

Carlson Family

Artur Hjalmar Ludvig Carlson

About Life in Sweden & Immigrating to Canada (1907 – 1929)

- Artur Hjalmar Ludvig Carlson was born on June 1st, 1907 on his parents' small farm in the parish of By, province of Varmland, Sweden. The farm was called Asbyskogen, which means aspen or poplar wood.
- His mother, Olga Mathilda (nee Jonasdatter), was 34 years old and his father, Karl Ludvig Nilsson, was already 52 years of age at the time of Artur's birth.
- His two siblings, sister Alice and brother Carl, were also born on the farm.
- Artur's father was trained as a cabinet maker and for two five-year periods, lived in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A., where he crafted laminated wooden bicycle rims in a factory.
- Eventually the family moved to Sodra Torpane, south of Tosse, Sweden, into a large farmhouse which had several fireplaces.
- Among Artur's earliest recollections were those of attending school and of the chores he was assigned on the family farm before and after classes. He took the cows out to pasture in early morning prior to commencement of the school day, and walked barefoot to attend school. After class and supper, Artur then shepherded the cows back to the farm. He also helped his father procure wood with which to heat the house.
- His early years in school were enjoyable but by the middle elementary grades, Artur suffered physical and psychological abuse at the hands of a cruel teacher. He was also subjected to teasing because he was the tallest person in the class. Artur began to dislike school and occasionally pretended to go to school, but instead went into the bush to daydream about a different life.
- By the last grades he attended, Artur had a new teacher and began to enjoy school once again, enough to reach Grade 9. He especially enjoyed carpentry, a class in which he excelled.
- When he was in his teens, Artur also enjoyed travelling by bicycle to Amal to see movies or to the Tosse railway station where dances were held on Saturday evenings.
- From early in his life, Artur fished with his father. As a teenager, he fished for eel and speckled trout which were either sold or cooked by Artur's hard-working mother.
- He also enjoyed bird watching and hunting, and worked part-time for neighbouring farmers.
- Tragedy struck the family in 1926 when Artur was 19. His beloved mother, Mathilda, died at the early age of 53. A few years earlier, she had fallen off a hay mowing machine which was then dragged over her by startled horses. She also had a heart ailment and ultimately died from a blood clot in her leg which travelled internally and caused a pulmonary embolism.
- When he was in his 80s, Artur lamented, "My mother had it really tough and I've thought about her a lot through my life, especially about how hard she worked and how much she worked for us."
- Following this traumatic time in Artur's life, he was conscripted into compulsory service in the Swedish Naval Coast Guard for one year. He served on a four-five ton steamer ship on the East Sea cleaning the deck and delivering supplies to forts on the islands by smaller boat.
- Artur recalled seeing Glasgow, Scotland, and Hamburg, Germany, while with the coast guard.
- Subsequently, Artur served in the merchant marines for approximately four months.
- Artur then left the sea to assist his aging father on the farm. The young man soon came to the realization that he did not want to farm for the rest of his life: "For me, there was no future in Sweden, or at least I thought so. We made almost nothing with the farm. I was looking for a place where I may go in this world. I read a lot and after learning about Canada, I decided that it was the place for me. I was determined to try to get there. At the time, advertising really played Canada up, especially how wonderful and big it was. It was very easy to go to Canada at that time. They were trying to talk people into it."
- Artur had to get a passport and a visa, so he corresponded with the immigration office in the west coast city of Goteborg (Gothenburg). It took about one month for everything to go through.
- Artur continued to read voraciously about Canada. "From what I read I felt that I liked everything about it. I read of all the different kinds of animals, all kinds of woods, prospecting for gold, hunting, and a lot of things I knew I could never do in Sweden. I was reckless and wanted to be adventurous, too," he added.

- Leaving home was difficult. Artur knew that his father was an elderly widower and felt guilty about leaving him with the farm and two younger siblings. His father blatantly said he did not want his son to emigrate. Artur remembered, "My father knew it could get cold in Canada and said he was worried I would freeze to death or have a terrible time surviving, but my mind was made up. When I told him I really wanted to go, my father could understand my point, as he had left twice himself to live in the United States."
- Artur turned to a neighbour for a loan of \$200 for his passage on the ship. In order to fulfill his dream and come to Canada, Artur was forced to sign over his interest in the family farm (and part of his father's future estate) to this neighbour.
- Having relinquished everything, Artur set out from home with only a suit of clothes, gloves, sweater, shoes, and his documents.
- He left for Canada in May 1929 from Goteborg harbour aboard the Swedish American Lines ship, the *M.S. Gripsholm*.
- The journey took six or seven days and he was only ill a short time during the voyage.
- The ship docked at Halifax, Nova Scotia, where Artur boarded a train to Winnipeg, Manitoba. Artur recalled, "Winnipeg was the biggest city I had ever seen besides Stockholm, Sweden. There were a lot of Swedes in Winnipeg at that time. No matter where you went on the street, you heard Swede."
- Artur encountered many difficulties because of his inability to converse in English during his early days in Canada, not the least of which was finding it difficult to make known what kind of food he wanted to eat.
- Artur was certain that he would have to work in the farming industry on the prairies as a start to life in Canada. However, the situation soon changed.

Going to Red Lake

- Four or five days after arriving in Winnipeg, Artur met Ernest Hilding Berquist Carlson, who had been born and raised in the same area as Artur, but was of no relation. Ernie had arrived in Canada in 1926 and went prospecting for gold in the famous gold rush to Red Lake, a remote location in Northwestern Ontario. Artur jumped at the chance to avoid farming and soon was on his way to Red Lake with Ernie.
- They left Winnipeg for Hudson, Ontario, on May 15th, 1929, where they met up with Ernie's prospecting partners, William Kelly and his son-in-law, Fred Conley.
- In Hudson, they leveled a large warehouse for transportation magnate Robert Starratt in return for transportation on the passenger boat, the "Miss Winnipeg", to Gold Pines (Ear Falls).
- When they arrived in Gold Pines (Ear Falls), Artur and Ernie earned a small amount of money when they helped pull one of Starratt's large steel boats, the "Alligator," across a marine railway portage and into the water on the other side. After transporting supplies and baggage, as well as canoes, over the marine railway, they were off.
- They stayed the night in Josie and Herb Moore's hotel, outside of which a pet adult black bear roamed from the length of its chain.
- The last leg of their trek to Red Lake was by canoe and 2.5 horsepower motor with Colin Campbell and Robert Starratt.
- Artur and his friends paddled into Howey Bay, Red Lake, on June 2nd, 1929, one day after his 22nd birthday. He was much impressed with the forest and lakes, all of which reminded him of his homeland.
- Artur spoke of his first impressions: "I thought Red Lake looked wild. There was hardly anything but bush. There were a few big log buildings a short distance from the shoreline, such as Bill Brown's post office, pool room, and store, and Kert's Store, a restaurant, and a boarding house. We were surprised to see pieces of ice still floating on June 2nd."
- Artur also recalls some of the first people he met in Red Lake were Swedes. "There were quite a few here in those days."

Working in Red Lake (1929 – 1939)

- Once in Red Lake, Artur wrote his Dad to let him know where he was and that he was all right. "We corresponded a lot," said Artur.

- After a few days in town, Artur, Ernie Carlson, William Kelly and Fred Conley went to Trout Bay at the west end of Red Lake, where they worked all summer doing assessment work, such as hand-steeling and drilling, on mining claims.
- As winter set in that first year in Trout Bay, Artur and Ernie also felled trees and built themselves a log cabin.
- During the winter, they trapped, and also hunted and ate deer and moose, but there were many times when they were hungry.
- Artur and Ernie also built two log houses at West Narrows for William Brown, Red Lake's first postmaster, his wife, Josephine, and their large family. Brown was a British émigré who spoke fluent Swedish.
- Later, they continued to build log homes for residents of the west end, including the family residence of Thomas Wilson (Wes) and Bessie Dean and their three daughters in Middle Bay. The home was completed with a large, screened-in verandah.
- Artur also prospected for Dean on the east side of Faulkenham Lake. He and Ernie located visible gold in a shear zone and staked 16 claims. Dean named the claim group Carricono Mines Limited. Unfortunately, no more economic ore bodies were found.
- By 1930, Artur began a pattern of working on mining claims and building log homes in the summer, and working for the gold mines in the winter.
- During the winters of 1930 and 1931, Artur, Wladyslaw (Bill) Stupack and George Slobodzian supplied five tons of de-boned moose meat to the cookery of the Howey Gold Mines, the first gold producer in the area.
- During this working partnership, Artur and his fellow hunters lived in a shack on Preno's Island in Howey Bay, and later in a log cabin at Faulkenham Lake, near Madsen.
- During his early summers in Canada, Artur also did assessment and trenching work at Woman Lake and Red Lake on the claims of Lorne B. Howey, one of the founders of the Howey Gold Mines.
- From 1932-1933, Artur worked underground as a chute blaster in the same mine.
- By the next winter, he was back at the west end of Red Lake, working underground at the Cole Gold Mines at Pipestone Bay. He worked there for two different periods.
- Artur worked on a property which later became Miles Red Lake Gold Mines. He hand-steeled on this property, and was paid with the food he ate. By the spring of 1934, Artur became caretaker of the prospect.
- Twice per week he ran many miles behind a dog team until he reached Red Lake, where he obtained supplies. His fish supply for the winter came via ice fishing on Douglas Lake.
- In the summer of 1934, he worked as crew foreman at the Scott Gold Mines property at Pipestone Bay.
- Later that year, Artur found employment with Red Crest Gold Mines at Golden Arm, where he and Ernie helped to sink a small shaft down 40 feet. They did everything manually with hand steel drills and a windlass hoisting system with a steel bucket.
- Artur lived in the mine bunkhouse and ate meals in the cookery. He later helped to build the headframe and installed lumber sheeting on the shaft house.
- Artur's next job was shaft sinking and drifting underground at West Red Lake Gold Mines in Phillips Channel at the west end of Red Lake. Horace Greeley Young, the mine's president and Artur's former Howey boss, was impressed by the work done by Artur and his partner, Ernie. In a 1936 letter to another mining operator, Young wrote, "You will find the Carlson boys capable and very honest, and they know the ground. Any gold values which they give you as to assay, etc., you can accept."
- The mine was relatively short-lived, but Artur continued to work for the company, part-time, into 1937 as watchman, caretaker, and prospector.
- In 1936 Arthur also worked for the May-Spiers Gold Mines located on an island at the west end of Red Lake. He toiled cutting and squaring timber with the steam-operated sawmill.
- At Frontier Gold Mines (later known as Mount Jamie Mines), Artur worked at drilling and blasting rock.
- His last employment at the west end of Red Lake was with Lake Rowan Gold Mines, where he assisting in constructing its headframe.
- For a period in the late 1930s, Artur worked for both the McKenzie Red Lake and Gold Eagle Gold Mines on McKenzie Island. For the former, he helped to build the cookery and bunkhouses. At the

Gold Eagle Gold Mines, Artur was a deckman (emptying the underground cars of waste rock and muck onto the ore pile).

- In 1938, he built a store and residence on Howey Street across from the Buffalo Bakery (now Lakeview Restaurant) for jeweller Edwin Harris and barber Ralph Rasmussen. For 40 years, it was the jewellery business of a Lithuanian, Karolis (Karl) Zalenas.
- In late 1938 and for much of 1939, Artur helped to build the headframe of the Cochenour-Willans Gold Mines. He and his crew moved the steel headframe from the defunct Red Lake Gold Shore Gold Mines in Red Lake to the Cochenour townsite by truck over the ice trail during the winter and reconstructed it near the Cochenour-Willans mill.
- Artur then did contract shaft work at the McMarmac Gold Mines.
- Ultimately, Artur was instrumental in erecting at least six mine headframes in the Red Lake District.
- While Artur eased his father's mind by never coming to harm in the wilderness, he saw first-hand how quickly life could be ended in the north.
- In 1936, Artur's friend Bill Brown drowned. The following year, the same fate was met by Sam Yee, another good friend.
- Artur had built Yee's log store and residence at West Narrows and became close to this émigré from China. Artur was one of those who had the sad task of extricating the bodies of Sam, a young child, and some of the dog team from the freezing waters of Red Lake.
- He also built caskets for two Sawatzky siblings who died as children.
- Artur worked at many part-time jobs, including doing blasting for game warden John Wesley Ashford.
- The only recreation Artur had all the years at the west end was visiting his friends on his off-work hours, listening to the radio or playing bridge.
- During his first 10 years in Canada, Artur kept a daily diary which he later found helpful in dating and substantiating various stories or events. He wrote in Swedish in the earlier diaries. As well, Artur took hundreds of excellent photographs which document the development and characters of this legendary gold mining district.
- Among his closest friends were Ethel and Charles Archer, Joseph Hodgson, Dr. Dan Revell, and Sam Yee.

Life During and After the Second World War (1939 – 1946)

- When the Second World War had begun, Artur knew that the Red Lake mining boom was over for the time being. He moved to Toronto in 1939 and found work as a labourer.
- Artur secured prospecting work in early 1941 with Nor Gold Mines on McIntyre Lake, north of the Albany River.
- Artur returned to Toronto in September 1941 after having staked eight promising claims for the Nor Gold Mines.
- Shortly after, Artur obtained his Canadian citizenship.
- Artur married Florence in November 1941.
- Artur worked for a short time for Toronto Iron Works.
- During the Second World War, Artur had difficulty in communicating with his father as letters were not getting through on either side. Shortly before the war ended, Artur learned that his father, Karl Ludvig, had died three years earlier at age 86 from a stroke.
- Artur was offered the position of caretaker and prospector of the recently-closed St. Anthony Gold Mines on Sturgeon Lake (12 miles south of the railway at Savant Lake) in May 1942, so he and Florence moved north.
- Artur's St. Anthony Mines' contract ended by the late summer of 1946.

Opening a Tourist Camp in Red Lake

- Since Highway 105 was being built into the Red Lake District, Artur felt that tourists would soon follow. He decided to go into the tourism business in Red Lake, and Florence wholeheartedly supported him.
- Artur and his long-time Red Lake friend, Wladyslaw (Bill) Stupack went into the tourism business in 1947. They built "Bow Narrows Camp" on a point at West Narrows at the west end of Red Lake.

- By the following year, Stupack wanted to bring a third partner, Hans Stegmuller, into the enterprise. Artur felt that there was insufficient profit to sustain three families, so he and Florence decided to open "Viking Island Camp" on Douglas Lake in 1948.
- During the winters, when the camp was closed, Artur supplemented his income by working at local mines.
- He worked underground at Starratt-Olsen Gold Mines and then did framing for the mine's headframe and mill.
- He helped to construct the headframe of Miles Red Lake Gold Mines at the west end of Trout Bay.
- From December 1948 through April 1949, Artur was a carpenter at Madsen Red Lake Gold Mines.
- In 1954, Artur supervised 200 men who were building a power station at Manitou Falls.
- On another winter break from the camp, Artur did carpentry work in the dry house and mill of the Campbell Red Lake Mines.
- He also returned to the west end of Red Lake to help establish a new headframe at Lake Rowan Gold Mines.

Artur's Later Years

- In 1952 or 1953, Artur became a member of the Chukuni Masonic Lodge in Red Lake. He eventually held the "3rd degree" in the "blue lodge," and was a Mason for 44 years.
- During the 1980s, Artur developed a mild case of Parkinson's Disease, which affected one arm. He coped as best he could and continued to be the same warm, good-natured person he always was.
- Artur gradually curtailed some of his outdoor work, but greatly missed being an active participant, especially in camp life. Artur often had to quell the urge to help with tasks such as tree-felling and cabin-building.
- He had a wonderful 80th birthday gathering at "Viking Island Camp" in 1987.
- From 1989 through 1991, Artur was interviewed extensively about his life and about the events and characters which shaped the history of the Red Lake District. The taped interviews were transcribed and written as a memoir and completed in 1991, in time for Artur and Florence's 50th wedding anniversary.
- Parkinson's Disease insidiously lessened Artur's quality of life by the mid-1990s.
- In his last days, Artur suffered a broken hip and with it went much of his spirit and will to live.
- This genuine Red Lake District pioneer died in Red Lake on October 2nd, 1996 in his 90th year, and one month shy of his and Florence's 55th wedding anniversary. Artur died peacefully after seeing most of his family.
- A celebration of life service was held at 50 Howey Street on October 8th, 1996.
- Artur's ashes were scattered over his beloved "Viking Island Camp" on Douglas Lake.

Florence Eleanor Carlson (nee Bond)

- Florence was born on September 23rd, 1914 at home in the family farmhouse in Blenheim Township, Oxford County, Ontario.
- She was one of eight children.
- When Florence was 12, the family moved to Woodstock, Ontario, where she completed high school.
- Her father worked as a night watchman.
- Florence chose teaching as her profession, and graduated in 1933 from teacher's college, then called London Normal School.
- During the Great Depression, Florence was fortunate to be hired as a Grade 2 teacher at Ingersoll, Ontario.
- When this job ended, Florence began tutoring until she found it difficult to live on her earnings.
- In approximately 1937 she found employment as the governess to the children of Major-General and Mrs. Donald M. Hogarth (he being a well-known Ontario M.P.P. and mine developer and financier), and later as a caregiver in the McLaughlin home.
- She married Artur in November 1941.
- Florence experienced a great tragedy with the death of their first child and only daughter, Eleanor Mathilda Ann, in April 1945. Ann was buried in the Chesterfield Cemetery in Woodstock which Florence, as a child, had explored with her cousins and friends but now held a different meaning.

- Florence worked hard, keeping the home running and the children well cared for.

The Couple

- At a Saturday evening dance at the Playter Hall on February 15th, 1941, Artur met a 26-year old teacher, Florence Eleanor Bond. He asked her to dance and she accepted. During their initial conversation, Florence learned that Artur was a prospector. She was so fascinated by hearing of his vocation that they missed numerous dances because they were deep in conversation.
- After this, they began dating. One of their early outings together included watching wrestling matches at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto.
- When Artur secured prospecting work in early 1941 with Nor Gold Mines on McIntyre Lake, north of the Albany River, the young couple reluctantly became separated. During Artur's absence, they corresponded frequently.
- Artur returned to Toronto – and to Florence – in September 1941 after having staked eight promising claims for the Nor Gold Mines.
- They became engaged and were married on November 8th, 1941 at College Avenue United Church in Woodstock, Ontario.
- At the time of Karl Ludvig's death – Artur's father – in December 1941, Artur and Florence had only been married for one month.
- Artur and Florence moved north in May 1942, when Artur was offered a position at the St. Anthony Gold Mines on Sturgeon Lake.
- Florence returned to Woodstock, Ontario, for the birth of their first child, Eleanor Mathilda Ann.
- Florence and the newborn left the city and joined Artur at St. Anthony Gold Mines in late January 1944.
- In March 1945, Florence and baby Ann returned to Woodstock to await the birth of the Carlsons' second child.
- A short time later, Artur and Florence's world was torn apart when their beloved and seemingly healthy Ann died on April 6th, 1945.
- Florence frantically tried to convey the tragic news to Artur at the mine site. Since it was during the break-up period, Artur could not access messages. It was an excruciatingly sad time for Florence, who was about to give birth imminently.
- At long last, in May, Artur was able to reunite with Florence in Woodstock.
- Their first son, Ernest Arthur Ray, was born on May 30th, 1945.
- That July, Artur, Florence, and Ray returned to St. Anthony Mines.
- It was on Sturgeon Lake that Artur first began guiding tourists and Florence began providing them with meals. One of the tourists christened the business, "Viking Island Camp."
- They were expecting their third child when Artur decided he wanted to go into the tourism business in Red Lake in 1946.
- Artur went on ahead to Red Lake and rented part of a large log house present-day Dynes Street.
- Florence and two-year-old Ray arrived on April 11th, 1947 on a Canadian Pacific Airlines aircraft. She stayed the summer in Red Lake before returning to Woodstock for the birth of Thomas Hugh Maitland that August.
- Artur and Florence opened "Viking Island Camp" on Douglas Lake in 1948.
- Their son Douglas Craig Haler was born in the Red Lake Red Cross Memorial Hospital on August 13th, 1952.
- In 1956, the Carlsons moved to 3 Howey Street on a lot which overlooked Howey Bay.
- Artur and Florence went on a holiday to Sweden in 1958. For the first time in 30 years, Artur saw his siblings again. They went again to Sweden in 1965, 1975, 1979, and 1984.
- Artur and Florence were understandably inconsolable after the death of their son Ray in January 1966. Gold mines, in which Artur had worked for so many years, had claimed one of his own.
- That same year, Artur and Florence marked their 25th wedding anniversary.
- Artur and Florence began to travel more and spent holidays in Freeport, Bahamas, in the 1970s. By the 1980s, they escaped some Red Lake winter months with annual trips to Cuba, and a motor trek to Texas.
- The Carlsons' retirement years were blessed with the births of their grandchildren, James Arthur Hugh, Stephanie Ray Marie, Enid Gwyneth Ann, Mallory Ellen Elisabeth, and Jean Harriet Ann.

- In 1981, Artur and Florence celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary.
- That June they were interviewed for the TV Ontario programme, "People Patterns."
- Artur and Florence joined the board of trustees of the Red Lake Museum in 1984.
- The following year they were honoured as "Mr. & Mrs. Tourism" by the Red Lake District Publicity Board in recognition of their founding the first fly-in tourist lodge in the area.

Children

Eleanor Mathilda Ann

- Born on December 8th, 1943 in Woodstock, Ontario.
- Ann was healthy and a tremendous joy to her parents.
- Artur built her a crib and a high chair.
- Ann died on April 6th, 1945. The physician felt that she must have acquired a virus and because she had been isolated from illnesses at the St. Anthony Mines, she had not developed immunity to fight viruses.
- Ann was buried in the Chesterfield Cemetery in Woodstock.

Ernest Arthur Ray

- Born on May 30th, 1945 in Woodstock, Ontario, shortly after the death of his sister Ann.
- Ray worked underground at Cochenour-Willans and Dickenson Mines before moving on to other mining jobs at Manitouwadge, Ontario, and Bathurst, New Brunswick.
- In October 1965, Ray found work at the Giant Yellowknife Mine in the Northwest Territories. He made many friends there and, at age 20, was enjoying life.
- Tragedy struck on January 29th, 1966, when Ray lost his life in a fall down the mine shaft.
- Ray was brought home to Red Lake to be buried in Red Lake Cemetery.

Thomas Hugh Maitland

- Born on August 6th, 1947 in Woodstock, Ontario.
- Hugh studied geography for one year at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario.
- He worked underground at Campbell Red Lake and Cochenour-Willans Gold Mines.
- He also worked in James Blom's clothing store.
- Hugh managed the first low-income houses in Red Lake.
- He served as councillor and deputy reeve from 1982 to 1988, and later as reeve of Red Lake.

Douglas Craig Haler

- Born on August 13th, 1952 in the Red Lake Red Cross Memorial Hospital.
- Craig studied aviation at Confederation College in Thunder Bay, Ontario.
- He worked in the Red Lake Food Market, and in aviation in London, Ontario.
- On the same day his brother became reeve of Red Lake, Craig was elected as a trustee on the Red Lake Board of Education.

More about the Carlson brothers...

- Ray, Hugh, and Craig Carlson attended Red Lake Public School and Red Lake District High School.
- Hugh and Craig both obtained their pilot's licenses. They both operate their own aircraft.
- Gradually, Hugh and Craig and their families took on increasing responsibilities in the operation of "Viking Island Camp" and "Viking Island Outpost Cabins."
- Hugh and his wife, Enid, and Craig and his wife, Roseanne, share various aspects of the operation of the business.