

THE OLSON STORY _TALE OF TWO BROTHERS

By Delphie Olson Norberg

This Sprague Olson story is about Andreas Östberg [3-5-1860 – 1900] and his younger brother, Lars Olson [14-9-1865 – 15-12- 1952 buried at Sprague] from Korpåsen, Hassela, Sweden. In 1888, they emigrated from Sweden to Minnesota, USA with their parents, Olaf Ericksson [4-2-1820 – 7-4-1941] and Catharina Pehrsdotter [12-2-1818 – 1907] six siblings, and Andreas daughter, Ellen Catharina [22-3-1865]. Andreas first wife, Matilda Erika Ericksdotter had died in 1866. Andreas changed his name to Östberg. In Minnesota, Karen and Erik Norberg took care of three-year-old Ellen.

In around 1892, Andreas married the Norberg's daughter Elizabeth [Lizzie] Mary Norberg [31-4- 1875]. The couple had 5 children but only 3, Anton Reuben Östberg [18-09-1895 – 18-12-1975], Myrtle [1898 – 1972] and Ethel Victoria [1900- 1984] lived. On April 7, 1900, Andreas died leaving Lizzie with a young family Reuben, Myrtle, and baby Ethel to raise in Dalbo, Minnesota with help from her family.

Andreas brother, Lars W. Olson, married Anna Greta Sjöberg [4-5-1865 -1906]. Their children were Beda Katharina, [1890 – 1890] Olaf Albin [1891 – 1976] Beda Katharina [1894-1951] Ernest Conrad [1895 – 1967] Erik Albert [1901-1954] Walter Clarence [1903-1991], all with the last name Olson. Anna Sjöberg Olson died in 1906 leaving 5 children. Walter was brought up by his uncle and aunt.

On October, 5, 1906, Lars married Lizzie Östberg, widow of his brother Andreas. The Olson family grew with the addition of Louis/Levi Kermet [1907 – 1923] Thyra Emelia [1908 – 1970], twins Emma Pauline

[1910 – 1959] Alma [1910 – 1910] Now there were 4 of Lars and Anna's children, 3 of Lars and Lizzies', plus 3 of Lizzie and Andreas's children the Östbergs. Lars and Lizzie even took in a baby, Ellen Jarf [1916 – 1986] after her mother died at Sprague, and raised her as their own. So now there were 11 Olsons all raised as one family. Cousins became half brothers and sisters and there were name changes when all became known as Olson.

The Lars and Lizzie Olson family was living at, Dalbo Isanti County, Minnesota, USA. In 1916, they decided to move to Manitoba, Canada where other families known to them had moved. Land was readily available there at a minimal price. They settled about 2 ½ miles north of Sprague where they built a large two-



story log house and out buildings. Reuben stayed and helped them settle on their new property.

On May 26, 1918, now under the name Olson, Reuben joined the American army. After training at Fort Dodge their unit, 158 Th Infantry, was sent to France. From December 11 to December 26, they served as the Honor Guard for President Wilson in Paris when peace was declared. He returned to USA and was discharged April 29, 1919. The change of name became an obstacle later in life when Reuben applied for a pension. His name on his birth certificate was Anton Reuben Östberg and he needed to find someone who could certify that Reuben Olson was Reuben Östberg. Fortunately, Elias Okerlund who lived nearby was able and willing to verify in writing that he had known Reuben since childhood when he was known by Östberg. Justice of Peace Ross Grey witnessed the procedure.



On February 28, ten years after being discharged from the US Army, Reuben married Florence Nordstrom from Sprague. They had 4 children, Donald Louis [1929 – 2020], Doreen Elizabeth [1931], Delphie Marie [1932], and Clifford Kermit [1935 – 1994]. They lived on section 27, township 1, range 14 east in the Golden Branch School District. Reuben was a sawyer working for other lumber companies and also running a mill of his own. Florence was the “Home” operator – cattle, “pork”- pigs, big garden, many jars of wild fruit and berries, sewed for the family, knitted, painter, etc. and a strong supporter of schools and neighbours. She understood the importance of an education and encouraged all four children to enjoy school, work and play.

It is now time for a few memories!

We loved the story of Lars Olson walking to the town of Sprague and deciding to take the "short cut" across that dilapidated old bridge and having the misfortune of falling into the Sprague River. Wet and muddy, he decided to turn back and go home. After a clean-up and perhaps a word or two, he got into clean clothing and proudly claimed, "At least I didn't get my "snus" box wet." "Snuff" or "snus".

We remember well his rakes and broom made out of brush willows. He made them for raking up chips in the woodshed and straw around the barn. His yard was always meticulously kept.

Grandma Olson had a well cleaned spot on her wood stove where she caramelized the inch square sugar lumps – our candy treat. As children we were so fortunate to live next door to their home where we were always made to feel very welcome.

Living next door brings back many other memories. Our household was always busy. We were fortunate to have many cousins our age and many school friends. We used to peel "posts" for four cents each – the bush was full of partridge and made a good supper – the chores had to be done first and then we played ball – walked the fence rails – took part in school activities – two miles to the Golden Branch School Grades 1 – 8, and three miles to town for grades 9 – 11 at Sprague School. We took 2 years of cooking and sewing at 4H, one year of handicrafts and good grooming and Clifford and I belonged to the Calf Club. We also joined the CGIT [Canadian Girls in Training] and had a most memorable camping trip [especially a terrible wind storm.] We belonged to the Square Dance Confederation learning round dancing and square dancing – sang in a choir with Norman Kleven the pianist and conductor.

Our home was always welcoming to family, friends, and neighbours. There was always room for one more at the table. Although we had no hydro or telephones, we managed to live a comfortable life, and an enjoyable one.