ANDRINE AND OLE LARSON AND FAMILY

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MARCH, 1982

June 1982 - additions

July, 1983 - additions

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ANDRINE AND OLE LARSON AND FAMILY

NORWAY

Olaf Severin Larson, son of Lars Iversen and Ellen Marie Larsdotter [1/] was born in Norway, August 19, 1857. We assume he was born near Frederickshald (renamed Halden after World War II). As most young men at that time, Ole learned a trade, that of bricklayer and stonemason.

Andrine (pronounced Andrina) Petronella Olson, daughter of Ola and Caroline Olson, was born in Frederickshald, Norway, June 7, 1863. She had two sisters, Martina and Johanna (pronounced Ole-onna) and two brothers, John and James Olson. Martina married Mongus Johnson and they moved to the United States in the 1880's.

As all young women, Andrine was brought up to be skilled in the art of being a homemaker, for she was excellent at housekeeping, cooking, sewing and knitting later in life, as this story will tell.

The results of Ole's and Andrine's skills learned in their young life and their willingness to work hard were displayed years later, when as pioneer farmers in the United States, the Larsons were not rich, but their family was always clean, well dressed, well fed and lived in a decent home.

Before continuing our story any further, I will relate a few of the stories passed down from Ole and Andrine of their early lives in Norway.

ELSIE: "I believe dad lived in the country outside of Frederickshald. Their house was on a hill and a river flowed nearby. Dad used to

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1/ See Appendix "A" entitled "Visit to Norway" and Appendix "B" entitled "Ole Severin Larson" for further information.

tell about his mother, that as she got older, she apparently was ill, perhaps mentally. She realized she was not well, and she used to tell her family, 'Don't let me go to the river alone.'

I would guess that mother's family lived closer to town, or at least that they did when mother was a teenager. She used to tell me about working in Frederickshald as a teenager. From what she used to say I'd guess that she had worked in a restaurant. Also, mother used to talk about Prestebake Road (pronounced Press-tah-bah-ka).

Another thing that makes me think that the Olsons lived near Frederickshald, rather than out in the country, is that when mother and Ole left to come to the United States, Caroline Olson walked with them to the train station.

Mother said that when she was young, each person in the family had 12 suits of underwear to last them throughout the winter. Then in the spring, everyone went to the river to wash all of their clothes!

Mother used to tell that each Saturday her mother, Caroline Olson, used to scrub the floor on her hands and knees and then cover it with oat straw. On Sunday, I would guess either after church or after dinner, she would sweep the straw away to reveal floor boards as clean and white as snow.

Mother always liked to have everything clean, and I guess she learned this from her mother!"

"A community oven was available in town and each woman had a certain day of the week assigned to her for her to do her baking. So, once a week Caroline would bake their weekly supply of bread and rolls.

The Olsons used to make cheese and store it in big stone crocks. A layer of cheese was put in the crock, then a layer of straw, another layer of cheese, etc. Stored this way, the cheese would not spoil.

One of mother's chores as a young girl was to watch the family's 4 or 5 dairy cows. No doubt the cows were pastured some distance from home and had to be herded back and forth.

Mother said that one day she was bringing the cows home and she was walking behind one of them, holding onto its tail. Well, the cow suddenly switched its tail and threw mother into a deep ditch full of water! Mother said she would have drowned but thank goodness there were some tall weeds for her to grab onto and she managed to pull herself out.

Mother, her sister, Martina, and their dad, Ola, used to go up in the mountains to gather wood for fuel. Ola would cut the wood - small limbs, etc, and tie them into bundles. He'd toss them down the hillside and the girls would gather the bundles and carry them home.

I don't know what Ola Olson did for a profession, but mother did tell how twice a year he would go into Olso to get his allowance (like social security) to live on. Mother used to say that Oslo was "7 Norweigan miles" from Frederickshald."

Mother studied and went to Sunday school in order to prepare for her confirmation in the Lutheran Church.[1/] She said that one day the minister talked to her and asked if she was going to be confirmed and join the church. Mother told me that 'if only he'd talked to me a while longer, I would have joined.'

I feel bad that mother never was confirmed. But when she and dad moved to the United States, they joined the Baptist Church. I don't know why they didn't join a Lutheran one, perhaps there wasn't one where they first settled.

I believe mother met dad at church in Frederickshald. He was a good looking young man, you know, and he would come to church each week dressed in his fine clothes, carrying his cane and Bible."

Now, to continue with our story, in 1887, Andrine, age 20, and Ole Larson, 6 years her senior, were married. Their first daughter, Martha, was born to them January 7, 1888. The following year they had a son, Ole, born November 2, 1889.

1/ The Norweigan constitution establishes the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the nation's official religion.