

Annie Boletta Flaaten nee Barsness (1892-1964)

Submitted By: Gladys Flaaten

(Youngest & only remaining child of the immediate family).

June 2014

Annie Boletta (Barsness) Flaaten was the third child born to Skak & Bertha Barsness on January 29th, 1892, in Glenwood, Minnesota. She attended School District No. 9 and was confirmed at the same school house in 1906 by Rev. Andrew Olson of Starbuck, Minnesota. As a young girl, she did her share of the farm work and household chores and also worked for various families. In 1911 and 1912 she worked in St Paul, Minnesota for a time. In 1913 she took up dressmaking in Glenwood, Minnesota.

Annie was married to Nels Nelson Flaaten on July 21st, 1917 at her home on the farm in Glenwood. Annie was twenty-five and Nels was thirty-two. Nels was born on October 20th, 1884 in Sogndal, Norway. After their marriage, Nels and Annie moved to Nels' homestead which was 160 acres on the S E -Sec 14-Twp 7-Rge 16-W2nd, near Weyburn in the Grassdale District of Saskatchewan. Four of their six children were born there - Bertha, Noel, Harold and Gladys. Annie went back to her home in the Barsness township for the births of their second and third children Norvald and Scotty as it was too hard to get to the hospital. The hospital was approximately sixteen miles from the farm, and there was no transportation besides horse and buggy.

Annie and Nels were charter members of Zion Lutheran Church in Weyburn when it was formed in 1925. At that time it was the Canada Synod of the American Lutheran Church. As their children grew older, many Luther League gatherings were held at the farm. Annie's humble faith was central in her family and community life thus it was natural for her to be a servant to the needs of others. She held the pastors in high esteem and always provided their family with fresh eggs, cream, and meat. She was so honored when the pastor would visit the farm.

In the fall of 1918 when influenza hit the district, there was only an eight bed hospital in Weyburn where Dr. H. E. Eaglesham (the father of Fergus Eaglesham) was the doctor. Nels and Annie opened their home to the sick and had as many as four at one time in their home, mainly young men who had come from Norway and were working in the district with no home of their own. They also walked to homes with food and cared for those with the flu. Neither caught the flu which was very fortunate.

Since the Flaaten farm was halfway between Radville and Weyburn, it became a stopping place for travelers. The coffee pot was always on and their home was used by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) for a meal as they patrolled the area. Coincidentally from 1967 to 1996 Gladys, their youngest child, became the detachment clerk at the Weyburn detachment. During the Depression of the thirties as many as seventeen stopped for a meal in one day as young men walked from town to town looking for work. Dad was also able to find water which was scarce, with a willow stick cut in the shape of a wish bone. He would walk across the land and when he

was over water, the willow stick would turn in his hands. Many of these wells are still used today.

In 1928, the C.N.R. was built from Weyburn to Radville with the railway running right through Dad's farm land. Mom's sister from Minnesota was visiting at the time, and had a camera and was able to get a picture of the first train which I still have. In fact, the train stopped so she could take the picture. In the 1930's the railroad was used for walking from town to town, and the farm was the stopping place for food or water. Hardly a day passed without someone stopping.

Mother was so very happy when Dad was able to buy a second-hand wooden washing machine when the children were young. In the summer she washed clothes outside. One day a neighbor rode over for coffee and tied his horse to the wooden washing machine. A few minutes later, the horse took off breaking the machine to pieces. After that, she was back to washing on the scrub board. She was also involved in doing chores, milking cows, carrying water and whatever else. A large garden was the source of their food. The fall was canning season as very few cans were purchased in those days.

In 1955, mother had an operation for breast cancer. She spent three months in the Grey Nun's Hospital (now the Pasqua Hospital) in Regina. In 1956 cancer started in her spine and she was given six weeks to live. She then spent seven months in the hospital and was brought home for Christmas. She gained some of her strength back and was able to be up at times. In 1962, Dad and Mother moved to Pioneer Place in Weyburn for the winter. In 1963, she was back in the hospital for six months. She then went back to the farm as a bed patient with Noel and Scotty caring for her. She was happy to be back on the farm and enjoyed the visits and kindness of the neighbors and friends. She passed away November 1st, 1964 at the age of 72 years. Dad passed away October 1st 1970 at the age of 85 years. They are buried at Green Acres Memorial Gardens in Weyburn.