

The Story of My Life

By
Gerda Augusta Swanson



Written by
Verna Kaster

December 2000

Preface

Here are the first five chapters to a fictional biographical story about my grandmother. Some parts of the story are documented facts, some are historical facts and some are just plan fiction. In order for you to know what is truth and what is fiction, the following information is furnished:

a. **Documented fact is in bold print. This information has either been passed down from generation to generation or I have documents to prove it.**

b. *Historical fact is in italicized print. This information has been taken from historical documents so it can be assumed that this is how it was for Anna and Gerda, but cannot be proven.*

c. The rest of the story that is in regular print is purely fictional. I have tried to guess at how things were, some of the things they did, and the feelings they must have had in certain circumstances.

Hope you enjoy!

Verna Kaster
December 2000



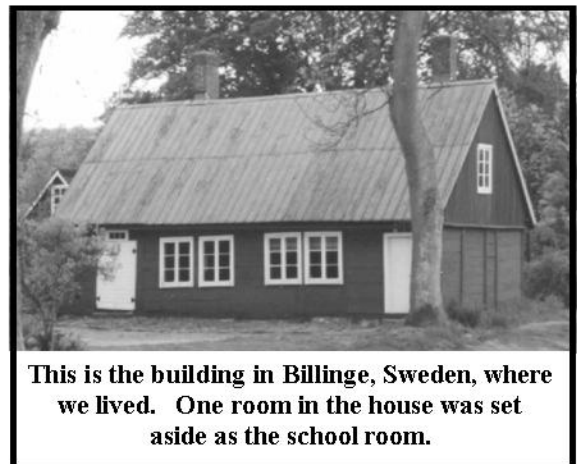
**This is me on our
50th Wedding Anniversary**

Chapter One

My name is Gerda Augusta Heurlin Swanson, and I am almost 130 years old now.

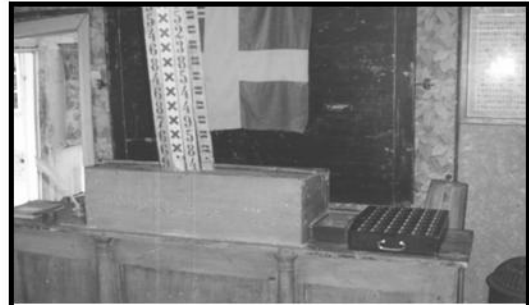
No, I am no longer living on earth, but my spirit is alive and well. Sometimes when I look down from this beautiful place where I now live and see my children, my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren, their children, and their children, this overwhelming desire to share my wonderful life with them comes bubbling up from inside of me. There are so many exciting and fulfilling things that happened to me such as the long trip to America that my sister and I took when I was just eight years old, the first time I saw my husband-to-be, the day of our wedding, and the first time I looked at each of my nine wonderful children. And then there are other things such as the first time I turned on an electric light instead of lighting a candle, or the first time I rode in an automobile instead of a horse-drawn carriage, or the first time I turned on a faucet instead of carrying water into the house. But I think I am getting ahead of myself, so let me start at the beginning.

I was born in the little village of Billinge in Malmohus Lan, Sweden, on December 20, 1873. I was the third of six children born to Anders Persson Heurlin and Petronella Andersdotter Grahn. My oldest sister, Hilda Victoria, was 4 years older than me, and Anna Sofia was 2 years older than me. Our father had obtained the position of School Master in Billinge, and the family had moved there from the village of Finja in Kristianstad Lan about a year before I was born.



This is the building in Billinge, Sweden, where we lived. One room in the house was set aside as the school room.

When my father became a School Master, he changed his last name from Persson to Heurlin ("Horlen" in Swedish), which was the custom in the late 1800's in Sweden. He got the name from a place which was near his birthplace of Rafstorp in Finja, Malmohus Lan, Sweden.



This is my father's desk in the school room. The Swedish flag is behind his desk and multiplication sticks are standing on top of his desk

My first recollections were of a happy home. Don't get me wrong. Father was strict and expected us to obey him, but he also would play with us and do silly things to make us laugh. He loved children and really felt it was his privilege to be able to influence children's lives for the better. We lived in the combination school and home that was provided by the town for the School Master. From my first recollections, my father always seemed to find time to do things with us, whether it was teaching us something new or reading us a special book or playing a game with us.



My parents - Anders & Petronella Heurlin

My mother was a dear. She had the most wonderful laugh, and really enjoyed people. She was energetic and very creative, and it seemed like she was always working. But even in the middle of all she had to do, she made time for us kids. I knew she really loved me by the special little things she did "just for me". One time she made a special hair piece for me with pink ribbons. Another time she made this most wonderful and beautiful blue dress for me. And sometimes when she was baking, she would let us girls make our own little loaf of bread or sweet roll or whatever it was she making.

Of course, as soon as we were old enough, we all had our chores to do. Someone always had to go *get water from the spring so we had water in the house*. I still remember how heavy that bucket would get after I had carried it only a short distance. Then there was *churning the butter*. It seemed like it took hours and hours for the cream to churn and my arms would get so tired, but it had to be done so..... We also had to help with washing the clothes using a wash board, sweeping and dusting the house, and mending clothes. Besides all that, there were a few animals which had to be taken care of. It seemed like work was



Here is a picture of the student's desks. My sisters and I would come in here on weekends and play school.

never done.

But when there was a break in the work, oh the fun times my sisters and I had. We loved to play with the dolls that Mom had made for us. We would find a spot in the field or by a tree that we could pretend was a playhouse and we would pass the time playing house. Another thing we loved to do was go into the school room and play school. Hilda would be the teacher, and Anna and I would be the students. I think we actually learned from Hilda's teaching even though we thought we were just playing. We also liked to play hop scotch, but my sisters were better at that than I was. Of course, they were older than me too. I do have to admit that every once in a while we girls would get angry at each other because we didn't get our own way, but we would soon make up and then everything would be OK again.

My sister, Amanda Dorothea, was born when I was about 2 1/2 years old. Of course I do not remember anything about her birth. I was about 4 1/2 years old when my brother, Erik Julius, was born. I have faint recollections of the mid-wife coming, a lot of bustling around the house and commotion in my parent's bedroom. **My youngest brother, Theodosius, was born on April 2, 1881 when I was 7 years old.** I do remember hearing him cry for the very first time. I had helped to keep the water hot in the kitchen. After he had been cleaned up, they let me hold him. He was so little and helpless, and I thought he was the most beautiful baby I had ever seen.

The year 1881 was a very difficult year for us. About 3 months after Theo was born, my father got a cold and it settled in his lungs. It kept getting worse and worse. The Doctor did come and see my father, and he gave him some medicine but it did not help him. The Doctor said **he had pneumonia. I was 7 years, 10 months old when my father died on September 3, 1881.** I felt like my world had fallen apart.

My mother was so strong during this time. I am sure her heart was breaking, but all she could think about was us kids and our needs. The day of the funeral I remember her holding me while I cried and telling me that everything was going to be all right. As everyone in the village knew my father, there were many, many people from the village that came to our house for the funeral. They

brought all kinds of food and were so kind. However, I'm sure everyone was wondering what our family was going to do now.

The big question was "Where were we going to live?" **We had to move as the town now had to hire another School Master and he would get to live in our house.** Eventually my mother found another house for us to live in but it was not as big as the house we were leaving.

And the next big question was "How were we going to live?" **My mother, who could bake the most delectable breads and cookies, started to sell her bake goods in order for our family to survive.** However, times were very hard and she was barely making enough money for us to eat and pay the rent. To make matters worst, she had no family near her. Her father had died a few years before, her mother had gone to America with my mother's sister, Johanna, and all her living brothers and sisters were living quite a distance from her. Something drastic had to be done.

My Aunt Johanna Olson, who had immigrated to Swedeburg, Nebraska, some years earlier with her husband and children, kept writing to my Mother and telling her that if she would come to Nebraska, they could help her and she wouldn't be all alone. However, she could not afford for all of us to go at one time as it cost \$32 (in US currency) per person with children between 1 and 12 years of age going at half price. That was a lot of money in those days. There was no way that my mother could come up with even that much money. So eventually Johanna's husband send the money for two children to come. (These tickets included transportation from Malmo, Sweden, all the way to Ashland, Nebraska.)

My mother could not spare my oldest sister, Hilda, as she had to take care of my younger brothers and sister and keep house. The day was just not long enough for my mother to run the household and do all the baking needed to support our family. So it was decided that my sister, Anna, and I would go first, and the rest of the family would come just as soon as they could. I was both excited and scared.

Bengta Rasmusdotter, who also lived in Billinge and knew our family, was planning to go to America too. Because my mother was very, very concerned for Anna's and my welfare on this long journey to America, she asked Bengta if she would take care of us on the trip. Of course Bengta agreed and the date was set.

As it got closer to the date, I got more and more excited. I had never been out of our village before. Now I was going to ride on a steamship all the way to America. Anna and I would talk for hours about all the new things we were going to do and see.

However, I was also very scared. The following thoughts kept running through my mind, and I worried about them: "I had never been away from my mother for even overnight. Now I wouldn't see her for at least a year." "We were going to a place that didn't speak Swedish so how could I talk with anyone?" "Even though we were going to stay with Mom's sister, I didn't remember her at all. She and her family left for America when I was very young." "What if Mom never makes it to America?" "What if the steamship sinks?" "What if I get lost from my sister?" I tried to be brave, but the closer it got, the more afraid I became.

The morning we were going to leave, my Mother sat Anna and me down and told us that she was very concerned for us and if there was any other way, she would not be splitting up the family like this. But she also said that she trusted God to take care of us, and his angels would be guarding us every step of the way. If we really trusted him, then we didn't need to be afraid. She also promised that she would pray for us every day. She again told us that she loved us very, very much and would be so glad when all of us would be a family again in America.

When Bengta came with the horsecart on **September 18, 1882** to take us to the train station, we were all packed and ready. *Mother had sent with us a couple changes of clothes and things like blankets, towels and soap.* She also included some things to keep us occupied such as our school slates and chalk and our dolls. *In addition she packed dried apples, smoked sausage, barley bread, rye meal bread, cheese, stick cinnamon and a few other goodies so we would have food on our trip.* **She had even pinned name tags on us** and made us promise that we would wear them the whole trip. There was a lot of hugging and crying before we left that morning. Mother hugged me so tight I thought I was going to die. The last thing I remember as we drove off was Mother standing there with my brothers and sisters crying and waving.

Chapter Two

It was late afternoon when we got to the train station. Some men came and

helped unload our things from the horsecart. Anna and I were staying close to Bengta as all this was very new to us. We had never even seen a train, let alone ride on one. And there was so much noise. It was all a little scary, but I was beginning to feel that this would be a wonderful adventure. We finally got on the train and found our seats. After putting our satchels and bags away, Anna and I started looking around. There were other people and families on the train that looked like they were on their way to America too. Maybe we would all sail on the same ship.

Finally, the train started moving. Anna and I were so scared we held onto each other real tight. Eventually we got use to the noise and motion of the train and relaxed. In fact, we relaxed so much that we fell asleep. Bengta had to wake us up when it was time for dinner. I think we were just totally exhausted from the stress of the last few days, and it had finally caught up with us. For dinner we each made a sandwich using the sausage and cheese Mother had sent, had a couple of pieces of dried apple and a stick of cinnamon. After dinner we noticed a family near us that had a couple of girls our age. We started talking to them and found out and they and their families were also on their way to America, only they were going to Minnesota instead of Nebraska. Maybe these two places were close enough together that we could visit once we got there, we thought.

Our sleeping arrangements that night were not very good. We had to sleep in our seats as it cost extra to get a berth. Just after breakfast the next morning we arrived in Malmo. We got off the train and made our way to the docks.

We were to sail on the steamship “Westa” to Hull, England. We found the ship real easy as it had it’s name painted on it in big black letters. Bengta had to remind me a couple of times to watch where I was going as I was trying to take in all the sights and activities on the dock. I had never seen such confusion. *There were families loaded with trunks, bedding, cooking utensils, etc trying to make their way to the ship, women saying good-bye to their friends, children crying, workers trying to get the freight and baggage on board the ship, ticket agents and officials shouting and trying to get passengers on board the ship, and above all that sound, I could hear the deafening noise of the steam engines as*



they were warming up for their long voyage.

We finally got on the ship. One of the stewards looked at our tickets and **directed us to go down into the steerage compartment.** *As we entered the steerage area, the smell was so bad I thought I was going to choke. I noticed that both Bengta and Anna started coughing too. We saw right away what the problem was. The wooden floors were wet and not very clean, and there was the faint odor of vomit.*

The head steward in the steerage area, after looking at our tickets, showed us into *a small compartment which had enough berths lining the walls for about 24 passengers.* Bengta had been told by the steward that only 12 passengers would be assigned to our compartment so we each fixed our bed on a bottom berth and stored our satchels and bags on the berth above it. As I remember, the *berths consisted of an iron framework containing a mattress and pillow which were filled with straw. The mattress and pillow were covered with coarse white canvas slips and one blanket was provided.* There was one porthole in our compartment.

As soon as we were settled and had tried to eat some of the food Mother had sent with us for dinner, Anna and I went off to explore the steerage area. We found where the bathrooms were, climbed up on a berth and looked out a porthole, and watched as more passengers came in and got settled. The family we met on the train finally arrived and were Anna and I excited. We had someone to play with.

The other passengers assigned to our compartment were a family with three older boys, a little two year old girl and a six month old baby girl; an older couple who were going to live with their son in Chicago, Illinois; and two sisters whose husbands had immigrated to Illinois two years ago.

Just as it was getting dark outside, a steward came and told all of us passengers that the ship would be leaving early tomorrow morning, and that **it will probably take around four to five days to sail to Hull, England.** He also informed us that *we all will be issued eating utensils tomorrow morning at breakfast. We are to keep them until the end of the voyage when we will have to turn them in.*

When it was time to go to bed, we took off our shoes and climbed into bed with our clothes on as *we had no privacy.* I laid in bed that first night and cried myself to sleep because I missed my Mother. Anna tried to comfort me, but I think

she was missing Mom too.

We sailed out of the port at Malmo, Sweden, on September 21, 1882. Bengta took us up on deck so we could watch all the activities on the ship. It was so wonderful to get away from the awful smell of our compartment, and after the ship got underway, to feel the wind in our faces. Anna and I, along with our new friends, had fun trying to walk straight in spite of the rocking of the ship.

We stayed up on deck until we had to go down to our quarters for lunch. After lunch, we went back on deck and stayed there until dinner time. This was our routine for the duration of this trip. *The conditions in steerage were so horrible that almost everyone that could was up on deck most of the time.*

We found out soon enough that the food served was not very good. Mostly we were served bread, lots of potatoes and some sort of meat, but it was not appetizing at all. And every so often we were given some sort of vegetable or fruit, but I could hardly eat them as they tasted so bad. Anna and I were so glad that Mother had sent food with us.

And the bathrooms! They were terrible. The rooms were very small with only one faucet of warm water. Oh, there were a number of faucets with salt water we could use, but I sure didn't want to use them because the salt water were real cold. The floors were always damp and dirty and, of course, the horrible smell was always there. Some of the women tried to keep them clean, but it didn't make me want to be in there any longer than I had to. *And there was no place to take a bath.*

No one in our compartment got seasick, but some of the other passengers were not so lucky. What upset Bengta was the fact that the crew didn't cleaned up the vomit, and they didn't even provide supplies for the passengers to do it. It just made our conditions worst.

It took us four days to reach **Victory Dock in Hull, England, where our steamship was to dock.** We were finally going to get off this smelly steamship. After we got all our things together, we hurried up on deck so we wouldn't miss any of the excitement of docking.

After docking, we were escorted off the steamship and put on railway carriages which took us around the town of Kingston upon Hull to a waiting

room at the Hull Paragon Railway Station. This waiting room was wonderful as it had a separate waiting room for ladies and children with real nice toilet and washing facilities where we could get clean. I had never before been so happy to take a bath and put on clean clothes.

We were told that we would not be leaving this station for two days as the train was waiting for passengers from a couple of other steamships. As we had plenty of time for clothes to dry, Bengta helped us wash the clothes we had been wearing to get rid of the smell. Anna and I got bored as there was not a lot for us to do. We played with our dolls some and tried to play school but it was not the same as when Hilda was our teacher in our Dad's schoolroom. *The place was filled with noise as there were babies crying, children trying to play, mothers yelling at their kids, people talking and officials coming around yelling out information about what was happening next. As there was no sleeping quarters available,* the three of us found a corner and tried to make as comfortable a place to sleep as possible using our blankets, towels and some clothing. The longer we were there, the more crowded it became as the other two steamships docked and unloaded their passengers.

The train finally came to take us to Liverpool. I could hardly believe how long the train was. I counted 17 carriages being pulled by one steam engine. *They told everyone to take their baggage to the rear of the train as the last 4 carriage would store the baggage.* Since we only had one satchel and bag each, we did not do what they said. We kept it with us. Bengta did not want to be close to the steam engine as it was so noisy and blew out lots of coal dust, so we got in the last carriage that held passengers. *The train left the station around 11:00 AM.*

The trip from Hull to Liverpool was uneventful. Anna and I watched as we went through the English towns of Leeds, Huddersfield and Stalybridge. *It took us around five hours to get to the Waterloo Dock in Liverpool, England, where our steamship was docked and waiting to take us to New York.*

After we had gotten off the train, we were directed to the Medical Inspector's Office as we had to have a medical examination to make sure we were healthy and able-bodied. No one was allowed to go to America who was sickly or disabled. *It wasn't bad at all as the Medical Officer just looked each one of us over, asked us a few questions, stamped our passage-ticket and sent us on our way.*

Now we needed to find our steamship. **Our tickets said we were sailing on a steamship named Spain.** We started walking down the dock looking for our ship. However, we really didn't have any trouble identifying it as there was a long line of passengers waiting to board it and lots of activity and commotion going on trying to load all the cargo.

Chapter Three

I was hoping that conditions on this ship would be much better than the other ship, but I was in for a big disappointment. Again, **we were directed to steerage.** As we entered the steerage area, the first thing that hit me was the same *awful smell like the other ship had.* I looked at Anna and saw that she was holding her nose. We both made a face, but what could we do?



There were three large compartments in steerage on this ship and we were directed to the one for families which held about 300 people. Bengta went to the steward and requested that we be assigned to the *compartment for women without male escorts.* He just hollered at her saying that he didn't have time for such petty requests. He grabbed our tickets to see what berths we were assigned and shoved us in that direction. At that point, I think Bengta was about ready to cry. I know I sure was. I had never been talked to so harshly before. The crew on this ship was not very nice at all. *All they did was holler at us as if we were nothing better than cattle.*

Our compartment had *rows and rows of berths that looked like the bunkbeds on the other ship.* We finally found our berths and felt pretty lucky as they were in one of the corners of the compartment. Bengta said it would feel like we had a little more privacy since our berths were against a wall instead of out in the middle of the room. Anna took the top berth, and I got the bottom berth. Bengta had the lower bunk next to mine. Bengta told us that during the day we were expected to *keep everything that belonged to us on our bed.* As I only had a

District of New York.—Port of New York.

I, Robert McKim Grace, Master of the Steamer "Spain", do solemnly, sincerely, and truly that the following List or Manifest, subscribed by me, and now delivered by me to the Collector of the Customs of the Collection District of New York, is a full and perfect List of all the Passengers taken on board of the said S.S. Spain, at Liverpool England from which Port said S.S. Spain has now arrived; and that on the said List is truly designated the age, the sex, and the occupation of each of the said Passengers, the part of the vessel occupied by each during the passage, the country to which each belongs, and also the country of which it is intended by each to become an inhabitant; and that said List or Manifest truly sets forth the number of said Passengers who have died on said voyage, and the names and ages of those who have died.

Sworn to this Oct 9th 1882. Robert McKim Grace Master

Before me J. McKim is Master, from Liverpool England 2875 tons.

NAME	AGE	SEX	OCCUPATION	The Country to which they properly belong	The Country of which they intend to become inhabitants	Died on the voyage	Part of the vessel occupied by each during the voyage
<u>Mr. R. Forsyth</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>male</u>	<u>man</u>	<u>England</u>	<u>U.S. America</u>		<u>Saloon</u>
<u>Mr. J. H. H. H.</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>male</u>	<u>man</u>	<u>Canada</u>	<u>Canada</u>		
<u>Mr. J. H. H. H.</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>male</u>	<u>man</u>	<u>England</u>	<u>U.S. America</u>		

Alfred Peterson	21			Sweden			
Lars Carlsson	19						
Sola Peterson	30	Female	Swedish				
Anna Gustafsdotter	57	Female	Swedish				
Gustafsson	14	Male	Swedish				
Nils E. Eriksson	24						
Anders S. Herlin	11	Female	Swedish				
Augusta	8						
Sopie K. Kellberg	17		Swedish				
Hans Carlsson	15	Male	Swedish				
S. P. Oederberg	31			U.S. America			
Lars	29	Female	Swedish				
Harry	2	Male	Swedish				
Olaf Lindin	24		Swedish				
Christian Olsson	18						
N. J. J. J.	24						
Lars J. J.	28						
Sopie	15						
Anna	8	Female	Swedish				

This is the a partial copy of the passenger list for the steamship "Spain".
We are listed as Anna S. Herlin, age 11, and Augusta Herlin, age 8.

satchel and a bag, it was no problem for me to leave my things on the bed even at night.

As we were getting settled, Anna poked me and whispered that I should listen to the families around us that were getting settled. They weren't speaking in Swedish, that was for sure. Bengta said that there were probably *people from Germany, Italy, France, Holland, Scotland, Poland, England and Sweden on this ship*. From then on, whenever Anna and I heard someone talking that we couldn't understand, we would try and guess what language they were speaking.

It was late in the evening when we finally got settled so the only exploring Anna and I did was to find where the closest bathroom was. This bathroom was exactly like the one on the other ship so we didn't stay in there very long. After eating some of the food that Mother sent, we climbed into bed with our clothes on as, again, there was no place to change. It had been a long day and I was real tired. I think my eyes closed the minute my head touched my pillow.

The ship left Liverpool at first light the next morning. I woke up to the rocking of the ship and the sound of the steam engines. Soon the steward and his assistants came with our *breakfast which consisted of hot rolls, butter and coffee. Again, we were given a plate, cup and eating utensils which we were to keep for the duration of the trip.*

After breakfast, Bengta took us up on deck so we could get some fresh air. It was a beautiful day with the sun shining and the water glistening. After finding a place to sit, we watched the people wandering around the small area designated for passengers. There were *Poles in gray linen suits with baggy pants and high-heeled topboots, Hungarians with dusky skins, large slouched hats and brown capeulders, Norwegians in red shirts and fur caps, Frenchmen in brown velvet suits, and Italians huddled against each other under a ragged blanket jabbering and quarrelling and eating onions. Little children were running around, glad to have some space to play while their mothers sat and watched them.*

At noon, we were called to our quarters for a lunch of *pea soup and bread. As there were no place set up for dining, we were required to sit on our bed and eat our food.* It was not easy sitting on a bed, holding the bowl of soup and trying to eat it while the ship moved with the waves.

That afternoon **we arrived at Queenstown in Ireland where the ship stopped to take on the Irish passengers.** We went up on deck so we could watch as the ship docked and the Irish passengers started coming on board. But very quickly we were told to get down to our berths and stay there until after we set sail from Queenstown. They didn't want anyone up on deck and in the way while they loaded cargo and passengers. It took about six hours for all the passengers to get on board, the cargo to get loaded and the ship get underway again.

Once we had set sail, they fed us dinner *which consisted of potatoes, carrots, and some kind of meat.* It did not taste too bad, but it was not the best

food I had ever tasted. As soon as it got dark, we went to bed as the stewards discouraged the use of candles because of the fire danger.

The next day, both Anna and I noticed that *the ship was rolling and pitching a lot* and our stomachs weren't feeling too good. Bengta, too, was not feeling well. We stayed in our beds, hoping that this seasickness would go away, but it did not. It seemed like everyone was groaning, crying and vomiting; and you have to remember that *there was no one to clean up after someone vomited*. Bengta kept reminding us to lean off the bed when we had to throw up so our bed wouldn't get too messed up. It took us about three days to become accustomed to the rocking of the ship and for the seasickness to go away. But the smell in steerage was now overpowering. Every chance we got, we were up on the deck where the air was clean.

We had a few good days of sailing and then one night, *the wind shifted and the sea grew rough. Trunks and chests began knocking each other about. The ship was being tossed about something terrible*. I woke up and was really scared. Anna climbed down to my bunk so we could be together as she was afraid too. Bengta kept telling us that everything was going to be alright, but when she came over to be with us, her whole body was shaking. I think she was scared too. We could hear *the waves crashing against the ship and the wind howling through the sails*. Soon we could hear children hollering and people crying and praying.

The storm lasted for a couple of days. *During this time, no one, except crew, was allowed on deck. The steward said that the Captain was afraid to allow anyone on deck, as it was all his men could do to keep their footing*. I guess it was dangerous, but the smell in steerage was really getting to me. And to make matters worst, *all the port holes were kept closed to keep the water out. So hardly any fresh air was coming into the steerage area. Most everyone in steerage just stayed in their bunks waiting for the storm to pass. I had no energy and it was like my brain had stopped working. I am sure this was the result of all the fowl gases we were breathing*.

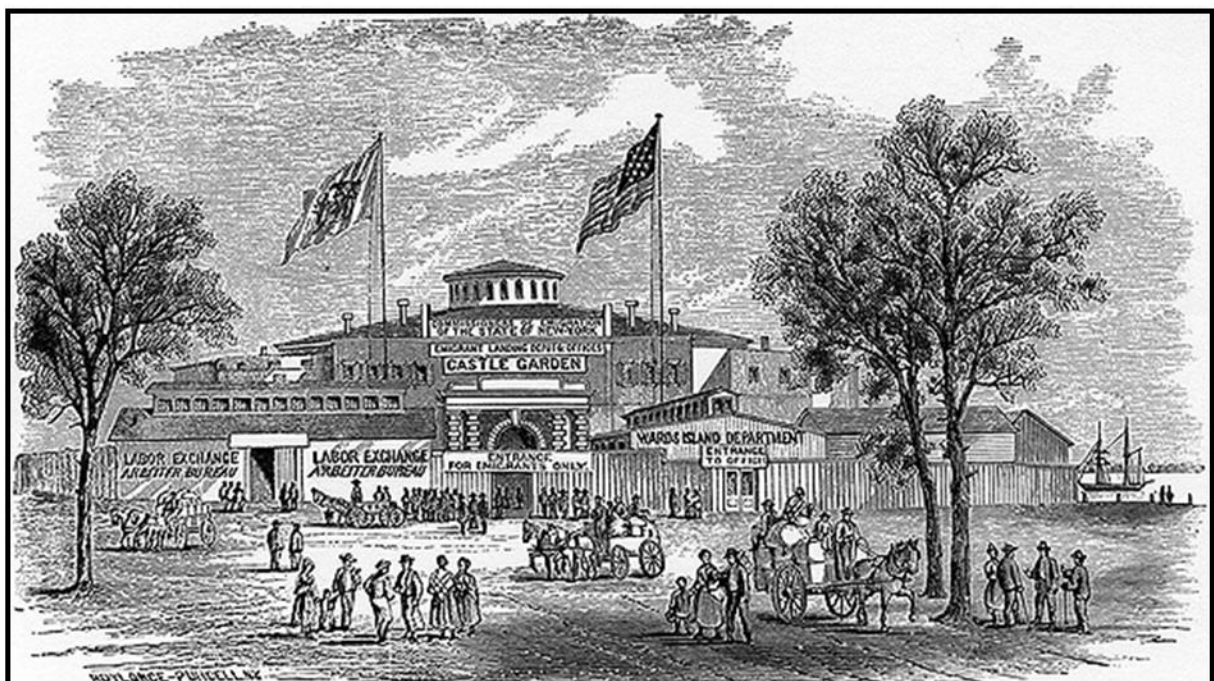
After the storm, everyone was very anxious to reach land. It seemed like we had been on this ship for a long, long time, even though it had only been six days. Someone had heard the crew says that we were almost to New York so every time we were up on deck, Anna and I searched the horizon to see if we would see land first. Of course, the man in the crow's nest saw land first, and eventually we heard that land had been sighted. Boy, were we excited. Bengta wanted us to look our best when we arrived in America so she rigged up a

way to hang our blankets around our bunks so we had some privacy, and we all took sponge baths and put on our last pair of clean clothes. Then she suggested that we try and get packed so we would be ready to leave the ship as soon as we could. We hurried as we wanted to be on deck when the ship sailed into the harbor.

Chapter Four

We sailed into New York Harbor on October 9, 1882. *After our ship fired a salute and dropped anchor at the tip of Manhattan, a steamtug came along side and began transporting passengers and luggage to land.* Bengta, Anna and I could hardly wait to get off this smelly steamship. Finally it was our turn to get in the steamtug and be taken to land. We were so excited! We had finally made it to America.

The steamtug dropped all us passengers off in front of a huge, round building made of red granite with the name Castle Garden over the entrance. We were instructed to go into this building as they had to make sure we were legal and healthy immigrants. As we entered the building, I was overwhelmed by how big it was inside. There was a huge glass dome in the center of the roof that provided light for all the activities going on. Under the dome stood some



This is a picture of Castle Gardens in New York where Anna and I were taken as immigrants to be processed before we could enter the United States

dozen men whose job it was to help each immigrant get processed in.

We were told to take a seat and wait until one of the men called our name. While we were waiting, one of the leading officers connected with the Bureau of Information mounted a rostrum and informed all us immigrants that, if needed, we could stay the night in this building and that all our questions about jobs, travel, accommodations, and exchanging money will be answered before we leave this building.

After what seemed like forever, our names were called. Because we could not speak English, there was some problem communicating. Anna and I did not say a word as we could not understand a thing they were saying. Bengta kept trying to figure out what they were saying and answer their questions. I guess eventually we did what we were suppose to, but it was real confusing. *After they verified that we were legal immigrants, they gave us another physical, including some mental tests, to make sure we were healthy.*

They then checked our tickets and saw that our tickets also included passage on a train to Nebraska. A Swedish interpreter came by who explained to us that transportation would be provided for us to get to the **train station, which was located across the Hudson River in New Jersey,** early tomorrow morning and that we should be on the train that would leave at noon tomorrow for Chicago.

As we would be staying the night in this building, Bengta said we should try and find a spot where we could make ourselves as comfortable as possible. That was not very easy as there were a lot of people staying here for the night, but we finally got settled.

After we had eaten some smoked sausage and dried apples, Anna and I walked around to check things out. We noticed that *there were two large iron stoves, between four and five feet high, at each end of this area which were used for heating the building. Some of the immigrants were also cooking on them. There were also water taps and a iron ladle at each end of this area where we could get water. As it was now evening, they turned on gas lights and it gave the place a more cheerful and warm feeling.* This was the first time Anna and I had ever seen gas lights as we had only used candles for light at night in Sweden. We finally got in bed, but I couldn't go to sleep right away as *there were babies crying and people standing around the stoves talking and laughing.*

Bengta woke us before light the next morning and helped us get all our things together so we would be ready when *the boat came to take us across the Hudson River*. After eating a couple pieces of bread and drinking some water, we went out and stood by the river with all the other immigrants needing to get to the train station. A strong wind was coming off the river that was real cold, and I was so glad when the boat finally came. Once across the river, we walked about a block to the train station.

I don't remember much about this train station except that there were lots and lots of people, and I couldn't understand a word any of them were saying. Anna and I stayed real close to Bengta. We finally got on the train, and I thought that now it would not be very much longer before we were in Nebraska and at my Aunt Johanna's house. Boy, was I wrong! When I excitedly said that to Bengta, she told me that it would take us four days to just get to Chicago, Illinois. And then we still had to travel to Nebraska. Our situation on this train was about the same as on the train in Sweden. We had to sleep in our seats.

And then we found out that they did not serve any food on this train. We had a big problem as there was not very much of the food that Mother sent with us left. Bengta had tried to get us to just eat the food provided by the steamship and save the food we had brought along, but both Anna and I had a hard time eating the ship's food so we had snacked on Mom's food when we got real hungry. Anna and I discussed what we should do. Anna decided that we should eat a little as we possibly could so what we had would last longer and I agreed. **I have to admit that off and on I got real upset at Bengta because every once in a while she ate some of our food.**

Every time we came to a town or city, the conductor would walk through the train hollering out the name of the place. Then the train would stop and passengers would either get off or get on. At first that helped to keep us occupied as it seemed we were stopping very often and it was fun to watch all the activity. I didn't realize it at the time, but later I found out that the train went through the states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana before we finally got to Chicago, Illinois. All I knew at the time was that I was sure tired of traveling.

Our food only lasted three days. Even though Bengta was unhappy with us for not being careful with our food, she did buy us a loaf of bread at one of the

towns we stopped at which kept us from being hungry.

We finally arrived in Chicago, Illinois, where we had to change trains. Bengta put us on the train going to Nebraska, and then said “good-bye” to us as she was not going to Nebraska. Even though Bengta sometimes made me angry, I felt secure and safe when she was with us. Now we were on our own and I was scared. How would we know when we were suppose to get off the train?

Eventually all our food was gone. We got so hungry that when Anna and I saw someone with food, we would go and make motions that let them know we wanted something to eat. Most of the people were nice and gave us something to eat. Every once in a while, someone would get a little angry at us and tell us to leave them alone. That was not a fun time.

It took another couple of days to get to Nebraska. That was the longest couple of days I had ever spent. I was hungry and tired and dirty. The conductor checked our tickets from time to time and when the train stopped in the town of **Ashland, Nebraska, he came and told us this was where we were to get off.** So we did.

We stood on the platform and looked around for our Aunt and Uncle. Anna sort of remembered them, but she didn't see anyone that looked like them. Eventually we were the only ones left standing on the platform. What were we suppose to do now? We both started crying.

The station master came up to us and asked us where we were going. As we couldn't speak English, we didn't know what he was saying. However, he saw our name tags and realized that we were suppose to get to Swedeburg, Nebraska. Mother had put our names and our destination on the name tags. Wasn't that wonderful of her! And Anna started saying the name of our Aunt Johanna Olson. The station master **found a place for us to stay for the night and sent word to Swedeburg that he had two little girls at his station who had come from Sweden and were trying to get to a Johanna Olson in Swedeburg, Nebraska.** Our uncle came the **18 miles to Ashland** and got us.

My sister, Anna, was sent to the home of Per Olson and I went to live with the C. J. Larson family. This was a very difficult time because now I was all alone. Don't get me wrong. The Larson family was very good to me, but it just wasn't the same as being with my Mom.

My uncle Olson sent money again to Sweden for my mother and siblings to come and one year later, they arrived in Nebraska. Boy ,were Anna and I happy when we were again with our family. **We all went to live with my Uncle John Grahm in Wahoo, Nebraska.**

Eventually, my mother married again and guess who she married. Remember the family I lived with for that year. Well, Mr. Charles Larson's wife died and on 19 December 1885, Mr. Larson married my mother.