

## ANNA JORGENSON LARSEN

Born: Oct. 11, 1827 Slayelse, Jutland, Denmark

Age: 28

Hodgett Wagon Company



Anna met and married Johannes Larsen of Gries Viele, Denmark, in Copenhagen in November of 1850. She was from a wealthy family and was in Copenhagen attending a finishing school. Johannes and his brother, Lauritz, were tailors, having learned the trade from their father. They had gone to Copenhagen at the request of the Danish government to make clothes for the soldiers in 1848, as Denmark and Germany were then at war.

Elder Erastus Snow arrived in Copenhagen in 1850 to preside over the Danish Mission. Johannes and his brother were baptized by George C. Dykes and confirmed by Apostle Snow. Anna and Johannes were married shortly after this, and returned to Gries, along with Lauritz, in the Spring of 1851. Anna had also joined the Church. During the next five years, Anna stood by her husband's side as he was called as Branch President in Gries and the nearby town of Fredericia. In 1853 he was called to preside over the Allberg Conference. He was honorably released in 1856 with permission to emigrate to Zion.

Although Anna had written to her parents about her new religion and how happy she was in accepting it, they had responded by telling her that unless she would denounce this hated religion and leave her husband, she could never come home. Anna loved her family, and prayed that they would relent as she was about to leave Denmark, but to no avail. They refused to see her. In contrast, all of her husband's family embraced the Gospel and came to Utah.

The Larsens left Denmark with their three small children, Christiana M. (5), Sarah (3), and Lauritz (1). Family records state that they were with another couple and small son. It does not say who this family was. It also indicates that during a rough storm, the husband and son of their friend were drowned. (If true, this would have been on the ship between Denmark and Liverpool.) Anna and Johannes reportedly cared for this newly widowed friend in their home as long as she lived.

The Larsens sailed from Liverpool in May 1856 aboard the *Thornton* with James Willie who later became the captain of the Willie handcart company. At Iowa City, Iowa, the Larsens secured a good yoke of oxen and a wagon along with other necessities they would need on their journey to Zion. There were a large number of Danish Saints in this wagon company and it must have been nice to be able to communicate with their fellow travelers in their native tongue. About three weeks after leaving the main outfitting point of Florence, Nebraska Territory, Anna gave birth to a baby boy they named Joseph. It was the 24th of September, and though the night frosts had begun, the weather was reported as being very hot through the first week of October.

On the 19th of October, the Hodgett company crossed the North Platte River for the last time and camped about 4 miles beyond. Directly behind them was the Martin handcart company and Hunt wagon company. By the time they crossed this icy river, the first storm of winter began. Feed for the oxen was scarce and the animals were becoming weak. It snowed heavily that night.

John Bond of the Hodgett company later recorded the events of the 28th of October, 1856, as the express team of the rescue party located them: "Joseph A. Young, Daniel W. Jones and Abraham [Abel] Garr came into camp with a small dun colored pack mule packed with supplies which caused much rejoicing throughout the camp with Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! again and again. The broken hearted mothers ran, clasping their emaciated arms around the necks of the relief party,

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kissing them time and time again as do the brethren also, rushing up in groups to fall on their necks, the tears falling from their eyes in profusion. They are overjoyed to think that all were soon to have relief and care for the living and sick, burial for the dead, as they go to their silent tombs. ‘God bless Brigham Young and the rescuing parties sent out to help all to the valleys over the snowclad Rocky Mountains’ was heard all over the camp.”

The last three companies—Hodgett, Hunt and Martin—arrived at Devil’s Gate the first week of November with the help of the rescue parties sent to find them. It was here decided to cache the wagon freight for the winter and only take what was necessary to sustain life so the Saints could hurry on to the Valley. It took about a week to accomplish this task, during which time it snowed a great deal and the temperature dipped below zero. The larger Martin handcart company moved into the shelter of a nearby ravine later known as Martin’s Cove.

According to family histories, the Larsens had hired a teamster to drive their wagon. His name was Lars Madsen. His wife, Bodil, and son, Lars Christian, were with him. On November 6, while at Devil’s Gate, Brother Madsen went out to bring in the oxen one morning, but did not return. He was found frozen to death as well as the oxen. (See Wilhelmina Krause and Lars Madsen stories in this section of *Tell My Story, Too*.) Johannes’ feet also became frozen and he became unable to walk. He did not walk again for six months.

Anna left her family’s belongings here as did the other pioneers. However, she had a small cedar chest that she felt impressed to keep and placed it inside her feather tick. About three weeks later, Anna’s newborn son died from cold and exposure. Joseph was buried three miles past Green River on December 1, 1856. Anna placed his cold little body in the cedar chest she had brought and Johannes chopped a hole in the frozen ground large enough to bury it. Anna said that the morning of the burial they were alone with their little family as the rest of the company had gone on. She said it was the greatest trial of their lives to leave their darling baby alone in the solitary wilderness. After Anna’s baby died she got a serious infection in her breast that caused the nipple to drop off. Christiana remembered how her mother and father kept looking back, fearful that the wolves would find the shallow little grave.

Some excerpts from the Hodgett Company Journal of this time are “The weather has been cold and a severe day to travel . . . started late and had to hunt some time for some of our oxen . . . Cold and windy . . . The flour was scarce in the camps. Many had little or none.”

The Hodgett Company continued to receive more help from the Valley until most of them arrived in Salt Lake during the week of December 7th through the 15th. They were taken in to the homes of the Saints and nourished and nursed back to health. The three little children had a difficult time adjusting to warm temperatures and would faint when brought into a warm room. They had to be carried in and out of the room several times to become accustomed to the warmth.

Johannes resumed his work as a tailor but the wages were not substantial. Anna took in washing and says she cried much of the time as she washed because she couldn’t understand the language. She developed a sort of sign language with one sister who befriended her. They first settled in South Weber where Johannes’ parents had settled previously, then went to Springville in what became known as “The Move South” as Johnston’s Army approached in the Spring of 1858.

Anna had just been settled in a dugout in Springville and given birth to a baby boy when a large rattlesnake appeared above her bed. This was three days before the army entered the Salt Lake Valley. She was moved in with a family who cared for her and nursed her back to health as she had also become very ill. Apostle Erastus Snow, who had confirmed her husband in Denmark, and others, administered to her.

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After the threat was over, the family moved back to Salt Lake where Johannes worked as a gardener for Brigham Young while continuing the tailoring business. Much of his tailoring was done in the evenings and Anna always worked with him. She did this as long as he worked as a tailor. The Larsens eventually made their permanent home in Spring City, near Ephraim in San Pete County. There were a large number of Danish Saints who settled there. They built a log room to begin with and later a four room adobe house with a lean-to summer kitchen. They lived here the rest of their lives. The Larsens had a total of 12 children, 6 of them born in this home. One little daughter died.

Johannes eventually had a beautiful farm and garden in Spring City. A granddaughter wrote: His place was one of beauty. Every foot of ground was laid out in order and utilized to some good. Choice apples, plums, pears, cherries, different kinds of currents, gooseberries, etc., besides a large vegetable garden. Every family must have their share. To we grandchildren he gave generously but decried waste . . . Everything was in order. During the winter months, he repeatedly sorted the apples to avoid waste and decay. How well I remember the big wheat and hay stacks on the place when the crops were garnered—always a place for everything and everything in its place.

Johannes remained an active member of the church, serving in the capacity of head teacher in the ward where one of his obligations was to distribute the fast offerings. He was one of the seven presidents of the Seventies in his quorum. He was blessed with the gift of healing and set apart to administer to the sick. Anna assisted in nursing the sick and was also called to prepare bodies of the deceased for burial. She continued in this calling until her death at the age of 71.

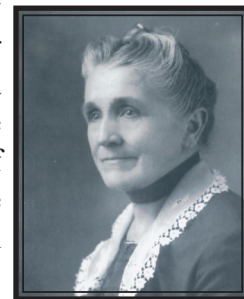


Christiana Larsen  
(Clawson)

Anna always reminded her posterity to “keep the commandments.”

Her granddaughter, Sarah Clawson Johnson wrote: How often I have sat and listened to grandmother relate the sad experiences of her life, ignored and disinherited by her family because of her faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. She had come from a wealthy family and was at a finishing school in Copenhagen when she met grandfather. Then the sad death of her baby boy, who had frozen to death and [was] buried in the wilderness of Wyoming. I have asked many times, “Grandma, how did you stand it all?” And then in the eyes of that little determined person, I knew that expression was real when she said, “It will be worth it all if my posterity will keep the faith.”

Sarah Larsen married James Rasmussen Clawson. Christiana Larsen married his brother, Christian Clawson. They related to their posterity that before leaving Denmark, the sisters were granted their childish desire to bring at least one of their prized possessions with them. They insisted upon bringing their beautiful silk and lace parasols which were tucked into the wagon with the limited baggage they were allowed. After the Larsens arrived in Utah, Sarah and Christiana carried these parasols proudly to church with them each Sunday as shades from the sun. At one time, the Larsen’s food and money supply began to dwindle, and they reached the point where they had no flour or means to obtain any. A neighbor who had been blessed that year with a bounteous harvest of grain, offered to trade Johannes Larsen flour in exchange for the two parasols which he wanted for his own girls. Feeling the pangs of hunger and seeing their family in want, Sarah and Christiana agreed to the trade. So the silk and lace parasols which had traveled thousands of miles from faraway Denmark at last served as a blessing in feeding the Larsen family. However, Christiana later told her posterity that it really hurt to see the other girls proudly carrying the parasols to church while she and Sarah looked on.



Sarah Larsen (Clawson)

Sources: Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files for “Margaret Christiana Larsen Clawson” and “John Larsen;” “History of Johannes Larsen and his wife, Anna Jorgenson Larsen, Parents of Sarah Larsen Clawson,” by granddaughter, Sarah Clawson Johnson; familysearch.org; letter from Phyllis Deuel, August 2002.