

Mrs. Selma Palm

Mrs. Selma Palm, nee Miss Selma Olson, was born in Nerke, Sweden on October 18, 1857. Her parents were John Gustav Olson and Clara Sofia Swenson. Mrs. Palm's childhood days as well as the days of her girlhood were spent in Sweden with her parents.

It was in 1881 that she came to America and eventually to Chicago where she stayed until November of the following year, when she came to Mayville. On May 22, 1884 she became the bride of Mr. August Palm. The ceremony was performed by Rev. Ohman in Hillsboro. Two weeks later the newly-weds came to Bartley Township to live on the farm where Mr. Palm had erected a sod house the previous year. This sod house was quite different from many sod houses at this time as it was boarded on the inside, while others had no frame work excepting the window frames and door cases. This was to be their home until in 1887, when they moved into a small frame house, the lumber for which was hauled from Valley City. Ten more years rolled on, when C.L. Peterson was hired to build an addition to the house, which made it as it stands today.

One of the very first jobs to tackle on a farm, whether in pioneer days or at the present time, is to locate a water supply. Mr. Palm and his able wife set to work; himself doing the digging, while Mrs. Palm hauled dirt to the top in buckets. As a reward for this she was promised a clock, which she got.

During their first years in Bartley they had no oxen nor horses. The spring's work was hired and the town trips were made in company with their neighbor Carl Berg Sr. who had the oxen. Mrs. Palm recalls instances when she did not go to town for three years. On one occasion when supplies had been brought home from town, Mr. and Mrs. Palm were away from home, an intruder entered their home and stole the supplies,

besides half of a homemade cheese. Also taken was silverware Mrs. Palm had brought with her from Sweden.

Pioneering would no doubt seem to be a rather dull life to this generation; yet we find that these good pioneer folks always have some stories of interest to relate concerning the early days. Upon one occasion an Indian came to the Palm home. Upon entering the house, he stood with his back to the occupants of the house, while apparently searching for something in his pockets. This naturally startled the members of the family. However, at length he produced a piece of paper on which was written: "Give him something to eat and a bed." Her anxiety over, Mrs. Palm promptly set forth food, which the self-invited guest devoured with evident famishedness. Soon after finishing his meal, the Indian made signs of being tired. A bed was soon made on the floor for him. Instead of placing his head on the pillow, he placed his feet there and was soon fast asleep. While he slept, Mrs. Palm set about to patch his trousers, as they were in very bad shape. When he awoke and found his trousers patched he placed his hands on his knees and uttered the only words he spoke while there: "That's good." After eating his breakfast, he left for Devils Lake and was not heard from since.

As a busy housewife, can you imagine anything more disheartening than to have a quilt all ready for tying and then to come and find your yarn twisted this way and that about the stove and table legs? Such was the case with Mrs. Palm, when she set about to complete the first quilt made on the farm. Her cat and dog were resting peacefully beside their finished work.

Besides rearing a family of nine children, this pioneer mother laundered clothes for neighboring hired help. This included patching also and netted her \$3 a week. Rearing a family was different in the

days, as all the clothes worn by the family were sewed by hand until in 1894, she became the owner of a sewing machine, which proved to be a big help. All the mittens and socks also were made by the Mother, and for these she spun the yarn. Another way in which Mrs. Palm earned extra money was to board the school teacher, which was her job as long as the one-room schools were in use.

During the haying season, Mr. Palm would cut the hay before going out to work and it was Mrs. Palm's duty to rake and bunch the hay with a hand rake. The children were along to do what they could, which consisted usually in emptying the water jug.

As years rolled by, more land was acquired until at one time eight quarters were owned and operated by Mr. Palm and all the work was done by horse power. Threshing time came with even more work for the housewife, as that meant an added task of cooking for twenty-four men without additional help.

Eleven children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Palm of whom all except two are living. They are: Charley, Marcus and Arthur of Hannaford, Henry and Fritz of Fargo, Gustav of Wenatchee, Washington, David of Anaconda, Montana, Oscar of Knox and Mrs. Oscar Torkelson of Dazey. There are 27 grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

In times of sickness when the husband was away to work, it was necessary for the mother to walk approximately three and one-half miles to a kindly neighbor lady, Mrs. V. Hanson, for assistance. One of these times it was Henry who took sick. With him in her arms and Charley, about two years old, toddling behind, the little party set out for Mrs. Hanson, who often times took the place of a doctor in the pioneer days. Both these boys are still living and show every evidence of having thrived very well during those days.

On October 30, 1915 Mr. Palm passed away leaving Mrs. Palm alone

with her family. The boys took over the farming at that time. Mrs. Palm lived on the farm until recently; since then she has made her home with her son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Torkelson in Barnes county. Barring rheumatism which has bothered her more or less during the past thirty-five years, she has been blessed with exceptionally good health and now at the age of 81 years is still mentally alert and does crocheting as her hobby.

Many changes have taken place since Mrs. Palm first came here. The biggest change to her is the mode of travel as compared with that of pioneer days. She used to drive twenty miles in a lumber wagon to church on Sunday mornings, but now it is merely a few minutes drive in a comfortable car.

When asked if she ever regretted coming to North Dakota, she replied emphatically, "No, I always liked North Dakota, and still do."

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