

CLARA DORA SELMAN ROLFSON: (transcribed from a tape made by Howard Dean Selman Rolfson - 1982)

I will now tell somewhat concerning the history of my mother. Clara Dora Selman Rolfson.

My mother was born the 12th of February 1876 in the town of Payson, Utah, the third daughter and third child of Charles Selman and Mary Ann Francom. There were ten children in her family of which the first four were girls and the last six were boys.

She lived in the town of Payson from the time of her birth until the time the family came to Canada in 1901, so she spent her early years as a child and young adult in that particular town doing the many things that children do, carrying on the work in the household and helping her mother with the care of the younger children, going to school, and playing with her friends and acquaintances in that area. She had some very good friends that she maintained throughout her life, a few of them that I know about. One was Minnie Ride, who was her cousin but one of her very best friends and also Minnie White, and Inez, another cousin of hers. These were lifetime friends of my mothers from that particular era.

As she grew to young womanhood, it was necessary, like most children had to do in those days to find work that brought in some money for at least themselves or for their family, and so my mother in her young womanhood, went out doing work. The kind of work that she usually did was cooking and taking care of homes and doing waitressing [sic] jobs and so she not only worked in the town of Payson where she was born and raised, but she also went further afield at times into some of the surrounding mining towns where there were opportunities to cook and to be a waitress, and so she did a fair bit of this work before the family came to Canada.

Her three sisters were married in the late 1890's and so my mother was the only single daughter that was left in the Selman family before their family moved to Canada. In September 1901 her father and mother, together with my mother and her six young brothers, came to Canada. They settled in Raymond. They arrived in November of that particular year. My grandfather soon built a home and the family lived in this small (by today's standards) home, in those early days

It was in 1902 when the people of the town, for their entertainment, used to have dances, and they were held often times in the upper floor of the Raymond Mercantile Company. It was here at such a dance that my mother met my father, Orton Joseph Rolfson, and he took her home [from] a dance this particular evening and began going with her. Several months later, they were married on the 12th of February 1903 in the home of her parents.

My parents took up residence in a rented house first of all in Raymond, exactly where I cannot tell, but they soon built their home just across the street from my grandparents on a triangular lot which is still the home of my sister, Edna.

Now to this marriage came eight children. I can mention them again as I have already mentioned them in my father's report. There was Frank, Edna, Brownie, twin boys Charles and Jay, and myself Dean, and Wilson, and Leonard. They also adopted another little boy in December of

1926 named Dee.

When my mother first came to the Raymond area, one of her big jobs was to help her mother take care of the small children who were in the family, for instance, Lee Selman, her youngest brother was only five years old when they arrived in Raymond and my mother used to do much to look after the younger children. She also tried to teach them many things, like on one occasion my mother accompanied my Uncle Delsel Selman, her brother, as he sang a solo in Church, and so my mother did do some playing of the organ for various things in the town although she was not an accomplished musician.

My mother was, I suppose you would say, of average height. She was always a slender woman having dark hair and hazel colored eyes.¹ She was always neat and tidy and she cared about the way she looked in her appearance, and she enjoyed dressing herself up and being neat and tidy in all that she did. She was a hard worker too. In those early days, you didn't have very many conveniences and she had to do the laundry for her rather large family by hand, scrubbing their clothes on a scrub board and this was really very hard for her. Sometimes, not having too many daughters, we boys sometimes had to help in such things as turning the wringer on the washing machine for her as she did the washing, and carry water. She also did the washing every week for many, many long years for her parents who lived across the street because my grandmother [Mary Ann Francom Selman], being crippled, was unable to do this kind of work for herself and my mother did the laundry for her parents, the Selmans.

My mother also had a very fine singing voice. She sang alto and from the earliest days of coming to Raymond, she joined the choir in the ward that was organized then, and she sang in the ward for the Raymond First Ward from that early day until the Sunday before she died. She also sang in the Raymond Stake Choir for many, many long years. She loved music, and she loved to sing, and she was a good singer and she liked particularly to sing in Church choirs.

While our home was not a very grand one in any way, yet my mother tried to do the best she could under the circumstances. As an example, our home wasn't very large and we even turned out from much of our life that our kitchen was in a separate building. It was just near to the main part of the house and so there was always a little walk between the house outside. This made it difficult for her to take care of the house but as I said, she always tried to keep the house neat and tidy. I remember at Christmas time the house was always decorated with streamers in the living room and bells and so on hung about.

She tried to teach her children to be honest and true and she taught them the Gospel as she best could, and she also taught us to be to be proud of ourselves and to work and to do the things that we were supposed to do and to be obedient. She also was engaged in many things in the community. She was very active in the Women's Institute organization for many, many long years and she held several positions in that particular organization. She even travelled sometimes as delegate to their regional conventions. At one time, she also travelled as delegate

¹ Clara actually had two different coloured eyes, one was blue, the other hazel.

to the United Grain Growers convention in Calgary as the representative of this particular region. So she did many things in the community.

She was always active in her Church work. She attended her sacrament meetings, Sunday School and Relief Society very religiously and scarcely ever missed one of these organizational meetings. She held positions in the Church. She was always a visiting teacher; she was an organist for some of her early life; she was the magazine representative for many years and, in this, I even helped her take care of the money. She also, at one time, was in charge of preparing the Chapel for all the funerals that were held in the town, or at least, were held in the meeting house, and in those days, things were done a little differently than they are today, but my mother was in charge of this bit of compassionate service. She also gave much service in helping people who were in distress - sickness, death and so on. She had a great responsibility also in taking care of her parents who lived just across the street from us and who were both crippled and needed help at times and it fell upon my mother to be there to render this assistance to them when she did willingly and graciously. As a matter of fact, my grandmother Selman was even brought into our home when she was so very ill in her final days, and she died in our home.

Mother tried her very best for her family, would have given all that she had in her life for that matter, for her family if it had been necessary, or if she could have done. As I said before, she was very faithful in her religious things, and she loved the Church very much. She used to attend the Temple as often as she could. She loved this work as well.

My father died in 1935 and so my mother was a widow for the next twenty-three and a half years until her death which occurred on the 8th of September 1958. My mother did not suffer very much time in bed although I am sure she had pain and suffering even though she was going about her various activities before her death, but she had even been to a family gathering in Lethbridge the Saturday before her death. She came home Sunday morning. She took very ill. She was taken to hospital where she was operated on and she died early the next morning so she spent very little time in the hospital off her feet.² She was buried in Raymond, in the cemetery here.

My mother was a very, very good woman, and I loved her and do love her very much. She did very much for me; she tried to guide me in the paths of right and to encourage me to do those things which are right and proper that one should do. My only regret is that she didn't have more comfortable things in this life and that I didn't do more for her while she was living, than I did do. As I look back now, I can recognize the things that I might have done to make things better and more comfortable for her which I failed to do but hindsight is sometimes better than foresight, and so now it is with regret that I say these things, but I do have the best regard for my mother for the kind of woman she was, that she did the best she possibly could under the circumstances under which she lived. She raised a large family and I am sure she wasn't always pleased with the things her family always did, yet she did not lose her love for her children and to the day she died she was concerned about her children and about her grandchildren whom she

² She was taken ill with stomach cancer.

loved very dearly.

In mentioning about my mother's cooking, she made excellent pie and one of her kind of pies that was superb was a lemon pie. Few people can make lemon pies as well as my mother could - it was most delicious. Another thing that she used to have, on a weekend particularly, she would either make cinnamon rolls or else what we called buns. They were sweet buns with raisins in them, rather large in size and so every Saturday my mother would always make cinnamon rolls or buns and then we could have these to eat how we enjoyed these particular things. They were great to eat, these buns and rolls which my mother made. Sometimes the things that we had to eat were not glamorous as the foods that we have now and so at times we were forced to eat, for instance, cooked beans, dried beans and we ate a lot of those and sometimes we had a lot of potatoes and a few vegetables. My mother always canned lots of things for the winter time in the way of corn, beans, peas, and also canned fruits such as peaches and pears and prunes and so on and she made jam. One of the kinds of jam that she made that I particularly enjoyed was green tomato jam. I thought that was excellent. Also, she made a pear jam which I enjoyed very much as I thought it was very excellent jam. So my mother was an excellent cook in so far as she had things to cook with, which was not always the case, but we used to eat very well because of her excellent cooking and there was always milk and cream and butter which we had because we had cows and generally speaking, there were eggs and even some chickens to use.

My mother was a good mother, and a good wife, and a good neighbor, and I have the highest regard for her.

I wish to add one or two other things concerning Mother's activities. As was mentioned in my father's report, she and my father were on the committee for the Senior Citizens or the honored guests' party for many years. Therefore, she had much to do with preparing the big dinners that they had for these people. In the latter years of her service in this regard, she was in charge of the dinner many times. Beside this, as the ward put on many dinners for raising funds for support of the ward, on a number of occasions, my mother was the one who was in charge of this dinner and she would organize and direct and help cook these big dinners that were staged usually in the Opera House and maybe they would feed upwards of 300 or 400 people and thus she would work days before and a day or two after in getting things cleared away, and so she was very useful in this regard as well as she enjoyed this work. Even after my father died, she carried on doing large dinners in the town.

Also, in the latter part of the 1940s and early 1950s, she worked as a cook at the Raymond Municipal Hospital for a number of years. She enjoyed this work because she was a good cook, and it was also a means by which she could make a little money. One summer also, she went to Waterton Lakes and was the cook at Crandell Lodge. This was again a way in which she could make some money and also it was an outing being there in the Park during the summer time, but cooking was one thing which she could do very, very well and which she enjoyed doing.

My mother also liked to visit her children and she was at our house quite often. She liked to travel to Edmonton to visit Dee and to Taber and Picture Butte to visit Brownie and also visit Leonard wherever he might have been stationed or working, and so she enjoyed going around

visiting with her children and seeing her grandchildren. It was always pleasant to have her here. Some of the time, she also did baby-sitting for us here as Kay and I were both working during part of this time and she would come when we needed her especially and looked after Ann and Barbara and Monica sometimes as well before they started school, They enjoyed having their grandmother with them. I am quite sure that Ann particularly can remember many of the things that she did with her when she was a little girl and grandmother was attending her, and Barbara to a lesser extent and probably Monica was so young that she doesn't have as many memories of her grandmother as the other two girls do.