

The Hanson Story

By Sylvia Nilsson-Barkman, shared by Granddaughter Jeanette Armstrong.

This story was told by Albert Hanson to his daughter Sylvia Nilsson-Barkman who listened to the stories and did research and wrote the family history. I will tell a few of the stories.

In 1907 Per Gustaf Hansson (name changed to Peter Hanson), born in Hjulsjo, Sweden, travelled to Michigan USA where he worked for a year in a saw mill. He learned English and began to enjoy the freedom of the American life style. Upon his return to Sweden he convinced his wife Elinora Augusta (nee Seglestrom) [born in Stora Orrbacken, married in Koppaberg], to return to America with him. In 1909 they chose to immigrate to Canada because free homestead land was available in the Sprague area. They had 4 children born in Sweden: Hjalmar, Gerda, Hulda and Everet. Everet became ill with the measles on the ship and died shortly after they arrived in Sprague.

My parents established a home about 1 mile east of Sprague. Four acres of bush had been cleared and the property had two shacks on it when they arrived. One of the abandoned log cabins provided shelter for our family however it was infested with bed bugs and they decided to construct a new one. My mother would say “why did we leave Sweden to come to this bush with all the black flies and mosquitoes?” We would love to listen to mother tell stories of the old Swedish kings and Prince Bernadot. She spoke Swedish as she ate herring, chewing it as she talked and she would laugh so hard her tummy jiggled. She loved to talk about Sweden.

Besides farming and clearing his own land, my father owned a logging company. During those years more children were born: Herbert, Harold, Ellen and Albert. All during this time my father built up his business known as PG Hanson & Sons. Father was a man of many talents. He loved to play the guitar that he brought with him from Sweden and sing hymns. One of the men stopped by and remarked “if PG Hanson is playing the guitar, I dare ask him for money for my cordwood. If he is not playing and looks a little grouchy, I wouldn’t dare ask” Whether you were man or beast, you didn’t want to rile father. He had a voice like a trumpet and even the tree tops would shiver if he yelled on a quiet night. Once I was driving father and it had rained. Every hole in the road was filled with mud and I had to stop the car a few times to clean off the windshield. Father asked me why I was stopping again. I said “I have to clean off the windshield, I can’t see.” Father being impatient replied, “Drive on. Drive on, there’s nothing to see! “

In 1929 a ready -made house was ordered from T Eaton Co. It had 3 bedrooms and a large kitchen and living room. It became a gathering place for friends and neighbors. It was around this time that religious meetings started to be held in our house. The living room was often crowded with people and the services were followed by a social hour. From these beginnings the Baptist congregation in Sprague took root and led to the construction of the Sprague Baptist Church in 1936.

Life as a pioneer was hard but it also contained many blessings.

