

Lars and Brita Lisa (Betsy) Nordstrom Family History



1898

Lars holding Sam and Brita (Betsy) holding Louis

Lars Svensson (Nordstrom) immigrated to America from Duvberg, Harjedalen, Sweden in June 1884 landing in New York. His parents and nine sisters and brothers had immigrated to America in April 1882 settling in the Alexandria, Minnesota area. When Lars came to America, the other members of the family had moved to Hallock – Lancaster area in Minnesota and Lars settled there also.

In Sweden, Lars was a shoemaker and traveled from home to home staying with the family for a week or so making shoes for them.

In 1894, Lars moved to Roseau, Minnesota and in 1895 married Brita Lisa (Betsy) Nelson. Betsy had come to America from Torgas, Lima, Sweden in May 1880 with her parents and siblings. They first settled in Meeker County before moving to Roseau in 1888. Lars and Betsy homesteaded in Roseau area and lived there until 1906 when they came to Canada to seek a homestead and build a home and life for their family. They came to Sprague, Manitoba with six of their eldest children; namely, Sam (10 years), Louis (8 years), Julia (7 years), John (3 years), August Elmer (2 years), and Beda (Bertha) an infant. Lars and Betsy had lost two children in infancy, Anna (1901) and Martin (1902). The family had intermittently resided at Sprague with her parents, Lars and Brita Nelson, since 1904.

While residing at Sprague, six more children were born to Betsy and Lars. Wilhelm (1910) and Clarence (1913) died in infancy and were buried at the old cemetery south of Sprague located on the ¼ sec that was then occupied by Andrew Nelson, brother of Betsy (S.E. ¼ section 03, township 01, range 14E). The other children born in Sprague were Florence (1911), Lillian (1914), Emmanuel (1916), and Sophie (1920). Until September 1912, Lars and Betsy and their children lived at the home of Lars and Brita Nelson, parents of Betsy, until their death; caring for them in their old age, and helping them with homestead duties to enable them to obtain their patent.

In December 1906, Lars Nordstrom made application for “entry” for homestead on the N.E. 1/4 of section 2, twp. 1, range 14E. An entry fee of \$10.00 was required. October 29, 1907, Lars was granted “entry” for the 160 acre homestead and he received a 20 acre allotment of timber. A letter indicates that the best timber had been cut by the Sprague Lumber Co.. On September 30, 1912, Lars wrote to the Department of the Interior in Ottawa requesting final patent for the land. Lars was first obligated to repay \$38.25 for the advance of 51 bushels of oats which he had received from the Dept of the Interior.

On September 14, 1914, a statement was completed by Lars indicating the improvements made on the homestead. The structures Lars had built were: 16’ x 26’ frame house \$500, 26’ x 32’ log stable \$300, storehouse \$50, fencing \$75

and a well valued at \$75. It was a very good $\frac{1}{4}$ section with 30 acres of hay land and 130 acres of timberland which could be cleared and brought under cultivation. From 1908 to 1914, Lars broke and cropped 8 acres. He had 7 cattle, 4 horses, 35 chickens and 30 pigs. Lars indicated that his was “special circumstances” in that he had helped and cared for his father and mother in law and that “lack of means” was the general cause for not having fulfilled all of his homestead duties. Lars stated he had also taken part in **all** the voluntary work such as building the school house and the building of roads and bridges. August Erickson and Nels Nelson provided “sworn statements”. The homestead inspector’s report indicated that the land was bush and exceptionally low and costly to clear.

On August 30, 1915 the application for patent received the commissioner’s approval and patent was issued September 13, 1915.



Photo taken at a picnic at first school house in Sprague

Lars was a man of very large stature and unbelievable strength. He was over 6 ft. tall and at one time over 300 lbs. Stories were told of him walking from town to home carrying a 100lb bag of flour or sugar on his shoulder and stopping to visit with friends along the way, but leaving the heavy bag on his shoulder all the while. He was a good natured, patient man who dearly loved children and loved to tease. Granddaughter, Lillian Hebel, recalls Lars sitting on the floor leaning against the wall while she and her siblings slid down his stomach.

Lars farmed but he was also a bit of a blacksmith. Arnold, Clarence and Lawrence recall Lars twisting a piece of steel and making a bit for a drill. They also recall him making a governor for a Ford tractor. Sam's son, Neil, recalls Sam talking about Lars making a tool and then having one of his brothers in Minnesota patent it. Lars loved to work and especially to split wood. He would spend hours splitting wood. Arnold, Lawrence and Clarence also recall a time when Lars was up in years and a bit unsteady on his feet. He walked out onto the field where it had been burned and stumbled and fell. Jennie and the boys tried to help him up but, because of his size, they had to bring the horse and manure sled to roll him onto so they could bring him back to the house. Fortunately, he was extremely good natured and found the situation amusing.



Lars Nordstrom picking up supplies at the train station at Sprague

Brita (Betsy) was a very small lady not quite 5 ft. “Wonderful things” come in small packages and she had many close, loving friends in the community. Lars and Betsy were both devout Christians and Lars was a member of the Sprague Baptist Church. Clarence recalls him spending a great deal of time reading the Bible and listening to Christian programs on the radio. Arnold, his grandson, recalls that the expression Lars used when he became frustrated was “great Scott”.

Lars and Betsy continued to do mixed farming. They raised their own beef, pork and poultry and always had plenty of butter, eggs and milk for the family. Garden vegetables and wild fruit were always available in summer and made into preserves for the winter months. Lars and his sons cut pulpwood for sale and for fence posts.

Betsy Nordstrom became ill with pneumonia and after eleven days, on March 2, 1924, she was taken to be with the Lord and Lars was left with the young family. The two youngest daughters, Lillian and Sophie were taken to live with their aunt and uncle, Martin and Betty Nelson in Roseau, MN. Emmanuel(Manny) lived with his Aunt and Uncle, Mary and Peter O. Nelson at Stafford, MN a portion of the time and spent some time with the family at Sprague.

The farm Lars and Betsy owned was later purchased by their son, Louis Nordstrom. Lars lived several years with Louis and Emmanuel on the farm and a short time with Florence and Reuben Olson before moving in with John and Jennie Nordstrom where he remained until his death in 1949 at the age of 91 years. In the 1950's Lars' old homestead was purchased from Louis Nordstrom by Lillian and John Hebel. Lars and Betsy's original home and buildings were situated along the property line a bit north and west of the present house now owned by Holgar Schoenbach.

Written by Elaine(Nordstrom) Tosberg and Lillian(Nordstrom)Hebel - updated 2017. Facts from Manitoba archives homestead records, census records, birth and death certificates and family history with the help of siblings and cousins. A few updates July 2020.