

## LARS MADSEN

Born: 19 April 1795 Denmark (died at Devil's Gate, Nov. 1856)

Age: 61

Hodgett Wagon Company



Lars, Christian, Bodel Neilsen Madsen

The emigration of the Lars and Bodel Madsen family occurred in three waves from 1855 to 1857. Five months before Lars and Bodel left Denmark, they sent five of their children ahead to Utah to prepare the way for the rest of the family. Their son, Andrew, wrote about their family's conversion and emigration:

"We belonged to the Lutheran Church and walked to Asmendrup, a distance of nearly two miles, to attend our meetings and also to attend school. In 1853 Mormon Elders visited our country and began preaching the Doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which had been restored to the earth through Joseph Smith, the Prophet. Among the missionaries who visited us were Hans Peter Lund, Lars Ericksen, and T.D. Falstead. They frequently visited our homes and always felt at home with us.

"In 1854, my father with his entire family became members of the Mormon Church and on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1854, I became a member and was baptized in Ordrup by Elder James Hansen. A Branch from the Church was organized and Lars Ericksen presided over the same for three years.

"In 1855, my father decided to sell out his old homestead and immigrate to the United States, and settle with the Mormons in Utah. The money he received for the farm was to be spent for emigrating his family and other poor people. November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1855, myself, Neils Peter, Neils, Grathe, and Bena left home and started for Copenhagen, accompanied by our father, arriving there November 24<sup>th</sup>. This was the last time I ever saw my father alive."<sup>1</sup>

The five Madsen children traveled across the ocean on the ship *John J. Boyd*. Because of the language barrier, they had some difficulty obtaining employment, but they found jobs in St. Louis, Missouri, and in Florence, Nebraska. They earned money for their journey across the plains with the Canute Peterson Company and arrived in Salt Lake City on September 20, 1856.

Lars (age 61) and Bodel (age 48) Madsen, along with their youngest son, Christian (age 8), joined the emigration from Denmark a few months later. The Madsens also had the charge of 9-year-old Wilhelmina Krause. She became very attached to the Madsens during this trip and later married their son, Neils Peter.<sup>2</sup>

When the Hodgett Company reached Devil's Gate the first week of November, Lars Madsen succumbed to the hardships. Andrew recorded:

"While remaining here [at Devil's Gate] ... my father took sick, and after a few days of illness and suffering, worn out from exposures and hardships, passed to the great Beyond and died at the age of 61 years. He was buried at Devil's Gate [near] the head of the Sweet Water and near Martin's Ravine. He was laid away as best that could be done under the conditions, as were many others, leaving my mother and youngest brother, Christian, to move on alone."

There were nearly a thousand people who needed to "move on" from Devil's Gate. Many of them could no longer walk or pull handcarts and there were not enough rescue wagons for all of them to ride. George D. Grant, captain of the advance team of rescuers, decided to "empty some of the wagons of the Hodgett and Hunt companies, store the freight in the cabins at Devil's Gate, and use those wagons to carry the sick and incapacitated members of the Martin Company. ... The [Hunt] company journal reports: 'Brother Grant told [the wagon companies] that they would have to leave their goods here till they could be sent for, such as stoves, boxes of tools, [and] clothing, and only take just sufficient to keep them warm with their bedding. ... All present appeared willing to do what was expected of them.'" (Andrew D. Olsen, *The Price We Paid*, 369.) The Madsen family still had more than a month of traveling to reach Utah.

Andrew Madsen wrote of the rest of his mother's journey: "[They] were placed in one of the relief wagons which reached there from Salt Lake and started with the companies for Utah. When they reached the Weber River the two young men driving the team preferred to go down the Weber River and left the Company and started off alone. They had to cross the River many times and at places the ice was broken and the horses could not pull the load up the bank and many times they were compelled to load and unload.

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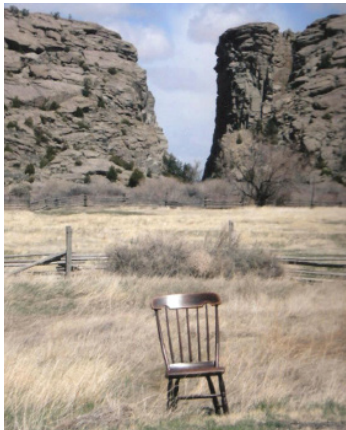
“They were two weeks in getting through Weber Canyon on account of snow and rough roads. They arrived at East Weber December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1856, while the other companies arrived at Salt Lake City fully ten days earlier.<sup>3</sup> My brother, [Neils] Peter, and family were living at Kaysville and learned of the arrival of mother and brother, which was a great surprise to us as we had not heard from them since we left Denmark. My brother went to Weber with an ox team and brought them to his home which consisted of a dug out and a wagon bed. There they remained over the winter, mother being nearly worn out from the exposure of so long a journey.”

The family belongings that had been cached at Devil’s Gate were brought into the valley the next spring. The last of the Madsen children also arrived in Utah the next spring. Andrew wrote: “March, 1857, my brother Mads, the only one of the family who remained in Denmark, completing some work and collecting the last payment due on the sale of our farm, started to emigrate to Utah in company with many others and landed here early in the fall. His journey was not such as that of my father and mother as he came through during the summer months suffering no cold. ... In the Spring of 1857 I assisted a Mr. Swensen in taking a load of flour to Green River with my Oxen. Arriving there I hitched to my father’s wagon which had been left there the previous winter by my mother and brother.<sup>4</sup> I also brought with me some of my mother’s clothing which she had left. The trip was not the most pleasant one, but by so doing I came in possession of the wagon.

“I returned to Brigham City and became the owner of a lot and after my brother Mads arrived, we worked together. ... We built a dug out which we lived in during the winter. That winter Lorenzo Snow made arrangements to build himself a home and we presented him with a keg of nails which had been hauled by us from St. Louis.”

Surely Bodel Madsen’s strength and determination helped carry this family through. She pioneered in Mt. Pleasant, Utah, until her death on December 18, 1883. Andrew recorded the heritage of faith left by Lars and Bodel Madsen in summarizing his mother’s testimony: “She left a good home and suffered much, losing her husband and leaving all they had upon the plains. She was glad to again be with her children and although she had sacrificed the loss of her husband and endured the hardships of the journey, her faith in God and the religion she believed in caused her to rejoice and she felt that it was the will of the Lord.”

Sources: “Autobiography of Andrew Madsen,” available in Church History Library, portions transcribed at <http://lib.byu.edu/mormonmigration>, (family photos and other portions of Andrew Madsen’s autobiography sent to Jolene Allphin by David R. Gunderson, June 4, 2012. Gunderson is writing a well-researched book on the Madsen family); letter from Mardi Jo Madsen Parkinson, May 4, 2011; photo of chair courtesy Mardi Parkinson; “The Life Story of Wilhelmina Krause Madsen,” by Pearle M. Olsen and Aleen M. Summers; *Mt Pleasant*, compiled by Hilda Madsen Longsdorf, (Mt. Pleasant Pioneer Historical Association) 1939 (reprinted 1999); other Madsen family histories in library of Jolene Allphin; Seegmiller, Janet Burton, “*Be Kind to the poor*” *The Life Story of Robert Taylor Burton*, 1988.



“[Bodel left] a husband, and all of her personal possessions except for a small rocking chair. ... The rocking chair is in my possession, having been passed down through many family members. It has rocked countless babies during its life of over 180 years. This year [2011] we were able to take the chair back to Martin’s Cove and Devil’s Gate.” (Mardi Jo Madsen Parkinson to Jolene S. Allphin)

<sup>1</sup>When these siblings left Denmark, Andrew was 21 years old; Neils Peter, 23; Neils Larsen, 12; Grathe (Anne Margrethe), 18; and Bena (Jacobina), 15.

<sup>2</sup>See “Marie Wilhelmina Catherine Krause” in Hodgett section of *Tell My Story, Too*.

<sup>3</sup>The rescuers had been advised in a November 27 letter from Brigham Young not to take this route through Weber Canyon, as all the help he was sending would be on the main road through Emigration Canyon. It is not known if the rescuers who brought the Madsen family through this way disregarded counsel or separated from the main group before the letter was received. (See Seegmiller, “*Be Kind to the poor*” *The Life Story of Robert Taylor Burton*, 161-62.)

<sup>4</sup>John Pulsipher, the clerk of the Green River Mission at Ft. Supply, gives us a little more information about what the Madsen family experienced upon reaching Green River. He recorded: “[November] 27 [1856] the news came that the last ox train of our emigration was way beyond Green River & not able to get to here without more help, the teams that were sent from Ft. Supply were doing all they could & could only move a part of the co. at a time & the people had to eat the poor cattle as they gave out, to save their own lives. ... Every man was wide awake to do something more to help them that are in trouble. ... The women baked a lot of bread while we were arranging the teams. All this was done & the teams on the march in about 2 hours. ... Eve of the 7<sup>th</sup> [December] as we were devising some means for the support of this last co. of our emigration which we supposed would have to winter here—we all seemed willing to divide our scanty portion of bread with them & do as well for them as we do for ourselves—the news came that teams & felled were on the way to take them to the Valley.” (See also November 30 rescue call of Brigham Young, pages 515-16 in Rescuers section of *Tell My Story, Too*.)