

Please return

*1952
1855
97 (96 died
Summer 1952)*

Ane Marie

Ane Marie was the third of the five daughters of Jens and Johanna Sveigaard. Born in Denmark December 25, 1855, she was ninety-four years old last Christmas.

Ane Marie grew to young womanhood in Denmark, learning dressmaking and tailoring as an apprentice. At the age of twenty-three, she and a younger sister left home and loved ones for the United States where two older sisters were wives of neighboring Nebraska farmers.

Ane Marie's worldly goods were in a big green packing-box trunk. Painted on in black were the words:

Ane Marie Sveigaard
Nysted, Howard Co., Nebr.
U. S. A.
Amerika (Spelled with a k)

To learn English, Ane Marie worked for a time as a hired girl. Sometimes her mistress having difficulty with her sewing, would thrust the offending garment in Ane Marie's hands and do the housework herself.

In 1879 Ane Marie met a young Dane who was engaged in prospecting and placer mining in the Black Hills of South Dakota. A year or so later she went to Deadwood, South Dakota where they were married. This bride and groom were my parents.

My father had bought the improvements on a preemption in the foothills of the Black Hills near the pioneer town of Spearfish. It was to this home, a one room log cabin, that

mother came as a bride.

These were really pioneer times. The cabin stood on a hill and water was carried from the spring below. Indian scares were still common. My sister and I were both born in this log cabin.

Some years later we moved to a larger log house on the flat below the original cabin and later into a new frame house.

Though never strong, mother did whatever needed doing. She scrubbed bare floors, roasted and ground green coffee beans, skimmed milk with a tin skimmer and churned the butter in a dasher churn. She sewed for us all and for some of the neighbors. She also helped her husband get loads of produce ready to peddle in the Hills. She always had chicken, eggs, butter, or something to send.

So many useful things came out of the green trunk, including the portable sewing machine. It was operated by hand. Then there was the big gray shawl made from wool from grandfather's sheep in Denmark; also a feather-tick covered with wool homespun. I remember mother's wrap, called a dolman, with its wide sleeves.

Mother had five children, two of whom died in infancy. Baby blankets were unknown, so mother used the big gray shawl to wrap her babies in. It was handed down to my sister who later used the good parts in a comforter for me. My oldest son still treasures a piece of it.

Our farm home was some distance from town and we usually walked to school. Mother moved to town a few winters until we were old enough to batch or drive. She cooked and baked

for father on the farm and sewed to help out.

When we finished grade school, mother saw to it that we entered Normal School. One drought year a small inheritance from Denmark kept me in school. She made my lovely graduation dress and banquet dress, as she had made all our clothes through the years.

Now this may all sound like a hard life, but mother did not find it so. I remember how she sang as she sewed. And she was one of those rare people who really laughed. When she and her namesake niece got started, they could hardly stop. Mother was a good friend and a good neighbor in the pioneer sense of the word. We had lots of company and there was always room for one more at our table.

When my sister and I were away teaching, mother wrote us regularly, though she never attended school a day in the United States.

We both had home weddings, and mother made our dresses.

After we girls were married, mother and dad and their only son moved to Arizona where they bought irrigated land just across the canal from the desert, and again lived in near pioneer conditions. My father gave mother the credit for their success there.

After selling out in Arizona, they moved to California in 1917 and invested in war bonds. My brother was drafted and mother worked in the Red Cross rooms regularly and knitted socks and sweaters at home.

When the war was over my parents bought property with their government bonds. They were the largest individual

owners of bonds in the city.

Though brought up Lutherans, my parents united with the Presbyterian church soon after going to California. Father died ten years ago, but mother still attends and helps support her church. She is a true Christian, possessed of a living faith.

I visited her the summer of 1945. She was still good company, bright and interesting. We were walking the baked streets of her valley town one hot July day. I was hobbling along pitying my poor feet when mother looked up and said brightly, "It's a long way to Tipperary."

Now living in a small apartment in a daughter's house, mother does her own work including her laundry.

She has always been a lifter instead of a leaner and is still financially independent. Again, her small savings are in government bonds.

I still look forward to, and receive her good letters. Though she misses father every day, she is not addicted to self pity. She has the outward and the upward look. I wonder if it is because she was a Christmas baby.

Readers Digest as in
"my most unforgettable character", Ed
5-15-'50. (R) nice appreciative
note
Published in R. City (il) summer
(Sunday ed.) 1950.