

Emma Larsdotter (1869-1945)



Figure 43. Emma Larsdotter (detail from Fig. 4).



Figure 44. Gustaf (Jansson) Johnson, photograph from Sweden

Emma Larsdotter, twin to Elvina Larsdotter, was born 7 Mar 1869^{8,9} at Rosendal (formerly Carlsberg) croft, Nedre Ullerud parish, Värmland, Sweden. She had left the family home by 1885.¹ On 23 Jan 1892, she married Gustaf Jansson/Johnson of Risäter also in Nedre Ullerud parish. Their first child, Helga Elisabeth was born in Sweden on 3 Jul 1892. They emigrated from Sweden on 18 Feb 1873, bringing with them Gustaf's mother, Britta (Ryd) Anderson, Emma's youngest brother, Oscar, and possibly Emma's mother, Lisa.

Lisa presumably stayed in St. Paul where, by 1893, two or three of her children had already established residences.¹ Britta Anderson soon returned to Sweden. Gustaf and Emma first settled (1893-98) in Bear Park Township, Norman County, near Fertile, Minnesota.⁵ Two of Gustaf's older siblings already lived in this rural community. His sister, Caroline, and her husband, John A. Thoren, and his brother, Axel, and wife Hulda, had earlier established small farms in this township.

Gustaf and Emma do not appear to have been landowners while living near Fertile. They were counted twice in the 1895 State of Minnesota census, once on July 10th in Bear Park Township in Norman County and again on July 20th in Garfield Township in Polk County. The reason for this is not known. Gustaf's occupation at that time is listed as farmhand. A second child, Stone William, was born 20 Mar 1896 and his birth is recorded as occurring in Bear Park Township.³⁶ While in the Fertile area, Emma and Gustaf were members of the Yggdrasil Lodge, a chapter of the International



Figure 45. Emma (Larsdotter) Johnson.
(Enlargement from snapshot.)



Figure 46. Gust, Helga, Stone Johnson

Order of Good Templars (IOGT).³⁷ The old lodge building, now abandoned, still stands in rural Sundahl Township, Norman County.³⁸



Figure 47. Lammers Avenue ("Main St."), Solway, Minnesota, about 1910.

In 1898, Gustaf and Emma filed a claim under the Homestead Act of 1862 for 160 acres of land near Solway in Lammers Township, Beltrami County, Minnesota. After building a log house during



Figure 48. Stone and Helga Johnson



Figure 49. L. to r., Gustaf, Donald, Stone, Merle, Gust Johnson; front, Roy Johnson.

the summer months, they moved to the homestead in the fall of 1898. They were joined in the period of 1898-1901 by ten other families who, with one exception, also claimed homesteads in Lammers Township. The community, located in the eastern half of the township, became known locally as the “Swede Settlement.”⁵ The homesteaders built a log schoolhouse in 1900-01 that they used for ten years before replacing it with a frame building.^{39,40} Their school district was number 123. The school remained open until the end of the 1938-9 school term. At that time, district 123 was consolidated with the Solway school and children were bused to the village for their education. In its later years, the school became known as the Meadowview School. Today, only the concrete foundation remains, nearly hidden by brush and trees. Nearby, the community cemetery, also named Meadowview, is maintained and supervised by the township.

During the early years of the Swedish settlement in Lammers Township, Emma frequently served as midwife for births of children in the community.⁵ She also experienced a stillbirth (date unknown) that was not officially recorded. It is said that Emma faithfully tended the gravesite but that in later years it was disturbed by another burial. Disturbed by this event, Emma requested not to be buried in this cemetery.⁴¹

A last child was born to Gustaf and Emma on 27 Nov 1906.⁴² He was named Gustaf Arvid, but used the name Gust throughout his lifetime; he is the author’s father. After about 1938, Emma began suffering from arthritis. The disease became sufficiently severe to cause her to be bed ridden for a number of years until her death on 12 Apr 1945 at the age of 76.^{43,44} She is buried in



Figure 50. Helga Elizabeth Johnson

Greenwood Cemetery in Bemidji, Minnesota. Operation of the family farm gradually was taken over by youngest son, Gust. Gustaf continued living on the homestead after the death of Emma until senility caused him to be hospitalized in the state hospital in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. He died there on 1 Apr 1958^{43,45} at the age of 88 and also is buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Bemidji, Minnesota.

Helga Elizabeth Johnson, daughter of Gustaf and Emma (Larsdotter) Johnson, was born 3 Jul 1892^{8,43} in Nedre Ullerud parish, Värmland, Sweden. She came to the United States with her parents before the age of one when they emigrated from Sweden to Minnesota. She grew up in a rural setting, first near Fertile, Minnesota, and then on the family farm in Lammers Township near Solway, Minnesota. It is said that after Helga left home, she lived with her aunt, Elvina, who with husband Andrew Carlson operated a hotel in Brainerd, Minnesota. Helga is shown in a portrait in Figure 50 and also is seen on a post card photograph (see Figure 109, page 63) showing four young women in similar dress and having the hand written description, "Workers at Hotel in Brainerd. Helga Johnson, Clara Lindell." The post card is addressed by Clara to her father, Christ Mathison, at Shevlin, Minnesota, and is post-marked 25 Jul 1910.⁴⁶ After Elvina's death in 1910, Helga married Andrew Carlson. They moved (date unknown) to Menisino, Manitoba, Canada, where they operated a small country store (Figure 107) and raised a family of six children (Andrew, Emma, Ellen, Clarence, Agnes, and Edwin). Helga died in Nov 1957 at the age of 65.



Figure 51. Elin and Stone Johnson

Stone William Johnson, son of Gustaf and Emma (Larsdotter) Johnson, was born in Bear Park Township, Norman County, Minnesota, on 20 Mar 1896.³⁶ His name is recorded as Sten Wilhelm in the county record of births. He moved with the family in 1898 when they took up a homestead claim in Lammers Township, Beltrami County, Minnesota. He attended the community elementary school (Meadowview School, District 123) through the eighth grade.

Stone served briefly in World War I, being inducted into service on 10 Jul 1918, where he served as a bugler for Company "F" of the Third Pioneer Infantry, American Expeditionary Forces. His company left Newport News, Virginia, on 30 Aug 1918 and arrived at Brest, France, on 12 Sep 1918. The company participated in the Meuse-Argonne offensive, September 26 – November 11, 1918.⁴⁷