

**History of:**  
**LARS AND LIVA KNAPHUS**

**Compiled by Anne Marie Knaphus James**

**Liva Sakariassen Alfseike Knaphus**

**Born:** 14 Mar. 1847  
**Place:** Vats, Stavanger\*, Norway  
**Died:** 18 Dec. 1914 at age 67  
**Father:** Sakarias Olsen Stople  
**Mother:** Martha Tollefsen  
Sixth of 8 children; 3 girls & 5 boys  
**Married:** In 1874

**Lars Larsen Slottenaa Knaphus**

**Born:** 20 Nov. 1843  
**Place:** Vats, Stavanger\*, Norway  
**Died:** 27 Oct. 1919 at age 75  
**Father:** Lars Larsen Slottenaa  
**Mother:** Gyri Bjornsen  
Seventh of 7 children; 3 girls & 4 boys

\* The county of Stavanger changed its name to Rogaland in the early 1900s.

**Background of the Region and the Family Names**

*Quoting some of the beautiful words of their second son Torleif's personal history:*

"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 (*about 1600*) there came to Eike, in Vats, a great man whose name was Alf, so from that time on it was called Alfseike in his honor.'"

***Note:** In Norway, and other Scandinavian countries, once people started using last names, they would take on their father's first name and add the "-sen" for the next generation. This is the patronymic method. For instance, Liva Sakariassen*

*Alfseike's father's first name was Sakarias. Therefore, her first last name is Sakariassen (sometimes one of the 's' is dropped).*

*The second last name is usually the family farm name or region name. "Alfseike" is the region where she was born and therefore, takes on that name after her patronymic last name. (Lars was born on the family farm "Slottenaa", so uses that name after his patronymic name of Larsen Lars' son). I've even seen Lar's last names including the Alfseike, too.*

*Upon moving to "Knaphus", both of them took on that name, too. It is very common for Norwegians to have several last names like these two did even though they don't always use each name all the time. This makes searching the family roots in Norway even more difficult! In 1901, Norway passed a law that "froze" people's last name so the patronymic method was no longer used.*

## **Young Lars' Parents and Early Life**

*Continuing from Torleif's personal history he writes: "In the early 1800s, across the deep little lake to the south of our home, lived a man and his wife, whose names were Lars Larsen Slottenaa and Gyri 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 (Alfseike) whom 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 (at age 37) leaving his wife Gyri with five children: Astrid, Martha, Anna Martha, Bjorn, and John. Eight weeks later on 20 Nov. 1843, another boy was born whom they called Lars, after his father. As the children grew up, Bjorn became a schoolteacher and at an early age immigrated 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 Gyri until her death on 1 Mar. 1894" (when Lars was 52 years old).*

From his early youth, young Lars Larsen was known as an active energetic fellow, just like his father. 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.

## **Lars and Liva Meet**

Once as a substitute, Lars was teaching school and met Liva Sakariassen. Torleif described her as "a well-built little girl". She would not go to school even though 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.

## **The New Knaphus Farm**

*Torleif continues:* "On the frequent trips young Lars made, he saw that the soil by the Knaphus (*meaning button house*) 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 Slottenaa 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 (*as described by his son 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 more than 125 years old.

Lars built a little home and an animal barn at the Knaphus farm, mostly by himself. He was handy with tools and built cabinets and furniture for his little house.

Much could be said about their fine pantry (*the building behind their house, built into the ground*).

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".

In 1886, at age 43, Lars Larsen Knaphus was awarded the Stavanger County Medal for exceptional cultivating of the land and farming and a fine article appeared in the newspaper about him.

At age 56, in another Norwegian newspaper on 16 July 1899, "The Farmers' Friend", featured a large article about Lars, honoring his efforts and accomplishments for clearing his land and making it a beautiful and useful farm. He was always sure his honest toil would bring a just reward.

## **Lars and Liva Wed They Have a Family**

Liva Sakariassen 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. (*He was 34; she was 27 years old*).

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. His son Martin recalled about

his Father, "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 knew the craft of painting decorative chest of drawers, chairs, cradles for babies, small carts for horses to pull and many other things". These things he painted in their house, so there was a very strong smell of paint when the family went to bed at night.

To this couple, seven children were born (two daughters and five sons). In order they are:

Jorgina Larsen Knaphus born 18 May 1876 died Nov. 1947 Never came to America  
Sirina Larsen Knaphus born 10 Mar. 1878 died 8 Dec. 1884 Died of a tapeworm at 6 years  
Lars Larsen Kampley born 15 Sept. 1879 died 11 Feb. 1962 Emigrated to Iowa  
Torleif Severin Knaphus born 14 Dec. 1881 died 14 June 1965 Emigrated to Utah  
Sakarias Larsen Knaphus born 5 Dec. 1883 died 27 Mar. 1950 Emigrated to Iowa  
Martin Larsen Knaphus born 14 Apr. 1886 died 21 Dec. 1968 Went to USA but returned  
Andreas Larsen Knaphus born 11 Apr. 1888 died 13 Mar. 1977 Emigrated to Utah

*Note: All the children took on the Knaphus farm name. Those who came to America had the choice to keep their patronymic name "Larsen" as their last name or their farm name "Knaphus" as their last name. All of the children, when coming to America, kept Knaphus as their last name except for Lars. He changed his last name to "Kampley" thinking it was easier to spell and understand for Americans.*

Liva and Lars were God-fearing people. For several generations, their families 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 church and school.

## **Getting to Know Lars and Liva through Their Children**

Torleif 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".

Torleif recalled playing games and watching the beautiful floating clouds and the golden glow of midsummer nights with the "midnight sun". 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. Torleif 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. Torleif said his mother taught him to have a great respect for animals.

Both Andrew and Torleif 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 sweet, tender, sensitive Mother and perceptive to her children's differences. She recognized Torleif'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 to make it smooth.

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 artist's 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 of their children has spoken of what fun-loving people they both were. They must surely have been that, because each of their offspring was a great storyteller, 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 on 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 to the kitchen to warm up the leftovers 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!"

Their Father Lars was very strong, physically, and could out-do his sons in physical power. 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 tapeworm.

Liva Strand, Jorgina's daughter, remembers going with Grandfather Lars, many places to get sod for fuel. He worked a hearth (a fireplace) way up on the 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.

## **The Children Leave Home**

One by one, each of their five sons said goodbye to their beloved parents and native homeland, and sailed for America. Jorgina, their daughter, told her family that Lars blessed many of his family that left home, as Abraham of old did to his sons. Lars and Sakarias settled in Iowa and Torleif and Andrew soon called Utah their home. 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. Throughout the years, Torleif came back to Norway a couple of times to visit the family and obtain families' ancestors names.

## **Lars & Liva's Final Years**

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 18 Dec. 1914 at age 67. 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. It soon took its toll on him.

Lars experienced a quick death on 27 Oct. 1919 of a heart ailment. He was 75. 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. We have a great heritage from these noble people in Norway.