

Mary Magdalena Capson And Hans Christian Peterson
1 September, 1856-3 May 1951 30 July 1848-12 October 1924

My Grandmother, Mary Magdalena Capson was born the 1st of September 1856 to Gustafva Amalia Lundstrom and Nils Monsson Johnsson Capson in South Cottonwood Canyon area now known as Murray, Utah. Her parents had come from Sweden on the ship "Benjamin Adams" in 1854. They had stayed in New Orleans for a year to earn enough money to travel to Zion with the Jacob Secrist/Noah Guyman" company of pioneers arriving in Salt Lake City in September of 1855.

My Grandpa, Hans Christian Peterson was born 30 July 1848 in Copenhagen Denmark to Jens K Peterson and Helena Christina Hansen(Wein). He was the oldest of five children. His siblings were: Annina Conradine born 17 July 1850 in Copenhagen, Caroline Amelia born 22 September 1851 In Copenhagen , James Ephraim born 16 Nov 1856 in Ephraim, Sanpete, Utah, and Joseph Knute 12 March 1859 in Ephraim, Sanpete, Utah. His father was apprenticed to become a cooper(barrel maker) and made hooks and eyes as a second way to support the family. Jens and Helena also had a little coffee shop where they sold cakes and coffee and lunches. They joined The Church Of Jesus Christ after having been taught by the Missionaries and were ostracized by their friends and neighbors because of the church, So they decided to go to America and Zion with other members of the church. They also emigrated to America aboard the ship "Benjamin Adams". Hans was four years old. The Peterson family traveled across the plains by Ox cart with the Peter Olson company. That trip was long and hard. the children that could walk probably walked a good part of the way. They were assigned a temporary place to stay and later probably lived in a "dugout" for a time. After a short stay in Salt Lake City the family was asked to go about 40 miles south to Lehi (to another "dugout"?) and then to Ephraim where Jens K. built a house. Eventually they settled in Glenwood Sevier county. They left Glenwood and spent some time in Ephraim and Manti during the Black Hawk Indian uprising. Hans' father entered in to plural marriage with Emma Gard in 1864 when he was sixteen. Hans had a hard time accepting this principal. Not much is known about how and where he spent his time until he married my Grandmother in 1873. It has been said that he went to Canada on a mission, but that is not confirmed. He did go on several missions to Canada later on.

Mary Magdalena was born in a "dugout". (A "dugout" was usually a large hole in the ground with steps leading down to a space the size of a small room). The roof was made of willows and brush woven to make it as secure as possible. When it rained, that was another hardship. The cooking was done out of doors over an open fire, with brush and whatever dry bushes could be found for fuel. Because the Utah valley was still a desert, food was very scarce. There was an allotment of

grain from the church storehouse and whatever roots they could dig out of the ground. Animals were eaten sparingly, Four months of 1856 the pioneer diet consisted of just greens and roots because the grasshoppers had eaten the crops of grain and corn.

In 1858, the little family had to go to Spanish Fork to escape the invasion of Johnson's Army. Again they had to live in a "dugout" until the danger was over and they could move back to South Cottonwood. Grandma's sister Sarah Christina was born 31 July 1858 in the "dugout", during all the turmoil. Grandma did tell me that she remembered being very hungry when she was a very little girl.

In 1861, after her Father had worked for 5 years, on shares, they had managed to acquire enough money, cattle and supplies to venture south to the town of Ephraim. This was where a majority of the Saints from the Scandinavian countries had settled. Grandma remembered her Father building an adobe house and how nice it was to be in a home. In September of 1862, soon after the house was finished, Brigham Young called them to go farther south to an area called Virgin, near Zion's Canyon. They were called to grow cotton and whatever else would grow.

They left their home and their Scandinavian friends and arrived in Virgin "City" in December of 1862. Again they lived primitively, this time in a cave dug out of the side of the mountain, with a cloth hanging over the doorway. But they did have the wagon to sleep in. The first months of 1863, it rained off and on for forty days. Everything was wet. Imagine, as a six year old, being with your Mother as she delivered a baby by herself, in a cave and everything soaking wet. Grandma never forgot it. The Virgin River overflowed its banks and while her father, Nils Capson, was out trying to save his cattle he fell in the river. As a result, he became very ill. He was sick all summer long but continued to care for his family and cattle and property. He died of pneumonia September 10th, 1863. His grave is up on the hill above the little town of Virgin, Utah. When the other settlers heard that her father had died, they came to comfort the family and the men conducted a proper burial. Grandma even at that age, was very much aware much of the Priesthood Blessings that were given.

Her mother left was alone with three little girls, one a baby, living in a cave Grandma told me little 'bits and pieces' of memories of that time. About the 'heart break' of losing her father, of her Mother crying at night and being strong by day, digging roots to eat, milking the cow, walking in the mud, being hungry, how her mother would make "lumpy dick" (stirring lumpy flour and water into boiling milk) and how good it tasted, the crickets in the summer before her father died, how they only spoke Swedish. She was seven years old,

In 1998 I met a grand daughter of Grandma's sister, Emma, She was able to fill in the history of how they, Gustava and her daughters, managed to go from

Virgin City to Fort Gunnison, Utah. It seems that with the help of their neighbors, Gustafva managed to load the wagon, round up the cattle, hitch the oxen to the wagon, and start off with her family. Gustafva driving the oxen with the baby Emma and Sarah in the wagon and my Grandma, Mary, herding the cattle.

The distance was well over a hundred miles, through the mountains and up through the wilds of central Utah. Indians apparently gave them no problem and probably they joined with others who were going north, no roads only wagon trails for direction. Once, when I was eight years old, I spent the summer with Grandma. She told me that at one time, when she was a little girl like me, she had driven a lot of cattle a very long long way.

Mary Magdalena was seventeen years old she married Hans Christian Peterson, son of Jens K, and Helena Peterson, on April 15 1873 in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City. Hans was 25 and Mary was 17. They met when their parents had renewed their acquaintance in Manti and Ephraim, at the time of the Indian trouble. How the courtship went, she never said. According to Grandma, it took two days to travel by wagon from Gunnison to Salt Lake City. Her mother, Gustafva, went along as a chaperone. She never had the opportunity to visit a Temple. She told me one time, that she had said her endowment and marriage Ceremony over in her mind every day and, I believe, she did until the day she died. She was a member of The Church Of Jesus Christ Of Latter Day Saints. Her Baptismal and Eternal covenants were precious and sacred to her. She lived the Gospel all her life.

She and Grandpa settled in a little house, that Grandpa had made of adobe. It had one room, two windows (no screens or glass) and dirt floors. They did have a wood stove indoors. (what luxury) This was in the settlement of Glenwood, which is near the city of Richfield in Sevier County. The Blackhawk Indian uprising was going on and this was Blackhawk Indian Territory. Grandma said that she never had any trouble with the Indians, but she kept a little dish of ground pepper near by for protection. One time a band of Indians came and asked for food and took nearly all she had, but they went away and did no harm.

My mother Amelia Helena Peterson was born there on 24 November 1874. It was here that Mary and Hans were among the first signers if the United Order of Glenwood. They then moved to the settlement of Sigurd, which is near Glenwood, so they could still participate in the United Order. Christian Leroy Peterson was born in Sigurd 19 May 1877. Seven more children were born to them. Grandma told me that she delivered all of her children by herself, alone, except one time. A couple in a wagon stopped by on their way to town and the woman handed her a clean towel and they went on their way. She never talked much about the death of her fourth child Nils Capson who died when he was three years old.

Nor did she mention Aunt Hazel's twin who died at birth. Sometime during 1880s they moved to Gunnison, Sanpete, Utah where they ran a hotel in town.

Grandma was a lover of dogs and usually had one most of her life. She told this story of a very special dog.... My mother ,Amelia, was a toddler about two years old when she pulled a pot of boiling home made soap off the wood stove and was badly burned. There were no doctors and Grandma and Grandpa lived in rather primitive circumstances out in the country with no one nearby to help. She cleaned and treated her baby as best she could. One side of Mama's face, above her hairline and her little body was scalded. She was grateful that the baby's dress had pretty much protected her body from huge blisters. She was heartbroken that her little girl would be scarred and that she had suffered so much. All she could do was but pray. After a few days when the blisters broke and the baby had stopped crying, she sat her out on a blanket in the yard for fresh air. Their big shaggy dog, Shep, started to lick the wounds and licked them until they were healed. Mama never had a scar on her face or body,

As I remember ,about that summer I spent with Grandma, she shared many things about her life. One afternoon as we sat on the front porch, she reminisced about Grandpa. He was a good husband and she loved him. They always spoke Danish and Swedish to each other so they had a good communication. I often wondered why he did not give his babies their names and blessings until I learned that he was usually away on a Mission when they were blessed. He had gone on several Missions to Cardston, Alberta, Canada to prepare the way to build the Temple there. One year he was "snowed in" in Canada and did not come home until spring. In the meantime Grandma was "snowed in" in Utah. She had little children, a good supply of flour and salt and she had a cow but was miles away from her nearest neighbor.

There had been enough grain and dried food to last most of the winter and the Indians had not bothered. When the snow started to melt, all she had left was the flour and salt and the milk from the cow. She said that she would make a paste of lumpy flour, a bit of salt and some melted snow water and boil it in some milk. That is what they lived on until Grandpa came home. That little dish was called "Lumpy Dick". The Pioneers had learned to make it during their trek across the planes. When Grandma was older, she would stay with us in the winters in Sierra Madre, California. She was then in her eighties and nineties and she would make "Lumpy Dick" and savor the taste and the memories of her younger days.

I never got to know Grandpa Peterson. He died in 1924 when I was six years old and living in Chico, California. From what I have discovered, Brigham Young would send some of the men from Sevier County to Cardston, Alberta, Canada on Missions to prepare that region for the Cardston Temple. So Grandpa was away a lot of the time. It seemed to me that every time Grandma was expecting a baby,

Grandpa would be sent on a Mission to Canada. He learned to speak English , just enough to "get by" but he and Grandma only spoke in Danish/Swedish. She always said "he was a good man" and she loved him but she didn't ever want to marry again. Hans Christian was her Eternal companion.

As a young Woman living out in the wilds of central Utah Grandma had many skills such as weaving, carding and spinning wool, and of course shearing the sheep. They lived in an adobe cabin with a dirt floor and cooked on a wood stove (this was a luxury since most had to cook over an open fire) , She often said that she had to knit one sock every day or her family would not have socks. There were no stores and besides that's what everyone did. When she would come to stay with us, in her later years, she would still knit for my dad and brothers one sock a day. She would admonish my mother to not throw those socks away when they had a hole in them. When she would come back the next fall she would unravel the socks and reknit them, still one sock a day. She used four steel knitting needles and could knit a sock almost without looking. During World War II she knit socks for the Navy. She passed away at the age of ninety five and had one sock half knit.

When my parents settled in the Seattle, Washington, Grandma and Grandpa Peterson, with the family, decided to move near by. That was a big change from a little country town in Central Utah to a Coastal city so far a way. Aunt Hazel told me one time , that Grandma would bake the bread, rolls and cakes and Grandpa would sell them from a little "bakery" cart around the city. (I could never verify that). This was about 1902/03.

When my parents went to Wenatchee, Washington, Grandma and Grandpa moved also. They had a house down near the river in the East Wenatchee. Myrna told me that she loved to go stay with them some times. She said they always spoke Danish to each other. This was about the time Aunt Hazel and Uncle Sheridan were married in 1913.

When Dad and Mother went to Yakima, Washington,(1917) I was born there in 1918. They moved there and lived with us in the big house in East "I" Street. There was quite a bit of acreage there and so Grandpa Peterson again became a farmer. When our family moved back to Seattle, Grandpa bought the house and they lived there until Grandpa died on October 12 1924. After Grandpa died Grandma lived in the big house in Yakima, Washington alone and when I was eight I spent the summer with her. We would sit on the porch and she would tell me wonderful stories about her life. That was a special time of my life. When I was nine we, the Ward family, went back to live with her for a year.

When we went to La Grand, Oregon she sold the house and lived the rest of her life with Aunt Hazel, her youngest daughter. At least that was her primary residence. Grandma spent a year 1929/1930 with my sister, Helen, in Layton Utah. She would visit her children for three months each year then go to the next. She

would always leave before her "welcome ran out". Those are her words not mine. What a treasure that her Grandchildren had the privilege to know her.

Grandma usually traveled by train, when she came to visit. What fun to go meet her at the train station. She had a big suitcase with her belongings in it, and she carried a dark green leather "pocket book" or purse. She had the most wonderful things in it. At least seemed so to me. There was always had a bit of money, a little deck of playing cards (she loved to play solitaire), pencil and paper, peppermints, four steel knitting needles and yarn, hairpins, a little mirror, a little bottle of gin which she called "woman's medicine", a little package of hard candy, and of course her handkerchief. It was like magic when grandma showed us what she carried in her purse. One of the strictest rules was, that we never looked in anyones purse or pockets without permission. That was a punishable offense.

As long as I can remember, Grandma always wore an apron. She said it served two purposes, namely to keep her dress clean and secondly to always have a place to put the eggs when she gathered them or when she would pick fruits or vegetables. She would just gather the hem of the apron up to make a pouch much like a sack.. It was really very handy. We didn't have paper bags, card board boxes and plastic had not been invented yet. When anything was bought at the store, the clerk always wrapped it in paper and tied it with a string. The paper and string were very precious and saved very carefully.

It was a joyous time when Grandma came. I was privileged to share my bed with her. She would snuggle me down in her arms, and hum a little Swedish tune and then go to sleep. I always felt so loved and safe. Grandma called me "Little Dump" which meant little dumpling in Swedish.

One time when she was in her late eighties, she flew in an airplane to California to have cataracts removed from her eyes. (She was still knitting one sock a day, she didn't have to look). This was quite an occasion. The Los Angeles Times wrote an article about her flying at her age and that she would be with five generations of her family. They printed a picture of her with Aunt Hazel, my sister, Helen Ward Stevenson Smith, my nephew J.Ward Stevenson and his daughter my great niece Judy Stevenson.???? See the attached picture. In her lifetime Grandma had traveled by ox cart, covered wagon, just plain wagon, steam train, early cars, bus and then an airplane.

The operations on her eyes went well and she was grateful to "see" again. In those days they didn't know about lens transplants so she had to wear very thick lensed glasses. But she was so Grateful just to see .

It was my privilege to take her to the Doctor for her checkups. She would "flirt" unmercifully with that Doctor. (Her sense of humor reminds me of Myrna.) It was so fun to go with her.

Grandma only took two baths a year. She said all that soap and water, every day, took the oil out of your skin and made you look old. But, she was always clean. It took her quite a while to get dressed in the morning because she was "sponge bathing" her entire body. She usually smelled of lavender.

Grandma, like every one else of her age, had three dresses. They were usually a dark washable cotton. She wore one every day for a week, (covered with an apron of course) and one that she wore when the first one was being laundered and the third one was the Sunday dress. The aprons were white bib aprons made of cotton. They covered the dress and kept it clean.. Aprons were usually changed every day. Her petticoats and undergarments were made of cotton. she wore "lyle" stockings, heldup by garters on her corset which had "bone stays" in it. and wonderful soft leather tie shoes. In those days everything had to be washed by hand, hung on the clothesline to dry, then sprinkled and ironed. There was no "wash and wear" or anything synthetic.

When Grandma was young her hair was dark brown, but when I knew her she had beautiful white hair and wore it in a bun sort of on top. In the mornings she would eat a little bowl of "mush" (hot cereal), a piece of bread and butter and "lieden tor" (Swedish for "little drop") of coffee. She would take a bit of sugar on a spoon, put it in her mouth and drink her coffee through it.

She had some strong ideas about behavior. Here are but a few: Pray every morning and night, Men and boys should always stand when a lady entered the room. Boys and Girls should say "Yes Ma'am" and "No Ma'am" or "Yes Sir" and "No Sir" to their elders, and always "Please" and "Thank you". She would correct us when we missed. "Nice" girls should never chew gum. . She really was emphatic about "Proper ladies never crossed their legs".

Between Grandma and my Dad, we were taught proper table manners. If we did not behave at the dinner table we were sent to our room. We were told: "Wash your hands and face, comb your hair and make sure you were clean before you came to the table". Don.t talk with your mouthful, Take small bites and chew it well. Eat everything on your plate. Do not waste food. Speak when you were spoken to. Sit up straight. Use your napkin. Keep your elbows off the table. And many more instructions. We never felt that we were abused to learn those behaviors,

One time when she was visiting, my sister Helen's son Warren was suffering with terrible hives. The hives were a reaction from penicillin (it was new and not much was known about it). He was seventeen at the time and a big young man. (and I mean big). Grandma prepared an "oatmeal bath" in the tub. She had a "heck of a time" getting him into that tub, She finally threatened him with a stick. He got in. She covered him with oatmeal, head to toe, and sure enough the hives were gone.

Another time, same visit, Myrna's son, Bob, asked her how come she had lived so long. She answered, "Young man, I just chew every bite I put in my mouth twenty one times." And that was that.

Our Grandmother was a great cook. She baked the most delicious potato bread. The Swedish meatballs with cream gravy over a slice of bread were special treats, She churned butter usually from sour cream. When the cream turned to butter she would gather the butter bits from the churn and put it in a hand made wooden bowl with some cool water then wash the butter "working" it with a wooden paddle. When all the cream was washed out she would gather the butter together, add a little salt, then pat it into a "brick". The milk left in the churn was the buttermilk. She made Cottage cheese, Hoop cheese, and some kind of hard cheese. She and Grandpa loved "clabbered milk". Fresh milk was usually poured into big round shallow granite pans then set in the cooler. We would drink the milk while it was sweet but when it soured it would be thick like a pudding. This was clabbered milk. They would sprinkle a bit of sugar on it and call it good.

Cabbage was cooked in milk with caraway seeds. Potatoes were boiled in their skins, In the morning she would eat a "little mush" a slice of bread and butter and a "leiden tor" of coffee. She would take a little sugar on the end of her spoon and put it in her mouth and sip a bit of coffee through it. Dinner was at noon time, that was a full meal, and Supper in the evening was usually bread and milk with a bit of cheese and maybe some fruit. She always said, "Eat to live, not live to eat".

Grandma was ninety one when she left us for the last time to go live with Aunt Hazel who took such good care of her. The house always felt a little empty when she left. She died in Wenatchee, Washington at the age of ninety five and is buried next to her husband, Hans Christian Peterson.

She was a great Lady. We are all privileged to be her offspring. We surely do, rise up and call her blessed.

The children of Mary Magdalena Capson Peterson and Hans Christian Peterson:

Amelia Helena Peterson - B. 28 November 1874 - D. 24 Apr 1951

Marr- Lemich Samuel Ward 26 October 1900

Christian LeRoy Peterson - B. 19 March 1877 - D.6 Feb 1964

Marr. Anna Nell Daykins - 31 March 1904

Ethel Gustava Peterson - B 1 March 1878 - D. June 1913

Marr. - John Kirby 1912

Mary Ellen Peterson - B. 9 November 1878 - D.

Marr - Axel Anderson -

Nils Capson Peterson - B 24 May 1881 Died 2 May 1884

Oscar Floyd Peterson - B. 3 May 1885 - D.3 March 1959

Marr. - Florence Rachel Rubon - 15 August 1917

Howard Spencer Peterson - B. 17 March 1889 - D.27 September 1964

Marr. - Lola Jabor 1918

Hazel Florence Peterson - B. 5 May 1893 - D. April 2002

Marr, J. Sheridan Sparks - 26 December 1914

Boy Infant (twin) Born 5 May 1893 Died 5 May 1893

Sources: Gustava Amalia Capson's Bible in possession of descendants of
Hazel Sparks
Stories as told by Mary Magdalena Peterson
Pioneer Histories
LDS Church Records
United Order records of Glenwood, Sevier, Utah
Family traditions.

Attachments:

Patriarchal Blessing of Mary Peterson

Various Pictures of:

Mary Magdalena and Hans Christian Peterson

Some of their children

Note: This narrative is written with a great deal of love. If there are any errors or misinformation it is purely unintentional.

Jacqueline Ward Rutledge Larsen... "Little Dump" (dumpling)