

9-1-2016

Her strong faith brought her to America

Eva Johansson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag>



Part of the [Genealogy Commons](#), and the [Scandinavian Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Johansson, Eva (2016) "Her strong faith brought her to America," *Swedish American Genealogist*. Vol. 36 : No. 3 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol36/iss3/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Swedish American Genealogist by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

Her strong faith brought her to America

The story of an early immigrant to Utah and her life there

BY EVA JOHANSSON

On 6 June 2013, we meet for the very first time, cousin Lynette and me. She had traveled far, all the way from Arizona in the United States, to see the farm in central Halland in Sweden where her great-grandmother was born. With her on her trip, she had her husband Lynn Miles and sister Sharol with husband Bill Moore.

Lynette and I had been in touch for over a year, and sent each other a lot of information via e-mail. Now we could finally meet. And we knew instinctively that we were related. Lynette's great-grandmother Albertina and my great-grandfather Emanuel were siblings.

My great-grandfather Emanuel Larsson (b. 28 May 1842 in Askome, Hall.), had six siblings. Three of them died as infants, the rest grew up to be adults. The oldest sister was named Albertina and she immigrated to America. Her sister Josefina moved to Denmark and their little brother Carl Alfred stayed at home and bought a farm in the neighboring parish.

Albertina - a strong woman

This story is about Albertina Larsdotter, strong and stubborn, her hat high on her head. She traveled halfway around the world, had a strong religious conviction, and gave birth to 14 children.

This her family knew nothing about that day of 15 January 1847 when she was born on the farm Svenstorp in Köinge parish in Halland, a few miles north of the parish church. Her parents, Lars Arvidsson (b. 1 Dec. 1817 in Askome) and Anna Christina Svensdotter (b. 7 Apr. 1819 in Köinge), had bought the farm in 1843 and moved here when their eldest son Emanuel was a year old. During her childhood, Albertina experienced the death of half of her siblings. Maybe this affected her religious faith.

To Denmark

Lars Arvidsson was not only a farmer, he



Albertina Larsdotter around 1876.

was also a constable in the village. A few years after he bought the farm, Lars sued the seller after some irregularities were detected with the sale. Lars won the battle. Some time later he bought another part of Svenstorp, so that he now owned the whole homestead. But in 1860 he sold everything after they became insolvent, and Lars and Christina settled in the little cottage Kopparåsen where they lived until his death 40 years later. The children followed them to the cottage.

When Albertina was 17, she moved to the city of Falkenberg and became a maid in a family. It was a sixteen-day journey away, so visits home at the cottage maybe didn't happen so often.

In Falkenberg, she became a maid at Johan August Lindgren's, who was a tailor, and his wife Beata Charlotta Norman. They lived at block number 50, at the address Storgatan 38, where the tailor and his family rented a home. The owner of the property was a blacksmith's widow Inger



Svenstorp in Köinge parish (Hall). (Photo by Eva Johansson).

Christina Möller. There is a famous painting from 1892 that shows this particular house and courtyard. The painting was made by Robert Lundberg. In 1903 the houses were demolished.

After a year in Falkenberg, Albertina moved to the parish of Morup where she worked as a maid for the tenant Alfred Strömberg and his wife Anna Maria Norman on the farm Sjöbohl. With them she stayed for two years, then moved back home, and the next year immigrated to Randers in Jutland in Denmark. This was in August 1868.

There she soon married Nils Nilsson, 20 years old and from Kristianstad in Sweden. They had two children, Alma Maria, who died three weeks old in 1871, and a son Nils born 12 Mar. 1873 in Randers. He came with his mother in 1877 directly to Utah. He died 26 Mar. 1954, in Blackfoot, Bingham Co., ID.

Why she chose to leave Sweden for Denmark we do not know, but it was not unusual for Swedish adolescents to be guest workers there, as well as in Germany.

Mormon

It was in Randers Albertina found her faith and became a Mormon. On 26 August 1876, she was baptized there into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was founded in 1830 by the American Joseph Smith and is now headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A.

Albertina was a very devout Mormon and when Nils did not share the same faith they divorced.

In 1850, the Mormons had arrived in Denmark and Sweden. In Denmark, there was freedom of religion since 1849, but in Sweden free churches were still prohibited. It took until 1858 before the law was changed and leaving the Swedish State Church became possible, under the condition that you joined another church.

As an adult Albertina's older brother Emanuel became a religious brooder. Perhaps Albertina was influenced by him. Her faith is well documented and was strong throughout her life and her children and descendants in later generations are still active Mormons. Lynette, great-granddaughter of Albertina, and her husband Lynn have assignments within the church where they live.

Albertina took her young son Nils and went to America and the Mormon Church in Utah. They arrived in July 1877, and came to Heber City in Wasatch Co., just east of Salt Lake City where she became a housekeeper for Bengt Petersson (name in Sweden: Persson), also a Mormon from Sweden. He was born 12 July 1825 in Högseröd (Malm.) and had recently been widowed, his 2nd wife was Johanna Jonsdotter, born 24 July 1834 in Farhult (Malm.), who died 4 April 1877 in Heber City. She left Bengt with six minor children.

14 children

It was not long before Albertina and Bengt married. It actually only took a few months. But their first child, daughter Martha, was not born until a year later, in July 1878. She died at only three months old, but was followed by eleven siblings. Over the next twelve years Albertina was either pregnant or had a newborn baby to care for. Eight of Albertina's 14 children lived only a short time after birth, up to a few months. According to her son Hyrum, she had had difficulty breastfeeding her children, she had too little milk, and they probably did not get enough nutrition when they needed it most.

Bengt was already 50 when he started a new family with twelve children to come. In Sweden, he had been married in his 20's and had three children before his wife died. He remarried and had five children before the family emigrated in 1870. In the U.S., a daughter was born before Bengt lost his wife.

They immigrated for the same reason as Albertina, they had become Mormons and wanted to get to the temple in Salt Lake City. An additional factor was the severe famine in Sweden in the late 1860's, which meant that many families at that time searched for a better future in America.

The farm

The same summer as Albertina and Nils arrived in the family, Bengt had acquired two areas of land of 80 acres each, through the Homestead Act. The area is located along Lake Creek about one mile east of Heber City, Utah. Here they built themselves a log house. Behind the house ran a stream of cold and clear water.

Lynette tells us about how the tough years of hard work were for those who were settlers in this area. They were attacked by Indians once, when neither parents nor the older siblings were at home. But the older sister Josephine managed to get away with



The area of Utah where Albertina and her husband Bengt Peterson had their farm.



Modern picture from Heber City, Utah.

the smaller children into a shed and keep them quiet. Through the cracks in the wall they could see the Indians go through the main house.

Bengt was, as many Scandinavians, big and strong. At home in Sweden, he had been the only farmhand in the parish who could lift the largest stone and throw it far away. His strength was not matched in goodness; he was a strict and unforgiving father, his children have said. They often were beaten, both by hand and with a whip, and had to go to bed without supper. But then Albertina came to them at night with something to eat and to comfort. Albertina's and Bengt's son Hyrum (Lynette's grandfather) was beaten by a teacher at school when he was twelve years old and refused to return. Bengt forced him to do so but just when they arrived at the school Hyrum ran away. After three years he returned home, but his father didn't want to see him. Two of Hyrum's brothers ran away



Bengt Peterson (1825-1913).

from their father at the same age and several of the children and grandchildren have said that Bengt was a moody and hard man with excessive demands on his children.

Albertina, however, was a good, friendly, and happy mother and grandmother. "She never raised her voice against anyone" her granddaughter Olive Bowen has said.

Albertina's faith

Since she had become a Mormon, during her life Albertina had a very strong faith, which was a guidance during the remainder of her life. In her old age she wrote a story about her life. She was deeply involved in the local Mormon Church and the family went twice a year to the big temple in Salt Lake City. They always paid their tithes to the church, even when they themselves were poor, and used only shops owned by Mormons.

In 1894 Bengt was appointed to go to Sweden as a missionary for the Mormon Church for one year. Then Albertina and the children who were at home had to run the farm, as best they could.

Eventually the family sold the farm and Albertina and Bengt spent their last years together in Driggs, Teton Co., ID, with their daughter Emily Ann *Josephine*, married Olmstead.

On 24 Nov. 1913 Bengt died in Driggs. Albertina then settled down in Salt Lake City, right next to the large temple where she volunteered well into old age. Her children and grandchildren took care of her and she passed away on July 7, 1932, at the age of 85.



Albertina in Salt Lake City ca 1916.



The Salt Lake Temple. (Photo by E. Thorsell 2014.)

Editor's note: The Salt Lake Temple is a temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) located on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, United States. At 253,015 square feet (23,505.9 m²), it is the largest LDS temple by floor area. Dedicated in 1893, it is the sixth temple completed by the church, requiring 40 years to complete, and the fourth temple built since the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1846.[Wikipedia]

The author Eva Johansson lives in Sweden.
E-mail: <eva@evagun.se>