

Abbreviated History of Gilbert Cromwell



Gilbert Cromwell 1968

Gilbert Cromwell is the son of George and Pearl Peterson Cromwell and Grandson of Nels and Martha C. Hansen Peterson. Martha C. Hansen Peterson is the daughter of Lars and Maria Larsdatter Hansen.

I was born on January 23, 1921, just after midnight. My mother says it was a very beautiful night--the moon was full and it was almost as bright as day. The moon was shining on the snow and a person could see all the way across Swan Valley. I was born at home with just my father, mother, and Uncle Elmer Cromwell, who went for help. He brought a lady by the name of Mrs. Corol (Ida) Jones, but I was already born when she arrived. My Grandmother (Martha) Peterson stayed with us for ten days-- until Mom was well enough to do her work. I was born in my Uncle Frank's house and dry farm. The house was south of Ivan Week's sheep sheds and the Swan Valley cemetery.

My folks moved from there to several other farms in the area where he share-cropped. When I was very small my father homesteaded six hundred and forty acres on Palisade Creek. We lived there and my brothers and sisters all

grew up there. Along with myself there were six boys and five girls in my family. The oldest, a boy, George died at three months of age so I was always the oldest in my family.

We lived in a two room, log house on the south side of Palisade Creek. We used the water out of the creek for the house. I can remember packing water on wash day until my arms were like pieces of wood.

My Aunt Anna and her girls stayed with us for a long time. The girl's names were Florence, Chloe, and Wren. We became like brothers and sisters and have continued until this day.

One time my mother and Aunt Anna went with Dad and Uncle Vanvleet, Aunt Anna's husband. As soon as she left, we kids took all our clothes off and played all day that way. We couldn't get my brother Tom to put his clothes on so we got caught. Aunt Anna really gave her kids a licking, but Mom just told us that it wasn't nice and not to do it any more. She understood that little children don't always see things as grown ups do. We never did it again.

I stayed with Grandma Peterson, Uncles Jesse and Dave while going to school. Many days I would get up and pump water for one hundred head of cows before going to school. I walked one and one half miles to school. When I got home, I pumped water for the cows again. The pump was operated by hand. There was no electricity in Swan Valley then. Radios were battery operated, lights were kerosene lamps or gas lamps, and heating was by wood.

One time, my uncles left me all alone for two weeks. I had to feed and water the cattle and horses. They kept the horses in the barn. They had to be

turned out to water and then put back in the barn and fed. This is a lot of work for a twelve or thirteen year old boy.

I started helping Uncle Jesse and Dave hay when I was five or six years old. I helped them every year until I left Swan Valley. That was the high light of the year, the days we spent haying and harvesting.

My Grandmother Peterson was a very special lady. She was born in Denmark and came to this country when she was 16 years old. She joined the Mormon Church while she was still in Denmark. She came to New York City where she worked for a family for a few years. She couldn't speak a bit of English. She learned to speak flawless English by the time I can remember her first. She met and married my Grandfather Nels Peterson in Utah after she came out from New York. They moved to Manti and lived for a while and then went to Brigham City for a year or two and Grandpa worked for a freighter hauling for the railroad. From there they went to the Egan Bench above Rexburg, Idaho where they farmed for a while. From there they moved to Swan Valley and homesteaded and lived the rest of their lives.

Grandma was a fiery sort of person. She was a kind hearted and very charitable person, but she was sort of spoiled being the only daughter of the family. Her mother spoiled her. She would get angry and pout for days at a time.

She was very close with her money as she had too be frugal as she was so poor all her life but when she took my sister Cleyeon and I to Church parties and fund raisers she gave us lots of money.

She only had one eye. The other one was put out with lye. She was killing bed bugs with lye on a feather when the feather flipped and the lye got in her eye. She went to the doctor and they took the eye out. They fitted her for a glass eye, but her friends kept telling her that if she fell down and broke the eye it would kill her so she would never wear it.

She was a hard worker and so by the time I can remember she was sloped and care worn but still very strong and active. She could walk farther and faster than I could. She lived with my Uncles Dave and Jess and took care of them until she died. She died at age 82.

Grandma had migraine headaches so bad that I have laid awake all night and heard her walk the floor and she would say, "Oh dear, dear, dear." I felt so sorry for her. Lots of times she would have to have the Priesthood come and give her a blessing which done wonders for her. Grandpa told my mother that he was sure that she would have died or lost her mind if it hadn't been for these blessings. She was very religious. The more I see my mom the more I see her. They are just alike.

When I was about 10 or 11 years old I was helping my uncles and staying with Grandma. We were stopped for dinner and Uncle Jess went into the back room and came out with a bottle. He handed it to me and said here have a taste of wine. I took it and started to drink. He tried to grab it but I just kept drinking and dodging. When he finally got the bottle I had drunk at least a cup. It wasn't wine it was moonshine whisky. I remember going through the kitchen door and could hear Grandma yelling at him and saying you dang fool and really mad.

They took me and put me to bed. That's the last I remembered until the next day. Grandma sat by me and watched and prayed over me until I woke up, bless her heart.

Excerpts from additional history written by Gilbert Cromwell



Pearl Peterson Cromwell
early 1980's

Mother Pearl Loraine Peterson. Daughter of Martha Christine Hanson Peterson and Nels Peterson. She was one of nine children: Nels P, Martha, Annie Marie, Amy Sophie, David Hartvick, Olga Dora, Jesse Leroy, Earl Lorenzo, her twin brother. Both my maternal grandparents were born in Denmark. My grandmother immigrated to this country when she was 16 year of age. She lived as a servant to a woman in New York City for a few years until she had the money for her parents to come over. She then moved to Utah and married my grandfather. He had come to this country and moved to Utah to work on the railroad. They moved to Lego in Oneida County Idaho, where six of their children were born. They also lived in Marysville in Fremont County Idaho, where David

was born. They then moved to Egan near Rexburg for a while where my grandfather worked on farms.

They then moved to Swan Valley and homesteaded a farm where the town of Swan Valley is now. They lived there for almost ten years. The house was right behind Shangnons Lodge. My mother was born there, her and her twin brother Earl.

They sold the property in Swan Valley and bought a farm 1 1/4 mile north of Irwin where they raised their family and lived out their lives.

My mother lived there until she met and married my father, George Albert Cromwell. My father was 32 years old at the time and Mom was 16 years old, but it was a very good union and lasted all their living days until he died.

Uncle Dave and Jesse used to come up every Saturday afternoon to bring their laundry for Mom to do. They would stay all night and all day Sunday and play cards. I got to be a card sharp before I could read or write.

We all went down to their place to help them hay. My dad and brothers and I would help with the hay and Mom would help Grandma cook and clean for the crew.

My uncles took care of Grandma until she died, but she also took care of them. She was a small woman with stooped shoulders from working so hard.

My grandma was a very wonderful lady, but she had a temper. When she was mad she stayed that way for a while. One day she got mad up to the Corbett place, and she decided to walk home, which is 4 or 5 miles. They drove along

side of her, but she refused to get in and walked all the way. She was past 65 years old at the time.

She had migraine headaches a lot. I remember her walking the floor all night. Night after night, holding her head and saying over and over, "Oh dear, dear, dear, oh dear, dear, dear." She used to say that earlier in her life. She would have died if it hadn't been for the priesthood a few times. She was so bad they called in the elders and she was helped. They got better as she got older, but she always had them some. I'm the same way. I think I inherited it from her. I always think of her when I have a bad headache.

My grandma was very thrifty. She was so poor most of her life that when she had some money she would save it. She had to hide it in different places because Uncle Jess would find it and buy beer and get drunk, but when we went to Church parties to raise money, she would give it to Cleyeon and I to spend. She always paid her tithes and offerings. She was really very true to her beliefs.

When you saw my mother you had seen my grandmother. They looked and acted alike. They were like as 2 peas in looks and actions.

I will say this, if I needed anything, Grandma would see I got it. I lived with her a lot of the time.

She came to this country when she was 16 years old. She worked for a lady in New York City, who spoke no Danish and she spoke no English. She learned English and never spoke Danish again. She had no money and no friends, but saved her money to come to Salt Lake, to be with the Mormons. She

met my grandpa and married him in the Logan temple. I think that is why she was so careful with her money. She knew what it meant to be without.

When I stayed with grandma I always knew what we would eat at all meals. Two eggs, a bowl of rolled oats with thick cream and a glass of milk. Uncle Dave and Jess had the same except coffee instead of milk. We also had 1 or 2 slices of homemade bread.

Grandma was so fussy with her bread, it had to be just right or she would throw it out and start over.

For dinner; stewed potatoes, bread and butter with milk or coffee. For supper they milked the cows and then we had bowls of bread and warm milk right from the cow.

Grandma had a hard life. Her oldest son accidentally shot himself in the head with a gun. There was a lot of suspicion that he saw something that he shouldn't have seen and was shot by his Uncles wife. She was a very evil woman. He lived for a while, but he got sunstroke and it killed him. Then Grandpa got sick. They thought he had asthma, but I think he had cancer. The last few months his heart beat was down by his stomach. She had to take care of them and the children and the chores around the farm so she worked very hard.

Dad and Mom lived on my Uncle Franks' farm on the east side of Swan Valley by Ivan Weeks place. From there they moved to the McKay dry farm east of Irwin for two or three years. Then to Jesse Wages dry farm north of Palisade

Creek where we lived for two or three years. We then moved to Uncle Joe's dry farm east of Irwin.

My dad then filed a homestead on 480 acres on Palisade Creek in 1924. We lived in a house made of logs with a dirt roof until 1932, when it burned down. My father pulled the willows and the brush on the creek bottom and planted it in crops. He also got a saw mill that belonged to Henry Hill to come in and he and others like Lew Daniels and Uncle Earl helped get out logs for the mill. They cut and sold cedar posts for years. My dad worked as a laborer on farms in Swan Valley. All his life he was a very, very, hard worker.

We lived in a tent all summer after the house burned while Dad and their friends and neighbors built a new house.

Grandma's



Martha Christine Hansen Peterson
about 1946

Grandma was married in the Logan temple, but they went to live in Lago, Idaho. I always thought it was near Logan or Franklin because they lived in Franklin for a while but Lago is between Soda Springs and Montpelier. I was

going to Montpelier to get some cars for Broadway Ford and saw the sign. Vic, Duane and I went down. Grandma and Grandpa moved around a lot until they went to Swan Valley. I can remember her and Uncle Julius kept their temple clothes hanging in suitcases in the back room of her home in Irwin. She got them down every once in a while and washed and pressed them. I can't remember Grandpa much. The only thing I remember was when he died. They dressed him on the kitchen table and one of his hands fell off the table. I remember asking my mother what was wrong with him. He had a white glove on his hand. That's all I remember of him. Mom couldn't remember the gloves, but we finally talked and discussed it and she finally remembered. I was probably 3 or 4 years old (Note: He was actually just over 2 yrs old).

My Mom



Pearl Loraine Peterson Cromwell
Late 1950's

My mother was a wonderful woman all her life. She was a replica of her mother. She was a twin and so was Grandma. Mom's twin was Earl. They were the youngest ones in the family.

She had a very explosive temper when she was young, but she got it under control in her later years. I can remember when I was 7 years old to probably 12 or 13. She would harangue my dad for hours and every evening until finally Dad would get up and put on his hat and get his saddle horse and take off. He would be gone 2 or 3 days so Mom and I would walk to Irwin and get him. He would be in a card game. We would walk in and mom would say, "Let's go home Dad or George." He would get up and cash in his chips and we would go get the horse and head home. She would be good for a while after that. The problem was she was pregnant all the time and she blamed Dad...

She would start to give me a whipping and loose her temper and hit too hard. One time she hit me in the groin and put me in bed for a week. That was the last time she ever did that.

When Dad was away, Mom and I had to do the chores. We had 8 or 10 milk cows to milk two times a day and when it was cold we had to go up on the hill and get wood. We would chop it up with the axe and then pack it 150 or 200 yards to the house.

My mother never had a good house, but we always had a home. Mom was a strict disciplinarian, but if we needed something she did her best to get it. I wonder sometimes if that isn't a lot of the trouble today we have a lot of beautiful houses, but far too few real homes.

I can still remember the first fish I caught. It was 4 or 5 inches long. I ran to the house all excited and asked her to cook it. She dropped everything and cleaned and cooked the fish for me. We always had another family with us.

Aunt Anne and Uncle VanVlet and their kids lived with us for a year or two. Then Uncle Earl (Mom's brother) stayed with us for a couple of years, then Grandpa Cromwell was there for 6 or 7 years until Dad kicked him out for being mean to Cleyeon and I. Then Uncle Elmer (Cromwell) moved in and was there off and on for years.

Us kids used to bring all our friends home to stay overnight. It seemed they all liked to stay in our home. That went on for years until we were all grown. Even after that a lot of them came and stayed. My mom always made them welcome.

Mom's Canning for Winter

Mom and us kids used to pick wild berries. Gooseberries, chokecherries, wild currents and huckleberries. She made jam and jellies from the berries and bottled the huckleberries for pies. We got apples from the people that had orchards also cherries and pears and Mom canned them for winter. We had a big garden and Mom canned vegetables and made pickles. Late fall and early winter we would kill a couple of elk and deer and Mom would can the meat for the summer months when it wouldn't keep. Mom put in many, many hours every summer canning and sweating over the old wood cook stove. It got terribly hot in the house even with the doors and windows open. Mom canned between 1000 to 1500 quarts of fruit, vegetables and meat every year.

We had a big cellar dug back into the hill. It was covered with logs and then covered with three feet of dirt. The doors made from heavy plank and the

outer door was the same. We kept all the canned goods and 1 1/2 to 2 tons of spuds, 4 or 5 hundred pounds of carrots, parsnips and other stuff. (Uncle Elmer's home made wine.) Speaking of the wine, Mom and Dad went to town and left the kids home alone one day. They decided to sample the wine. One thing led to another and when Mom and Dad got home the kids were in different stages of drunkenness. Dad went out to the cellar and broke all the wine bottles and that was the end of wine in the cellar.

One day in the winter when I was 7 or 8 years old, Sis, Tom and I and Aunt Anne's girls Florence and Wren were tobogganing about 3 or 4 hundred yards from the house. As we came down the hill we had to cross a ditch. We came down the hill real fast (20 or 25 mph) but when we hit the ditch the toboggan stopped dead. As I was in the front all the others went over the top of me. I couldn't move from the waist down. The kids ran to the house and told my mom. She ran up and packed me to the house and put me in bed. It was 2 or 3 weeks before I could walk. Mom massaged my legs for hours every day. In those days it was almost impossible to get out of Swan Valley in the winter. We had to do our own doctoring except life and death cases and sometimes it was the later.

When Uncle Dave and Jess were harvesting, Mom would go down and help Grandma cook for the crew. She was always helping them or Aunt Martha. She took time from her busy life to help everybody else.

I guess even when she was young before she was



Jesse and David Peterson
about 1960

married; she helped Aunt Annie, Aunt Martha and Aunt Amy.

She did their laundry (Uncle Dave and Jess) every week. She never got over the habit of helping everyone around her. Even in her old age she would help people that were younger than her. Bless her heart.

When Uncle Henry (Cromwell) came out here from Illinois he stayed with Mom and Dad, and Mom took care of him.

Speaking of my uncles. They would come up every Saturday evening and bring their dirty laundry. When they got there we got out the pinochle cards and started playing cards. We'd play all night and the next day without stopping. Mom would cook meals and we would stop to eat and then continue with the game. Sometimes Mom would spell me off as I was only a small kid (8 or 10 years). This went on for many years. They would break up the game about dark and my uncles would take their clean clothes and head for home. They always walked up (5 miles) and back.

When we moved up Palisade there were thousands of wild chickens there were ruff grouse, pine hens, and sage grouse and prairie chickens. We called the ruff grouse "drummers." In the spring you could hear them by the hundreds. They sit on a log and beat their wings against it. It is a really loud noise.

I took Uncle Jess and Dave's team up there one day. We had 4 or 5 toboggans and a scoop shovel. I decided to ride the scoop down. I got on the thing and started out it just kept going faster and faster. I was afraid to jump off and afraid to say on. Finally, I jumped. The snow was crusted hard enough a horse could

walk on top of it, so when I hit I bounced end over end down the hill and removed a good portion of the skin from my face.

We stayed until one of the toboggans went through the barbed wire fence and hit the net wire on the other side of the road. It threw the kids over the fence. They were really lucky. They got plenty of cuts, scratches and bruises. It could have killed someone.

One day we were haying right by Grandma's house. We were going along when we heard a blood curdling scream from the house. We started running over there when Grandma came out of the house like a shot out of a gun still screeching. We got her calmed down enough to tell us what happened. She went down in the spud cellar to get spuds. It was dark in there and she picked up a salamander. When she decided what it was she threw it down and got out of there in a hurry. After that she never went down there any more. If we didn't get spuds we didn't eat. They are terrible looking lizards, but are harmless. I have seen them a foot long. There used to be lots of them. They stay underground all their lives unless there is a pool of stagnant water. Then they come up in to it.

Me and Cleyeon were trying to start the fire in the cook stove while Mom and Dad were milking the cows. We put kerosene in and lit it. Poof, it flared up and set the ceiling on fire. In those days, they used newspapers for wallpaper. That house probably had 7 or 8 more layers on it. It was a log house and was a disaster waiting to happen. It was a matter of 2 or 3 minutes until the whole house was in flames. It was so fast that all we saved was what we had on.

Thank God, Sis and I ran and got the baby and packed him out. I guess you could say Sis and I burned the house down. I hadn't thought of it for years and years. I can still see us all standing around and us kids asking where will we sleep Mom.

After the house burned, my dad got a tent, 12 by 16 feet. We set it up in the cottonwoods just above where Dad was going to build the house. We lived in the tent all summer. Dad and my uncles went over to Pine Creek and got logs for the house. They got it put up and the roof on. They couldn't find dry lumber, so they just laid the floors down and didn't nail them. By the next summer, the boards had dried and there were gaps between them 3/4 of an inch. We had to turn the boards every few days, because they would warp and the ends would curl up. When they were good and dry we nailed them down and put boards in the fill the spaces.

It wasn't well built, but it was a home for us. A house is a house until there is love. Only love can make a home whether a cabin or a castle. That's one thing we had a lot of, and not too much of anything else. That was in the very worst days of the depression.

We used to have water fights when Uncle Dave was around. Sometimes, it would last all day. When he got tired of water fights, he would get the black horse and chase us. Sometimes, it got a little out of hand. One day he was chasing Deb (Delbert) and Deb got too tired. All at once he reached down and got a club and turned around and said, "I run just as far as I'm going too." The horse came closer and Deb hit him over the head almost knocking him down.

Uncle Dave got mad and was going to hit Deb, but Dad stepped in and told him it was his own fault and if he touched Deb he'd have to answer to him. That settled that.

NOTE:

The history as written by Gilbert Cromwell has not been changed. Pictures were added by Daniel Cromwell.

History contributed by:

Daniel Cromwell
21223 Springbrook Hollow Court
Spring, Tx