

OLE MADSEN

Born: 14 February 1815 Denmark (Died October 23/24, 1856, Rock Creek)

Age: 41

Willie Handcart Company



Anna Marie Madsen (Ericksen)

Ole was a farmer and a laborer from Sjaelland, Denmark. He and his family joined the Church, and Ole was an ordained elder at the time of their emigration. In the Madsen's home in Denmark, the elders were often fed and given a place to rest. Branch meetings were sometimes held in the Madsen home in Tornved, which was part of the Ordrup Branch. These meetings were often broken up by mobs who pelted the home with rotten eggs and disrupted in other ways.

Ole traveled to America with his wife, Ane Jensdatter (age 46) and four children, "Johanna" Marie (15), Mette "Christena" (13), Anna "Marie" (10) and Anders [Andrew] (5). The oldest daughter, Karen, went as far as Copenhagen with the family, but did not continue from there. Ane had four children from a previous marriage who also remained in Denmark. It appears that three of them were also members of the Church.

The Madsen family traveled from Copenhagen to Liverpool and there boarded the ship *Thornton* under the direction of James Willie. Elder Johan Ahmanson was a leader over the Danish Saints and served as their translator from Liverpool to Florence. Neils L. Christensen was their captain from Florence into the Valley, with Ahmanson's assistance.

Peter Madsen, clerk for the Danes in the Willie Company, recorded in his diary, September 3, 1856: "4 o'clock up, 7 o'clock prayer, 8 o'clock departure. We traveled several miles over hill and dale and saw buffalo by the thousands. During the noon hour Ole Madsen shot a large buffalo and an Englishman another. Both were distributed, about 2 pounds per person." Perhaps Ole's only son was proud of his father that day. Hunting buffalo was not a skill Ole had learned in Denmark.

Ole was not to be with his son in Utah, however. In less than two months, a winter storm and short rations stopped Ole Madsen's progress. Ole was likely one of the strong ones in the beginning. He carried his family members, and perhaps others, across icy rivers. He shared his rations when they were hardly enough to keep himself alive. Ole left his family in the hands of God and his people when he succumbed to death after the climb across Rocky Ridge on October 23. The next day, thirteen people were buried in a common grave at Rock Creek Hollow. Six of the thirteen buried in the common grave were from Denmark. They were Ole's friends and neighbors.

With the help of rescuers, Ole's family finally reached the Salt Lake Valley on November 9, 1856. Ane and the children were taken in by kind people there. The two younger children then went with their mother to Ephraim where many other Danish Saints had settled. When Christena had recovered sufficiently to travel, she and Johanna went to Ephraim with a man who was driving a cow there. He let the girls ride on the cow's back when they forded the Sanpete River. Once in Ephraim, they went from house to house trying to find their mother. When they did find her, she was lying on the floor with a quilt for a bed, apparently not yet fully recovered. They stayed in Ephraim for 2 years.

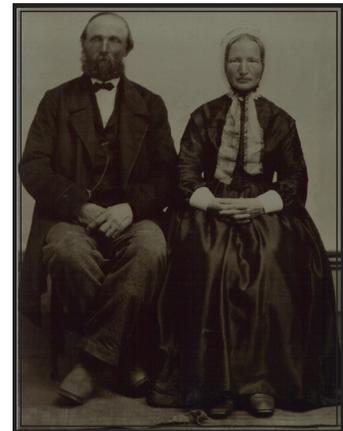
Ane married Hans Christensen and lived in Mt. Pleasant until her death in 1864. Christena married Hans Christensen's son, James Christensen Harbro, in December 1859. Christena's husband died in 1880, and she remained a widow for the next 20 years until her death on November 15, 1900. Andrew lived with his sister, Christena, for some time, and even went by the Harbro name. He married Maria Jensen and lived to be 85 years old. Johanna married Martin Aldrich in December 1860. She died in Mt. Pleasant at the age of 101 years and 6 months. She had been a widow for 23 years at the time of her death. Ane Marie married Hans Peter Ericksen in April 1865. Only two of their 10 children lived to adulthood. Six of them died from diphtheria at the same time. Ane Marie was buried in Mt. Pleasant in 1929, shortly after her husband died.

Ole's daughter, Christena, told of the family's immigration experiences: [While studying with the missionaries in Denmark] a mob raged outside [our home] throwing rotten eggs at the windows, and we children was not allowed to go to school because we were Mormons, so we did not get the education we should. ... One half-brother did not join the Church. ... [In Copenhagen] we had to stay a week before our vessel was to sail. While there one of our sisters [Karen] had a dream that our mother's sister was dead and they were preparing the funeral, so she would not go any further. She went back home and sure enough, it was just as she had dreamed so she stayed ... and helped to train the children. ...

Christena's daughter, Annie, continued quoting from Christena's autobiography: Mother used to tell us children some of her experience. She would say, "I could write a book of my life and not tell half of the suffering we went through on our journey over the plains. We took all our bedding and the family Bible with our records written in, but we had to throw them away on the plains." ... [Father] pulled his handcart all day without having anything to eat. At last one evening he rolled up in scanty covers, laid down and passed away. That same night several others died. ... They who died that night were laid in a small ditch with their boots or shoes on and covered. That night the wolves howled all night. They believed the wolves had uncovered the bodies and were eating them. She told of how hard it was for her to think of such a terrible thing, and her now left alone with her children with nothing to eat, frozen and hungry. But they pulled and pushed the handcart until their hands were so cold and fingers so crooked they never again came back into shape. [They] rejoiced when they sighted the relief party sent to meet them loaded with provisions and some clothing for the suffering emigrants. She told how this company of men baked flap jacks, as they called them. Sometimes they would burn them, then would throw them away. Mother Madsen said she would pick them up, take them into the bushes and eat them, she was so hungry.

Family histories indicate that Ole carried his family, one by one across a stream the day he died. He was buried with his boots on because they were frozen to his legs and they could not remove them. A grandson (Mike Ericksen) has participated in a reenactment for a documentary wherein he carried others across the Sweetwater River, and had the same experience of his boots freezing on him immediately.

Family members know that the woman pictured here is Ane Madsen. Given her age at the time of the picture and other facts, they also feel confident that the man pictured at her side is her husband, Ole Madsen. The original picture is a tintype and this setting was a common one for that time period at the port of arrival, in this case, Castle Garden, New York, where it may have been taken.



Sources: Daughters of Utah Pioneer history files; "Christena Madsen Christensen History," (letter from Christena to her cousin); *Mount Pleasant*, compiled by Hilda Madsen Longsdorf, (Mt. Pleasant Pioneer Historical Association); "Ole Lykke Madsen and Ane Hansen Jensen," compiled by Shirley Porath, edited by Nick A. Ericksen; "Hans Peter Ericksen and Ane Marie Madsen," by Leonard Douglas Ericksen, edited by Nick Ericksen; "Ane Marie Madsen," by Jennette Staples Ericksen and Andrew Madsen, edited by Nick Ericksen; Peter Madsen Diary, Church archives. (A movie about the Madsen family entitled "Walking in Obedience - The Ole Madsen Story," has been created by Madsen descendant, Mike Ericksen. See on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRXHZzqaTnE>. Likewise, the song "Light Up the Land," on the CD *Unsung*, was written for the Madsen family and the Willie handcart company, and used as a theme song for the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah. These can also be found on YouTube. *Upon Destiny's Song*, by Sage Steadman and Mike Ericksen, tells the story of Mike Ericksen's search for his roots, and of his great-grandmother, Anna Marie Madsen (Ericksen).) See *Follow Me To Zion* by Andrew Olsen and Jolene Allphin, *Deseret Book*, 2013, for artwork and more Madsen family stories.



Johanna Marie (Aldrich)

Mette Christena
(Christiansen)

Anna Marie (Ericksen)

Anders (Andrew)
Madsen