

OUR LADY OF THE MONTH  
BETTIE ELIZABETH GREWELL

Bettie's father, Christian Frederick Larsen, was born and raised in Denmark. Her mother, Ingjer Petersen, was born and raised in Sweden. When Ingjer was a young lady, she took a trip to Denmark and it was there she met and married Christian.

Bettie was born in Denmark on July 2, 1887. She is the oldest of the seven children of Christian and Ingjer. Her brother, Peter, was also born in Denmark. Ingjer had a brother, Bent Petersen, who was living in Portland at this time. He was a pharmacist at what is now the J. K. Gill Co. It was in 1889 that he sent for Christian and Ingjer and their family to come to the United States. Bettie recalls the stories her mother told of the trip across the ocean, the privation, sea sickness, terror of the open sea and the trip across the country. It was such a very long trip with many hardships.

Christian and Ingjer became citizens of the United States shortly after arriving. Christian found it easy to adapt to the new language and customs of America but it was much harder for Ingjer. She spoke some English, but preferred her native language in the home. She always wore wooden shoes and would send to Denmark whenever she needed another pair. Ingjer always felt they were much warmer and her feet were always dry. The clothes she made for the family were always of wool material. Bettie tells how the other children in school reacted to her wooden shoes during her early school days. Although she had always spoken Danish, the English language was not hard for her to pick up.

In 1896, the family moved to what was then 'in the country,' where they bought a ranch with several acres in Columbia County near St. Helens. (This area is near the present site of the Montgomery Ward store in Portland.) The area was of huge timber land which had to be cleared for the general farming which the family did for a living. Wild game and animals were ever so plentiful. The house which her father and Uncle built there for the family is still standing today.

Bettie tells of playing with her four brothers and two sisters along the river edge, finding all kinds of Indian arrowheads which to them at that time were not too important. She and her brothers and sisters grew up and attended school there in Columbia County. The main part of the school she attended is still standing and they have just built around it.

Bettie says she was quite a 'Tom Boy' as a youngster playing can shinny, hop scotch, jumping rope and fishing. Her father built the children a merry-go-round of their own. She tells of the first motorized street car in Portland -- what a sight it was to see this street car moving without horses pulling it! And the streets were all lit by candle light. The kids would look to find the burned-down candles, which would be blackened from use, to write on fences, etc., as kids will do. This being a logging community, she says there was what seemed like a saloon on every corner.

It was in 1904, Bettie met and married Pern Grewell in St. Helens. They spent their honeymoon at the Lewis and Clark State Fair. Pern and Bettie had two daughters, Helen and Gladys. On June 1, 1925, the family moved to Cloverdale, where Pern worked as a meat cutter and postal employee, driving mail trucks in and around Cloverdale.

When we asked Bettie about her hobby, she said, "I guess you could say shovel, rake and hoe." As a young girl, she worked as a housekeeper for a banker in Warren, Oregon. He had quite a large estate there where he grew many different kinds of flowers. It was here she became interested in growing and caring for flowers. This banker had imported many kinds of bulbs, some of which Bettie has today in her garden at her home in Cloverdale. Bettie has always raised flowers in Cloverdale and for the last 20 years, she made the floral arrangements for the Presbyterian Church piano each week. Pern passed away in 1953 and Bettie continued to care for her flowers alone until this last year.

Bettie donated many of her personal treasures to the Pioneer Museum in Tillamook. Wayne Jensen, manager of the museum, is Bettie's grandson. Arlene Schuh, granddaughter, is a member of the staff here at the Care Center. Two more granddaughters are Barbara Gibbons of Portland and Beverly Mohr of Hood River. There are 12 great grandchildren and 1 great, great grandchild.

Bettie has been with us since September of this last year and we all just love her. She is such a beautiful, lovely and gracious lady. Drop in anytime for a visit with her for she has many more unusual and interesting stories to share.