

MY NORWEGIAN ANCESTRY
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In 1821 a Norwegian adventurer named Kleng Peerson arrived in America and traveled extensively in New York State. Thrilled with what he saw as an opportunity for a Norwegian settlement in America, he returned to Norway to promote his idea, that of a religious freedom from the Lutheran State Church. After several ventures, he finally decided on a spot near the Fox River in what is now La Salle County, Illinois. In 1834 Peerson and five families, established what was later called the Fox River settlement. (In 1837 approximately 215 emigrants left Norway bound for the Fox River settlement.) Endre Dahl, Jacob Anderson, Gudmund Haugaas, Nels Thompson and Thorstein Olson. The following year Knud Slogvig returned to Norway and persuaded approximately 200 persons to emigrate.

On August 15, 1837, the Big Nord arrived from Norway at the Port of New York with the family of Oystein Sondresen Bakka and Ase Olsdatter. They took canal boats up through New York, and a steamer on the Great Lakes to Chicago, Illinois. They stopped there a little while, and then Ostein took up land at a place called Beaver Creek. He built a log house, but died before it was finished. The area was quite swampy and malaria struck the settlement. The mother died just three weeks before, leaving seven with no one to care for them. Sondra, my great grandfather, who was only nine years old at the time, said "sometimes he would be the only one out of bed, and as cornmeal was the chief victual, he used to wet it with a little water and then put it in a skillet to bake. It either came out perfectly raw, burned on the outside, but still raw on the inside, so mush and milk went pretty good, that was fit to eat. Most of the emigrants died, only a few that moved away into Fox River settlement."

One by one the children were scattered and sent to families who needed help with their farms. Sondra tried running away, and he finally ended up at Jack Andersons near Ottawa. He stayed there five years.

Helga and her sister Aagaat escaped to the Fox River settlement, and about this time Sondra found them. The girls changed their names to be better understood. Helga became Harriet, and Aagaat was Ellen. They dropped Bakka, as that pertained to the farm they lived on in Norway, and Sondresen was shortened to SANDERS.

Ellen learned that a Mormon was to preach a number of sermons in the settlement. Elder George P. Dykes recently arrived from Nauvoo, and bore a strong testimony of Joseph Smith, the Restoration, and asked for investigators. More than 100 persons including Ellen, Harriet and Sondra were baptized. Sondra said, "we did enjoy ourselves splendid there for about two and a half years, but then it seemed as though the devil got a foothold after that. Many of them apostatized. It was at this time James J.

Strang came to Fox River settlement and claimed to be Joseph Smith's successor. Sondra went to two of his meetings, but said he did not raise his hand to sustain him. About this time Sondra decided to go to California, but the girls elected to move to Nauvoo to be closer to the main body of the Church.

Ellen and Harriet obtained work in the Kimball home helping with his ever increasing family. Great consideration was being given to the future welfare of the widows of church leaders, especially of Joseph's. On 5th November, 1844 Heber C. Kimball took Ellen as his wife. By January 1846, Heber had sixteen wives, and at least eight living children, and partial responsibility for some of the fourteen other children three of his wives had by previous husbands. It was in January, 7th, 1846 that he took Ellen as well as his first wife Vilate to the Temple and were sealed for time and all eternity.

The next few months were busy, as it was the last chance to have these marriages solemnized in the temple before heading into the unknown. By doing so, however, he indicated his willingness to assume full liability for these women and their children. Harriet, Ellen's sister was married and sealed to Heber 26th January of this year.

There is much to be said of the following months, the exodus from Nauvoo, crossing the Mississippi, helping those who did not follow the advice of their leaders in being prepared...but this was all behind them, their future lay in the west. By this time Heber's family consisted of at least thirty eight wives, six small children and two married children and their families. However the thirty or so of his family going west with him consisted of twelve to fourteen wives, including Vilate, Ellen Sanders, Harriet Sanders, Sarah Lawrence, Sarah Peak, Christeen Golden and the pregnant Sarah Ann Whitney; Vilate's four small sons, Helen and her husband Horace Whitney, William and his wife Mary and their daughter and Heber's adopted sons. (500 wagons and 3,000 people)

A few journals give a romantic cast to the exodus, but the worst part of the entire journey from Nauvoo to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake was the beginning....They averaged under normal conditions, two miles an hour. It took a month to cover the first 100 miles.

As the camp moved west, changes and improvements in organization became necessary. Many of the original families for various reasons had returned to Nauvoo and bad weather and roads had scattered others. By April 14, they were near the Missouri boundary, when a courier arrived with a letter from Nauvoo for Ellen Kimball. It told her of the safe birth of a son to William Clayton. As a result of this joyous news from Ellen to William, the next morning he went off by himself and wrote the famous hymn, "Come, Come Ye Saints."

By 24th April, the Pioneers had reached a place they called Garden Grove, halfway across Iowa. Heber asked his adopted son to keep a Journal for him. Some of his personal comments of the Kimball family were, "...good, faithful, prayerful, etc., but some were..." "William has but little faith and neglects prayers. Helen is disobedient to her parents. Heber's young sons were pretty good, sassy or disobedient. Harriet Sanders was inclined to jealousy, and Sarah Peak was not very strong in the faith, and proud and jealous, which did indicate that difficulties had already developed in the Kimball family. After over two and a half months of Iowa mud, domestic problems, Heber lost his customary good nature. He assembled the camp and thundered a few denunciations. The people tried to do better and special group prayers were held.

As the Saints trudged on, it became necessary to find a campsite in early September, which was decided to become their Winter Quarters.....Florence, Nebraska. At Winter Quarters, Heber first consolidated and housed his sprawling family and many dependents. He had at least twenty-five of his wives and twelve of his children with him in Winter Quarters, but not necessarily under his immediate care.

In early January 1847, Heber and Brigham began readying a pioneer company to start for the Rocky Mountains, sometime between April and May, which was the traditional time to head west. Only those who were able-bodied were considered best able to spend that winter in the Valley. He planned to bring the rest west when the final trip was made in 1848. In any case, he took with him but one wife, Ellen Sanders; his son-in-law, Horace Whitney, Vilate's nephew Carlos Murray and five of his adopted sons, Howard Egan, William King, Hosea Cushing, George Billings and Hans Hansen. The bulk of the Kimball family remained in Winter Quarters until the 1848 trek west. Of this group only Ellen Sanders and Hans Hansen remained in the Salt Lake Valley through the first winter. She was his "strong young Norwegian wife."

On April 5th, Heber moved three wagons out, but returned to Winter Quarters to meet with John Taylor who had just arrived from England with some special instruments for Orson Pratt. The elite fast moving band of Pioneers were not just taking themselves to the Valley, they were charting a road which the Saints and others would use for more than twenty years. At the insistence of Brigham's brother Lorenzo that he take his wife Harriet and two children, Brigham decided to take Clara Decker, Harriet's daughter, thus making the three women in the party.

In the beginning, Heber and Brigham occupied the same wagon, but by early May however, Heber was in a private wagon with Ellen. Their child Samuel Chase who was born February 3, 1848, was one of the first white births in the Salt Lake Valley. As Heber by then was in Winter Quarters making ready for the rest of his family, the little son died before his father returned. Ellen had her home on City Creek.

These three women entered the Valley in 1847 with the Pioneers, but they were not the only women in the company. By then six females among the Mississippi Saints had joined them at Fort Laramie, so nine women and girls entered the Valley together. History has recorded little of the activities of these women and children during the trek. From the journal of Lorenzo Young which was kept by his wife, they remain only in the shadows. There are few references.....baking, washing, being sick, Ellen Sanders almost setting a wagon on fire, Harriet Young's children being unhurt when a wagon overturned, but that is about all.

From "Heartthrobs of the West," this is given: They learned to make butter on a march by the dashing of the wagon, and so nicely to calculate the working of barm in the jolting heats, that, as soon after the halt as an oven could be dug in the hillside and heated, their well-kneaded loaf was ready for baking, and produced good leavened bread for supper." Heber invented a new furnace for burning the buffalo chips more slowly. He first dug a hole in the ground about 15 inches long and 8 inches deep, into which the dried chips were piled. Then at each end and about 8 inches from this he dug another hole about the same size and depth and at the bottom of the partition made a hole about 3 in in diameter, which made a good draft.

The Pioneers of 1847 were much better disciplined than was Zion's Camp of 1834, or the crossing of Iowa in 1846. This was largely the result of a revelation given by Brigham Young on January 14, 1847, and is known today as Section 136 of the Doctrine & Covenants. It gave details on camp organization. The Mormons never used professional guides. They preferred to "trust in the Lord" and pick up trail savy as they moved along. The scouting assignment was vital, in that whatever might prove dangerous to man or beast had to be anticipated. They had a job to do and they wanted to do it as simply expeditiously and conveniently as possible.

Heber's journal reveals clearly the high adventure of the Pioneer crossing of the plains. His positive reaction accords well with others who had similar experiences. A study of 135 Pioneer journals written between 1847 and 1866 found that none contained a negative assessment of the Great Plains as a region. After it was over, Heber said, "It was pretty hard and laborious, I admit, but it was one of the pleasantest journeys I ever performed. He had a great zest for life and adventure as they went along, he went hunting, riding, fishing, exploring caves, stood guard, scouted, was chased by a she-bear, amused himself by naming several creeks, and became acquainted with the Indians and the buffalo. Characteristically, if Heber had any worries or troubles on the trail, he did not record them. He seemed to have enjoyed the trek.

Brigham and Heber had studied Fremont's account and maps of the area, but into which of the several unclaimed valleys? They asked everyone they met about the area. The hardy band of pioneers

asked Brigham Young daily, where were they going, when would they reach there, what would the place be like, why not this or that plan....add to these mind afflictions the unbroken roads of the desert wilds, Indians, wild animals, death, birth, sickness, hunger, weariness and above all, the dark uncertainty of the future, these would assail the mind at times and cloud faith in spite of everything. Yet it is certain that he knew not the exact location nor would he know till he arrived at the place he had seen in vision.

By noon on July 12, they had made camp along Coyote Creek near the present Wyoming-Utah border. Here Pres Young was suddenly stricken with tick fever, and remained ill for nearly two weeks. For the rest of the journey the Pioneers split into three groups....Pratt's vanguard blazing the trail, the main portion following and a rear guard which stayed with Brigham and Heber. Pratt's company sighted the Valley on July 19, and scouted it on the 21st. On the 22nd at about 5:30 pm, the main company arrived in the Valley via Emigration Canyon. Brigham had told them to go northwest where a creek was, and could be used for irrigating. By damming up the water, they were able to plow the hard ground in order to plant the potatoes. How Brigham was aware of the existence of the stream, puzzled Erastus Snow, but two hours after their arrival, they began to plow and built the dam that afternoon to irrigate the sod.

The next day was July 24th, the second most important day in the Mormon calendar, the making of the official entrance into the Valley. They beheld the Great Valley of the Salt Lake spreading before them, but as Brigham lay there in the wagon, he saw in vision, the valley filled with homes, a Temple with it's heaven-reaching spires. It was the beginning of the fulfilment of his vision,.....This is the right place, drive on!

What were the feelings and views of the three women who had accompanied the advance guard of Pioneers" Harriet Young, wife of Lorenzo Young cried out at the desolation about her. Weak and weary as I am, I would rather go a thousand miles farther than remain in such a forsaken place. But she was a heroine and quietly accepted her lot, she knew that this was to be the place. Ellen Kimball, wife of Heber said nothing....but she worked with zeal to make a home in the wilderness. Clara Decker Young, Brigham's lovely young wife, said "I am satisfied." There are no trees, but they can be planted, and she went calmly to work making a peaceful home out of wagon boxes.

Thereafter the days of Heber and Brigham were crowded with the supervision of laying out a city, planting potatoes, corn, beans, peas, buckwheat, and other crops, assigning building lots, dealing with the Indians, building homes, a fort, a bowery, and fences, repairing equipment and exploring. They even tried bathing in the warm springs and at a place they called Black Rock by the Great Salt Lake.

By Sunday, on a hot August 22nd, it was time to plan to return to Winter Quarters to prepare for the final migration the following year. Five days later Heber bade farewell to Ellen Sanders, then four months pregnant, saddled up and left with Brigham and 106 others for Winter Quarters. Over 100 Pioneers including all the women, remained in the Valley.

The return trip proved satisfactory, they accomplished more than they expected. They lost not a horse, mule or ox, but through carelessness, the blessings of the Lord had been with them. They arrived about sunset on Oct 31st to streets crowded with people. A journey of over 2,200 miles and nearly seven months was successfully and finally completed. A road had been charted and a colony planted. The exodus of the body of the Church would be most difficult as it would be comprised of old and young men and women and children. Still as a result of experience and discipline, the three companies made the trek surprisingly well and fast. This was the beginning of the fulfilment of Brigham Young's vision, the "place in the tops of the Rocky Mountains, foretold by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

But what of Ellen Sanders, the young Norwegian wife of Heber Kimball? She was always the sweet, calm, never tiring, who was there when she was needed. By 1855, she is listed in his immediate family with twins, Joseph and Augusta, (first set born in the valley) and Rosalia. She is noted to have lived longer than any of Heber's children. (65--22 Feb 1950) Jedediah Heber was born March 10, 1855.

Once Adelia one of Heber's wives, suffered an infected hand and could do little. For weeks she was waited on and cared for by others, Ellen Sanders in particular.

In July 1850, Sondra Sanders crossed the plains and came to the Salt Lake Valley. He was so happy to be near his sisters, that he decided not to go on to California. He then took up land three miles south of Murray and farmed it. He bought seed wheat from Heber Kimball, and put in about eight acres of wheat. He stayed here until 1852, when some of the boys decided they had stock they wanted to get driven to California. Brigham Young warned them before they went, that they wouldn't make much. Sondra rented out his land for 4 summers, all the wheat he had sown and \$40 besides....that was how he came out by going to California.

In 1857, Sondra met a beautiful young girl from Sweden. Her family had joined the Church before coming to the Valley. Her name was Anna Jorgenson or Yorgenson. They were married soon after, and he built a home on his land. They were blessed with nine children before Anna took sick when the last little girl was six weeks old. My grandfather, Peter James was but a young boy, but he remembered the happy times they had as a family. Sondra later married Anna Marie Larson by whom he had two more children.

In the Deseret News of April 14, 1934, it says of Ellen Sanders Kimball: She still owned property in Salt Lake, and often visited from her new home in the North. In the summer of 1871, she returned for the last time to the Valley to consult a physician about a "dropsical condition," and suffering a relapse, was taken to the home of her brother, Sondra Sanders, in South Cottonwood, where she died November 22, 1871.

"Without fanfair but full of kindness and courage, she had accepted the call to be one of but three women to accompany the pioneer vanguard to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. She was proud to be the first Norwegian to set foot in the New Promised Land."

Compiled by Virginia Sanders Pendleton