

MAREN HANSEN SORENSEN

Maren Hansen was the second child of Hans Anderson and Metta Christensen of Bjergby, Denmark. She had two brothers and one sister listed on the family group.

Christian Hans	chr	17 Nov 1811	Degneboel, Mygdol, Den.	died	no date
Maren Hansen	"	26 Dec 1812	"	"	13 June 1865
Sophie Hansen	"	6 May 1815	"	"	11 Feb 1890
Peder Hansen	"	15 Mar 1818	"	"	15 Dec 1901

Maren married Anders Christen Simonsen, whom she separated from, they were the parents of two children: Craistan Wancair and Metta Piersen. About 1842 she married Soren Christen Sorensen, the son of Soren Madsen and Karen Sorensen. Their children were born at Mygdal, except Hans, whose birth place is given as Denaboleger, all of Hjor, Denmark.

Hans Sorensen	26 May 1843	Md	Karen Marie Jensen		
Soren Sorensen	10 Sep 1845	Md	Anna M. Nielsen	Died	13 Sep 1930
Anna Sorensen	10 May 1848	Md	Karl Johnson		1870
Karen Marie Sorensen	1 Oct 1850	Md	George T. Peay		21 Feb 1944
O'Tena Sorensen	16 Nov 1857	Md	Jacob Martin Sorensen		6 July 1940

The Sorensen family lived on a pleasant farm near the sea. O'Tena often talked about the long pier reachig far out into the water, where they liked to play and to watch the ship come in and go out. Denmark being a level country, nearly every acre was cultivated. They were good farmers and took excellent care of their live stock. Fish furnished a good part of their diet, it was salted and preserved for winter use.

They had a very happy home life, filled with love and peace. They belonged to the Lutheran Church, which was the State Church. The children went to a one room school. Denmark was the first country in Europe to enact a compulsory school attendance law. The school master was strict and they learned the 3 R's and literature, a subject which all enjoyed. They were required to memorize pages from the Bible, Bible literature as well as other literature daily.

Her husband Soren was called to serve in the Danish Army, in a war with Germany between 1855 and 1860, when Germany took part of Denmark. A picture of him, in uniform, on a big black horse was one of their prized possessions, one they took with them when they left their native land.

Denmark and Sweden were the first Scandanevian Countries to receive the Gospel. At the October Conference of 1849, only two years after the Saints had arrived in Utah, the Saints had barely had time to erect primitive huts for shelter, and provide to some extent for existance in the mountains, when their thoughts were turned to reaching their fellow men with the message entrusted to them by God. The Gospel must be preached. Apostle Erastus Snow and Peter O. Hansen being called there. Denmark about one fourth the size of Utah, did its part in building up Zion. The Danish people were, honest, thrifty and hospitable - a God fearing race. They had the will power and determination to succeed, which they did in a praise-worthy manner. Nearly 15,000 converts came from Denmark in the early days of the Church. When in 1850 Erastus Snow landed there he was received with open arms, hearts and unprejudiced minds,

and after being converted their first thoughts turned to working and saving to immigrate to Zion. Later much prejudice, caused by untrue stories and apostates returning there caused much bitterness and persecution.

We don't know just when the missionaries first visited the Sorensen family, probably in the early 60ties, we do know they were made welcome, although the parents on both sides were much opposed to the church. We know little of the intense search for truth and exhausting conquest of self that proceeded conversion. But what a soul satisfaction and joy filled their lives when they accepted the truth. With their new found knowledge and happiness it was hard to see why their loved ones and friends could not find the same truth and rejoice with them. One time Maren was very ill, the Elders were called in to administer to her and she was instantly healed.

Her husband's health was very poor, probably from consumption, and the illness lasted two years, he expected to get well and be baptised but did not recover. He was always good to his wife and children and they all loved him dearly. After his passing Maren sold the farm and most of the live stock and bought a smaller farm.

That winter Soren studied the Bible from beginning to end, although it was a required reading in the school, now he read with new interest and inspiration, which removed any doubt he might have had, of the unpopular message that had been brought to them. He was soon ordained an Elder and called on a mission to another part of the Country. The family were baptized in 1864. With membership came the spirit of gathering.

Great preparations were made, although no one can say what spiritual or mental battles and inner struggles took place with those who must face such changes in their lives. To leave behind all their past, their native land, their relatives and friends to face the unknown, to go to a new country, in which a terrible Civil War was being fought; to cross a great ocean to a strange land; over a thousand miles of wilderness; wild Indians; a strange language. How black a picture their folks must have painted to try to influence them to stay. But at the end of the journey would be found the Prophet of God, the Zion of the Lord and the body of the Saints. There the Temple of God was being built and there was a great work to be done.

Karen Marie told how her Mother made fine coats for the girls, using wool from their own sheep. Some of the wool she dyed medium red, some navy blue, and used natural black and white, which she picked together, corded it, then picked it apart and corded again to mix the colors well, then spun the wool into yarn and wove the cloth. It was sent to machines to be stamped and teaseled. The teasing made it slick and glossy like broadcloth. The coats were made by a taylor, and how very beautiful they were.

Maren's oldest daughter Metta, by the first husband, asked her to leave O'Tena with her, she was well to do and could give her a fine home and education. She also reminded her Mother of her poor health and said she might never live to reach America. The brave faithful Mother replied, "If I don't I will at least have started my children on the right way."

Maren Hansen Sorensen with four children, Hans 22 years old, Anna 17, Karen Marie 14 and O'Tena 7, joined a company of emigrating Saints numbering 557 souls which left Copenhagen by the steamer Aurora, 4 May 1865, accompanied by

Anders W. Winberg, who was a missionary in their home, and was returning to his home in Utah. The Company arrived at Kiel the next morning. In the afternoon the journey was continued by train to Altona, whence the emigrants went up the Elbe River on a small steamboat to a place off Hamburg, Germany. Here the Company was placed on board the double-decked ship the B. S. KIMBALL, an American vessel, with Captain Dearborn. On their arrival at Altona, the Company was met by President Daniel H. Wells and Elder George Reynolds from England, who were both present when the Company boarded the ship. On Sunday, the 7th, a meeting was held on deck, on which occasion President Wells dedicated the ship with its Captain, crew and passengers to the Lord and gave instructions and admonitions to the Saints. Elder Anders W. Winberg was appointed leader of the Company with Johan Swensen and Hans C. Hogsted as his counselors. The ship was divided into eight districts, each with a president.

On Monday the 8th, the ship lifted anchor and was drawn by a tender down to Gluckstadt, where Pres. Winberg and Elder Samuel M. Brown (who had accompanied the emigrants from Copenhagen) took leave of them and returned to Denmark, accompanied by Pres. Wells and Elder Renolds.

On May 10 the ship with its precious cargo, sailed from Gluckstadt, and as the Captain thought the colder climate would be better for the passengers, he chose the route north of Scotland. With the exception of one terrible storm when the ship's officers ordered all passengers below deck and everything securely tied down, the weather was fair and favorable. The Captain was fair and kind to the emigrants and the sick received good treatment. One day a fire broke out, causing concern but was quickly put out. Meeting a ship going East from America, they were informed of the victory of the Union Army, all were ordered on deck and many gave cheers for the red, white and blue.

There was much sickness on board, as some contagious fever broke out, measles and scarlet fever are mentioned in histories, all the children became ill. In the latter part of the journey the water became so bad that vinegar had to be mixed with it, in order to swallow it, many became ill on this account. The Saints were allowed to put their own cooking in the kitchen to prepare food for the ill. Captain Dearborn gave them many privileges in the way of amusements, dancing and theatre-playing. The worst inconvenience was the fact that there were no air pipes, all the air had to come through the stair ways, so the stench from below was bad indeed.

Many children died from the fever, the number varies in different reports from 25 to 50, with three adults. All the Sorensen children became ill, and after the children began to recover the Mother took very ill. They used crackers made of rolled oats ground up and gave them with milk to the sick. As long as the milk lasted the Mother ate, but when that was gone she could not eat. In her delirium she asked for milk. She died the 13 of June and was buried in the ocean. The next day land was sighted, they landed at New York Harbor. O'Tena was so ill she wasn't expected to live. Frantz C. Grundvig said in his journal, "We buried 25 children in the deep ocean who died from measles. We had no fresh water as it had gone rotten and no milk to give the poor sick children and no place or way to care for them. Severine, our son, had the disease but recovered, there were only three or four children who lived through it." Maria Lofdahl Audelin said, "Many children got sick and died, I saw many buried at sea, - about 30 of them. I felt sorry for the poor Mothers, but they acknowledged the hand of the Lord;

counted as a trial." The new found faith of the parents helped sustain them in their grief, knowing their children would be saved in the Celestial Kingdom of God.

Maren had made ample provisions for the journey to Utah, but with her passing the children knew nothing about her money. She had started the trip with a good supply of household goods, plenty of clothing and bedding. She had means to provide a good outfit to cross the plains with. It may have been sewn in her clothing and buried in the ocean with her. The children were all so ill at the time, that they hardly realized their great loss. However in spite of all their trials and hardships they succeeded in walking all the way across the plains and reached their destination in the tops of the mountains 8 October 1865.

She had indeed started them on their way and there must have been great rejoicing when she was reunited with her dear husband on the other side. My Grandmother, Karen Marie, was anxious to do the work for her relatives in the Temple, she and her brother Soren did work for some in the Manti Temple. Later records were received from Denmark and the work done for many ancestors and relatives.

To ancestors such as Maren Hansen Sorensen we owe a great debt of gratitude, although she did not reach the promised land she did indeed start her family on the way. May we be able to meet them on the other side and rejoice with them in family reunions. There are hundreds of descendents who revere her memory. Her children remembered her teachings, lived them and passed them on to their children. God bless her memory, may we be worthy of her.

References:

Scandinavian Mission by Jensen
D.U.P. Lesson "They came in 1865"
Memories of Karen Marie and O'Lena