

HISTORY OF OUR NORWEGIAN GRANDPARENTS  
LARS LARSEN KNAPHUS AND LIVA SAKARIAS ALFSEIKE

Lars Larsen Slattenaa was born the 20th of November, 1843 in Vats, Stavanger, Norway. He died the 27th of October 1919. His father being Lars Larsen Slattenaa and his mother, Gyny Bjornsen Hallingstad. He was the seventh child (the youngest) of his family of three girls and four boys.

Liva Sakariasen Alfseike was born the 14th of March 1847 in Vats, Rogoland, Norway. She died the 18th of December 1914. Her parents were Sakarias Olsen Stople and Martha Tollefsen. Liva Alfseike was the sixth of eight children, five boys and three girls.

Quoting some of the beautiful words from their second son Torleif from his personal history concerning these dear grandparents.--- "I can never forget on the Sabbath Day when we went to Church, which stood on a green slope at the south end of a long narrow lake called Vats Vandet, which lies near our place to the east. As the people came rowing out with their different colored boats, chatting and singing, and the majestic mountains to the east, with birch wood on the lower slopes and the different painted farm homes below, all reflected in the still clear lake. It was wonderful to see.

Around this lake are homes and estates whose saga and history is known for hundreds of years back. When I was a young boy, I had heard tales like this: Long ago there came to Eike, in Vats, a great man whose name was Alf, so from that time on it was called Alfeike in his honor.

In the early 1800's, across this deep little lake to the south of our home, lived a man and his wife, whose names were Lars Larsen Slattenaa and Gyny Bjornsen Hallingstad-- and their family. He was a tailor by trade, noble, and widely known as a folk dancer. This Lars was a descendant of this noble man I have just mentioned. We heard folks saying that after the services in the church were over and the folks were still gathered on the church lane, Lars danced for them and his feet were frequently seen over the heads of the crowd. After a short happy life, Lars died leaving his wife Gyny with five children: Astrid, Martha, Anna Martha, Bjorn, and John. Eight weeks later on Nov. 20, 1843, another boy was born whom they called Lars, after his father. As the children grew up, Bjorn became a school teacher and at an early age emigrated to America and so did his sisters Astrid and Anna Martha. John married and moved away, so the responsibility of keeping the family fell on Martha and Lars. From this time on, Lars cared for his mother until her death on March 1, 1894.

From his early youth, Lars Larsen was known as an active energetic fellow. In addition to working his farm, outside income was necessary to maintain their needs. For a few years he collected rags etc. which were sold to factories for re-cycling.

Once as a substitute he was teaching school and met Liva. Torleif described her as 'a well built little girl'. She would not go to school and her mother insisted. She replied, "I will not go as long as that big dummy is teaching". So we see that she had already noticed the man that became her future husband.

On the frequent trips Lars made, he saw that the soil by the Knaphus Hill was good, so he took a life lease on a part of this wonderful land and called it Knaphus, and this is how our name began."

Lars Larsen Knaphus was a cotter (tenant farmer) leasing the approximately 2.5 acres of land. At once he began to clear the rocks away by hand, carrying them in a sling he had made, that fit across his shoulders, (described by Andrew). Stumps and other obstacles were also removed and each small part of the field carved its toll of sweat and heavy burden. A constant shortage of funds and much illness in the family made it difficult. He cleared this property in two or three years and built a rock fence all around his land---which is still standing to date in a sturdy condition. Now it is well over a 100 years old.

In a Norwegian newspaper, "The Farmers Friend", July 16, 1899, they featured a large article about Lars, honoring his efforts and accomplishments for clearing his land and making it a beautiful and useful farm. They stated, "He never lost courage and confidence for the future. He was always sure his honest toil would bring a just reward".

Lars built a little home and an animal barn there mostly by himself. He was handy with tools and built cabinets and furniture for his little house.

Liva Alfseike returned from where she had worked for twelve years. With their combined earnings they built an addition to his home and were married in 1874.

Everything was difficult for them on their little farm. They also had duties on the main farm that had to be taken care of every day, which was in payment of their property. In spite of their hardships they felt very secure for that time. Lars became a painter and was a very fine one. He painted three churches. The churches were in Vats, Skjold and Olen. He painted several large houses as well.

He also painted chest of drawers, chairs, cradles for babies, small carts for horses to pull and many other things, his son Martin recalled. These things he painted in their house, so there was a very strong smell of paint when the family went to bed at night.

In 1886 Lars Larsen Knaphus was awarded the Stavanger County Medal for exceptional cultivating of land and farming and a fine article appeared in the newspaper about him.

To this couple, seven children were born. In order they are:

Jorgina Larsen,	born 18 May 1876	--- died	Nov. 1947
Sirina Larsen,	born 10 Mar 1878	--- died	8 Dec. 1884 (of a tape worm)
Lars Larsen,	born 15 Sep 1879	--- died	11 Feb. 1962
Torleif Severin,	born 14 Dec 1881	--- died	14 June 1965
Sakarias Larsen,	born 5 Dec 1883	--- died	27 Mar 1950
Martin Larsen,	born 14 Apr 1886	--- died	21 Dec 1968
Andreas Larsen,	born 11 Apr 1888	--- died	13 Mar 1977

Liva and Lars were God-fearing people. They were Lutherans and attended the well kept church in Vats. They did not have family prayer in their home as it was not customary, but they studied the scriptures regularly and insisted the children learn their lessons in school and church. Jorgina, their daughter, told her family that Lars blessed many of his family that left home, as Abraham did.

Torlief remembered their home in Western Norway, by the highway leading from Haugesund to points of interest in the Hardanger Fjords. He writes, "Our house was red, trimmed in white with heavy grass on the mud roof. There were beautiful mountains and many lakes around our place where we used to fish and swim. When we talked or laughed it echoed back to us from the rugged hills across the lakes. In the still atmosphere, we clearly heard the chatting and quarreling of the people that lived across the lake." He recalled playing games and watching the beautiful floating clouds and the golden glow of midsummer nights. Their dancing and playing around the bonfire were treasured memories. They planted and sowed and when they cut the hay, it was carried home on their backs. Torlief often told his children how his dear mother, Liva, called the sheep down from the green pasture that was high on the cone-like mountain to the north of their place. "Every goat, cow and sheep had their individual name, and when mother called, they immediately came. Either it was for an afternoon snack or to be tucked in for the night. She was there each evening to greet them as they came down off the mountain." He said the animals knew how much she loved them and they responded to her more than anyone else in the family. Torlief said his mother taught him to have a great respect for animals.

Both Andrew and Torlief have written about their Mother, Liva, spinning and carding the wool and helping her spool it afterwards. Every process was done by hand, from the shearing of the sheep to the making of each piece of their clothing. On the cold winter evenings, their father, Lars, was making new wooden shoes for the next year, which they usually received at Christmas-time with a large orange.

Liva was a tender, sensitive mother and perceptive to her children's differences. She recognized Torlief's interest in art when he was a young boy, and gave him a bound book with blank pages in it, that he might draw while he was on the hill-sides tending sheep. She encouraged him in his efforts. Lars referred to the fact that he had promised his mother that he would never fight again, so when ever he had the inclination to fight, he thought of his promise to her. Andrew has relayed the story of how he used to help his mother scrub the floor with clean sand from the creek.

Both Liva and Lars were very industrious people; planting and raising their food, storing it, making clothing, and knitting socks and sweaters for the family. Each were very bright, not well-schooled, but learned a great deal by self instruction. They were good at math and reasoning problems out. They had an artists touch in things they fixed up in their home. All of their children did well in school and the teachers came often to visit. Though they were hard workers, each one of their children have spoken of what fun-loving people they both were. They must surely have been that, because each of their off-spring were great storytellers, loved to laugh and play and enjoyed parties. These traits come from a happy home.

Their son, Lars, told the story of when he was at home in Norway with his parents, Liva and Lars. A tramp knocked at the door of the Knaphus home and asked for food. Lars invited him in. The table was still set, as the family had just had dinner. Liva went out into the kitchen to warm up the left-overs and cut some bread for him. The visitor spied a dish of butter on the table and grabbed it when no one was looking and dumped it into his hat, which he quickly put on his head. Liva came in with a plate of food and set it down. The tramp grabbed it and began to run. Lars, having already sized up the situation and seeing the melting butter running down the sides of the man's face and neck, said "no, you have to eat it here!"

Lars was very strong, physically, and could out-do his sons in physical powers. They had many contests of strength to see who could win.

Their second child, Serina, a sweet little daughter, died when she was just six years old. This grieved them deeply. The cause of her death was a long tape worm.

Much could be said about their fine pantry. It had many shelves and stored all kinds of foods there. The milk was stored in big rough brown bowls and they had chalk there, and wrote down whether it was morning milk or evening milk. Liva kept flat bread and lefse (both an unleavened bread) that could be stored up to a years time. They had all kinds of goodies and sweets there, so it was possible to get refreshments any time from that fine "chalkhouse".

Liva Strand, Jorgina's daughter, remembers going with grandfather Lars, many places to get sod for fuel. He worked at<sup>a</sup>hearth (a fireplace) way up on Kroka-nuten, the mountain nearby. They took many beautiful rocks up there. They had a cabin there and they had lots of fun, and beauty to enjoy. Even though they had to work hard on 'Knaphus', they were all happy people.

One by one, each of their five sons said goodbye to their beloved parents and native homeland, and sailed for America. Lars and Sakarias settled in Iowa and Torlief and Andrew in Utah. When Andrew (their youngest) left Norway, their mother Liva said "Now all my boys are gone, I'll never see them again". In 1914, their son Martin returned home from America and they held a great feast in the inlet and at Knaphus and also at the church in Vats. They were filled with joy to have one son back in Norway with them.

Liva was quite sickly the last years of her life. The problem was in her chest-- they called it "hal pa bresta". We can guess many things it might have been, but it was chronic and weakened her. She died with this ailment on Dec. 18, 1914. She is buried in the church cemetery in Vats.

A couple of years later, Lars married a widow from Skjold. The children and grandchildren there, were present when they were married. It was a wonderful occasion with a horse and carriage taking them to the Skjold Church. She moved to "Knaphus", but after a little while, they moved to her home in Skjold. It was difficult for Lars to leave the home he had built and worked on so many years and it soon took it's toll on him.

Lars experienced a quick death on Oct. 27, 1919 of a heart ailment. He was carrying a slaughtered calf on his back for quite a distance. He had been walking along the roadway to Skjold, and was found there. He is buried in the church cemetery at Skjold, the home of his second wife.

These good ancestors were loved by all that knew them and each in their family revered them deeply. Their descendants are spread far and wide now and are great in number.