

OLOF JACOBSON WICKLAND

Born: 31 October 1825 in Storbyn, Dinlla Parish, Sweden

Age: 30

Willie Handcart Company



Christina Wicklund (Sorenson)

The Wicklund family has a legend about their ancestors: Once there were “four brothers who were princes. They lived in one of the German principalities long before Bismark consolidated the Germanic states. There was a political uprising in which the brothers participated. Their side lost and they were banished from their country. Their name was Buse. They became political refugees. One brother went to St. Petersburg, Russia; one went to Stockholm, Sweden; one went to Wemland, Sweden (Warmland); and one went to Northern Sweden, North Helsingland (Land of Health). This last brother became a landowner and founded a settlement called Buse. He is supposed to be the father of [this] family line.”

Ella Michaelsdatter was born in 1797 in North Helsingland, Sweden. She married a soldier by the name of Jonas Stiner Esbjornsen. Jonas was also born in North Helsingland in 1788. Family tradition indicates that Ella Michaelsdatter married for love, and beneath her social station, since her opportunity for inheritance depended on marrying another landowner. Ella and Jonas had seven children. Only two of those children survived: Ella Johnson and Michael Johnson (or Jonsson).

Like her mother before her, Ella Johnson married a man who had served in the military. His name was Olof Jacobson, the son of Kerstin and Jacob Olsen. While serving in the military, a new method of recording data on the soldiers was initiated. Each soldier was asked to choose a surname. Olof chose the name “Wicklund.” It means “a stream of water running through a woodland or forest.” Olof’s daughter, Christina, said that the place in Sweden where they lived was “so far north that her father walked to the tops of the high mountains near their home and there he saw the midnight sun. In the long summer days he could sit on his porch and read until eleven o’clock at night by the light of day. He was a man who liked the outdoor life and would often take [Christina] into the woods and tell her about the different birds and animals.”

Christina Wicklund used to tell her children stories while sitting around a pine wood fire in their old adobe home in Monroe, Utah. Christina’s son, Nels, recorded the following about one of Olof’s and Christina’s adventures: “On one occasion while walking through the woods they heard a bear. Her father told her to be quiet and they might be able to see him, but the bear got out of sight before they could see it. In the fall of the year, men would hunt places where the bears were preparing to hibernate for the winter. The man who found the place would put his name on the bark of the tree. That bear would be his property, the same as we would put a brand on our cattle.

“In the winter when the snow was deep and frozen over, he would wear snowshoes and take his dogs to find the bear. The dogs would tantalize the bear until he would come out of his den after the dogs. He would be so heavy that he would sink into the snow and fall easy prey for the men on snow shoes. They would use the meat for food and other parts for clothing and for rugs. In the fall and early winter the Laplanders would visit their country with their reindeer much the same as the Gypsies used to do in this country. ... These begging Laplanders occasionally made their way through these mountains to the delight of the Swedish farm folks. They marveled at their costumes made of two goat hides—one tied in front and one tied behind.”

Olof Wicklund and Ella Johnson were married in 1847. Christina and Jonas were born to the young couple in 1848 and 1849. Olof worked as a tenant farmer in Sweden. He worked the land for the landlord and had no opportunity for ownership. Olof had a cousin who had gone to America and written about the wonderful opportunities he had there. Olof and Ella wanted this for their children. They began saving as much money as possible, but it still wasn’t enough to go to America. Ella finally insisted that they at least make a start, so they moved to Denmark. Ella’s parents and her brother, Michael, went with them. The family obtained an apartment on the 3rd story of an apartment building in Copenhagen, and they went to work. Olof worked on a hand dredge which was used to clean the harbor. The wages were good but not enough to take the family to America. Ella worked at spinning and weaving while her mother tended the children. Two more children were born in Denmark: Sarah Jacobina and Josephine Ephraimeur in 1852 and 1854.

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Nels Sorenson wrote: “One day grandmother heard of a missionary who held meetings down on the beach. He belonged to a church which owned a ship and would take people who belonged to his church to America. ... She went to see him and tell him what she had heard. He said, ‘No, sister, we do not own the ship.’ [He] invited her to come to his meeting. She said she didn’t care about his religion. ... She finally went to hear him speak. The way that he explained his religion, ... and explained the principles of the gospel, made her want to investigate further. ... She was finally converted. She tried to get grandfather interested in the church, but after hearing what he would have to do and how he would have to live, he said he wouldn’t live it as he should, as he used tobacco and took an occasional drink. After he found she was so anxious, he said he would try.”

Olof was also finally converted. He and Ella were baptized in 1851. As Olof entered the river for baptism, Ella noticed a chew of tobacco still in his mouth and she was worried. But Olof stepped into the water, spit out the tobacco, and it went downstream. He never touched tobacco again. Ella’s parents were also baptized on May 18, 1851. They planned to accompany the Wicklund family to America, but their goals were cut short by their deaths in Copenhagen. Ella Michaelsdatter Esbjornsen died of cholera and Jonas Stiner Esbjornsen died from an unknown cause. (Their son, Michael, immigrated to Utah, but the date is not known.)

Olof Wicklund’s family left Copenhagen aboard the steamship *Rhoda* on April 23, 1856. They sailed from Liverpool on the *Thornton* in May 1856. Ella was expecting her 5th child. One of Olof’s descendants wrote: “Apparently, ‘Ole’ Wicklund had advanced rapidly in the Church, because he was an elder at the time of their departure. He was well thought of by the company, which is evidenced by his being called upon to baptize several people for their health and others to renew their covenants.” (Thelma Chamberlain) This was a fairly common practice in the Church at that time. It was not the same as the ordinance of baptism, followed by confirmation, that brought an individual into Church membership. Peter Madsen, who was the clerk for the Danish Saints, recorded: “Tuesday, August 12, 1856. [Florence, Nebraska] Weather: beautiful. The saints were happy, busy with washing, repairing, and daily provisioning which is now given regularly. A cow was slaughtered and distributed. Fresh meat soup was eaten. We bathed and visited the beautiful neighborhood and the Mormon ruins [Winter Quarters]. In the evening five brothers and sisters were baptized, the sick were washed, namely Peder Jacobsen, Anne K. Jacobsen, Petrea Madsen, Marie Andersen, and Ellen [Helle] Nielsen. They were baptized (for their health) by [Olof] Wicklund.”



Josephine
Ephraimeur
Wicklund (Tuft)

Ella “Lollie” Nielsen met the Wicklund family as they traveled to Utah. She was on hand to assist Ella Wicklund when her new baby was born. She may have assisted Olof with the handcart as well. On October 14, the company journal recorded: “Weather splendid.” On October 16, the company journal recorded: “Early this morning, sister Ella, wife of Olof Wicklund was delivered of a son.” They named him Jacob. Ella had already walked nearly a thousand miles since leaving Iowa City, 96½ miles of that in the seven days prior to giving birth. The company had passed Independence Rock and Devil’s Gate the day before Jacob’s birth near Split Rock. They had also “unanimously agreed” to reduce the flour rations again. Three days later they issued the last flour and other foodstuffs and winter arrived with the first snowstorm. When Jacob was born, some of the sisters took Ella behind some shrubs and sheltered her with a sheet for privacy. The company continued another 11 miles that day. Ella Wicklund was allowed an uncomfortable ride in one of the provision wagons for three days. An unnamed “sympathetic gentleman handed her a sweet cookie or cake and later she said it was the best meal she had ever eaten.”

On October 19, the Willie Company met the first group of men sent from Salt Lake City to their aid. These four men brought the good news that rescue wagons were not far behind. Those wagons met the stranded Saints two days later. On October 23, the Willie Company crossed Rocky Ridge in a blizzard. Ella Wicklund and her new baby somehow survived, but Lollie had spent her last ounce of strength. Olof wrapped her in a buffalo robe and left her on the trail while he saw his family safely to camp at Rock Creek. He then returned and carried her back to camp. He had his 8-year-old daughter, Christina, sleep next to Lollie to keep her warm. Lollie’s biography states:

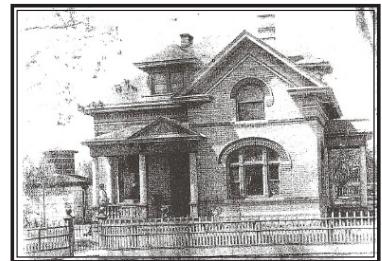
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“In spite of this precaution Lollie did not survive, and the next morning Christina awoke to find Lollie frozen to death at her side. Her hair was frozen solid and an ax was used to free it from the ice.”¹ Lollie is buried in a common grave at Rock Creek Hollow with 12 or 13 others. Brother and Sister Wicklund and their five children all survived and arrived safely in the Valley on November 9, 1856. Lollie’s biography summarizes:

“Because of the lack of space, families of the deceased were not allowed to take the belongings of their dead loved ones with them. Among the things which Lollie’s family [the Wicklunds] were preparing to throw away were a quilt and a pair of scissors. These were both in better condition than those owned by the Wicklunds, so it was decided that they could be exchanged. The old quilt and scissors of Christina’s family were thrown away and replaced by the better ones. The quilt eventually became worn out but the scissors remained in use through the years. Christina later married Martin Sorenson and she used [the scissors] during the time she was rearing her family in Monroe, Utah. When Christina’s son, Lionel [Alexander Sorensen], married Clara Larsen, a descendant of the family to which Lollie Anderson [or Nielsen] belonged, the scissors were given to this young couple who continued to use them. At the present time they still belong to the Sorenson family. They now occupy a place of honor among the family pioneer relics and are brought out only upon the occasion of the retelling of the story of the death on the plains to the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Christina Wicklund and the descendants of the family of Lollie Anderson.— Dona Sorenson Hansen”

Upon arriving in Utah, Olof took his family to Manti, where he built a dugout for their shelter and fashioned some crude furniture out of rough lumber. Olof died one year later, on November 6, 1857. He was buried in a grave that remains unmarked, “in a park adjoining the Manti Cemetery,” in the shadow of the Manti Temple.

Notes: Ella Wicklund married Morten Sorenson in 1858. She had four more children before she died in Washington, Utah, in 1865. The last two were twins. Christina Wicklund also married Morten Sorenson. They had twelve children. Christina died in Monroe, Utah, where she had served in her ward Relief Society presidency for 25 years, and later as the Stake Relief Society President for nearly 15 years. Jonas married Rachel A. Gifford. They had seven sons, but only the youngest son had any children who lived to adulthood. Jonas died in Hagerman, Idaho. Sarah married Franklin Binning Goold, “a handsome young Welshman,” in 1874 in St. George, where their first two children were born. In 1877 they moved to Monroe, “where they were esteemed as worthy, progressive citizens.” Josephine married Hans Tuft in 1872. Hans “told her she would never go hungry or work again. She later said that she never went hungry, but the work seemed about the same.” They also moved to Monroe, where all three Wicklund sisters then lived on the same block. Josephine had 7 children. She died in 1937 in Monroe. Pictured is Josephine’s fine brick home in Monroe, something she would have not known in Sweden. Jacob Wicklund was blind in one eye, mostly likely as a result of the severe winter weather to which he was exposed the first few weeks of his life. He married Estella Patten in 1882 and Fannie Hansen in 1902. A Utah census for Joseph, Monroe town, Sevier County, in 1900 shows Jacob as a widower with four daughters.



Sources: *Pioneers and Prominent Men*, Frank Eschholm, 1913; “Olaf Jacobsen Wicklund,” in *Mormon Biography II*, (book at Kirtland family history library found by Geraldine Sorenson Adams, 1995); “Lollie Anderson,” *Treasures of Pioneer History*, “They Came in 1856,” p. 51-52; email from George Robison, July 2, 2011; “Ella Michaelsdatter and Ella Wicklund,” by Thelma C. Chamberlain; email from Gregory Perry, June 29, 2010; “Josephine Ephraimeur Wicklund Tuft,” by Nadeane Tuft Nielsen, 5 Apr 2000; “Sarah Jacobina Wicklund 1852-1907,” compiled by Maurine R. Goold, February 1978 (from information furnished by Sarah’s son, Binning Franklin Goold, and daughter, Ella Goold Yergesen Jones); Obituary of Sarah Wickland Goold; Obituary of Josephine Wickland Tuft; familysearch.org; “Morton Sorenson and Christina Wicklund Sorenson,” by Nels Sorenson; Diary of Peter Madsen, (see <https://byustudies.byu.edu/>); *The Willie Handcart Company*, by Paul D. Lyman, 2006.

¹It is unclear from the various sources if Christina and Lollie both had their hair frozen in the ice, and whether an ax or pair of scissors or both were used to cut it.