



## JOHANNA FALDT AGREN 1848–1937

Johanna Feldt was born about 1848 to Ellse Hendrickson and Staffen Olsen Faldt in St. Olof, Christiansted, Sweden.

She had fond memories of her grandfather, Henric Thorngren, who lived not far from the home of her family. Children came to his house for help with their studies. She stayed with him for one winter to learn how to write English script, but her mother took care of her clothes and sent food over to help out. While she was staying at her grandfather's, she had a toothache. Her father came and carried her home on his back. When she recovered, she returned to her grandfather's home.

The family lived in a town inland from the sea coast. Once in a while her father would take her with him to the coast. There he rented a room to live in, while he peddled fish that he bought from the fishermen. He mainly bought fresh herring and codfish, put them in a wheelbarrow, and sold them by going from house to house. Johanna liked being near the ocean. She liked to play with other children on the snowy-white sand on the shore of the Baltic Sea.

She wore long dresses and long sleeved cotton underwear called "sark." She wore woolen stockings, knit at home, and held below her knees with strips of knitted yarn garters. Her petticoats and dresses were made of heavy homespun cotton and wool. Her father made her shoes of wood. Sometimes wooden shoes had leather tops which were more comfortable but also more expensive. Johanna was twelve or fourteen years old before she got her first pair of leather shoes.

Her father was in the army as a cavalryman in his younger years, but it took him away from home so much that her mother insisted he find other work. After leaving the army, he did butchering, shoe-making, grooming and other work.

Johanna's sister, Mary, about seven years older than Johanna, contracted the measles and died. She also had a baby brother who was born but never took a breath. The other children in the family included Hanna, Ulrika, and Bertha who were all older than Johanna.

When she was about ten, the family moved further north and lived in two homes where her mother took care of the owners to help with the rent. She recalled one of the homes where the beds consisted of boxes set on four legs filled with clean, bright straw. They tucked strips of carpet over the straw to keep it in place and placed a feather bed on top. This was covered with sheets of linen with cotton warp, then a feather filled cover and a bed spread which was woven on a hand loom. Pillow cases covered the pillows. Ticking for the beds was always made in hand looms with cotton warp and linen fillings which were aired, fluffed, and plumped up to make them just right.

The family made bread from rye flour which they mixed it in a large wooden trough. They used a piece of dough saved from the last mixing for leavening. Rye flour, yeast, and warm water were the only ingredients they put in the dough. After it rose, they kneaded it until all the dough clung together in a smooth lump. It was left to rise again after which it was rolled into loaves to fit in the oven made of brick and clay. A fire was built in the oven until the walls inside were hot. Then using long brooms and rakes the coals were swept out and loaves of bread were placed on a long handled wooden paddle and slipped off close together in the big oven. The oven was sealed tightly and left for two hours. When the bread was done, the seal was taken off and the oven was left to cool enough to take the bread out. For bread they wanted to keep from spoiling for a long time, they split the loaves in half and put them back into the oven again to dry thoroughly. The dry loaves were hung on the ratters in the loft until it was time to eat them.

Johanna's sister Hanna listened to missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints preach in Denmark and joined the church. Johanna's mother investigated and also joined. Johanna became a member and was baptized at age 12 on 29 September 1867.

Washing clothes in Sweden was a big undertaking and was only done about once every month. Clothes were soaked at least overnight. Suds were made in a great stationary boiler next to the fireplace so the smoke from the fire under the boiler could go into the great chimney. When the suds were ready, each piece was taken from the soaking tubs, wrung out, and rubbed by hand with suds. After rubbing, the clothes were boiled in a big boiler and then stored in large wooden tubs ready for the river or lake where cleaning was completed. The older women and girls were loaded into a wagon along with barrels and tubs of boiled clothes and taken to the nearest fresh water. Every piece was taken separately and dipped in the water and then placed on a wooden board or bench and pounded with a paddle. For the most soiled clothes, the dipping, paddling, and wringing were repeated several times. The last stage was the bluing and hanging out to dry which was done at home. The irons used to press the clothes were hollow inside. A piece of peat heated in the fire was cut to fit inside the slot at the back of the iron. The hot peat was changed often enough to keep the metal shoe at the right temperature.

The family used peat for fuel. Black soil was hauled from the swamps, mixed with water, and spread out flat to dry. When still damp, it was marked into squares with a stick so that when it was dry it would break into blocks along the marks drawn. They built honeycombed piles of peat blocks so the air could circulate and continue the drying process. The dry blocks were finally piled in the storing shed for winter fires.

At 13 years of age, Johanna went to work tending five children. In addition to caring for them, she knitted for them, and looked after the geese and chickens. She did this work for two and one half years. Her pay was a dress a year and two sark with long sleeves. The winter she turned 15, she returned to her parent's home. In order to secure a position, a girl needed to have a certificate from her priest to the effect that she could read. Johanna went to the Lutheran Priest twice a week to read for him. She got her certificate the spring before she

turned 16. Most people thought it was not necessary for a girl to be able to write, but Johanna wanted to learn to write. A missionary wrote letters on a slate for her. She copied them and got so she could write quite well.

In the spring she worked for a Baron in his garden. She worked along side two boys and another girl and she enjoyed this work. There were a great many servants at the Baron's estate. Her wages were paid in money. Each Sunday she could get off to go to church meetings. In the fall, when she went to take care of an elder lady, a letter came from Pher Agren from America asking her to come to Utah and be his wife. She had met him when he was a missionary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the place where her parents lived the winter she had been at home going to the Priest. She quit her job and went home to get ready to leave for America.

She began her immigration to America in June, and was sick the whole time she was aboard the ship. After arriving in New York, she traveled a week on the train. Pher Agren came to Ogden to meet her. She arrived on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July and a brass band was playing at the station. Agren took her to Salt Lake where she worked for Mrs. Ballstrom cutting peaches to dry. In return, Mrs. Ballstrom sewed her temple clothes.

Johanna and Pher Agren were married in the Endowment House on 4 August 1873. They lived in Salt Lake for two years. Agren was a carpenter. At 19, he learned the wheelwright's trade. They moved to West Jordan where Agren worked building a large house for someone. Agren paid passage for Johanna's sister, Bertha, to come to America from Sweden. He also sent for her mother who came before Johanna gave birth to their daughter Emeline. Bertha married Carl Anderson, a missionary she had heard preach in Sweden. He asked her to leave Salt Lake and come to Ogden to marry him since his first wife had died leaving two small girls badly in need of a mother. Carl Anderson, became ill and needed Agren to help on the farm, so they moved to Harrisville. Carl knew he was going to die and told Agren and Bertha that he would feel better about going if he thought they would marry when he was gone. They were married 12 June 1876.

Alfred, Ida, and Laura were born to Johanna and Pher while living at the Anderson ranch. During this time, Pher Agren acquired land in the northwest part of Harrisville and worked there whenever he could. In his unselfish manner, Pher also sent passage for other members of the Feldt family as well as other immigrants.

When the Edmunds Bill against polygamy passed, Johanna moved with her children to the northwest property, and Agren took Bertha and their son, S. Andrew, and went to Alma Wyoming to work as a carpenter in a coal mine. While he was gone, authorities came to Johanna's home searching for Agren. They looked in the flour bin, under the beds, out in the granary, even stuck forks in the mangers through the hay. He did not happen to be home or they likely would have found him. The authorities came another time and just stood and watched Johanna weave carpet for a while and then left. Agren, tired of being away from his family, returned to give himself up to authorities. Nothing was done to him and the case was later dismissed.

Johanna's mother died in 1893 while she was living with Johanna. Her father died three years later. She and Agren took 10 year old Nils, the son of a friend, into their home. Nils did chores and helped around the farm for his board. They kept him for seven years. Johanna was an active member of the L.D.S. Church. She held many positions including a counselor in primary. She served as president of the Relief Society from 1907 to 1909.

Pher and Johanna were delighted when a neighbor, by the name of Swenson, sold them the right of way to connect to the country road (750 West) east of the ranch. They graveled it and used it to go to town instead of going along the railroad tracks.

In 1905, their daughter Emeline and her husband Charlie Shurtleff wanted to move down from Idaho and asked to buy their farm. Pher and Johanna sold it to them. Pher built a three room yellow brick house built west of the old house. He did most of the carpentering himself, but before the house was finished he got pneumonia and died 26 twelve days later, November 1905.

Daughter Ellen went to the Agricultural College in Logan, and daughter Ida went to the University of Utah. When Laura's husband, Warren Shurtleff, went on a mission to England, she and her children stayed with Johanna while he was away. Charlie and Emeline sold the farm in 1912. Johanna moved into an upstairs apartment in Bertha's son, Andrew Agren's, new brick house (409 North Harrisville Road). Her family was building a home just to the north and they moved in that fall.

In 1919, they sold the new home in Harrisville and moved to 7<sup>th</sup> Street in Ogden. They lived in two room log house for two winters. Then the girls remodeled a frame house on the same property and they moved there. Johanna helped tend the chickens and fruit. In her later years, she moved to Pocatello, Idaho and lived six weeks with Emeline and Charles, and then moved into a new duplex owned by Laura and Warren. She died 6 September 1937, in Pocatello.

**SOURCE:**

Agren, Johanna Faldt. "Personal History." Unpublished manuscript.

-----, Nils	Feldt, Bertha
Agren, Alfred	Feldt, Hanna
Agren, Ellen	Feldt, Mary
Agren, Emeline	Feldt, Ulrika
Agren, Emeline	Hendrickson, Ellse
Agren, Ida	Shurtleff, Charlie
Agren, Laura	Shurtleff, Emeline Agren
Agren, Pher	Shurtleff, Ida Agren
Agren, S. Andre	Shurtleff, Laura Agren
Anderson, Carl	Shurtleff, Warren
Ballstrom, Mrs.	Swenson, (a neighbor)
Faldt, Staffen Olsen	Thorngren, Henric