

History of JOHN NELSON PETERSON
written by his daughter Zelma P. Beardall

John Nelson Peterson was born in the little town of Vadeslov, Kronsberg, Sweden the 12th of January 1852. He was the oldest child of Magnus and Ingre Swenson Peterson. His parents were industrious, hard working people. His mother was a large, strong, healthy woman. She could pick up a sack of grain and throw it upon her shoulder as easy as any man. Father was small of stature, being the smallest one in the family.

His parents were of a very religious nature and were members of the Lutheran Church, and when the Mormon Elders came to their home they gladly accepted the message brought to them.

When father was about four years of age grandmother went to a neighbors home, leaving father to look after the baby, a boy of about two years of age. They had an open fireplace in the home and the baby's clothing caught fire and he was burned so badly that he died from the effects.

The spirit of gathering was with them after they became members of the church and they were anxious to join the Saints in Zion. They sold their earthly possessions and were soon ready to commence the journey. Father, his parents and his brothers August and Swen Mont and baby sister, Ida left Sweden in the early part of May and arrived in Liverpool Friday, 8 May 1863. From here they sailed on the B. S. Kimball, under Captain H. Dearborn, arriving in New York, Saturday evening, 13 June. While on the ship they were organized with Hans Peter Lund as president, Elder Peter Backstom and Christopher S. Wings as counselors. On the 15th they were permitted to go on shore and left by railroad for Florence, Nebraska, going by way of Albany.

It was while at Florence, Nebraska, that their baby, Ida passed away and a small grave was left by the side of the road with the many others. Grandmother road in the cart the rest of the day, after burying her child and that was the only time she road during the entire journey.

They left Florence, Nebraska and arrived in Utah the first part of Sept., 17th, undoubtedly with the Capt. Rawlins Co. They passed through all the hardships incident to pioneer life in crossing the plains in the new country.

At first they went to Spanish Fork but Grandfather didn't feel satisfied there so they returned to Springville. The trip across the plains and the first few years after they came here were especially difficult because of the new language. There were very few Scandanavians here for them to associate with. They became friendly with the Anthon and Larsen families and the Andrew Nelson and Eklund families of Spanish Fork.

I well remember father telling me of the older boys teasing him so he would become angry and swear at them because he mixed the language so much that it was really amusing. He learned to speak the language well and one would never have known in later years that he had been born in a foreign country.

Their first home was a dug-out on the northeast corner of Fourth East and Fourth South just outside of the old fort wall. Here they lived the first winter and during the next year they purchased the ground on Fourth South between Third and Fourth East on the south side of the street. Here a one room log house was built and later on a story and a half adobe house, which still stands and which was grandfather's and grandmother's home the rest of their lives.

The opportunities for schooling were very meager in those days and being the oldest child, it was necessary for father to start working while still very young. He was fond of reading and did quite a bit of it during the long winter months when he wasn't so busy on the farm, and so he became a good reader, although it was always rather difficult for him to write. I remember as a child of coaxing him to read stories to me and I still have a story book that he used to read to me. He especially enjoyed reading the Bible and other church books and in later years he read the church magazines aloud to us in the evenings.

Soon after they came here grandfather used to gather willows that grew so plentiful along the creek bank, and wove them into baskets. He would peel the bark from the willows for the main part of the basket and then trim them with the red ones. Father would take them from house to house and sell them. He would also take them to Spanish Fork.

When he was a young man he made molasses from sugar cane and took it to San Pete County and traded it for wheat. Grandfather persuaded him to trade the thirty bushels of wheat to William Huntington for the acre of ground on the southwest corner of Fourth East and Fourth South.

On 12 Jan 1874 he married Francis Giles in the Endowment House at Salt Lake City. They traveled in a covered wagon, the journey taking them two days each way. They were accompanied by mother's father and step-mother (George Giles and Elizabeth Thorne).

During the first five years of their married life they made their home with father's parents and father was away a good share of the time. They decided to build them a home on the ground that father had purchased prior to their marriage. He hauled timber from the Big Slide on the mountain east of Mapleton. This he did in the winter time so the logs could be rolled down the mountain on the snow. He gave a share of the logs to the Moses Child's sawmill to pay for the cutting and sawing of the lumber for the house. He hauled clay from the City pasture west of town and he and mother made the adobes for the two roomed house. He gave shingles he had made to William Johnson to pay him for making a cupboard. This cupboard is still in use and is the only one they have had during their married life.

Two daughters, Rozella and Ida, were born to them while they were still living at grandfather's. They moved into the new home on New Years Day, 1878 just four weeks before their first son John William, was born and it was in this home that they spent the remainder of their lives. Nine other children were born to this union: George August, James Alfred, Harold, Ingre, Edna, Zelma, Andrew Giles, Grace and Magnus. They also reared two adopted children, Lela and Leslie.

Mother was so proud of the new home and did everthing she knew how to do to make it attractive. Her curtains were made of unbleached muslin and she crocheted lace to go on all of them. A rag carpet, under which straw had previously been spread to make wear longer, covered the floor. This home was later remodeled as it stands today.

Father worked for some time for William Sumsion on the railroad doing construction work. He also spent some time making adobes. Later years he worked on the farm, first with his father and later with his sons. When the farm work was completed he spent several years in Rush Valley burning charcoal.

At one time he hauled salt from Salt Lake and sold it in small amounts for family use. One of these trips Rozella and Ida accompanied him. They made the journey in a wagon and after going half way it was necessary for them to camp for the night. The following morning he awakened the girls and told them to see their bed companion. When they looked a large snake was crawling away from them. When telling of this experience someone asked him if he killed the snake and he said "No, it didn't hurt us so why should I harm it." He was fond of animals and was always kind to them and would talk to them as he would talk to a person.

It was not uncommon for him to walk to and from the farm, a distance of a mile and a half. He was always active and wasted very little time. There was always some task to be done around the home when he had a few minutes to spare, he would cut wood if he couldn't find anything else to do. He believed in action rather than words.

He was a kind and loving husband and father and was often called into the home during the time of sickness or trouble and was never too busy to respond to such a call no matter what time of day or night it might be or how busy he was at the time. He was very religious in nature and always active in church work. Never worked on Sunday unless it was absolutely necessary.

He was one of the presidents of the deacons when a quorum was first organized, while the meetings were still being held in the Old White Meeting House. While holding this position he had to gather and cut wood for the church fire, clean and fill the lamps, gather the fast offerings and numerous other jobs. He held this position for many years. For tithing he always gave the best of the crops and the largest load.

He was baptized April 1864 by William Brammall, confirmed April 1864 by Mowere, ordained an Elder 8 March 1885 by Jacob Gates and was ordained a High Priest on 26 Aug 1917 by Somon E. Dalton. In 1915 he went on a Home Mission in the Utah Stake with George Matson as his companion. From this mission he received an honorable release.

In January 1926 he had pneumonia from which he never fully recovered. He passed away at his home in Springville on Wednesday the 22nd of September and was buried the following Sunday.