

LIFE SKETCH OF BETSY SWENSON ANDERSEN

Sister Betsy Swenson was born in Guitenga, Christina County, Sweden, on October 1, 1842 – the daughter of Lars Swenson and Mary Johnson, who owned a large farm and were well-to-do. At the age of fourteen, she graduated from the grade schools, and, soon after that, she joined the Latter-Day-Saint Church. Here is how it all came about: Her family belonged to the Lutheran Church and were very religious people. They taught their children good principles, one of which was to be prayerful. When the Mormon missionaries came to preach the gospel, however, she took a great interest in their doctrine and noticed such a difference in the way they prayed. Her father wouldn't let her join at first as he thought she was too young. She was so insistent, that he finally consented when he was converted. The parents joined first, and then she and her sister were baptized. Her younger brother later became a member, but the older brother could not see the light.

After a few years, such bitter resentment arose toward the Mormon converts there, that peace no longer existed. The parents sold their property, loaned money to other less fortunate families who also wanted to come to Zion, and they left their homes on April 1, 1864. On the fourth of April, they boarded a ship in Malma which took them to Germany. By rail, they traveled from here to the North Sea and then to England by boat. By rail again, they traveled to Liverpool. In the company there were five hundred immigrants who boarded a sail boat bound for New York.

While on the ocean, the ship struck an iceberg which tore a large hole in its side. The Elders told all the Saints to be faithful and to pray for their safety and everything would be alright, which they did.

Credit for the safe landing of the vessel was given by the captain to the fact that there were Mormons on board. Eight or nine weeks was the time they were on the ocean. Everyone was well while on the voyage except one little girl, three years old, who died.

From New York they took a ship on the Hudson River and then traveled on to Wyoming near Council Bluffs, Iowa, where they had to wait for the teamsters to take them to Utah.

With Bishop William Preston as captain they started out with ox teams. He gave them their instructions and provisions for the journey. Many bought cows to take. Mr. Swenson was one who did so. Only those who were not able to walk, rode. Those who walked were to keep ahead of the wagons and stay in a bunch and be friendly to the Indians so they would not harm them.

Each night when they camped, every family would do their own cooking. After supper was over, the teamsters would play some music and they'd all dance and have a good time until ten o'clock. A horn was then blown by the captain as a signal to gather for evening prayers, after which they would retire. Early the next morning the horn was blown again calling them up for breakfast and to be on their way. This was the routine for each day's travel.

With the exception of a few deaths, everything went fine. Betsy Swenson walked all the way across the plains which took eight or nine weeks. On the fifteenth of September, 1864 the company arrived in Salt Lake City.

Andrew and Lars Toolson, two of Brother Swenson's neighbors from Sweden had migrated years before and settled in Smithfield, so after stopping in Salt Lake for a few

days, one of the teamsters, Robert Collet, who was from Smithfield, took the Swenson family there with him.

Betsy Swenson was married on July 30, 1865 to Jens Andersen. In the fall of that same year, they were called to go to the Endowment House to receive their endowments. Brother Heber C. Kimball performed the sealing ceremony. They made their home in Smithfield for a few years and later moved to Brigham City. Later, they bought a farm in Benson Ward and moved there.

Several years later, the Saints were asked to volunteer to go to Arizona to settle. Brother and Sister Andersen sold the farm and with their family and all their belongings, started out. They went about one hundred miles farther than St. George, but upon reaching a stretch of dessert about sixty miles long, with no water they were forced to turn back. They then decided to go to Oregon, so they traveled through Utah and Nevada and up to Oregon.

Upon reaching there they had lost everything, but Brother Andersen soon found work and they remained there during the winter.

In the midst of that winter, the snow had fallen until it was four feet deep on the level. A warm wind came and melted the snow causing a flood. Imagine the feelings of that family as the flood waters began to steadily rise – rise until the house was filled to the ceiling. Their only escape was to the attic and their only hope of safety was their trust in the hand of the Lord. Once they were in the attic, they all kneeled down and offered fervent prayers to the Almighty God asking His aid in their deliverance from this calamity.

When morning dawned, the water was all gone. Trees were up-rooted, all houses and buildings were washed away except this one. Surely the Lord does watch over His people.

As soon as possible, the family started back to Utah. They settled in Salt Lake City and lived in the Ninth Ward for about thirty-seven years.

Ten children were born to this couple, five of whom are still living (1933). There were twenty-one grandchildren, fifty-three great grandchildren, and four great, great grandchildren. Since that time, however, her posterity has increased to seven or more great, great grandchildren. Besides the rearing of her own family, she raised six children from her husband's other wives, she being one of four wives.

Brother Andersen died on October third, 1915, at the age of eighty-five and then Grandma again moved to Smithfield to live with her daughter, Mrs. Mary Plowman. From this time on until her death, she spent mostly visiting her children and grandchildren. This was her chief delight and afforded her a goodly amount of travel as her children lived in California, Idaho, and Utah and we all looked forward to the time she would visit us. When she was past ninety years of age, she traveled alone from Salt Lake to California by bus.

Although she was past ninety-four years of age when she passed away, she was active until the few short weeks she spent on her back just prior to her passing which occurred June 15, 1937. Just a little while, not a year, before that time, she step danced at a social gathering in the ward as spry as anyone many years younger than she.

Her eyesight was keen until the last, for on her return trip from California to Smithfield in April before her passing in June, she stopped off in Salt Lake and she could still read the newspapers without the aid of glasses. She never used a cane and stood very erect.

She was a Relief Society teacher for over fifty years and also a home missionary among the Scandinavian people in Liberty Stake. She has done lots of temple work in the Salt Lake and Logan temples.

Grandma Andersen's formula for longevity can best be illustrated by the experiences of two philosophers who set out to endeavor to discover the secret of perpetual youth. One toiled in the laboratories following formulas. He spent his time reading bulk volumes. He spent time experimenting with the mystic forces and muttering the uncanny spell of old magicians, but after all this, one day he looked in the mirror and saw wrinkles as numerous as ripples on a wind swept bay. The other philosopher sought different channels. He went out on the street. He played with children. He smiled with them and enjoyed them, and in return received smiles from them. He slept at night under the guidance of the stars, knew the call of the songs of the birds. His hair also became as white as the bloom on the hawthorn, and his face too became wrinkled, but behind it all he had discovered the real formula for longevity. Back of the long life Grandma Andersen lived, much can be contributed to her ready smiles, good cheer and love for others. Her memory will live for ages.

When the Lord sought to bless ancient Israel with His choicest blessings, it was either with long life, or great posterity. Grandma Andersen had both of these, and the high ideals and kindnesses of her glorified her powers, and rare deeds filled her hours, and what a neighbor she will be to angels throughout eternity.

-----History found in possession of LaFay
Rasmussen Hogan, a great granddaughter.
Author Unknown