

MY MEXICAN HERITAGE

MY MOTHER, ZINA CHARLOTTE CHLARSON

Note to the reader: I (Ida-Rose Langford Hall) am writing this history of my parents' Mexican experience. For dates for the different moves of the Chlarson family, refer to Louis Chlarson's history which appears before this one. I will concentrate on the experiences of my parents in Mexico, in New Mexico, and in Arizona until my parents were married. My material is taken from a taped interview of my parents taken in August 1961 at the Langford home at 3292 Orchard Avenue, Ogden, Utah.

My mother, Zina Charlotte Chlarson, was born 15 October 1889, in Thatcher, Graham County, Arizona. Her parents were Heber Otto Chlarson and Ida Isabella Norton. Heber Otto was born in Ronneby, Blekinge County, Sweden, on the 17 November 1862. His parents, Hans Nadrian Chlarson and Johanna Charlotta Scherlin, had moved to Ronneby after they were married 20 Sept 1861. Hans N. and Johanna met when Hans knocked on Johanna's door when he was serving as an LDS missionary. She and her widowed mother were both converted and were promptly disowned by the rest of Johanna's family. In fact, her brothers threatened to put both Johanna and her mother in an insane asylum.

While Heber Otto was still a baby, his father sent Johanna and baby Heber, Han's mother, Anna Persson Nilsson, and his wife's mother, Ulricka Scherlin, to Salt Lake City, the "Gathering Place" of Zion. His father was to follow as soon as he could earn enough money to pay his passage. Johanna and Heber sailed on the John J. Boyd from Hamburg, 30 April 1863.

There is a story in the family that Johanna was advised that she would need a sunbonnet to protect her from sunburn on the trip across the plains. She went to buy one and instead fell in love with a fussy little hat which she bought instead of the more practical sunbonnet. The way the family tells it, she was sunburned so dark on the trip to Utah that she never lost the tan. Tall tale? Well, at least the part about never losing the tan.

It was three years before Hans Nadrian arrived in Salt Lake City and was re-united with his wife and child. The story of both their lives during this time reads like a dime novel. Hans had his money stolen from a New York City hotel and a Swedish friend in New York offered to get him a job as an interpreter with the Union Army. Instead, the friend sold Hans as a substitute in the Union Army for a rich man's son. He fought through many battles, was wounded in the leg, spent time in a Washington D.C. hospital and then went back to New York and beat up his supposed friend.

Johanna, meantime, did not receive any of Han's letters. The local postmaster intercepted them because he was trying to get Johanna to become his polygamous wife. She went to Brigham Young for advice and he asked her if she thought Hans was still alive. She thought he was.

"Then follow your heart," Brigham told her. She did. After spending some time in jail for beating up his "friend", Hans joined one of the wagon trains to the Salt Lake valley and was reunited with his wife and child in the fall of 1866. If he had waited until the next year, he could have come to Utah on the train.

They settled in Salt Lake City where Johanna had been earning her living by weaving and sewing. Hans prospered, and with Hannah's consent (even urging, according to my mother) Hans took other wives, all of them of Scandanavian descent. Hans started earning his living in Salt Lake City as a photographer, but soon branched out into silver mining and beer brewing. Family tradition is that he was also involved in an amusement park.

He built an impressive home for his wives on the bench in Salt Lake City about 11th East, between 3rd and 4th South. Members of the family remember a beautiful, winding staircase. According to family tradition, a jealous partner burned the home down. The partner was angry because the girl he wanted to marry had married Hans instead. When I interviewed the last surviving son of one of Hans' wives, Lars Chlarson, in 1980, he said he could remember being lowered from a second story window in a blanket during that fire. After the fire, Hans moved his families to Granite, Utah, probably to be nearer his mining interests in Cottonwood canyon.

When the persecution against polygamists became intense, Hans took his youngest wife, Anna, and headed to Mexico to find a home for his large family. On their way to Mexico, they stopped in Thatcher Arizona and were persuaded by the local Saints to stay in Arizona. He built homes for each of his wives in Thatcher. My grandfather, Heber Otto, grew up in Arizona and met and married Ida Isabella Norton on 25 December 1888 in nearby Central Arizona.

Mother's paternal line, Norton, dates back to Revolutionary War times in Virginia and Kentucky. Her grandparents, David Norton and Elizabeth Benefield joined the church in Indiana, and went through the building of Nauvoo, and the exodus of the Saints from that city. Their son, John Wiley Norton, was a scout in Brigham's first company to cross the plains to Utah in 1847. After a short stay in the gold mines in California (contrary to the admonition of Brigham Young) the family settled in Lehi, Utah.

In Lehi, a younger son, Hyrum Fletcher, met and married a young English convert, Zina Emma Turner, and infused some fresh immigrant blood into the Norton line from Lancashire County, England. Their first child, Ida Isabella, was born in Lehi, but soon thereafter the young family moved to Central, Arizona, where the rest of their children were born, and where some of the other members of the Norton family had settled.

Mother was the oldest child born to Heber Otto Chlarson and Ida Isabella Norton and spent her early childhood in Thatcher, Arizona. Before she died she asked me to be re-baptized for her. Mother said she knew she was baptized and the Lord knew it, but she wanted her baptism and confirmation to appear officially on the records of the Church. We had been unable to find her baptism on any of the ward records for branches and wards where the Heber Chlarson family lived, both in Arizona and Mexico. I did this for her soon after she died.

While the family lived in Thatcher, Heber Otto worked for his father at the family saw-mill in Show Low. About this saw mill, Mother once said to me:

CHARGE IT!

Grandpa (Hans Chlarson) was a good-hearted fellow, but he was always in debt. He could get credit anywhere. I guess that was his fault. But they knew he was working--he had his sawmill, and mines, and he seemed to be able to get credit

anywhere. And that's the only way he paid his boys. (Heber and Hyrum) The boys very seldom saw any cash, but they would just charge what they needed to their father at the company store. Mother (Ida Isabella Norton) had never been raised to do anything but pay for what she got. She wouldn't let Heber charge things to Grandpa Chlarson. The rest of the family did, however, and that is the way they got their wages. But mother--she got down to nothing. She swept her floors with a rag and stood in Dad's clothes to wash--while she washed the one dress that she had left. But she wouldn't let Heber charge at the store. They worked for him for years, and it just seems as if it had been me, I would have quit after about a month

BLUE EYED SWEDES

Shortly after Mother was born her Grandfather Hans Nadrian Chlarson came into the room where Grandmother Norton and the baby were, and Ida Isabella asked him if he didn't want to see his new grand-daughter.

"What for?" he said, "She's just another blue-eyed, blond-headed swede!"

This remark so offended Ida Isabella that she kept baby Charlotte covered whenever Grandfather Chlarson was around. When he finally got a look at Charlotte, he called a saw-mill holiday and had a big party for all the workers. She had black hair and brown eyes! The brown eyes come from the Norton side of the family. All nine of Heber Otto's and Ida Isabella's children had brown eyes. Blond-headed Swedes indeed!

While still in Arizona three more children were born into the family: Heber Philbert, born 1 June 1891, Lewis Rudolph, born 20 June 1893, and Vivian, born 9 October 1896. According to Lou, 1906 was the year the family moved to Mexico. My mother, Charlotte Chlarson Langford, would have been seven years of age October 15 of that year.

DEADLY NUTRITION

I remember Mother telling about an incident which must have happened while they were still in Arizona. Mother almost killed her brother, Heber. Heber was the third child and was just a toddler at the time. Someone was plowing a lot near their home (in Central) and the children, including Lou, were playing nearby, watching the plowing, and mother picked up a root that had been turned up by the plow. It was white, but she thought it was a white carrot, so she picked it up, wiped it off and gave it to Lou to eat. He ate a little of that, but mother thought that he couldn't have eaten much of it because he didn't have many teeth. There was a girl that worked for her mother, and she would take the children to primary each week. When she brought the children back from primary, Lou kept running into the fences. She wondered what was the matter with him--the fences were barbed wire and it was dangerous for him, When she got home she told my grandmother what had happened on the way home. She said: "Lou just seems to be running into all the fences--he acts like he's drunk!"

Her mother picked up Lou and examined him and took him down to her mother's place. (Zina Emma Turner Norton.) Zina Emma was the local midwife, but she also did a lot of first aid work and general medicine. Grandmother Norton took one look at Lou and said: "This boy's been poisoned!" And she hooked up her buggy and took Charlotte's Mother (Ida Norton) and Lou over to Pima where there was a doctor. They took mother with them.

The Dr. said: "You bet this boy's been poisoned!" He gave Lou epicat to empty his stomach. The Dr. said later that he gave Lou enough epicat to empty the stomachs of three

drunks, but he finally did get Lou to empty his stomach. When they tried to find out what Lou had eaten to poison him, they finally asked Mother if she knew what he could have eaten that was different, and she told them about the 'white carrot' which she had given him.. It turned out to be very poisonous. Mother said that for years Lou's eyes would sometimes dilate so much he could hardly see. It was Lou's dilated eyes that had given the clue to Grandmother Ida Chlarson that he might have been poisoned.

SPENCER KIMBALL SLEPT HERE

Mother remembers Thatcher fondly. On a genealogy trip to Arizona, we sought out the primary school that Mother had attended. Since it was the only primary school in Thatcher when Mother was a child, it was undoubtedly the same one that President Spencer W. Kimball attended when he was a boy. Spencer W. was born in 1895 and would have been a year older than Mother's sister, Vivian. (Child number four in the Chlarson family.)

On Page thirty-four of Andrew Kimball's biography of President Spencer W. Kimball is related the story of Spencer's being punished when he was in the primary grades at school for giggling during class with Agnes Chlarson, who "was a pretty girl and a happy soul and giggled like I did and seemingly couldn't stop." (sic) The teacher finally put Spencer closer to her own desk, which stopped the giggling. President Kimball would have attended the school after Mother's family had gone to Mexico, but would probably have been in attendance at the school in 1900 when Mother was with her Grandmother and going to school in Thatcher.

Agnes was the daughter of Mother's uncle, Hyrum Chlarson. Hyrum was the only other child of Hans Nadrian and Johanna Charlotte Scherlin to survive to adulthood. Hyrum and his family stayed in Arizona, working with his father in the saw mill business, whereas Heber Otto took his family and emigrated to Mexico. In his older years, Mother's Grandfather, Hans Nadrian Chlarson, was a Patriarch in the Thatcher area.

HUMMING ALONG

While still in Arizona, Mother tells of another experience she had while visiting her Grandfather at his mill at Show Low. Grandfather Chlarson kept asking Charlotte to sing for him. She didn't know what he was talking about. She never sang solos in front of people like some children do. One day she was sitting beside her grandfather in the buggy, and as they were going along she was humming. Unconsciously. She often did that when she worked. "That's what I mean," said her Grandfather. "That's what I've been wanting to hear you do."

ORIENTAL COOKING

Another time he gave her a lesson on racial tolerance. He took her to a mine he had up in the hills. He had a chinese cook up there who prepared lunch for the three of them. Charlotte didn't say anything, but she didn't eat. When they were on their way away from the mine her grandfather asked her why she hadn't eaten anything. She told him she wasn't going to eat anything a dirty old chinaman had prepared.

"Lottie," he said, obviously displeased with her, "that Chinese man is as clean and decent as anyone else."

"Well, I sure do," she said.

Well, I got her on her horse and I just went off in any direction. It didn't make any difference to me which way we went just so we would get away where they might not find us.

"Don't let's do this Charlotte," she said, "we're going to get lost for sure."

And I said, "Oh we won't get lost. We're on horses that stay in town and all we have to do is let the horses take us home." It was getting late. It must have been four or five o'clock and we had been out all afternoon.

"I don't know," she said, "I don't know anything about horses. Maybe they won't take us home."

"Oh yes they will. They'll take us home. You just tie your reins and tie them on the neck of the horse, and then don't touch them--just never touch them," I told her.

And the horses just took us right home and we never saw the boys. And they looked all over the place and fired their guns so we could come to them. When they came into town they were the scariest boys you ever in your life met up with. Brigg came up to me and said, "Wherever were you? Didn't you hear our guns?" (We must have been a long way away from them not to have heard their guns.)

"We've been all over that place and we couldn't find you. We knew you were lost. You might have gone in the opposite direction. Why didn't you stay where we left you?" the boys complained.

I said, "Well you shouldn't have left us. You might have known we wouldn't stay there."

"We sure had a good time that night. It was all the conversation. George Brown was so mad at me he could have beat me. That was fun, though."

"How did you do it?" George asked me later.

"I didn't do a thing," I said. "We just let the horses bring us home."

"I didn't think you were that smart," said George.

But I wasn't a bit scared. Not a bit. Because I knew that the horses would take us home. Mother had taught us and trained us ever since we came to Chupe that that was the thing to do--just give the horses their head.

THE MAD DOG SCARE

While the family was still in Chuachupa, there was a mad dog scare. Her mother was alone because her father had gone somewhere looking for work. As Charlotte tells it:

That mad dog scare gave me nightmares for years. The dog came into town on Saturday night. He wasn't one of our own dogs but was a stray. Howard Vader had a special dog. He was a cattle dog. And Vader thought the world of him. That dog was king of the dogs. He stood up to every dog in town, but when he saw that

President Ivins--afterwards in the Presidency of the Church--remember? He was our Stake President down there--and he would come up to Chuachupa and hire the boys in the area to dig up the "White Star" bulbs, which he sent down to Jaurez. They did not grow wild down there, but they transplanted well. In the garden catalogues they call them "Aztec Lilies".

We also had Tiger Lilies in all their different shades.

GIVE THE HORSE IT'S HEAD

The country around "Chupe" was covered heavily with heavy timber. Except where there were hard-pan formations. Mother (Charlotte) said the forest would come right up to the hard-pan and there wouldn't be a tree where the hard-pan was located. When the hard-pan ended the trees would start again. Ida Norton was afraid of those forests--especially for Lou, who was so adventuresome. She was sure that the children would get lost in those heavy woods. Because of this worry she told the children that if they were ever lost in those woods, to tie the reins behind the horses's head and give the horse his head, and the horse would bring them back to town safely. Mother tells a couple of stories about "giving the horse it's head."

Lou came home one night and said: "Well, Mother, what you said was true. I had to trust my horse this time. He just took me in the opposite direction that I wanted to go. I had the time of my life to keep my hands off the bridle. I knew I was going farther and farther from town and lo and behold, here I am."

I had the same experience one time. I can't remember the name of the other girl we were with. George Brown and Brigg Johnson took us horseback riding out in the forest. I was with George and this other girl was with Brigg Johnson. Brigg Johnson was the laziest guy I ever knew. If we ever wanted to call someone "lazy" we simply called them "Brigg."

The Mancinita there grows quite big--it's just a bright red shrub--and I said to the boys: "Let's carve our initials in the Mancinita." So I and this other girl sat down under the bush, and the boys gave us their knives and left us there alone.

After a while the other girl said: "We'd better go after then or we'll get lost."

I said, "I don't care how lost we get, I'm not going after them." And so we stayed there quite a while, thinking they would come back. But they didn't. They were just trying to frighten us, I suppose. I thought I knew what direction they went, but that was no way of saying that we would know where they were when we went to look for them. The boys knew where they were, but we were lost. Before we even got on our horses we were lost. We didn't know where town was more than anything.

I said to her, "Let's get on our horses."

And she said, "We'd better stay right here, so we won't get lost. The boys know where we are, but if we get on our horses we will get lost."

"I don't care how lost we get," I said, "I'm not going to stay here. I don't want them to find us."

Mother said that the only people who made any money in Oaxaca were those who ran cattle. Oaxaca itself was too small in area. But those who had cattle used the surrounding lands to pasture their cattle. James Harvey Langford ran a grocery store in Oaxaca, and had a small farm on the other side of the river. Those who had farms in Oaxaca had to have them outside the main settlement. While the Chlarsons were there, besides raising produce on their small two and a half acres, Mother's father did carpentry work. Her father was a good carpenter, and made most of the money the family had in Mexico doing carpentry work. Often he would pack up his tools and go back to the states to do carpentry work to get cash for the family.

CHUACHUPA

In 1902 Heber and Ida moved their family to Chuachupa, Chihuahua, and so missed the terrible flood that came later and caused the Langfords and everyone else in Oaxaca to move. But their move didn't prosper them. Of their move, Mother said:

Charlie Scott drove our stock up there and we hit Chuachupa in a drought. Everything was burned up. Most of the springs went dry. We had a peculiar formation in Chupe. In the south end of the town was a big spring and for two or three hundred feet around that spring it just teetered when you walked on it. It sounded hollow. The men of the town had brought the spring water into town by digging quite a deep ditch into the sprng and running water into the town in this ditch. And that's the only spring that didn't go dry.

The town was maybe a mile and a half long and you could find what we called an underground river all the way through town. when you would go over it with a wagon or a horse you would come to the edge and it would go "perplunk" and then you'd go over it just as if you were going over a bridge. Near that spring, on the part that teetered, if a horse went banging across that, the horse could break through the crust and go into it up to the belly. I always wanted to dig down on that edge and see what was there. Why didn't the men do that?

Our stock would go down in a big cut near the spring to get a drink of water and get bogged down and couldn't get out. They would starve and die. Everyone of Dad's stock died that way that year except one. I couldn't understand my father's reasoning. All the other men drove their stock into the canyon where there was plenty of water and grass, but Dad left all his stock in town. He lost everything he took up there--everything, which was unfortunate, because her father's intent when he went up to Chuachupa was to go into the dairy business. He was going to make cheese. And this was not a bad idea because Chupe was way up in the mountains at a high altitude and the season was so short it was difficult to mature a regular crop. But the grasses were good for grazing stock.

THE FLOWERS THAT GROW IN THE SPRING

Another thing Mother remembers about the Chupe area was the beautiful flowers that grew in that area.

I had a lot of fun in Chupe, though. It was a wonderful place for kids. There was water, trees, springs, and horses and the most beautiful flowers you ever in your life saw. There were millions of different kinds of flowers. "White Stars" as big as a cup--just like wax--and they grew up in the grass and you could see them by the miles--just acres and acres of them. The Delphiniums were prettier than anything I've seen in the gardens here--beautiful things!