LIFE SKETCH OF CASPER CHRISTENSEN

by his Granddaughter - Mary J. Christiansen

I am Mary Johannah Alred (Peacock) Christiansen. I am the grandchild of Casper Christensen. I am really his first grandchild, as my oldest brother died in infancy. I am now 71 years old, but as we have no history of this good, kind man, I am making this attempt to write what I can from memory. Grandfather Christensen died 10 June 1924, when I was 30 years old.

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As I Remember Grandfather

My grandfather was one of the kindest, most gentle and mild-tempered man that I have ever known. He was born in Denmark, September 5, 1837. He grew up there and married Maren Lund in 1866. I never knew my grandmother. She died as a very young woman, but she was a lovely and wonderful person. My Mother and other people who knew her has told me about the wonderful woman she was. She was 24 when grandfather married her. He was a young soilder just mustered out of service. He had just served 3 years in the Danish Army and had fought in the German, Danish war. Not long after their marriage, this young couple embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints. They were baptized in Denmark. Theri first child was a beautiful baby boy (Johannes) who died in infancy. While still in Denmark, they had another child, a daughter, Johannah (My mother). She was one year old when the emigrated to America in Nov. 1869. They first went to Minnesota as grandmother had two brothers living there. They intended to come on to Utah but Grandfather became very ill and lay sick for weeks. When he recovered he was out of money so they stayed on in Minnesota.

They lived in Minnesota six years and Grandfather engaged in farming. Three children were born there: Hans, Mary and Sens. At the end of the six years, Grandfather sold all he had accumulated and moved to Utah in 1875. My mother was seven years old and remembered well their trip across the plains. They settled in Spring City and farmed and raised livestock. They endured all the trials and hardships of pioneer life and Grandmother shared it all without complaint. Two children, Annie and Cecelia were born in Spring City.

In 1881 Grandfather again moved his young family. This time to the newly opened territory of Emery County. He homesteaded on the Muddy and was one of the very first settlers there. Here he again engaged in farming. What a lot of courage it must have taken to start life anew in this barren spot. Nothing but unbroken flats of sage brush and with very crude and clumsy implements to farm with; and miles from the nearest community with very few neighbors or friends. They moved into the very first house that was built on the Muddy. Joseph Lund had built it, but he became discouraged and moved back to Spring City. Grandfather and Grandmother put in crops and gardens and with the help of other settlers, they built a ditch from the muddy creek to water their crops. The ditch gave them a lot of trouble but by determined effort and hard work, they managed to keep enough water on their crops to mature them. However, before they could harvest their crops they ran out of flour and had to go back to Sanpete County by team to get some. A distance of approximately one hundred miles over a very rough and treacherous mountain road.

A Post Office was established in 1882, with Grandpa Christensen as Post Master, and my Mother, Hannah C. Christensen as Assisant Post Mistress. Grandfather's Commission for Postmaster General was issued 19 Nov. 1883. I still have the copy.

A Ward of the Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter-Day-Saints was organized with Casper Christensen as Bishop; Hyrum Strong - First Counselor, and Frank Foot - Second Counselor. Grandfather was also the first Justice of the Peace on the Muddy. Their little modest home was a Post Office and a meeting place for all the early settlers. On the same day, Sept. 12, 1883, Grandfather was ordained a High Priest and Bishop by Francis M. Lyman. He served as Bishop from 1883 until 1890.

Grandfather applied for his citizenship papers on 26 Feb. 1883. He received his citizenship papers Sept. 1, 1886. I still have his certificate of Citizenship.

While my grandfather lived on the Muddy there were many robbers, cattle rustlers, and all kinds of strange people. There were new settlers that came to stay and others going through to other settlements farther up the county. Grandpa and Grandma befriended all of them. No one was ever turned away from their home hungry or cold. They had two children after they moved to the Muddy: Belletta Marie (Lettie) and Harriette Pauline (Hattie). Grandmother died 3 Nov. 1887.leaving her husband and eight young children. The youngest just two years old. This was very hard of Grandfather, but with the help of his older children he managed to get along fairly well.

On August 27, 1890 Grandfather married Johannah Marie Nielsen; a widow with eight children. By now my mother was married and had taken the baby (Hattie) and Cecelia to live with her. Aunt Mary soon married and took Lettie to live with her. Some of the Nielsen children were grown too; but much of the time, all the young children were at home in the two room house. They all got along real well. We all called Grandpa's second wife, "Grandma" and loved her very much. Anyway, I know I did. She was very good to me and always had a cookie or something to give me when I went to her home.

When the town of Emery was first settled, Grandpa moved there and built another two room house, this one did have an upstair bedroom over the big room. The older children were moving out on their own. Grandpa and his second wife had four children of their own. They were Bertha Christine, Rasmina Caspretta, Casper and George. George died when he was nine years old. The others have all been Aunts and Uncle to me.

Grandpa had a farm about three miles southwest of our home and he opened up the first coal mine in or around Emery. With the help of Rasmus Albrecktson, his good friend, he operated the mine for a number of years. He had to go past our place to go to and from his farm and mine. About the first thing that I can really remember was when he used to pass our place in a small cart with his horse, old Billy, hitched to it. Grandpa worked hard but not too fast, and Billy worked the same way. When Grandpa would pass by our place, I remember I would try to be outside so I could run to the street and say Hello. Grandpa would smile and raise his hand and say "Ya Ya". Sometimes he would let me ride a little way with him, then I would walk back. I remember so well, after he had moved to town and built his home and yards, his corrals caught fire and burned his milk cows and other animals and their feed. This was a very hard blow to people that had to depend entirely on such things for their living.

Grandpa took it good and rebuilt the best he could.

He was a very devout man and I never heard him swear but once. When he was a little old man he came down to have Father pull a lose tooth for him. Father felt of it then, unbeknown to Grandpa, he slipped his forceps into his mouth and pulled the tooth. When he showed the tooth to him, Grandpa said, "Hella man, how dot ting did stick tight." Father got a big laugh out of this and he liked to tell this story about Grandpa. Father treated him just like he would a child, so kind and gentle. Grandpa never lost the Danish accent to his speech.

My son Mervin made four generations for Grandpa. He was old and sick but we all went up to get a picture taken. There was Grandpa, Mother, myself and Mervin. He was so proud of Mervin and kept patting him on the back and saying, "Fine boy, fine boy." He lived to see five of my children: Mervin, Vivian, Inez, Genevieve and Wayne. He thought I surely had some fine children. Although Grandpa Christensen was kind and mild he never was one to make a big fuss over any of us like my Grandpa Allred did, but he loved us all and we knew it.

Grandfather failed slowly and Mother took her turn going up to take care of him, and whenever I could, I would go up on her day and stay awhile. He was so little and sweet and patient. None of us could feel sorry for ourselves because we had to care for him. Grandma was old and just couldn't do it, so the children that could, from both families, helped care for him.

When he passed away there was a large and very nice funeral. So many nice things were said about his absolute honesty, friendliness and goodness to his fellow man. What more could a man do to earn his place in heaven than to be kind, good and generous to others. I am very proud to have had him for a grandfather. I loved him very much.

Along with his Citizenship papers and his certificate of Commission to be Postmaster General of Emery, I also have his ordination papers to the office of High Priest and Bishop, and I have a record that he kept of all the contributions made by the people of Emery toward the building of the Manti Temple.

My three older children remember their great-grandfather Christensen. Mervin remembers him better than the girls do. Inez remembers stopping by their place one day with us. We were on our way to the field in the wagon. Grandma (Johannah) went into the house and brought out a small oblong box of vanilla wafers to give to the children. It was the first time Inez could ever remember eating cookies bought from the store. She also remembers this incident: The ward had put new shingles on the church house and the Primary children were asked to gather up the old shingles and take them to the homes of the old people in town. Grandpa lived nearest the church so the tiniest children carried the shingles to their place. She remembers her class taking the shingles, by the armload, up to their place, and then some of the older boys and the teachers piled them up nice and neat in the little old woodshed. She was so happy because she knew that this was her grandpa's place. Grandpa and Grandma came out in the dooryard and thanked the children for this nice thing they did, getting in their kindling for the winter.

Grandpa was one of those good unassuming men that did everything he could for his family, his church and his community. He must have had a fair education or a keen mind, because he was head of so many things. He was the first Bishop of Emery, the first Justice of the Peace, the first Postmaster, and he was the first vice-president of the first canal company. He mortgaged his farm to get food, tools and steel to help build the canal. That is the way it was with Grandpa, for as long as he was able to do things.

He died 10 June 1924 and is buried in the cemetery at Emery, Utah

Subscribed and edited by Inez P. Forbes - 1965

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After the death of Maren Lund, Casper married Johannah Marie Larsen Nielson 27 Aug. 1890. Their children: Bertha Christine b. 11 June 1891, m. Wilford E. Wilson; Rasmina Casperetta, b. 17 Mar. 1893, m. Benning B. Olsen; Casper, b. 29 March 1895, m. Kisty Christiansen, (div.); George b. 31 Jan. 1897, Mied 11 Aug. 1908.

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