



BERTHA FALDT ANDERSON AGREN 1842-1919

Bertha Faldt was born 16 June 1842 in Hasel Basarop Malmo, Sweden. Her mother, Ellse Henricksson, was small in stature. Her father, Staffen Olsen Faldt, was a large man and a trained uniformed soldier in the Swedish Army. Even though he had a horse, he was only permitted to leave camp for short visits with his family. Ellse and Staffen had five girls, but their father called them boys as he trotted them on his knees and sang to them. When he was released from the army, he took up the butcher trade. He bought cattle, killed and dressed them, and cut them up ready for market. Then he hauled the meat around in a wheelbarrow and sold it. When Bertha was a small girl, she often accompanied him on these trips.

Her father fell into the habit of drinking. The family was quite poor and this made it still harder for them. The children had to go to work when quite small. Bertha had a sunny disposition that won the love of children, so her work was to take care of babies and small children. She also learned to knit her own stockings, petticoats, etc. When she was older, she hired out to work for families of the landlords. She had to pick potatoes, bind the grain and help haul it, haul the hay, and milk cows, in addition to doing the house work. She helped the women take the clothes to the river or lake to wash, even in cold weather. They would dip the clothes, lay them on a bench, and with a flat stick they would pound them until clean. Bertha also clipped wool from sheep, washed and corded it, and then spun it into yarn ready to knit.

Wages were extremely low, and for pay she hardly ever received more than clothes and board, and very few clothes at that. Usually, once a year, they would receive one pair of leather shoes and a few dollars. Working girls had to wear wooden shoes.

When Mormon Elders came to Malmo, Sweden, Bertha was anxious to hear what they had to say. She listened attentively to their explanation of the Gospel of Christ. Many times she walked seven miles to attend their meetings. She accepted the Mormon faith and was baptized. She crossed the ocean to join the saints in America traveling with a friend who had several children and needed her help. Her brother-in-law, Pehr Agren, paid for her passage.

As soon as she landed in New York she boarded a train to Salt Lake City. Immediately upon her arrival, she hired out to work for a family before she could even say "yes" or "no" in English. She shed many a tear before she learned to speak the language. She washed dishes in a restaurant, and did any kind of honest work she could find.

Some time later, one of the missionaries she had heard preach in Sweden, Mr. Carl John Anderson, sent for her to come to Ogden and marry him. His first wife had died leaving two

small girls, Annie Josephine and Mary Ann, badly in need of a mother. Bertha and Carl were married 12 June 1874.

Carl became ill, and he asked his good friend Pehr Agren to bring his wife, Johanna, and their child, and move to his farm in Harrisville to help run the farm. Johanna was Bertha's sister. The farm was located at 721 North Washington Boulevard and extended from Washington Boulevard west to Harrisville Road.

Because of his good heartedness, Pehr sent money for his wife's parents and many family members as well as others to immigrate to America. Those he helped agreed to pay him back, but only one actually did. Johanna later said of Pehr, "He was too soft hearted and free with his means for our own good." He put others before himself. At Carl's request, Pehr moved his family from Jordan, Utah, to Harrisville to help Carl. Pehr plastered and white washed an old granary and fixed up an adjoining building to make it comfortable for his family to move into.

In September 1875, Carl and Bertha had a baby boy they named John. Six months after the baby was born, 6 March 1876, her husband died. Three weeks later her baby boy, John, died leaving her broken hearted with Carl's two little girls to raise.

Before Carl died, he asked Pehr Agren, to marry Bertha and take care of her. He also told Bertha he wanted her to marry Pehr. They married on 12 June 1876, in the endowment house in Salt Lake City. On 10 September 1877, Stephen Andrew Agren was born to them. Pehr and Bertha had three other children. Ellen, born in 1880 only lived for five days, and twins Nils & Hanna born in 1883 died at birth.

Pehr bought land, in the northwest part of Harrisville, west of 750 West, and spent whatever time he could working the land in addition to taking care of the Anderson farm. Pehr had three children with Johanna while living with the Andersons, Alfred, Ida, and Laura. They had two other daughters, Emaline and Ellen. There is no record as to how long they were on the Anderson farm. When the Edmunds Bill against polygamy passed, Johanna and her children moved to the northwest farm Pehr had bought. Ellen was born later at the farm.

To escape prosecution for polygamy, Pehr, Bertha, and their son, Stephen Andrew, moved to Alma, Wyoming, where Pehr worked as a carpenter in the coal mines. They were there for two years, and came home to Harrisville on occasions for a visit. It is assumed that during this time, Johanna and her children and her mother and father lived on the Anderson farm with Carl's two daughters from his first marriage. Pehr became tired of living away from his other family, so he and Bertha and their son came back to Harrisville. Pehr gave himself up to authorities for cohabiting, but authorities did nothing about it and the case was later dismissed.

Pehr built a new brick home on the northwest farm. Before it was finished he contracted pneumonia and after twelve days of illness, died on 26 November 1905, leaving Bertha and Johanna as widows.

Their children eventually married and moved into their own homes. Stephen Andrew worked the Anderson farm until it was eventually divided up between him and his two-step sisters. He looked after his mother as she aged. He built a home at 408 North Harrisville Road with a place for his mother. She helped take care of her grandchildren and patched, darned socks, and washed dishes until the girls were old enough to take over the tasks. She belonged to a birthday club she enjoyed. She and other older ladies would take presents and celebrate each birthday with a nice lunch.

Bertha often wiped her eyes and exclaimed, "I can't understand why all my babies but one were taken away from me." To ease her aching heart she learned to do beautiful hand work. She pieced together wonderful quilt tops. One quilt was of silk crazy-patch work and was worked around every block with silk thread. She wove rugs and carpets. She could knit sweaters and the nicest fitting socks and gloves ever made. In order to have yarn to knit, she first clipped the wool from the sheep, washed it, corded it into rolls, and then spun it into yarn. She knit her three oldest granddaughters, Ruth, Eileen and Bertha Agren each a pair of baby stockings out of a very fine yarn that she had spun while they were still little girls. Their families still have the baby stockings that she knit.

Most of her last days were spent quietly at home, sewing a little on her patch work quilts, or knitting a little to pass the time away. On 20 October 1919, she was not sick, she just went to bed because she was tired, and she went quietly to sleep and passed from this life into the next.

NOTE: A note of interest added by June Agren Brown: Four members of the Agren family married four members of the Shurtleff family.

- (1) Emaline Agren (daughter of Pher and Johanna Agren) married Charles Jonathan Shurtleff (Noah Luman Shurtleff's brother)
- (2) Laura Agren (daughter of Pher and Johanna) married Warren L. Shurtleff (Noah Luman Shurtleff's brother)
- (3) Ida Agren (daughter of Pher and Johanna Agren) married William Joy Shurtleff, (son of Cornelia Samantha and Noah Luman Shurtleff)
- (4) Andrew Agren (son of Pher and Bertha Agren) married Samantha Cornelia Shurtleff (daughter of Cornelia Samantha and Noah Luman Shurtleff).



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SOURCE:

Pearce, Eileen Agren. "Bertha Faldt Anderson Agren." Unpublished manuscript.

Brown, June Agren. "Note about the Agren and Shurtleff Families." Added to Bertha Faldt Anderson Agren Manuscript.

Agren, Andrew	Agren, Ruth
Agren, Bertha	Anderson, Annie Josephine
Agren, Ellen	Anderson, Carl John
Agren, Ellen	Anderson, Mary Ann
Agren, Emaline	Faldt, Staffen Olsen
Agren, Ida	Henriksson, Ellse
Agren, Johanna Faldt	Shurtleff, Charles J.
Agren, Laura	Shurtleff, Samantha Cornelia
Agren, Nils & Hanna	Shurtleff, Warren
Agren, Pher	Shurtleff, William Joy