

## Through the Years with the Youngdahls

Jim Anderson

This is the story of America which begins in Sweden.

The mother, Elizabeth, was born in Dalsland Sweden just after the Civil War had ended. She was one of five girls. Her father was Matthias who was 6'8" and her mother Lisa was 5 feet.

Matthias Johnson was a Bishop's son. When they married, their dowry was 18 hand woven sheets plus several towels and other necessities.

One day a co-worker cheated Matthias out of a large sum of money. They moved to Norway where he worked on a farm. It was there that he got a steel splinter in his eye.

By now the rest of the family was urging them to move to America. They wound up in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. There Matthias became a lumberjack. That is where Elizabeth grew up.

John Youngdahl was from Skane and came to America as a 17 year old. He cooked on ships on the Great Lakes and laid railroad tracks.

John married Emma and Elizabeth married Martin Nelson. John and Emma had two sons, Peter and Carl. Elizabeth and Martin had two daughters, Nora and my grandmother Mabel.

John and Emma moved to Minneapolis where Emma died of cancer. Martin and Elizabeth moved to Washburn, Wisconsin. Martin drowned in Lake Superior in 1892 leaving Elizabeth with a 3 year old and a 2 year old.

Shortly after Martin's death John invited Elizabeth to be his housekeeper and they eventually fell in love and married bringing 4 children into the home. They were married August 25, 1892 at the old Augustana Lutheran Church with Dr. C.J. Petri presiding.

6 children were added to this family.

1893 Oscar – A Gustavus graduate –Represented the 5<sup>th</sup> congressional of Minnesota in the U.S. Congress. He married Mary Ribble and they had four children – John, Mary Elizabeth, Janet and Robert. Oscar was a veteran of World War 1.

1896 Luther –A Gustavus graduate, veteran World War 1, Governor of the state of Minnesota and a Federal District Judge in Washington D.C. Luther married Irene Engdahl and they had 3 children – William, David and Margaret.

1897 Benjamin – A Gustavus graduate, Veteran World War 1, Professor at Gustavus, Chairman of Department of Social Work at George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University, St. Louis. He married Livia Bjorkquist and they had 3 sons – Jim, Kent and Mark.

1899 Myrtle – She died at age 11 of Spinal Meningitis.

1904 Ruth – Gustavus graduate, Author, National Mother of the Year, Worldwide speaker, Pastor's wife. She married Clarence Nelson and they had 4 children –Jonathan, David, Elizabeth and Mary.

1911 Reuben—Gustavus graduate, Pastor of Mount Olivet Lutheran Church from 1938-1968, grew church from 300 to 10,000, Authored numerous books, took yearly trips to Mission Fields, had a daily devotional program on WCCO TV daily. He married Ruth Youngberg and they had 3 children – Paul, Susan and Steven.

The four original children were:

1881 Peter---He was an attorney in Los Angeles. He married Luella Hansson and they had two sons – Willard and Robert. Gustavus graduate

1886 Carl ---He was the conductor of Augstana Lutheran College Choir of Sioux Falls, South Dakota for 36 years. He married Hilma Croonquist and they had a son Carl Richard and a daughter Eileen. Gustavus graduate

1889 Nora --- She was an artist. She married Frank Norris. They had no children and she died at the young age of 29.

1890 Mabel – She was a teacher. She married Albert Anderson and they had one son, Reynold. They ran the dime store in Moose Lake and she also dabbled in real estate---hence all the Youngdahls and Nelsons on Sand Lake.

John and Elizabeth raised their family of ten children in south Minneapolis. He was in the grocery business having his first small store on the corner of 8<sup>th</sup> avenue and 6<sup>th</sup> street and later relocating to 40<sup>th</sup> and Lyndale. There was no forty hour work week back then as the store was open from 7 to 7 except on Saturday when it closed at 11 p.m.

Both he and Elizabeth agreed that they wanted their children to have the educational opportunities they had never known. They were both avid readers, and so a daily educational process was pursued, but for their children they wanted college and all the opportunities it would bring. That this could be possible for families like theirs was a part of the greatness of America. Their children all received college educations and went on to serve in the church, government and education.

Anne Lewis in her book “So Far Away in the World Stories from the Swedish Twin Cities” writes: The Youngdahls used to have an annual gathering at Moose Lake, Minnesota where Mabel and her husband lived. There was always food, fun and music at these meetings and their descendants continue to get together. Ben Youngdahl often wrote poems to commemorate the family. The ten original Youngdahl children are all gone now, but Ben’s playful poem—written for a 1965 family reunion—gives a sense of the family solidarity The “epilogue” states:       May the numerous members of the Youngdahl clan

Give service to others—that is our plan,

In pulpits, in slums, in poverty-sod:

There are many paths that lead to God.