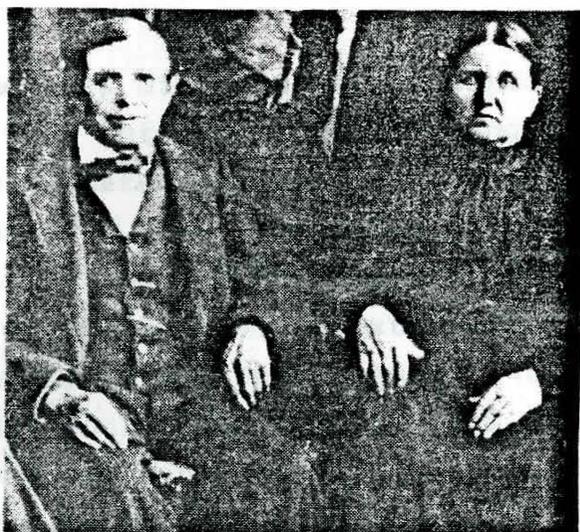


**Researched  
and  
Written  
By  
Gilbert R. Olson  
and  
Family**

**Project begun in 1977**

Jonas Olson  
Born 1831  
Died 1909



Anna Britta Hed  
Born 1835  
Died 1924

Jonas Olson was born at Skaraborgs Lan Westergotland, Sweden, November 27, 1831. In 1861, he migrated to America. Whether he came alone and where in America he spent the first few years is not known. However, in 1864, he homesteaded on Section 28 Alfsborg Township, Sibley County, Minnesota. This land is located about seven miles southeast of Winthrop, 23 miles northwest of St. Peter, and fifteen miles northeast of New Ulm. How or when he arrived in St. Paul is not known. The trip from St. Paul to St. Peter was made via river steamboat down the Minnesota River. The trip from St. Peter to the Bernadotte area was made either by foot or by oxcart, as that was about the only transportation available at the time. Here he met his wife-to-be, Anna Britta Hed.

Anna Hed was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Johannes Hed. They homesteaded in the same neighborhood that same year (1864). In fact there were eight couples who homesteaded in the same neighborhood that same year including Jonas Olson and Johannes Hed. The Heds also came from Westergotland, Sweden. The other six families were Swedes also, whether they came from the same place in Sweden is not known. The Heds lived in another Swedish community known as New Sweden, which is located in Nicollet County about seven miles closer to St. Peter, for several years before they homesteaded in the Bernadotte area.

On December 17, 1864, Jonas Olson and Anna Britta Hed were joined in holy matrimony and thereby becoming the first couple to get married in Alfsborg Township (so it's stated in the Sibley County Historical Records).

With the help of his newly acquired in-laws and the other new settlers, they set about establishing their own home on their own land. These statements are, of course, assumptions, at least to a degree; however, they are based on recollections of conversations with mother and her older children.

Money, of course, was an extremely scarce item those days. Many of the newcomers arrived on America's shores practically penniless. They would stop and work and as they saved a little money they moved further west. There seems to be no information available as to where Grampa Jonas spent his first two years in America, so it can safely be assumed that he spent his first two years in the new world working his way west and trying to save a little money.

Although scarce, lumber was available in both St. Peter and New Ulm for those who had the money to pay for it. Possibly not all, but it's a safe bet that most of the very earliest settlers made their first houses out of logs or sod, both of which were plentiful, and available for the taking if you had strong backs. According to Nicollet County Historical Records, there were between 250 and 300 people living in St. Peter at this time (1864). However, there was a settlement located just a short distance to the north of St. Peter, known as Traverse des Sioux. According to records, this had been an Indian camping ground or village for many years. As the white man moved in, fur traders, missionaries, etc., it became quite an active trading center; that is, until St. Peter was picked as the county seat of Nicollet County. After that it soon faded into the past.

Their first crop was not planted until in the Spring of 1865. The planting, cultivating and harvesting were done with hand tools the first few years. The only equipment they had was mostly homemade. Oxen was the only power available to them the first few years. Some of the earlier settlers closer to the river had some horses, and, of course, soldiers and government people had horses.

The only fuel available was wood. Their land was about ten or twelve miles from the closest woods. Wood was used for both cooking and heating, so cutting up enough wood to last all year was almost a full time winter job. After the trees were cut down, they had to be cut up by hand in lengths to be loaded on their homemade

sleighs and hauled home by oxen. After they got it home, it had to be cut and split into stove size. It should be remembered this was all accomplished by oxen and manpower. Gasoline engines and electric motors were unheard of at that time. In fact, no telephones, no mailmen, no newspapers, no organized roads, just cross-country trails. Kerosene lamps were available, however, kerosene was scarce and cost money, so homemade candles made from waste fat furnished most of the light.

In those days it was absolutely essential that you get along with your neighbors, because they had to depend on each other for help for almost everything. Communication with the outside world was slow, seldom and difficult. Shopping was a big task in those days. You couldn't jump into your car and be at a well-stocked super market in ten minutes. They climbed into a homemade wooden oxcart and went for an all day ride to St. Peter, twenty-three miles away. Mother said they usually went to St. Peter instead of New Ulm even though New Ulm was considerably closer. The reason for this was the fact that New Ulm was almost 100% German speaking people, many having come from Ulm, Germany. That's why it's called New Ulm. This made it difficult to shop, so they preferred to travel the extra miles. Of course, they had very little produce or grain to sell, so they just had enough money to buy bare essentials the first few years. The trip was usually a two-day event. Both New Ulm and St. Peter already had hotels, but I have heard it said that they often stayed with other new settlers along the way.

Mail. For the first four years they had to go seven miles for their mail. The Government had established a post office on the Fort Snelling Fort Ridgely trail or road, about a half mile south of what is now Winthrop, Minnesota. This post office was known as the Eagle City Post Office and was established in the year 1858. The first post master was a man by the name of Michael Cummings. According to the records, he operated a tavern in conjunction with the Post Office; seems like an odd combination, but so says the record. However, they say the tavern burned down in 1862. The Post Office, of course, continued and served the Bernadotte settlers until 1968, when a post office opened at

Bernadotte. Mail was only picked up and delivered once a week to begin with. Mail between Fort Snelling and Fort Ridgely was delivered by horseback. The trail was established primarily to deliver messages and mail to soldiers who were stationed at Fort Ridgely, before, during and for sometime after the big and disastrous Indian uprising of 1862, which killed over 1,000 people, Indians and Whites, plus hundreds more wounded.

Church. In May 1866, the famous Bernadotte Lutheran Church was organized. Gramma and Grampa Olson and all the other newcomers became charter members. Services for the first few years were held in people's homes. In 1872, the first church building was erected. It was replaced by the present brick church in 1897. This building is still in good condition. They still have a very active congregation probably one of the most active country congregations in the state. In the early days especially (before automobiles) it provided most of the community entertainment. To this day (1978), they still put on one of the biggest church dinners each fall of any church in the state. The menu is always lutefisk and chicken, with all the trimmings. People come there by the hundreds from miles around.

In 1895 they organized a cooperative creamery in Bernadotte. Up to this time each farmer had to churn his own butter and haul it to either St. Peter or New Ulm, along with their eggs and other produce they had to sell. Now Bernadotte had a creamery, a store, a post office and an aggressive church. This made the burden of life considerably easier for these early pioneers, who settled in that area on barren prairie land twenty years earlier. In addition to the development of Bernadotte, the Rail Road had come to Winthrop in 1881, so it too was developing very rapidly into a good trading center. This meant that all their bulky products, such as grain, hogs and cattle that they had for sale, no longer had to be taken to New Ulm or St. Peter.

Schools. The first school was organized in 1867. It became known as Sibley County School District No. 46. There are no records available as to the number of pupils enrolled until in the year 1870. By that time it had an enrollment of 27 pupils. An interesting fact is that for the first years they only had four months of school. The

months of October and November in the fall, and April and May in the spring. There is no record who the first teacher was, however, in 1876 a man by the name of Angus McGinnis was the teacher, and he was paid a salary of \$30 per month. Grampa Jonas Olson helped organize the school and was elected to the first Board of Directors of the school.

Retirement. They continued to live on their homestead until 1908, when they retired and moved to Winthrop. Uncle John and his wife Ida took over the farming operation at that time. During those 44 years, 1864 to 1908, they developed their homestead into a very productive and successful farming operation. In addition, during that same period they raised nine children, five boys and four girls; all of whom grew up to be devoted christian men and women. They were total abstainers. Alcoholic beverages of all kinds were strictly forbidden in their home. In fact, very few of the men used tobacco of any kind.

Health. It's almost unbelievable, but these nine children were born without any medically trained help whatsoever. The closest medical help would have been New Ulm or St. Peter, and it's not certain whether either one had doctors the first few years or not. Modern day vaccines were unheard of those days. When any of the childhood diseases, such as small pox, scarlet fever, measles, diphtheria, hit the community, there must have been some pretty worried mothers. Evidence as to the seriousness of these diseases can be found in a lot of the old cemeteries. It's not uncommon to find graves of two, three and four children from one family, all under eight years of age, having died in one year. From a health standpoint, the most serious thing that seems to have happened is that someone dropped Uncle Arthur, the youngest son, when he was a baby and injured his back so that he grew up and remained a hump-back for the rest of his life. The only other serious accident known is when Uncle Oscar, the oldest son, was kicked by a cow while milking and received a broken arm. His arm was set by Grampa and put in splints. There were no pain killers available, so the pain however great just had to be endured.

Back row  
left to  
right

Front row  
left to  
right

Josephine

Carl

Ida

Emil

Arthur

Emma

John

Grandpa

Grandma

Selma

Oscar



This Picture Taken Approximately 1900

Josephine

Born 1862  
Died 1926  
Buried---Clear Lake Luthran  
Church Cemetery

Carl

Born 1874  
Died 1948  
Buried---Willmar, Minnesota

Oscar

Born 1865  
Died 1955  
Buried---Clear Lake Luthran  
Church Cemetery

Emil

Born 1872  
Died 1950  
Buried---Bernadotte Luthran  
Church Cemetery

Arthur

Born 1867  
Died 1910  
Buried---Bernadotte Luthran  
Church Cemetery

John

Born 1871  
Died 1916  
Buried---Bernadotte Luthran  
Church Cemetery

Ida

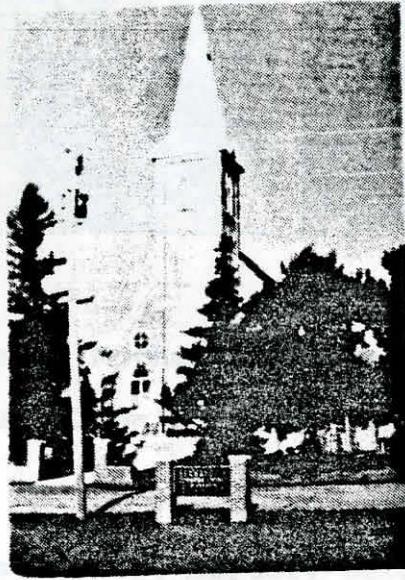
Born 1870  
Died 1955  
Buried---Lakewood Cemetery  
Minneapolis, Minn.

Selma

Born 1875  
Died 1951  
Buried---Bernadotte Luthran  
Church Cemetery

Emma

Born 1877  
Died 1928  
Buried---Winthrop, Minnesota



The above picture is a recent picture of the Bernadotte Lutheran church as it appears today. As previously stated, this building was built in 1897 making it 81 years old this year. It has been well maintained so it is in excellent condition. It will no doubt be there for many generations to come. Immediately behind the church is a beautifully maintained cemetery where six of the family members are buried.

(The facts set forth in this writing have been gathered from historical records of both Sibley and Nicollet counties as well as state historical records. Of course some information has been contributed by some of the older members of the second generation still alive. Possibly all dates are not 100% accurate, however, we believe them to be reasonably correct.)

John Olson

Born Oct. 30, 1859

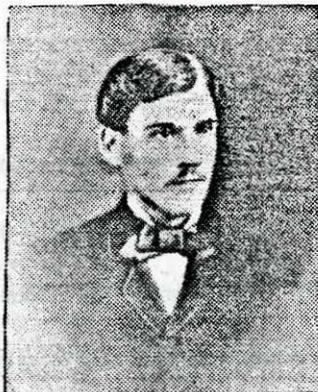
Died Dec. 1, 1938

Buried Clear Lake

Swedish Lutheran

Church Cemetery,

Gibbon, Minnesota



Josephine Olson

Born Oct. 31, 1861

Died Dec. 21, 1926

Buried Clear Lake

Swedish Lutheran

Church Cemetery,

Gibbon, Minnesota



Josephine's (Mother) early history has been pretty well covered in the Jonas Olson's family history both by words and pictures.

Unfortunately the history of John's (Father) family background is very limited mostly because those in our family that knew are either too old to remember or too young to know. The only pictures available is the one of him shown above and the one in the family picture, as a result the information that follows is strictly from the memory of the writer. Although my recollections are rather vague I believe them to be reasonably accurate.

John Olson was born at Asa, Landa, Holland Sweden Oct. 30, 1859. In 1877 at the very young age of 18 he decided to leave for America, as they used to say in those days the (land of freedom and opportunity). As nearly as is known he came all alone. For reasons unknown he first landed at Redwing, Minnesota. How he got there from New York is not known, maybe by boat up the Mississippi river from Chicago. As nearly as is known he had no friends or relatives there so why he stopped there is mystery, possibly he ran out of money.

He came from a family of six, three girls and three boys. His parents never came to America so none of us ever met or knew our Grandparents on Father's side. The brothers were named August and Charley, they both came to America also.

Uncle August who I believe was the oldest of the three spent most of his life at sea as a sailor, he had four children, all born in Sweden but came to America as soon as they grew up. Two boys and two daughters, their names were Oscar, Carl, Bertha and Axelena. Uncle August apparently became a severe alcoholic no doubt brought about by the rough and lonely life of a sailor. For some reason he never went back to his wife after he left the sea. He was found dead on a down town street here in Minneapolis on a hot fourth of July some time between 1912 and 1916. We estimate his age at the time of death in his middle sixties. Cause of his death was generally believed to be over intoxicification. He is buried in the Cedar Lake Cemetery, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Uncle Charley He came to America as a single man, he soon married a young lady by the name of Anna, what her last name was or where she was from none of us seem to remember. Where they started their married life no one alive in our family seems to know either. My first recollection of Uncle Charley's family is that they lived on a farm near Herman, Minnesota. They had six children all born out there as nearly as anyone can remember.

Uncle Charley died there about 1905. While their children were all quite young. Cause of his untimely death seems to be somewhat of a mystery. Seems I can faintly remember hearing it said that he developed what was known as brain fever in those days. This illness seems to have affected his mind, and as a result he either

accidentally or intentionally drank fly poison, this of course resulted in almost immediate death. After his death the family moved to a small community in Northern Minnesota by the name of Freedom, Minnesota, here the family grew up. As the children grew up they scattered throughout the United States, I know a number of them settled in Southern California. Whether or not any of the originals of either Uncle Charley's or Uncle August's children are still alive at this writing is not definitely known (1979). It's possible that some of Charley's youngest children may still be alive, they would be our full cousins on Father's side. As I recall Charley's family were very devoted christians. Uncle Charley is buried in the village cemetery at Herman, Minnesota.

Father had three sisters none of whom ever came to America. However their sons did. As a very young boy I can remember Father's nephews coming out home to the farm directly from Sweden. Father and Mother would put them up long enough to where they became acclimated to conditions in this country and found employment. If I am not mistaken I believe father even helped some of them financially while they were getting started. These fellows were direct cousins of ours also. As I recall it there were boys from three different families. Their last names were Johnson, Jenson and Nelson. As I remember hearing most of them did pretty well. One in particular by the name of Oscar Johnson became very wealthy, at least temporarily. As I was told he went to Alaska during the Alaskan Gold rush and struck it rich. However he lost most of it (as so often happens) by investing it by constructing a large business building in downtown Seattle. It is supposed to have been the largest building in Seattle at the time, which was

about 70 years ago. The only nephew of Fathers that I can recall meeting was Joe Nelson, he and a brother by the name of Albin Nelson both lived and died here in Minneapolis. There are still two sons of theirs living here. Robert, son of Joe, lives in Shakopee and Edgar, son of Albin lives here in Minneapolis. They are both second cousins of ours. With the possible exception of a few of Uncle Charley's youngest children who live in Southern California and are probably still alive we have no knowledge of the whereabouts of any other of Father's relatives. There are without doubt a lot of second and third cousins still alive both in this country and Sweden.

#### Father's Employment

He said his first job in America was working for an Irish farmer in Goodhue County just out of Redwing. I recall hearing him tell about this experience, he couldn't speak a word of English and his boss couldn't understand a word of Swedish. How long he stayed on this job is not known.

He said his next job was helping build the spillway by St. Anthony Falls on the Mississippi River for Pillsbury Flour Mills. It seems they used water power in the early days to operate their wheat grinders. It is not known how long he stayed on this job.

The next work he spoke of was a job in a cabinet factory. Here he stayed until he moved to the farm in 1887, he must have worked at this type of work for quite awhile because he was pretty handy with wood working tools, this proved to be a great help to him on the farm in later years.

About this time (1883) good fortune came his way, he met

a very beautiful, great and kind young lady from the Bernadotte area near Winthrop, Minnesota. Her name was Josephine Olson (same last name as his) she was the oldest child of the Jonas Olson's as is shown in the history of the Jonas Olson family.

The picture on page one was their wedding picture, it's the first picture available of Father, (they were a handsome couple). Josephine had come down to the big city to work as a house maid for wealthy families. This seemed to be the thing to do in those days of large farm families.

We cannot find any records as to the actual date of their marriage, however, we know it took place either in late 1883 or early in 1884. Their first child was born on July the 5th, 1885, they named her Ellen, a second child was born on January 23, 1887, they named her Emelia.

Up to this point Father was still working as a cabinet maker. However, at this time a great change came into their lives. With the help of Josephine's parents they purchased land near Gibbon, Minnesota about nine miles Northwest of Grandpa and Grandma Olson's farm in Bernadotte and two and one-half miles Southeast of Gibbon, Minnesota. Here they had eight more children. All ten lived and grew up to be full grown men and women. John (Father) Josephine (Mother) both lived out their lives on this land. On the following pages an attempt will be made to tell how they fed, clothed and educated all us children.

Although it was 23 years later than when Grandpa and Grandma Jonas Olson started they were still pretty much in a state of privation. Farm machinery was becoming available but money was

still a scarce commodity. The oxen stage was over so horses now furnished all the power and transportation, however, because of the lack of money most of the work was done with hand tools. Grain was sown with a walking hand spreader. Corn was planted with a hand planter, one hill at a time.

It was harvested by hand also, cut by hand placed in shocks to dry and to be husked out later. Although we know that the grain (wheat, oats and barley) was sown by hand no one in the family alive today seems to remember how these first small grain crops were harvested. Leonard the oldest member of the family still alive (1979) says his early recollections of work on the farm was plowing with a walking plow and cultivating with a hand cultivator drawn by one horse. This was a considerable advancement as compared to 25 years earlier. Both the cultivator and plow were considered modern equipment. According to Leonard it was still being done this way in the early Nineteen Hundreds when he was 12 or 13 years old.

The above paragraph explains how they did it to some extent. The big mystery is how did they make money or a living? The first things they had to sell were eggs, homemade butter, and possibly a few hogs. After the first harvest they probably had some wheat to sell. Wheat was the first cash crop that produced a fairly good return and was quite simple to grow. Eggs and butter were next in line for a fast cash return. Eggs were usually traded for groceries, mostly staples, such as sugar and other spices. Up until 1910 when the Gibbon Co-op creamery was organized they made their own butter and sold it for cash. Although no one remembers, it is quite certain that Father worked out part time,

especially at first to earn a little extra much needed cash. He was a fairly good carpenter.

Food. What did we eat? Although there is no way of knowing for certain I feel sure that for the first 20 years, 1887 to 1907 they raised close to 99% of what we ate. In fact, it seems everything we ate we raised; for example, each year we would have a large patch of sugar cane. A neighbor by the name of Anderson had a sugar cane press and a large cooking pan. Some years we had up to 200 gallons of molasses, compared to butter molasses was a much cheaper spread, navy beans, dried peas, potatoes, carrots, beets, dried apples, onions and in the summer time a lot of fresh vegetables of all kinds. Corn meal bread, corn meal and rye meal mush were regular items on the menu, with a lot of homemade molasses, a Saturday night special was just plain home grown, home cooked beans. Mother would throw in a chunk of fat pork. All of these dishes were delicious then and still are to this day. There is only one problem, they just simply contain too many calories for today's style of life. Bread was always plentiful, they raised their own wheat so Father would take a few sacks of wheat to the flour mill and have it ground and bring nice white flour back, they did the same with both rye and corn. Because of cost meat was a very scarce item on the menu. Also it must be remembered that there was no artificial or mechanical refrigeration of any kind available, meat was of course very perishable so without refrigeration it had to be consumed soon after it was prepared or cured with heavy salt and smoked. So much for food.

Clothing. I'll begin this part of our bringing up that I remember the best, that is the joy I experienced when I received my first boughten suit. It was in the Spring of 1916, the new suit was for my confirmation, up until that time I had worn hand me downs from my older brothers or sometimes cloths which the folks received from other relatives or friends. In todays standards this doesn't happen even in the poorest of families. This practice took place among our whole family, girls and boys. It was practiced it seems by all our neighbors and relatives so it was not a disgrace, although I suppose we were poor we didn't feel that way, some how our parents had a way of making us feel well off even though we were frightfully poor money wise.

Much of our clothing was strictly home grown and home made. Father had sheep, enough of them so that they produced enough wool for all our mittens, stockings, scarfs, headware, some under garments and bed quilts. They would shear the wool from the sheep each spring. They would then wash it, card-it and spin it into yarn and roll it into large balls of wool yarn, put them away for knitting into stockings or whatever at a later date. Mother and Father both spent many, many hours (mostly in the Winter) knitting. I am not certain but I believe the older sisters were capable of doing all of these things also and no doubt helped along.

Education. All of us children are graduates of Knox College better known as the school of (Hard Knox) or still better known as Sibley County (District No. 72) grades from first grade through eighth grade only. The school was located a mile and a half from our home to the Southeast. The school term lasted eight

months, September to May. We walked this mile and a half morning and afternoon every day unless it was a severe snow storm then Father or some one else would pick us up by bob sleigh. Only two of the ten went on to high school, Olive and Leona both graduated from high school, Olive went on to college and became the only one in the family to graduate from college. She went to Montana and taught school for a number of years. The writer did not attend any formal school beyond eighth grade, however after I got involved in dairy processing, specifically (butter making) I attended three different short courses at the University of Minnesota. After I got my first job as a cooperative creamery manager I found myself sadly lacking in knowledge in the area of accounting, as a result I entered into a correspondence course in higher accounting offered by the LaSalle Extension University of Chicago, Illinois. This later education proved to be tremendously beneficial to me in my work in later years. Seventy years ago education was not considered nearly as essential as it is today. Of all the children in our neighborhood my age and older only two that I can recall graduated from college, they were sister Olive and a neighbor boy by the name of Holly Allerson. This was out of a total of about fifty children.

Transportation. The railroad came through Gibbon in the year of 1886. This of course changed the style of life tremendously getting from one town to another or to the big cities (Minneapolis and St. Paul) became a very simple problem. Roads along section lines were being built very rapidly. Horse and buggy was the only means of getting around the community, that is, besides bicycles or horse back or by foot, walking three or four miles to visit a friend

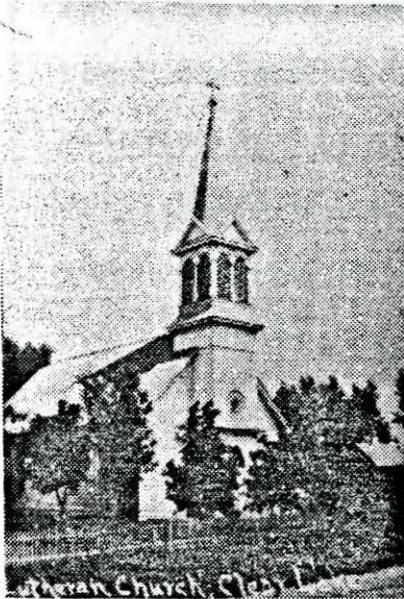
was not uncommon. The first automobiles or motorcycles did not show up in the community until about 1911 or 12, in fact, our folks didn't buy their first car until 1915. It was a 1915 Model T Ford and if I remember correctly they paid \$360.00 for it. It was truly a great car and a big event in the history of the John Olson Family. With the exception of the telephone this Ford automobile was the first real step forward in the way of modernizing our way of life. The telephone was installed in either 1907 or 1908. It should be remembered we still had no electricity, no radio, no television, so it should not be hard to understand why it created excitement. In fact at that time we had never even heard of radio or television yet.

Religion. Religion was a very important part of our

over-all education and bringing up. Both Father and Mother were brought up Lutherans so naturally we children were. The picture

to the left is a picture of the Clear Lake Swedish Lutheran Church. It is located four miles do south of our home or farm. The church was organized in 1871.

Evidently the Swedish church in Gibbon had not been organized yet so the folks joined the Clear Lake Church. A Swedish Lutheran church was finally organized in Gibbon. Even though it was a mile and a half further then the church in Gibbon they stayed with the church at Clear Lake. Eight



of us children were baptized there and all ten of us were confirmed there. The folks were very devoted christians. We went to church and Sunday school every Sunday. Sometimes the platform buggy wouldn't

hold all of us so some either stayed home or rode bicycle. During the confirmation years those that were being confirmed had to go once during the week also for the last three or four months of study. This meant eight miles each trip, either by horse and buggy, bicycle, or by foot. Some how the folks managed to make going to church a happy event, I cannot remember ever hearing any of the children object to going.

In back of the church is a well kept cemetery. Father and Mother are both buried there and so is sister Ellen and both brothers Harry and Selmer. Uncle Oscar and his two children Ida and Clarence are also buried there.

Control. How did they control all of us children? The answer is organization, discipline and love. I don't know who was responsible for organizing the work, Mother or Father. However, I can remember clearly that everyone from the age of six or seven years and older had some sort of responsibility. For instance when you reach the age of 10-11 or twelve you were assigned the job of bringing in all the fuel. Somehow they made you feel proud of yourself, keeping the woodbox full was important and I suppose it made you feel more grown up. Mother was always liberal with praise if you did well.

Discipline was firm but administered in a very mild or kind way. Mother had a way of disciplining you that just melted your heart. I cannot remember her ever striking or spanking any of us. If she disapproved of what was going on or what one of us was doing she would ask us in a nice way to stop it. If we didn't obey her request the first time she would try again and probably again, each time a little harsher, finally if we didn't abide by her wishes she would start to weep. That always worked.

Father was more lenient, he always played with us and was always for having fun. I can never recall him laying a hand on any one of us either. But when he thought we were too far out of order he had his own way of letting us know. All it took was that certain look in his eye and we would know what to do and did it. Our Mother and Father (Josephine and John) were great disciplinarians. We all knew that when they scolded us it was because they loved us. There never was any bitterness in their voices or any sign of hatred.

Front row  
left to  
right

Back row  
left to  
right

Viola

Harry

Father

Myrtle

Mother

Selmer

Emelia

Leona

Leonard

Ellen

Gilbert

Olive



This Picture Taken December 29, 1920

Ellen

Born 1885  
Died 1977  
Buried---Clear Lake Lutheran  
Church Cemetery  
Gibbon, Minn.

Olive

Born 1894  
Died 1963  
Buried---Montana National  
Cemetery  
Hardin, Montana

Emelia

Born 1887  
Died 1974  
Buried---City Cemetery  
Savage, Montana

Myrtle

Born 1897  
Died 1922  
Buried---City Cemetery  
Winthrop, Minn.

Leonard

Born 1888  
Died \_\_\_\_\_  
Buried---Emanuel Lutheran  
Church Cemetery  
Gibbon, Minn.

Gilbert

Born 1900  
Died \_\_\_\_\_  
Buried---Lake Wood Cemetery  
Minneapolis, Minn.

Harry

Born 1891  
Died 1975  
Buried---Clear Lake Lutheran  
Church Cemetery  
Gibbon, Minn.

Viola

Born 1902  
Died \_\_\_\_\_  
Buried--- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Selmer

Born 1893  
Died 1967  
Buried---Clear Lake Lutheran  
Church Cemetery  
Gibbon, Minn.

Leona

Born 1906  
Died \_\_\_\_\_  
Buried---City Cemetery  
Winthrop, Minn.

## Marriage and Grandchildren Record

Ellen

Married - Ed Nelson  
 5 children  
 Einer - step son  
 Merle  
 Beatrice  
 Eva Jane  
 Mary Ann

Leona

Married - Ralph Woods  
 5 children  
 Donald  
 Charley  
 Lois  
 Betty  
 Michael

Leonard

Married - Marcella Bandow  
 No children

Myrtle

Married - Elmer Axleson  
 No children

Harry

Married - Ellen Whim  
 3 children  
 Elaine  
 Ione  
 Arlo

Gilbert

Married - Verna Mueller  
 3 children  
 Romaine  
 Jay  
 JoAnn

Emelia

Married - Jens Miller  
 2 children  
 Lavern  
 Oriana

Viola

Married - Ernest Behnke  
 7 children  
 Wilbur  
 Walter  
 Warren  
 Marilyn  
 Lorraine  
 Larry  
 Marvel

Olive

Married - Ed Nelson  
 3 children  
 Burton  
 Jonnette  
 Keith

Selmer

Never married

As nearly as I can find out Dr. Flower was the first doctor to open up an office in Gibbon. It is believed that he arrived sometime between 1895 and 1900. Up to that time the closest doctors available were in New Ulm about fourteen miles away from our farm. However, it seems as though the folks relied very little on professional assistance. Home remedies were used almost entirely and apparently with a considerable degree of success because they brought all ten of us up to full manhood and womanhood. It should be remembered that all ten of us children were born without the assistance of a doctor and we were all born in a few months over twenty years. The only serious health problem that occurred was with brother Selmer. When he was nine years old he developed a severe case of Rheumatism in both of his legs. Mother always maintained that he got it from wading in a pool of water early in the spring while there was still ice in the water. They doctored with him for a number of years. They finally found a doctor in Minneapolis that succeeded in curing his right leg, although he was able to relieve the pain in his left leg it remained stiff for the rest of his life and as a result he always walked with a severe limp. He grew up and was able to provide for himself pretty well until his early sixties when it seemed to affect his mind. As a result he spent the last years of his life in the State Hospital at St. Peter for the mentally ill. Being crippled no doubt had much to do with him never getting married and his mental condition .

The only other tragedy was the early death of sister Myrtle, she died in her early twenties from female complication brought about by pregnancy. She was married less than a year and a half. The rest of us have all made it past seventy years of age, several have made it past ninty (Ellen and Leonard).

Although the occurrence of World War I can possibly not be classified as a tragedy for it all turned out well, it certainly was a tremendous period of anxiety and sadness in the family because both Harry and Leonard were called into service a brief explanation of their army careers follows.



Harry E. Olson  
Private 1st Class  
Third Pioneer Inf.

He joined the army on July 23, 1918 after brief booth training he was assigned to what he called a Supply Train and classified as a Wagoner.

This was a lucky break for him for it kept him out of the actual fighting. Their duties were to bring supplies of all kinds from the seaports up to the front lines. He said they would get close enough to the fighting so they could hear the noise from the front lines, cannon fire, etc. He received his honorable discharge on August 30, 1919 after having spent one year and one week in the army.



Leonard A. Olson  
Private 1st Class  
Co.L. 58th Infantry

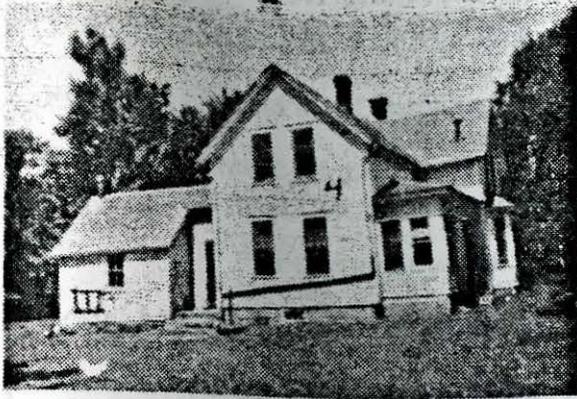
Leonard was not as lucky as brother Harry. He enlisted in the army on March 18, 1918, by early June he was already up in the front lines taking part in battles. He was involved in a number of gruesome battles. During the month of September (date not known) he was involved in a fierce battle where

almost his entire company (Co.L. (250 men) were destroyed. Those that survived of which he was one, were so scattered that they could not report back to their base headquarters for several days. As a result Leonard was declared missing in action. In a few days we received a telegram to that effect. This of course upset the family terribly. Mother would say repeatedly if she only knew where he was. She had visions of him laying somewhere seriously wounded or possibly a prisoner being badly mistreated. However, ironically as it may seem, just two weeks after we had received the message from the army we received a letter from him dated several days after the telegram telling us what had happened and that he was o.k. Needless to say this was a joyous day.

There were of course many interesting incidents that occurred during his army career some good, some bad, mostly bad. They of course cannot all be mentioned. However there was one thing that happened that was a distinct honor to him.

Shortly after the war was over he was selected along with 3,000 other soldiers out of a total of 2 million to form a marching unit to escort General Pershing back to the United States. They paraded through Paris, London, New York City and Washington, D.C. in all four parades he was selected to be the pivot man in the color guard. (Front four directly behind General Pershing.)

Another distinction or honor was the fact that out of the 3,000 soldiers he was selected to be one of Pershing's personal guards on the trip home.



It just seems to me that even though this history is already too long it would be incomplete if the living quarters where this huge family was brought up was not mentioned.

The house shown on this page is as it appears today. 1979.

The center section shown as section 1 was built in 1887 the year they moved on to 80 acres of barren land which had never been cultivated. The size is as near as I can recall 26' X 13' consisting of two rooms downstairs and two upstairs.

In 1893 after Selmer was born they found they had run out of space so they built a lean to on the north side of the house, about 9 feet wide and the length of the house.

This gave them a good kitchen and a little extra sleeping room. Some of the younger children would crawl into this upstairs lean to and sleep on the floor on homemade mattresses filled with corn husks.

About 1895 as the family kept on increasing they added a summer kitchen shown as section 3. This was unheated and served strictly as a kitchen during the hot summer season. In 1911 after all the children had arrived and they had become more prosperous they completely rebuilt the whole house. The lean too was removed and a large living room with a large bedroom upstairs was added on the north side. A large kitchen with a large bedroom upstairs was added to the south side shown as section 4. The summer kitchen was moved and attached to the new kitchen. The house still stands the way it appears in the picture to this day.

As previously mentioned I feel this write-up is getting too long to make interesting reading, however, I would feel remiss if I didn't tell a little more about the personalities of that wonderful pair of human beings, Josephine and John who were (Mom and Dad) to the ten of us children.

Personality is something that is almost always passed on down through inheritance so it is of interest to all of us to know what kind of personalities they had. Josephine was a very humble person, although she had a good sense of humor and a ready smile she was rather on the quiet and serious side. The tone of her voice was very soft and kind, very rarely did it raise or change and show any anger. Her conversations never included criticism of others, it just seemed as though she didn't want to think bad about any one, she won all her points and arguments with love and kindness.

John. Although John had a considerably different personality than Josephine he was also a very warm and friendly person with a ready smile and a twinkle in his eye. He was a sincere and very ambitious person and contributed much to the new and developing community which they had chosen to make their home and bring up their family. To give you an idea as to his standing in the community he served 28 years as a member of the Board of Directors of the Gibbon co-operative creamery, he was a member of the Board of Directors of Sibley County School District No. 72 and served as the Treasurer of that Board for a number of years. He also served a number of years as a director on the Cornish Township Board. He accomplished all of this in spite of the fact that he never did have any formal education. He said he went to school in Sweden for a few months during winter for several years, he said however that you

really couldn't call it school. Just what he meant I don't know. Although he never learned to speak the English language well he could always get up at a meeting and get his point across. He did learn to read very well however so he always knew what was going on.

He was truly a great man and father always jolly, he had a great sense of humor, always planning games or entertainment of one sort or another to keep us children busy and entertained. Most often you would find him right in the thick of things. He could dance, he could jig and he loved to do stunts. To illustrate what I mean, one Sunday in his early seventies he was showing off to a group of children how he could hang by his toes on the clothes line poles, well he slipped and fell down and broke his collar bone. Well, that ended his career as a stunt man.

Although he was not a total abstainer, he used both alcohol and tobacco with moderation. Josephine and John were truly a great couple. In my entire life I have never heard a single derogatory remark about either one, they simply had no enemies. They believed in and lived by the Ten Commandments, this was especially true in the case of the 8th commandment which states as follows.

(Thou shall not bear false witness  
against thy neighbors.)

They did not leave a lot of earthly wealth when they left this earth but they left us with something far more valuable, that is to have love and respect in our hearts for each other and all fellow human beings. This has remained steadfast among all of us throughout our entire lives. The memories of my boyhood life at home on the farm with my parents (Josephine and John) and my brothers and sisters, the Clear Lake Church and our country school are beautiful beyond description.

In researching and writing this family history so many memories have come to mind that I am finding it difficult to bring it to a conclusion.

Most of the memories have been pleasant, however, there are also a few that have brought regrets. One I have in mind especially is the fact that my mother left this earth while I was still so young that I don't believe I ever told her how very much I really loved her and appreciated everything she had done for me.

This may be a bit of personal philosophy and possibly does not belong in a write-up of this kind. However in the beginning of this write-up I stated that one of the reasons we were doing this was for the benefit of future generations that will follow us here on earth.

The point I want to bring out is the lack of recognition and respect society in general show for mothers. Especially while we are young. I feel that far too many of us fail to realize in time the discomfort, pain and agony a mother must go through to bring us on to this earth, not to mention the loving and meticulous care she must give us for many years to help us become self sufficient.

In my opinion motherhood is by far the greatest accomplishment any woman can give to this world during her very brief stay here on earth. I feel she is not given the recognition she is entitled to.

I am fully aware of the fact that all women for various reasons do not or cannot become mothers. They can and do justify their stay here on earth in many different ways. Fathers are of course important too, but in a different way.

In conclusion, I wish to state that I have found writing our family history interesting and rewarding as it has brought back many beautiful memories. I must say that there are no doubt some errors especially in dates, however I feel certain they are reasonably accurate.