the first grade. Then he pursued his carpentry work in Alexandria constructing many farm buildings. I recall one house that I went out with him to do some finishing. It was something that he was doing on week-ends and whenever he had extra time. But then the economy dropped out and there was no work at all. I recall one winter that he spent on a farm working for his board and room while the rest of us lived in Alexandria.

In 1928 we moved to Minneapolis because it looked like there was more work there. He did find a job after we had been there a few months. He continued to live there until he passed away in January, 1953. He had fallen out of bed in a rest home, breaking his hip and then developing an infection. He apparently succumbed to the infection and fever, and possibly pneumonia.

# Conversations with Hortense Johnson - March 1983

These are the transcripts of taped conversations between Doris Kirkpatrick, Hortense (Johnson), and Hortense's husband, Ralf Swanson. Hortense was Emma's half cousin. Their mutual grandmother, Maria Lisa (Elisabet) Magnusdotter, married Emma's grandfather, Peter (Pehr) Jonasson, in Notteback Parish, Sweden. They had three kids there. Peter died at the age of 40. Sixteen months later, she married Israel Magnusson, Hortense's grandfather. They had four children in Sweden and immigrated to the United States in 1870.



## Emma and Fritz

Doris Kirkpatrick - I'm in St. Paul talking to Hortense and Ralf (Swanson) and she just started telling me about my dad. Here it is –

Hortense - Emma and Fritz came to Hastings and Welch, Minnesota, on their wedding trip. He had just rebuilt an automobile. I don't remember the make of it but it was a big car. I still remember how beautiful he had made the upholstery and everything. We had many rides while they were there - enjoying the visit very much.

I don't remember being with Emma much after she was married. Only once I had a chance to go to Fargo on vacation. I went by train and paid my own fare. Emma and

Fritz had two little tykes – Donald and Raymond. I had a very beautiful dress that had a bunch of grapes on it - a dress-up dress. Raymond got hold of that dress and he ate a grape off it - and I nearly died, I thought that the child would. And you know, it was shortly after that visit that Raymond met his death. The first thing that I thought of was “Oh, you don’t suppose that he died from that grape?” At that time I didn’t know that he had met with an accident.

At your home in Hawley - We were on vacation and had been up at Milnor - at that time we did meet all you children. But of course, it was so many years ago that I don’t remember much about that.

## Hand Painted China

Your mother used to do such beautiful hand-painted china work. I remember that your dad had these dishes on the table. I felt that these dishes should have been so prized that they should have been put aside and not used. And here I was - criticizing - but I just didn’t dare say a word so I just shut up. I imagine that a lot of those were broken.

DK - I still have some of them. Not many though.

H - She had, I guess, a whole set of them.

DK - I have part of a tea set - that is I have a plate, saucer and cup - service for four, and then a cake plate that doesn’t quite match. My Auntie Alice (Backman) has given me another plate. I gave some - a couple of pieces to Fred and Margret and Donald and Janet have a few pieces too - but not very many.

H - I had a pickle dish and I don’t know - something happened to it - but I know that I had it glued together just to keep it. Right now it is with all my things that are packed away. I don’t know really where it is - but I still have it. It is a good memory since she made it. Her name is printed on the back. She used to do that work - all very beautiful.

DK - Oh yes - do you know where she learned to do that?

H - Well, she must have learned it in Fargo. Perhaps before she was married.

DK - Yes, some of them had Oberg written on the back.

## Obergs

H - Oh yes - Emma Oberg - so it had to be - she and her mother lived in Fargo.

DK - I didn't know that.

H - Yes she lived with her mother all her life. Auntie had her home there. Of course there wasn't any other place for her . Orville's family -and Leonard's family had all that they could take care of.

DK - You said that she didn't really like Milnor anyway.

H - Well, she always said to me that she wanted to be in Welch. As I told you, she stood by the graves of her mother and father and then there was room for another grave so my dad said "You know if you want to be buried here, you can" and she said "No - I've got to go where Oberg is". His first name was Aaron, but she never called him anything but Oberg. When she spoke of her husband, it was always Oberg. "I've got to go where Oberg is" - she went back to Milnor, of course.

Then of course, Leonard was the one she lived with before she died. So she was right up in Milnor. But I know that she liked it down in Welch best. Every time she would come down to the home place she would say "Now I'm home again". After all those years - "Now I'm home again".

There were so many summers she would pack up her trunk and sometimes bring the two girls - Emma and Mabel. Then of course later on she would spend the summer down there with my mother.

## Magnuson Homestead

DK - That was where the Magnusons homesteaded?

H - Yes, and that farm was bought in 1876 and it is still in the family. Our son Jim is on it now. His address is Welch - Route 1.

Orville - Did you get the Magnusons and the Petersons straightened out?

DK - Yes, this morning.

H - Peterson was the first husband, and Auntie belonged to Peterson. But you see, she never recognized Peterson as her father. You know, she was a little child when Grandma married Magnuson.

DK - and he treated grandma so well.

H - and he took her under his wing because he always felt sorry for her. He was always so good to her and she always called him her father. She was very close to my mother. Aunt Christine was kind of a little bit different than the others. I guess I'm the same way because I lived with her twelve years while I went to school in Hastings. Twelve years spent with someone, you get to be kind of like them.

DK - You probably would pick up some of their mannerisms.

H - Anyway, I know that Auntie just enjoyed to come to Welch. That was her long suit. And Emma was there, she came down one summer, alone.

DK - That was before she married my dad –

H - Yes, and it must have been a couple of years before - and oh, she was having a good time at a party I had there with younger girls, you know. And say, do you know that her leg got so bad - she had hurt her knee before - I don't remember how it started. But anyway she landed at the doctor's and was taken to the hospital in St. Paul. She was in the hospital for quite a while and they did quite a bit to her knee. Then she came back - my uncle went up and got her. She says " I can leave, but I've no place to go" . He said "O.K., get your clothes on and you come back with me" - to Hastings. So he had a cab - they had hacks in those days to take you around in - and he took one of those and got her home. Then my mother came up and she took Emma to her place. So it was my mother, never my aunt - who took care of everybody - that was in her. I don't believe she was down again. Her leg was quite stiff - she walked stiff legged. So she had quite a siege with that leg. Then, of course, every Christmas they would send us gifts, always something real nice. Then my mother would make up a box of food and send it to them. In that box of food was cheese, my mother made cheese. (They enjoyed cheese.) They just waited for that box to come. Your dad told her that was the best thing that he ever ate. She also sent meats and made a roll of butter. It was good that they had good (fast)

shipping in those days. The butter was all rolled up in cloth so that it would not leak. It would arrive nice and hard - just as good as when it was shipped. I wouldn't be able to make the cheese - I know what they did, but I wouldn't be able to start it.

## Emma

It was a very close connection between us (and your mother and father) Mabel would come down sometimes, but she wasn't quite like Emma was. Emma had a different personality from Mabel.

DK - I was told that my mother was a seamstress - at Moody's or some store in Fargo.

H - I don't know what she did, I suppose it was (so).

DK - I still have her old Singer treadle sewing machine. The latest patent number on it is 1915. She had it before she married my dad.

H - What year were they married?

DK - I think 1920, I can look it up.

H - I'm sure, because it was before I graduated, and I graduated in 1921. I remember when they came down here on their wedding trip.

DK - I have some pictures, or have seen pictures of them on their wedding trip.

H- Well, I suppose that I am in some of those. Well, somebody had a black taffeta dress with a white collar - it's me. If I find any of those pictures I will mail them to you. ----  
----- You see, you went entirely to the father's side of the family and nobody knew anything about you. I don't really think your father wanted anyone to know about you. At least, that was the feeling we got. That he would rather not have anything to do with Emma's people.

DK - I think that it was because he was so hurt (by the loss). He never talked about my mother unless I asked him. It was very difficult for him to speak of it.

H - Grandma was the sweetest thing in the world, but she could be so nerve wracking, and I can understand your father - that he did not want her to come in and take care

of you children. Not to downgrade either, but she was with us so much, I know little things that happened. Once, Hazel was making rennet and every time she got a cup of water, your grandma took it and dumped it in the dishwasher. Hazel was ready to scream - and mother just said "just be quiet, take another one and shut up" you see, that's how mother and auntie got along. Mother never crossed her. I can truthfully say, she would make you nervous. I can understand, for her to be there, and she was getting along in years, Auntie was in her 70's and could not take care of little kids.

Emma died in May - and we were married in August.

Auntie was good, but she was so finicky. Things had to be washed so many times. We always let her have her own way. I'm sure that Emma had a lot of hardships when you kids were little, because grandma had her own way of raising kids.

I never interfered with raising my grandchildren. It's the mother's duty to do it (and the father).

As for your mother I remember her as a little girl, when she used to come down - we had a lot of fun. She would play with me. We enjoyed her very much. After high school though, I only saw her when I spent one week up there, and that week Mabel spoiled for us. Mabel had had an operation, and she also brought her kid in (Lyle) and he had been circumcised that week. Here Emma had to run to the hospital to see them.

Emma's two and Mable's three - and I was on vacation - and babysitting.

Donald was a fright - he could get into more things - the baby was only 17 months old (Raymond) and he was just the age to get into things. So I had them on the (enclosed) front porch so that they could not run off. Donald got a chair and unhooked the door and they ran off - all in different directions (Eunice, too). When Emma came home, I was so tired. She says "How'd you get along?" and I said, I didn't. Five of them was a little too much for me. Donald was the limit! He was only about four or five.

After that, (about 1925) I never had another visit with Emma. Auntie (your grandma) came down for our wedding in August and there was a lot of crying - (for Emma and for the wedding).

I don't think that any of us could accept that Emma should go like that. Your dad did well in raising you children anyway. It was very wonderful.





