

Carlyn & Jean Goulson
The Goulson/Thompson & Oliver/Edgecombe Stories
Volume One
By
Carlyn Goulson

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Note by editor and transcriber David Nitz

Transcription of *Chapter One* from the original word-processor-produced copy of text written by author, Carlyn Coulson, was done by me, David Goulson-Johnson Nitz. It follows this note on page four of this document.

Much to his credit, and to the advantage of all of us Goulsons — both Canadian and American — Carlyn dedicated ten years of his life to producing hundreds of pages of written documentary, the most complete history of the Goulson family written to date, albeit a great portion of Carlyn's material concerns that of his mother's family and has nothing to do with American Goulsons, except as it relates to their Canadian cousins, the offspring of Aaron and sister Lena.

Carlyn completed his three-volume work of literally hundreds of pages on a word processor. There is no copy saved to a computer disc. I have tried scanning Carlyn's work into the computer so that it can be viewed, read and enjoyed by all. However, the scanned documents are difficult to read on a computer monitor and because the scanned images are basically photo images, they take up a lot of computer disc space and are time-consuming to download.

And so I am asking for volunteers to help in the transcription process. If a few Goulsons were inclined to help, we could get all of Carlyn's work into computer and internet-friendly form using Microsoft Word. This would facilitate reading, reproducing and adding to the work already completed. It would make Carlyn's work a dynamic, rather than static — one printing, singular publication — document whose pictures and text could be easily augmented for generations to come.

There is, of course, another way to accomplish the job of transcription and that is to give the work of transcription to a word processor typist. This can be done, and done relatively quickly, but the cost is estimated to be in the order of \$1,000 to \$1,500 (and that doesn't include adding the dozens of photographs). If anyone would care to raise this amount of money from contributions, or make a big donation, that would be appreciated. However, I suspect that is not to be expected.

Because I have a huge amount of work — and some expense — to do with creating and maintaining the Goulson website, I simply don't have the time or energy to complete the next several hundred pages of transcription myself.

In the meantime, and until Carlyn's three volumes are completely transcribed, the reader may obtain copies of any of Carlyn's volumes by contacting him. His copying cost is about \$50 including postage.

Inquiries regarding Carlyn's work should be made to:

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David Nitz & Carlyn Goulson (with Jule Neg), September 2004

Thanks for your interest, support and — for volunteering — your help,

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Chapter One may be found on the following pages.

Chapter One **Aaron Goulson's Roots**

The date is 5 November 1988, a Saturday. These are the first words of a family story to be compiled by Carlyn (Cary) Floyd Goulson and Jean Elizabeth (nee Oliver) Goulson. It is to be a family story not a history because it will probably take a rambling anecdotal form, and it is being written primarily for our granddaughters Erica (twelve years old last February 27) and Jessica (five on October 13) — they are the children of our daughter, Vivian — and all those who come later. It will attempt to follow four strands to the present — the lifelines of Carlyn's and Jean's parents — the Goulsons, Thompsons, Olivers and Edgecombes. Its goal cannot be completeness, but rather a feeling for what life was like in different generations and in different places. Where did people live? What were homes like? What did men and women work at? What did they wear? What did they do for fun? What games did children play? What was school like? Were they good times or bad? Easy or difficult?

Shifting to the first person, I, Carlyn, am starting this story now for various reasons. Probably most importantly I am recently retired so I have more time. Jean is continuing her very demanding and very satisfying volunteer work for the Girl Guides of Canada and spends one or two days (or more) a week in Vancouver, again producing periods of time for me to use profitably. Also we acquired a new Macintosh computer with attachments (about \$2,500) for Jean's 60th birthday on September 27, 1986, so we have a magic machine for me to learn to use. (Let me hasten to add that I was 64 years old on July 20th of that year. As Jean would say, she married a much older man.)

The idea of a project such as this first began to take shape back in the spring of 1965. I had been a faculty member in the Faculty of Education at Victoria College/University since 1960, and each April/May we headed out into the province to supervise our student-teachers in their final practicum. That year I was bound for the Peace River area, driving alone in our 1957 gold Dodge. As we did frequently when heading off the island, I stopped overnight at the Millers (sister Vivian) so I could work in a visit as well. Our mother (Erica and Jessica's great-grandmother) was living downstairs at my sister Vivian and her husband Francis', and at breakfast Viv asked Mom why she didn't drive part way with me — for the ride and for company — and then she could come back on the B. C. Railway from Quesnel or Prince George. Mom's first reaction was that she hadn't thought of it, that she wasn't ready, that it would take too long to pack — but soon we were on our way.

It was a fun day! For hours we just drove and talked about many things, but especially about her very different life as a young girl in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. She remembered every vivid detail — hoeing and picking tomatoes, and riding bareback and barefooted with Uncle Donald to the Saturday night socials. At some point I asked her if she would write down everything about what life was like then, and someday I would try to write a history of three generations — Blue Ridge Mountains to Alberta prairies to Vancouver Island — and tell about the remarkable changes from Minnie and her brother, to Jean and me, and on to our children, Vivian and Donald. She thought it was a great idea, but later that year she dies of cancer. On of the last things she said to me was, “Well, we didn’t get our story written, did we?”

Mom would have been much the best source for my side of the story , but now I shall have to turn to others. And the worst of it is that the previous generation has gone. I shall turn to people like Georgia Moe and Stella Thompson, but it will be largely the secondhand memories of when they were very young. Also, I shall get as much feed-in as I can from Hilton and Vivian and Arnold whose memories go back seven, six and five years further than mine. We shall see. The moral, especially now that there are small, efficient recording instruments, is that everyone should get family history onto tape while the opportunity is still there.

Of the four family roots, we shall begin with the lineage of my father, Aaron Goulson, and as reference for names and generations in all assorted branches we shall attempt to provide family tree diagrams elsewhere. The oldest names I have been able to establish are Ole Olsen Byberget and his wife, Marith, and the occasion of discovering these was one of the most memorable events in my whole life. In 1972-73 Jean and I were in Europe on a study-leave year. The first four months were spent in Britain, and then from January to July we traveled the roads of Europe in our brand new 1972 Volkswagen camper-van, delivered to England from Germany for \$4,000 (cost in Victoria at that time was \$5,000; cost in 1988: \$29,000). In six months we drove 23,000 miles and visited 23 countries (including two weeks in the Soviet Union) while I contacted ministries of education and Jean called in at Girl Guide headquarters.

After cutting up through Finland, “Lapland” and Sweden, we drove into Norway on June 30, 1973 and stopped at a beautiful campsite overlooking the city of Trøndheim and its sparkling fjord. I had been told by Minnesota relatives that my grandmother, Anna Byberg, had come from that area and had emigrated to America as a young woman in the 1860’s. Armed with this meager information we went next day to the “Ståtsårkevet” and a very pretty researcher spent a long time going through thick ledgers of single-line handwritten records of people who had left Norway for foreign fields. It was rather overwhelming to see all those

volumes and to realize the struggle and trauma and family-breakup that each entry must have meant.

Finally, our young lady found what she was looking for: Anna Byberg, born in Byneset on December 3, 1847; daughter of Ole Olsen Byberget, "Husmann" (tenant farmer), and wife, Marith. She emigrated in 1868, aged 20, along with her brother, Ole, and a sister, Emma. Their debarkation point in the New World was the port of Quebec.

Byneset was a tiny fishing village a few kilometers away, and on July 3rd we drove there. Our first stop was the village church, a most interesting structure dating back to the twelfth century and with recently uncovered frescoes, hidden for ages under layers of paint, and depicting most graphically and earthily the Seven Deadly Sins and what lay ahead in heaven and hell. There were Byberg gravestones in the churchyard, and when we asked the gentleman in charge if there were any Bybergs still living in the area, he directed us to a middle-aged couple with that name who lived nearby. They spoke a little English and were not related, but they said there was an old, blind bachelor by the name of Byberg up the hill and they took us there by the hand, literally.

A housekeeper was working outside and she smiled and pointed up the steps. Up we went and into a room where a man was sitting at a table, and for the second time in my life the hair on the back of my head felt like it was standing up. I said, "Anna Byberg," he replied, "Minneapolis." Then before I could say anything more, he asked, "Aaron Goulson?" he turned out to be Ole Byberg, a nephew of Anna's and a first cousin to my father, Aaron. His father had been Olaus Byberg, another brother of Anna's who had stayed behind in Norway and married a woman named Gurine. Ole was in his mid-eighties, the last of the line there. He had never married and his only sister had no children. We were cousins once removed, and when it came time to leave, it was very sad because he wouldn't let go of my hand and kept saying over and over, "Well, goodbye, goodbye."

(The other time that the hair on my neck bristled was the first time I saw the detonation of an atomic bomb on a newsreel in Holland in the fall of 1945.)

So, the oldest known names in the Byberg lineage are Ole and Marith Byberget, my great-grandparents and great-great-great-grandparents to Erica and Jessica. Since Anna was born in 1847, Ole and Marith were probably born in the very early years of the nineteenth century, perhaps during the Napoleonic Wars before the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. If Ole was more than 47 when his daughter, Anna, arrived, he would have been born in the 1700's — and here are we just over eleven years from 2000 A.D. Thus, is history foreshortened.

The history of the Goulson family in Minnesota's Swenoda Township centers around Anna Byberg Christopherson Goulson. Anna settled in Swift County with her new husband, Lars Christopherson, on a homestead located in Section 32 of Swenoda Township. They lived in an earthen dugout overlooking the Chippewa River. Indians of the west lived in similar abodes — part cave, part sod, part logs — and relatively warm in winter and cool in summer. Winters of course were very severe, and during one particularly bad blizzard a neighbor who lived to the south along the river was making his way home with his team of oxen when he crashed through the roof of the dugout and into the Christopherson living quarters. The neighbor and his oxen remained inside to weather out the storm.

There were five children born to Anna and Lars Christopherson: Ludwig in 1869, Olena (Lena) in 1871, Aaron in 1873, Sophie in 1875, and Julius in 1877. Lars contracted scarlet fever and died on September 1, 1878. On February 14th of the following year 22 month old Julius died of the same disease. Barely two weeks later, on February 27th, nine-year-old Ludwig also died of scarlet fever. The three of them were buried in Chippewa County in a plot intended as a cemetery for the Mandt Lutheran Church. The graves are now unmarked but are [probably] located in the church cemetery [Mandt church was demolished in 2003, but the cemetery, of course remains] located at the SW corner of the SW quarter of Section 20, Mandt Township, two miles north of Highway 29, fourteen miles north of Montevideo, Minnesota. *

Only months later, on May 11, 1879 31 year old Anna, pregnant with Gustav, was married to 22 year old Hans Goulson (a young man who had followed Lars and Anna from Wisconsin where they were married near LaCrosse, and who worked for the couple as a hired hand)*. The ceremony was conducted by a circuit-riding preacher. Hans was born in Wisconsin, the son of Norwegian immigrants Goul Guthornson and Kari Olsdatter Skolt. Anna and Hans continued to live on her Swenoda homestead. They added seven children of their own to the earlier three still living: Gustav (1879), Carl (1881), Clara (1884), Julia (1886), Oscar (1888), Thomas (1891) and Henry (1894). One would suspect that no formal name changing took place for Lena, Aaron and Sophie, so perhaps their descendants are really Christophersons, not Goulsons.

In 1908 Hans Goulson, seeking to find a more suitable place for his large family, went westward to Montana. Confident that he had found such property, he started back to Minnesota for the others. Getting as far as Williston, North Dakota, he was caught in a snow storm and dies of pneumonia. He was fifty years of age. Anna was seventy when she died on October 26, 1918 of complications from cataract surgery [at Abbot Hospital in Minneapolis; her death certificate notes the cause of death as cerebral hemorrhage]*.

In June of 1963, Jean and I with Vivian and Donald, then ten and eight years of age, visited relatives in Minnesota and the homestead area north of Milan. Uncle Gust told us many stories about Aaron and Lena and Sophie and took us to see a depression in the ground which was the site of the old dugout into which the oxen had fallen. Gust remembered the time he had been knocked unconscious when he overturned out of a chair through the cellar trap-door into water and Lena jumped in to save him. He also told about a stallion he had which he could ride at full gallop while standing barefoot on its back. One day it reared and pawed Aaron to the ground and would have killed him had Gust not called him off.

What was life like for the Goulson children growing up in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in a pioneer setting? Anna Byberg had arrived in Minnesota in 1868 just ten years after that territory had been made a new state. I have found no family records describing those years, but I do have the story of Josephine Svaleson who was born in 1872, the year before my father, Aaron, and who was a neighbor in Swednoda Township. It is a beautiful tribute written by four of her grandchildren.

Josephine Svaleson Opoien, our grandmother wa born on June 9, 1872 and passed away July 29, 1962 at the age of 90 years. She, to us kids, was the most super, special grandmother in the whole world, always smiling, so sweet, kind and tender. She had love to give to everyone who ever knew her. Never once, to our recollection, wa she angry with us and sometimes I am sure she should have been. W stayed with Grandma many, many times when we were kids. Out mother, Minnie Kvam, is one of her fourteen children.

We were so fascinated when Grandma told us about the home she was born in, a dug-out or "dirt cellar" which had two rooms. One room was used to keep milk and food in, and just high enough above ground so they could have a few small basement windows for light. The roof was heavy timbers laid across the top, and heavy, coarse slough grass over that; then, layers of prairie sod, clay and more slough grass built up in layers so it would not leak. If it did, they would repair it in the same manner. For light in the evenings they melted tallow in a saucer and used rags for a wick; this light they used to read by.

Grandmother was born in Swenoda Township, Swift County, Minnesota just a mile and a half from the home farm she and Grandpa homesteaded in Swenoda township, located in the northwest quarter of section 29, where she resided her entire married life. Grandma's parents, Andrew and Sesila Tonnes Svaleson, emigrated from Kvinhered, Norway to America. Arriving in America they first settled in Goodhue County, Minnesota later moving northwest to Swift County, Swenoda township, and homesteaded on the northeast quarter of section 28 in

the year 1869. There is a depression in the ground yet where the dirt cellar was, after all these years... one hundred, ten to be exact.

Great-grandmother Sesila passed away when Grandma Josephine was a small girl so she and her two sisters and two brothers helped Great-Grandpa as much as they could. We especially remember how Grandma, being among the younger children, had to herd cattle. She would start herding as soon as the grass became green in the spring until everything froze in the fall. Leaving early in the morning she would make two sandwiches, put them in a clean rag, tie that to the end of a stick and then drink slough water. Sometimes she said the water was covered over with green algae that she would push aside then cup her hands and drink. Once in the spring when the river was at its highest the cattle had gotten out of control for her and crossed the river. She tried to head them off and started crossing the river with them. As the stream was too strong for her she grabbed for one of the cow's tail and hung on to the opposite shore. She almost lost her life that day, herding cattle.

Yes, and I remember Grandma describing her clothing to me that they wore. The girls always wore long, dark blue cotton dresses made of overalls material [denim]. They just cut an opening for the head, sewed up the sides, leaving room for the arms, and that was all they wore... no underclothing. So many times she was cold she had to crouch on the ground to keep warm. The shoes she wore were old wooden shoes belonging to Great-Grandpa. He would stuff rags into the toes so they would fit her and tie them on her feet.

Grandma was never sick. Her first hospital stay was when she was seventy-five years old for a few days, and then she was hospitalized the day before her death at the age of ninety. Grandma married Grandpa, John Opoien, at nineteen years of age, on October 31, 1891. They had fourteen children. The oldest children were identical twin boys who passed away a few days after birth, which almost claimed Grandmother's life also.

We regret that we never knew our Grandfather. He passed away quite early in life. We would have enjoyed hearing about his youthful days in Norway, and then immigrating to America at the age of nineteen, landing at Marquette, Michigan in the year 1873. Grandmother would tell how Grandfather was employed as a lumberjack in Michigan and Wisconsin. She said he used to ride the logs down the rapids; that alone took more nerve and courage than all his grandchildren's nerves put together. We can understand why he was not afraid of water after being born and raised in Norway, where they practically lived on the water. Grandpa was an excellent skier and skater.

I remember Grandma telling about her confirmation days. It is hard for us to believe the distance they had to walk. Grandmother along with other children her

age, Gust, Lena, and Aaron Goulson, Anton Moe and Herman Stay, all took confirmation instruction together at the Jens Falla farm located eleven miles south of her home in Chippewa County, half the distance to Montevideo. They would walk this distance every other week and most of the time the pastor, Knud Salvesson, wouldn't get there before nine o'clock in the evening for confirmation instruction. This meant they wouldn't get home before midnight, or after, and most of them had no shoes to wear. They were afraid of the dark and would run all the way home, sometimes in rainy weather. Grandmother was confirmed at the Jens Falla home by Pastor Knud Salvesson from Kviteseid Lutheran Church at Milan, Minnesota.

Grandma and Grandpa had a lot of sadness as the years went by. They lost four babies, ranging from several days to one year of age. I remember Grandmother telling me how she would prepare the bodies for burial and place them in the casket. In those days they didn't embalm the corpse. They would go to town, bring the caskets home and dress and place the bodies in the caskets themselves. That took strength and courage to do, especially children a year old, giving them back to God at such a tender age.

Grandma had raised fourteen children of her own, plus three children from her husband's first marriage who she cared for as if they had been her own. Her oldest stepchild was only nine years younger than she. Grandmother lost Grandpa when she was still a young woman, as he was much older than she was. Her faith in God grew stronger as she parted with each loved one through the years.

At the age of 90, Grandmother had bid farewell to Grandpa and nine of her children, and she was called home to her resting place to be with her Lord. Her faith, love and trust in God kept her going all those years. She was truly a living testimony to every one who ever knew her, always cheerful and happy. No one ever left her home after a pleasant visit without a cup of coffee and good home-baked bread and cookies.

All of us feel she has been an inspiration to us and our children who knew her, and will be all of our lives. This story is a "Thank You", filled with everlasting love to our Grandmother for holding us in her arms, loving and caring for each one of us when we were sad, and happy, and all the wonderful Christmas Eves we had together...

This heritage story was passed along to me by my cousin, Georgia [Christopherson-Goulson]* Moe Gilhoi in 1988. Her father, Anton Moe, was one of the children mentioned who walked together to confirmation instruction along with Lena, Aaron and Gust Goulson. One would suspect that Sophie (Georgia's mother) was part of the group also since she fell between Aaron and Gust in age.

Anton Moe was the second white child born in West Bank Township. His father, Johannes Bardosen Moe, and wife, Ingeborg Anna Sivertsdatter, had arrived in America in 1866 from North Trøndheim, Norway (the home of Anna Byberg). Anton married Sophie (Christopherson-Goulson) in 1893 and had ten children: Alfred, Hjalmer, Signe, Selma, Ludwig, Oscar, Georgia, Alvina, Frances, and Walter.

Life on the Goulson farm, 130 miles west of St. Paul, would have been hard and busy with lots of chores for all hands, big and little. Continental conditions meant four distinct seasons with hot and humid summers and long, cold winters. The soil was black and rich and deep, part of the immense ancient glacial basin, Lake Agassiz. Later, soil and climate produced fine quality spring wheat, while further south in Minnesota, corn became the major crop. In the late 1800's it was mainly mixed farming — small grain, cows, pigs, chickens, garden produce — in an attempt to be as self-sufficient as possible. Education was relatively unimportant. The needs of the farm came first with schooling a catch as catch can arrangement. My father, Aaron managed about four grades.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, westward expansion in the United States was at its height. People from all over Europe were rushing to get a parcel of land and become part of the American melting-pot. In one ten-year period nearly 2,000,000 settlers entered the four states of Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. (The total population of the United States in 1880 was about 50,000,000; that of Canada, just over 4,000,000.) Before long, available choice land was dwindling and eyes were turning to the vast, empty, unorganized territory north of the 49th parallel, seemingly there for the taking. Great Britain and Canada had some important decisions to make... and in a hurry.

The worry of American pressure northwards had in fact been one of the reasons for the joining together of British colonies into a Canadian federation in 1867. In 1869 Great Britain negotiated an expensive settlement with the Hudson's Bay Company, and in 1870 Canada took over control of the huge western regions. Also, in 1870 the new province of Manitoba was formed. One year later, British Columbia joined the confederation with the understanding that a transcontinental railway would be built forthwith, connecting the far western colony with the eastern heartland of the country. Along with this commitment was the undertaking to put people in the empty spaces in between. The first official Canadian census figures in 1881 showed an estimated 56,446 persons in the Territories between Manitoba and British Columbia. Of these, 49,472 were listed as Indians, leaving only 6,974 whites and mixed blood.

First attempts to encourage large-scale immigration were disappointing. The Bay Company had long discouraged settlement, since farming and fur-trading don't

mix. In 1857 Governor Simpson had testified when giving evidence to the British Imperial Government, "I do not think that any part of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories is well adapted for settlement; the crops are very uncertain." This was certainly true of much of the north, but it painted the fertile south with the same icy brush.

In 1872 Canada introduced a generous homestead policy adapted from the American system. Any man who was head of a household or who had reached the age of 21 could apply for a quarter-section (160 acres) and after three years, and the payment of a ten dollar registration fee, could obtain title providing he had built a lodging, had lived there at least half of each year and had sown a certain number of acres to crop. Getting to the land was a formidable problem; however, before the completion of the transcontinental in 1885 and the addition of spur or branch lines. After reaching the end of the line, the incoming settler had to load into his Red river cart or prairie schooner enough bulk provisions (flour, bacon, beans) to last the first winter, along with such things as seed, carpenter supplies, and guns and ammunition. Cattle and other livestock had to be led or driven. Prince Albert lay some two months west of Winnipeg and Edmonton another two months beyond that.

Included in instructions given to settlers proceeding to Battleford in March, 1882 were the following suggestions, "Route: take train from Winnipeg to Brandon or to the end of the C.P.R. wagons drawn by Canadian horses — the load should not exceed fifteen hundred pounds. Good oxen in carts — from five hundred to eight hundred pounds. The best time to travel is in early spring. A fair average rate per day is oxen 15 miles, for horses 15 to 25 miles."

By 1900 the immigration picture was changing. Railways were being built, the recently established Northwest Mounted Police (1873) were providing law and security, and Clifford Sifton, appointed Minister of the Interior in 1896, was introducing a new dynamic settlement policy. Immigration agencies were established in the United States, in Great Britain, and on the Continent. Enticing advertisements filled the pages of foreign newspapers; for example: a picture of a man cutting a huge loaf of bread, and alongside the caption, "Sunny southern Alberta! Will you have a slice? (The two new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were formed in 1905.) There were lantern slide shows and tours and excursions for influential newspapermen and farmer delegations. Most important of all, good land was running out south of the border.

* small amount of editing by David Nitz

Chapter Two
Settlement In Canada

Transcription to be completed (see note at the beginning)