

## MY MEXICAN HERITAGE

### MY MOTHER, ZINA CHARLOTTE CHLARSON LANGFORD

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 separate experiences of my parents in Mexico until about the time that they were married. My material is taken from a taped interview of my parents taken in August 1961 at their home at 3292 Orchard Avenue, Ogden, Utah.

I wish to extend my thanks to Elisabeth Huntington Hall who graciously edited this history and gave suggestions. Any mistakes in the manuscript are mine, not hers.

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 17 November 1862. His parents, Hans Nadrian Chlarson and Johanna Charlotta Scherlin had moved to Ronneby after they were married 20 September 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 if they joined the church.

While Heber Otto was only six months old, his father sent Johanna and <sup>baby</sup> Heber, <sup>Hans'</sup> mother, Anna Persson Nilsson, and his wife's mother, Ulricka Scherlin, to Salt Lake City, the "Gathering Place" of Zion. Anna Nilsson sailed for America May 14 1861 on the Monarch of the Sea, Ulricka Scherlin sailed 21 April 1882 on the Athenia, and Johanna and Heber sailed on the John J. Boyd from Hamburg 30 April 1863. Hans N. was to follow as soon as he could earn enough money to pay his passage.

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 into the union army of the Civil War as a substitute 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 Hans' 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 and waited. 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.

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 also owned or had an interest 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 Hans' last surviving son, 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 one of his younger wives 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 Thatcher <sup>Church</sup> 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 Isabelle Norton in nearby Central Arizona, 25 December 1888.

Mother's maternal 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 Young's first company to cross the plains to Utah in 1847. The rest of the family came by wagon to Utah in 1848.

I could not find the family in the 1850 census of Utah, however. Someone recomended I go and interview a Norton relative who was living in a rest home south of Salt Lake City. She was a very astute lady and during the interview told me that the Norton's had gone to the gold fields in California in 1849. [What? In spite of Brigham Young's admonition for the saints to avoid the gold fields?] I then found them in the 1850 census of Placerville, California. David and Elizabeth were running a boarding house in California. They were back in Utah by 1860. *not possible*

*Heber* In Lehi, Utah, where the family settled after returning from California, a younger Norton son, Hiram 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 Isabelle, 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 moved.

Mother was the oldest child born to Heber Otto Chlarson and Ida Isabelle Norton and spent her early childhood in Thatcher, Arizona. Before she died she asked me to be re-baptized for her. Mother said that 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.

### CHARGE IT!

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

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 Hiram]. The boys very seldom saw any cash, but they would just charge what they needed to their father at the company store. Mother [Ida Isabelle Norton Chlarson] 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 --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 on 15 October 1889, her Grandfather, Hans Nadrian Chlarson, came into the room where Ida Isabelle and the baby were, and Ida Isabelle 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 Isabelle, that she kept baby Charlotte covered whenever Grandfather Chlarson was around. When he finally got a look at Charlotte, he called a sawmill 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 Isabelle's children had brown eyes. Blond-headed Swedes indeed!

While still in Arizona three more children were born <sup>to Ida & Heber Otto</sup> into the family: Heber Philbert, born 1 June 1891; Louis Rudolph, born 20 June 1893; and Vivian, born 9 October 1896. According to Lou, 1896 was the year the family moved to Mexico. My mother, Charlotte Chlarson Langford, would have been seven years of age 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!"

*my grandmother*  
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. *Great* 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~~ *my grandmother* [Ida Norton] and Lou *and his mother* over to Pima where there was a doctor. They took ~~mother~~ *my grandmother* 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. 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 *my grandmother* Ida Chlarson that he might have been poisoned.

### SPENCER KIMBALL SLEPT HERE

Mother remembers Thatcher fondly. On a genealogy trip to Arizona, Mother and I sought out the primary school that Mother had attended as a child. 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.

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 in Thatcher for giggling during class with Agnes Chlarson, *(sic)* who "was a pretty girl and a happy soul and giggled like I did and seemingly couldn't stop." The teacher finally put Spencer closer to her own desk, which stopped the giggling.

Agnes was the daughter of Mother's Uncle, *at* Hiram Chlarson. Heber Otto and Hiram were their only children of Hans Nadrian and Joahanna Charlotte Scherlin to survive to adulthood. Hiram and his family stayed in Arizona working with his father in the sawmill business, whereas Heber Otto took his family and emigrated to Mexico. In his older years, Hans Nadrian Chlarson was a *small p* Patriarch in Thatcher, Arizona.

### HUMMING ALONG

Mother tells of another experience she had while still in Arizona 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 while 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."

### PLAYING POSSUM

Her grandfather had a pair of gray horses and a buggy at the mine, and that is how he got around from place to place. But sometimes these horses would interfere with each other and when this happened they would run. Grandfather Chlarson was a good horseman and could bring them under control without any problems, but this day Charlotte told her grandfather that if those horses ran away she was going to jump out. Her grandfather told her that was the worst thing she could do. The best thing was for her to stay with the buggy until the horses were brought under control. The sawmill was up on the top of the mountain, and some of the men who worked at the sawmill apparently didn't have much to do, so they were watching Charlotte and her Grandfather approach through binoculars.

Sure enough, those horses interferred and Charlotte jumped out. She wasn't hurt, but instead of getting up she just lay there. The people watching through the glasses thought she had been killed. When her grandfather got the horses under control and came back, she simply got up and got into the buggy again. She really got a scolding from her grandfather for jumping out of the buggy. When they got up to the camp, those who had been watching also scolded Charlotte: "Why didn't you get up? We thought you had been killed."

### DREAM ON

Mother tells of another experience she had at the lumber mill at Show Low, prior to the exodus to Mexico.

They had the lumber yard at the foot of the mountains, but the lumber mill was way up in the Carson mountains. Uncle Hi was running the mill and I went up to stay with them for a while and he said to me, "Lotten, (which was his nickname for me) we haven't had any fresh eggs for a long while--I wish you'd do some dreaming."

And I said, "What do you mean--dreaming?"

"Well," he said, "you always used to dream where our eggs were, and you always found them."

"Well," I said, "maybe I can do that again." And honest to goodness--no foolin'--that night I dreamt about a nest, but it wasn't fresh eggs, it was a setting hen. And I thought it lived right there in the canyon. There were big mountains this way and big mountains that way, and I thought I saw that hen. She had had a fight with something in the night and her eggs were all down the hillside.

The next morning her uncle ask her, "Lotten, what did you dream last night?"

And I said, "I dreamt the hen had a fight with the skunk last night and lost her chickens."

"No fooling?" he said.

And I said, "Let's go out and I'll see if I can find it." And we walked out into the yard, and I looked around and I said, "It's over there." And I walked right to it. It was exactly as I had dreamed it. The hen was sitting on only one egg, and the rest were down the mountain. The hen had won her fight, but she only had one egg left to hatch.

She added that when she was a girl, traveling around in Mexico, she would dream that she saw a scene, and soon after, while they were traveling, they would come to what she had seen in her dream, and it would be exactly the same as it had been in her dream. When asked if she had dreams like that after she was married, she replied that she hadn't. Only when she was young.

### AS GOOD AS MONEY IN THE BANK?

Before Mother's family moved to Mexico, her father quit working for his father in the sawmill, and built a brick store that had about two rooms, in Central, Arizona. He had decided to go into the grocery business. The trouble with her father, (Heber Otto Chlarson) was that he was too kind hearted. He just let everyone have endless credit for groceries--even those who didn't need it, and then he could never collect.

When he built the store, one of the two rooms in the store was a bedroom for him and Ida. To get some heat into the bedroom, her father ran the stovepipe from the store through the bedroom. But before she knew it, the bed clothes were all dirty from that stove pipe. The stove pipe was too long, and so the moisture condensed in the pipe and dripped out of the joints onto the bed. The drips were black from the soot inside the stovepipe.

When her father bought the land he built the store on, there was an old house already on the property and that's where they had their kitchen and where the children slept. Her father built a breezeway between the new store and the old house, and my mother said that was the coolest place to be in the summer. The roof of the breezeway was covered with branches and leaves to make it shady underneath.

Sometimes her father would go over his books and add up all the money people owed him, and he'd say, "Why, I'm worth ten thousand dollars!"

And his wife would say, "What do you want to keep going over those old books for? I'd think it would make you feel terrible!"

"Well," he'd say, "it doesn't. It makes me feel pretty good that the other fellows owe me that much and maybe I'll get it some day."

### WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY

Her father decided (even though it was after the manifesto) that one reason he wasn't prospering was because he hadn't obeyed the Lord and entered polygamy. He had his eye on the oldest daughter of a man named Clemens. And Clemens was moving to Mexico, so Mother's father went down with Mr. Clemens to look the Mexican colonies over to see if there was a place that looked like a good place to move his family. (Note: He did not marry the Clemens girl.)

While he was gone, Ida proceeded to go after the deadbeats on the store's books and see if she could collect some of the money owed them. If they didn't pay she'd take them to court and take their horses, or cows, or crops--or anything they had to pay the debt. Because of this, people said that Ida "wore the pants" in the family. Mother said that this

wasn't true, though. Her father was very stubborn, and if he didn't want to do something, nothing would move him--not even his wife.

If her dad had stayed away for six months, Ida would probably have collected most of the bad debts, but as soon as he got back he put an end to the collecting.

"You wouldn't want to be treated like that," he told Ida

### PUMPKINS AND PIGS

Mother tells another thing that she did while they were still living in Central. The family had a pig pen in the corner of the lot and the hired boy had been hauling in a lot of pumpkins. Great huge things. And mother had to feed the pigs these pumpkins. She just kept throwing those pumpkins into the pen until it was so full that the pigs could walk out of the pen over the pumpkins. "I was going to see that those pigs didn't get hungry in a long time," she said. She was still quite young--she hadn't yet started school so she was probably five or six.

### THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE

Mother always had trouble with spelling. When she did start school, she started at a new school that had just been built in Thatcher. (The same one mentioned previously.) Her first teacher was Sister Irene Cluff. Every day the class would sing, My Country Tis of Thee and say The Pledge of Allegiance. It remained her favorite song. A few years after they had moved to Mexico, her father sent her back to Thatcher to live with his Mother, Johanna Charlotte Scherlin Chlarson, to go to school for a year. (1900) And she had the same teacher again. Her words:

The teacher would stand beside me and hear me spell a word right and when I wrote it I would spell it wrong. The teacher would say: "Will you never learn to write the way your mind tells you to? Students all around you get their spelling right by following you and then you're wrong because you don't write it the way you spell it out loud."

### THE WIDOW'S MITE

The year I was staying with Grandmother to go to school, my father put me on the train and didn't give me a cent for the trip. And as far as I know, all the time I was with Grandmother, he never sent her a cent for my keep. And Grandmother was a widow. While I was staying there, I overheard a conversation between my grandmother and my uncle Hi Chlarson which made me aware, for the first time, that I might be a burden on my grandmother.

Uncle Hi had some pigs and I had been helping him by cutting alfalfa to feed them. I heard Grandmother Chlarson say, "Charlotte needs a new pair of shoes. She has been helping you feed the pigs, why don't you get her some shoes?"

And Uncle Hi said, "Why doesn't Heber take care of his own brats--I've got enough of my own to worry about."

Looking back on it, I can't understand why my father didn't send her some money. At the time he was working as a carpenter and making good money. I just don't understand why he would let his mother suffer like that.

## NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED

There was a ditch that came down by the Thatcher schoolhouse and it had a straight tall bank on one side of it. The local children liked to dig in this bank. Mother and her siblings were no exception. She tells of one experience she remembers about digging in this bank:

While we were still living in Arizona, Heber and I had dug a cave and made a big fireplace back into the side of that bank, and we wanted to see if the fireplace worked. Matches were a taboo. Mother just wouldn't let us have matches.

So Heber said, "Let's go get some matches and see if it works--you ask Mother if we can have some matches."

"Well, she won't let us have any," I said.

"Maybe she will if you ask her," Heber said.

So I asked Mother. I explained it all to her--what a nice fireplace we had and that we wanted to try it to see if it would work. And--miracles of miracles--she gave us a couple of matches. She was a smart mother. Mother said she didn't know what she would have done if her mother had said "no". Maybe she and Heber would have stolen those matches.

And when I asked Mother if the fireplace worked, she said: "Yes it worked just fine, but the thing I remember most is that my mother gave us those matches that we wanted so much!

And then my Mother said to me, "How vital it is for parents to know when to say yes."

As Mother was the oldest child in her parents' large family, a lot of responsibility fell upon her. Her brother Heber writes in his personal history of their stay in Mexico, that "his mother had the babies, and turned them right over to Charlotte." He said that Charlotte brought them up "strictly, but fairly." Later, after Mom and Dad were married, it was always to Charlotte and Ernest that both the Chlarson and the Langford aunts and uncles came when they had problems.

## SOUTHWARD, HO!

In 1896, the year Vivian was born, the family moved down to Oaxaca, Mexico. Her Dad bought two and a half acres there. The land they purchased was partially cleared, so they cleared the brush off and put in a garden.

The years in Thatcher and Central were probably the only years of stability in Mother's life before she married my father. Her father was always moving them from place to place while they were in Mexico. Perhaps looking for "greener pastures." I never heard my father or mother say they had known each other as young people, but Chlarson child number five, John Otto was born 20 April 1896, in Colonia Oaxaca, Sonora, Mexico, as was Hyrum "F", number six, born 29 March, 1902. The Langfords were in Oaxaca during those same years.

Mother's brother Hyrum remembered James Harvey Langford, Jr., though. He said when my Grandfather Langford yelled, it could be heard all over Oaxaca. I can identify with that. Someone in Schenectady once told me that they could tell the minute I hit the parking