

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF NEILS CHRISTIAN CHRISTENSEN

I Neils Christian Christensen, the third child of Christian and Anne Marie Neilson Christensen was born in Uglit Sogu Denmark Jan. 26, 1853.

As I sit and ponder over my life, my thoughts carry me back to the memory of my first home and in fancy I can see again that long brick house, which consisted of five rooms in a row. First kitchen, dining and living room, feed room, thrashing room and barn. Then just out of doors was our brick baking oven, where Mother did her baking for her little family.

My father was a farmer and as a small boy I assisted my father with little chores. My parents also raided bees for the honey for our own use and well do I remember the first swarm of bees I ever say. (This was 75 years ago) My mother started to run after the bees, untying her apron all the while, for she heard if she could throw her apron over the swarm they would settle.

Raising honey in those days was much different than today. The bees were kept in round hives made of straw. In the fall of the year father would go out and lift the hives and in the heaviest ones, he would kill the bees, by placing sulfur in a small trough. The sulfur was set afire and placed in the hive. Then the hive was closed tight and left until the bees were dead, then we would remove the honey.

At nine years of age I was hired out to another man. This at times was rather a hardship for a boy so young, for I loved my home dearly and many a time I would think of my dear parents and I would say to myself "What would I do if my father and mother should die." Then I would cry bitterly.

My first job after I was hired out was watching sheep, and this gave me lots of time to think of my loved ones. Many hours I spent with my pocket knife and cut animals out of wood.

My mother was a very industrious woman, she wove her own cloth from the wool of the sheep that my father raised. First she would wash the wool then when it was dry, cord it then spin and weave it into cloth.

I was taught by my mother to do each of these tasks also to knit stockings, and to be able to darn them. I remember well that when I was hired out mother gave my yarn and needles and told me to keep my stockings mended.

For years before we came to America our home was open to the Mormon Elders and many a delightful time was spend with them. My father and mother were very religious people and we children were taught to go to our meetings and many the time I would go with my parents to conference and walk as far as eighteen miles. We would start out at four o'clock in the morning in order to get there in time for afternoon meetings.

In the year 1861 at the age of eight I was taken a short distance away from my home to a small pond of water and there they broke the ice and I was baptized a member of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. (More commonly known as Mormons) The missionaries at that time were very scarce and the people very bitter, and well do I recall how the children made fun of me and called me the Mormon and often I became frightened of what they might say and do to me.

Six years after I was baptized into the church in 1867 my two older sisters sailed for America. One year later my father and other sister left. This was indeed a hardship on my mother, but with her was left the thought that she would soon join them, this she did the next year in 1869.

Then I was left alone to wait my turn and after what seemed to me endless months the time arrived when I was to leave my native land to join my parents.

In the year 1870 with my violin and few earthly possessions I started for America. While crossing the ocean (which took eight days) a severe storm arose and I remember standing in a narrow passage way and bracing myself with my hands on opposite walls to keep from falling. This narrow passage way was close to the kitchen and although the cooks had chained the kettles to the stove, the ship was rocking so that the food would spill out of the kettles and soon I found myself standing on the food. Most of the eleven days I spent on the water I stayed on deck for the trip was a new adventure to me and I felt much better in the fresh air as there was so much sickness below and I couldn't stand it. There was no one on board ship I could talk to so it was rather a lonely trip for me.

Upon my arrival in New York I was very hungry and I remember of buying a pie. That was the only real pie I had ever had. This was the first thing I ever bought in America.

I was very anxious to go on to the west, so my stay in New York was a very brief one being three days. I took the train in New York and traveled through to Salt Lake. This was only a short time after the railroad had been laid into Salt Lake. This trip required eight days.

When I arrived in Salt Lake I went at once to the old Tithing Yard, there I spread out my blanket on the ground and slept that night. This is where the Hotel Utah now stands.

It was here that I met a man who treated me kindly and when I told him I was going to Ephraim to my folks, he told me I could ride with him as far as Pleasant Grove. I was very thankful to him, and stayed with him for two days and then met some people who were going through to North Bend with store supplies. I asked if I might go that far with them and they told me yes. Upon arrival in North Bend they asked me to stay with them, but I could not for I longed to see my parents and sisters. From North Bend I walked to Ephraim, and as I entered the town I went from one dugout to another in search of my folks. They were expecting me for they knew the immigrant train was in, and as I hurried from one place to another, my father and mother were watching me. When at last they knew it was their son it was a glorious meeting. Mother shed tears of joy when she saw me. I was indeed happy to be with them, and the only thing I had against Utah was the Mountains and when I looked at them I felt that they were to close and that I could not see far enough.

My father at this time was not very well. he had a small farm but was not able to run it himself, so he had help and he wove baskets as it was much easier on him. During my first four years in Ephraim I made bricks during the summer and thrashed in the fall.

It was while I lived here in Ephraim that Black Hawk, the chief of the Indians gave us so much trouble. The Indians would enter the city and scalp people. A large stone wall was built around the church for protection against attack. It had a tower in one corner, and it was in this tower that I was called to stand guard-- this during the black hawk war. My duty was to watch for Indians and then signal. It was here that I met and married Metta Marie Jorgensen on August 19, 1873. Shortly after our marriage we moved to Richfield where we stayed until the fall of 1874, then we moved to Lehi, Utah.

We landed in Lehi with out five cents and only our small baby. I took up one

hundred and sixty acres of land to homestead. The land was all sage brush. People from down in the town would come up and they would kick the dirt and say, "Boy, you will starve yourself to death on this place." I began at once to clear the land at make ready for my crop the following year. Then it was necessary to get water to my land so I took my spade and dug a ditch for ---- miles long, and my sister-in-law followed behind with a shovel and helped clean it out. During the winter months it was necessary that I should get out and find work so I went to the mines. In the summer I cared for my place and made dobies. At that time I was paid \$5.00 per thousand. I would work each day until about three o'clock or until I had completed 500 dobies then I would return home and work on my place the remainder of the time.

I remember well the first crop of wheat I raised on my place. My father in law was so pleased over it that he asked if he might bless it and I said, "Yes," for it was indeed a blessing to me.

I was the first man in Lehi to raise trees, and for forty years we have been the only family to raise nursery stock, and I will say this that in those forty years we have never sold anything but the best.

I have also been in the honey business for the same length of time. I remember buying my first swarm of bees from Old Brother

Goats. He at that time lived in lower Lehi. My father in law helped me carry the swarm to my place between us on sticks. This at times has been rather discouraged as we have had many losses but each time we could buy again and start over. For many years I was known as Strawberry Chris. (for I was the only man for years that raised strawberries in Lehi, and sold strawberries in every home) I entered my berries in the state fair in the fall, and this was the second crop that year and these were bigger and better berries than those grown in the spring. I was awarded the diploma for the best strawberries grown in Utah. A few years later I entered six potatoes in the fair and was paid three dollars for them.

To us was born eight children, three girls, and five boys. Six who have preceded me in death.

I was ordained a high Priest in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints by Brother Able John Evans July 17, 1932, in the second Ward Meeting House. I am now in my 83rd year and the last of my father's family.

My testimony to my children and grandchildren is that I know this Church is true, and that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, that Brigham Young was a great man in the Sight of God. I know there is a life after death and that I shall see and know my loved ones who have gone before me.

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