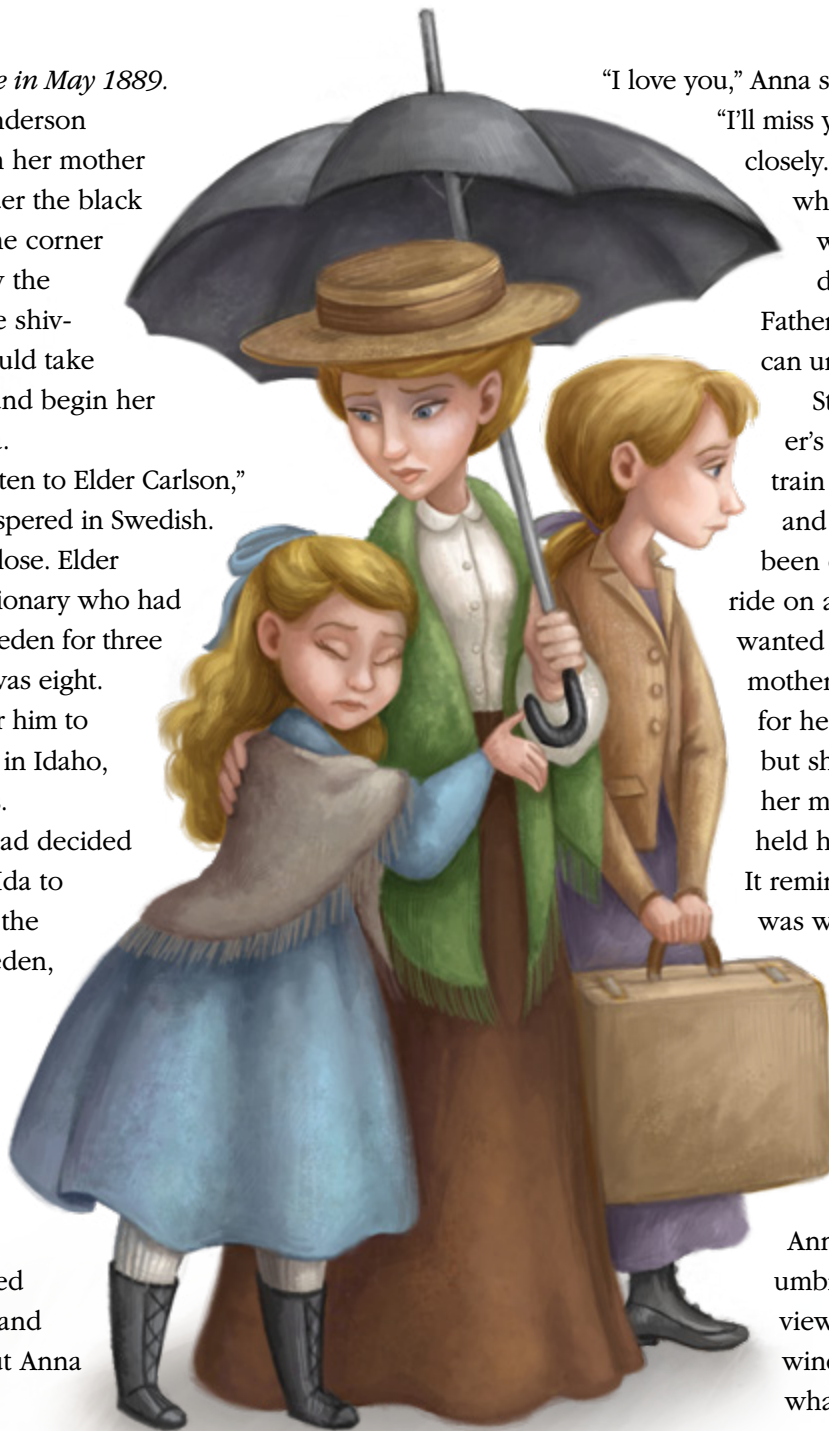


This story took place in May 1889.

Anna Matilda Anderson huddled with her mother and sister, Ida, under the black umbrella. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the train approach. She shivered. This train would take her from Sweden and begin her journey to America.

“Be good and listen to Elder Carlson,” Anna’s mother whispered in Swedish. She held the girls close. Elder Carlson was a missionary who had been serving in Sweden for three years, since Anna was eight. Now it was time for him to return to his family in Idaho, in the United States.

When Mamma had decided to send Anna and Ida to America to escape the persecution in Sweden, Elder Carlson had offered to watch over them. Now he stood by the train. He motioned for the two girls to join him. Ida hugged her mother tightly and moved forward, but Anna stayed behind.



“I love you,” Anna said. “I’ll miss you.”

“I’ll miss you too. Now listen closely. If you come to a place where you can’t understand what the people are saying, don’t forget to pray to your Father in Heaven because *He* can understand you.”

Still thinking of her mother’s words, Anna got on the train and settled next to Ida and Elder Carlson. She had been excited about her first ride on a train, but now she only wanted one last glimpse of her mother. The train was too tall for her to see people’s faces, but she smiled when she saw her mother’s black umbrella held high above the crowd. It reminded her that Mamma was watching.

With a great bellow of smoke, the train lurched forward. At first it moved so slowly that Mamma ran beside the train. The black umbrella waved at Anna. But soon the black umbrella disappeared from view. Anna leaned against the windowpane and wondered what lay in store.

Anna’s Journey

By Jessica Larsen

Based on a true story



Several weeks later, Anna leaned against the window-pane of another train. This one was taking her to Salt Lake City, Utah. “America looks different than Sweden, *ja?*” she said to Ida.

“*Ja,*” Ida whispered back in Swedish. “But America is home now, and if we work hard enough, we can bring Mamma here too.”

There had not been enough money for Mamma to buy her own ticket. A family in Ogden, Utah, had paid for Ida’s passage to America. Ida would stay with them on their farm and work to repay them. But Anna would be staying with her aunt in Salt Lake City. Anna’s aunt had come to Utah several years earlier, and Mamma had written to tell her that Anna was coming.

After the train, they had taken a boat over the North Sea to Denmark. Then they sailed to England and

Ireland before crossing the Atlantic Ocean and landing in New York City. Anna had been seasick for most of the 15-day journey. She had been relieved to board a train in New York headed to Utah.

“Ogden, Utah!” the conductor called. Anna still knew no English, but she recognized the name of the city. Her heart sank. It sank even further when Elder Carlson stood and picked up his and Ida’s bags.

“Do you have to go?” she asked her sister.

“Yes,” Ida said gently. “Don’t worry, Auntie will be there when you get to Salt Lake City.”

Anna watched as Ida and Elder Carlson met his family at the station. They would take Ida in a covered wagon to her new home on the farm and then travel on to Idaho. Now Anna felt truly alone.



The train rumbled through the night until it shuddered to a halt at the station in Salt Lake City. It was nearly midnight. Anna grabbed her bag and leapt down onto the platform. Her tired eyes searched for her aunt.

But there was no one waiting for her.

Fear slid over Anna. She scanned the platform again, hoping she had missed something. Her eyes lingered on the shadows. She tried to make out people's features in the flickering gaslights. But her aunt was not there.

Strangers walked up to her and asked her questions. Anna thought they wanted to help, but she could not understand what they were saying.

She had never felt so scared in her life. Not when her classmates in Sweden had mocked her new faith. Not when she had been sick on the boat to New York. And not even when she had said good-bye to Mamma.

Anna closed her eyes and thought back to her mother's words: "Don't forget to pray to your Father in Heaven because *He* can understand you."

Anna knelt on the platform next to her suitcase and prayed harder than she had ever prayed in her life. She prayed that Heavenly Father would send her someone who spoke Swedish and could understand her.

When she finished the prayer, she looked up. There was still no one waiting for her. But then she saw a German family she recognized from the train ride. The mother motioned for her to follow them. Still crying, Anna grabbed her bag and shuffled after them.

She followed them to the south gate of the Temple Square block. She looked at the spot where the beautiful new temple had been built. Then suddenly Anna heard rapid footsteps nearby. A woman was hurrying

toward them, looking closely at all the arriving immigrants. The woman's gaze passed over the German family. Then she paused on Anna. When Anna looked up, the woman stopped and stared. Anna stared back, hope rising in her.

Anna knew her! It was her Sunday School teacher who had gone to Utah only a year before! She knew her!

The teacher pulled Anna tightly into her arms. She wiped away Anna's tears and whispered in Swedish, "I was awakened over and over again. Images of the arriving immigrants raced through my mind. I could not go back to sleep. I was prompted to come to the temple to see if there was anyone I knew here." She took Anna's hand and led her down the street. "Now come with me."

Later Anna learned that her aunt and uncle had moved from Salt Lake and had not received her mother's letter. Her teacher sent word to them, and they came to pick up Anna four days later. Eventually Ida and Anna were able to bring Mamma to America too.

But for now, none of that mattered. As Anna walked to her teacher's home, she thought, "Heavenly Father *more* than answered my prayer. I only asked for someone who could understand me, and He sent someone I *knew*." ■

The author lives in Arizona, USA.

FIND YOUR FAMILY HEROES

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Ask your parents or grandparents to tell you stories about your family. You just might discover a hero from your family's past!

