

DUP AF Book 2
Biographical Sketch
of
Catherine Ingreberg Neilson Olsen

by Cynthia Adams Okey

Pioneer Year 1854
Sailed on the Benjamin Adams

Born 13 Oct 1829 in Narreaux, Brobst, Denmark
Married in February 1854 to Captain Hans Peter Olsen

Died 8 Dec 1915
Buried in the American Fork City Cemetery

Daughter of Christian Neilson and Annie Marie Neilson. Born in Narreaux, Brobst, Denmark, October 13, 1829. In her early life she attended the public schools in her native land. She majored in sewing and dressmaking and was found to be very apt with her needle and scissors thus obtaining employment among the choicest people in Denmark. When she was home, before her marriage, they washed but once a year, as they had ninety suits of underwear, and she having done most of the family sewing. They were early risers, as they lived in the land near the midnight sun. Would work between twelve to sixteen hours and have five meals a day. They took their grain or barley and spread it out in some large place to sprout, from this they made their beer. This was always on hand and use it with their meals, but no one was ever seen intoxicated.

During this time her parents had heard of a new Gospel, through the missionary labors of Mormon Elders. Erastus Snow was one of them, in fact, he was the first Elder to open the Scandinavian Mission. Sister Olsen heard these Mormon Missionaries and believed their teachings as it sounded true and scriptural. She was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, commonly known as Mormonism, Nov. 3, 1853. Was married in February 1854 to Captain Hans Peter Olsen before sailing to America. They emigrated that same year in one of the first Companies from Scandinavia. The vessel that they came over in was named "Benjamin Adams." Brother Olsen, her husband, was Captain of the ship and in charge of the company of emigrants. In crossing the North Sea they encountered a rough journey and many of the company suffered from exposure and cold. In these early voyages only sail boats were used and some days they were drifted backwards instead of going forward as they desired. There were 378 Scandinavians and 6 Brittishers on board and most of them were seasick. A further sorrow was caused when Cholera broke out among them; many died and were buried in a watery grave. They suffered for loss of food, their faith was tested to a straining point, but after a long tiresome journey they finally landed in New Orleans, destitute and without means also among a strange people and with a different language. They remained here working the best they could to obtain the necessary

means and food to continue their journey. As they journeyed westward by ox team they were compelled to stop at times to earn enough to supply their needs, and were five months in making the journey. The women as well as the men walked most of the way fording the rivers and endured many hardships. Arriving in Salt Lake City, Utah, Oct. 5, 1854.

They remained in Salt Lake City for a year or two and then moved to American Fork, Utah. Being of a very independent nature, they obtained a lot from John Eldredge, and since they needed their home immediately, they built them a dug out, with log roof covered with dirt and straw, with one door and a precious glass window arranged at the south.

In 1856 the Olsens moved to Carson Valley, Nevada, under the call of President Brigham Young. In 1857 when Johnston's Army came to suppress a supposed rebellion of the Mormons, Pres. Young called them back to Utah. There were many other families called to go at the same time. When called to come back some came and others remained but the Olsens, true to their leaders, came back.

In 1865 another call came to go down and settle near Moapa, in the southern part of the State. Mrs. Olsen told of an incident, that, while making the journey to the Muddy Mission, they found the root of a plant, which made a very good suds, to be used for laundry purposes. While in the Muddy Mission, Brother Olsen and their only daughter took the cholera and both died in a short time of each other. They were very poor, and the necessary lumber and materials needed for their burial was not a hand, so they were compelled to use one of their wagon boxes for the coffins and some cloth Pres. Young advised them to take to make Temple Clothing, was used for the burial clothes of both father and child. With slow mail service there was of necessity a long wait before they got words to their relatives.

Brother Cunningham of American Fork was requested to go down and bring Sister Olsen and the other children, Peter, Ammon and Justenus, to their first little dug out home in American Fork. Sister Olsen, now a widow with three children was up against another severe trial, but she was industrious and a hard and constant

worker. She wove cloth and carpets and further she planed flax seed, cultivated, gathered, spun, colored and wove it and made it into cloth, which she cut and sewed for use of the family. She was thrifty, intelligent, capable, and was successful in maintaining her family and educating them. Through her sacrifice she was able to send Justenus to the Brigham Young Academy. He later became an Attorney of California. He having married there and they one child, a daughter. Ammon, another son, will always be remembered as an unusual mathematician. He could even corner Br. Joseph B. Forbes.

Sister Olsen was a Sunday School teacher for a number of years. She was a liberal giver to the Relief Society and was strictly honest in her dealings.

Another tragic incident happened to the Olsen family. The eldest son, Peter, came into possession of a bomb from Camp Floyd, which had been prepared for the Soldiers of Johnston's Army. Peter being curious to see what was in it, heated on of his mother's knitting needles and proceeded to pick it while he held it between his knees. An explosion took place, blowing the window out and setting the bed on fire. He was very much mutilated and killed. He was choice son and her hopes and aspirations were again very much shattered in this sad bereavement.

After returning from the Muddy Mission, through her industrious and thrifty management she built a log house and lived in that for many years and later through her saving and wise planning she built an adobe house which is now standing, located on the southwest corner of fir East and Second south, which shows the spirit of progressiveness with which she was endowed.

She lived in American Fork the remainder of her life and her friends and neighbors who knew her best - loved her most. She died a faithful member of the Church, December 8, 1915 and was buried in the American Fork City Cemetery, where she awaits her glorious resurrection.

The following lines have been written by one of her neighbors,
Cynthia Adams Okey.

I once had a splendid neighbor
Whom I often went to see,
A little grey haired lady
And was dearly loved by me.

She came from her native country,
From a land across the sea.
And travelled here to Zion
To make a home where they be free.

No task too great for her to undertake,
She sewed, reaped and spun.
She milked, churned and baked,
From early morning till the setting sun.

It was not rare in pioneer days
For people to do and dare
So when they were called to the Muddy
They were willing to do their share.

It meant breaking new land again
It meant building another home,
But answering the call of their leader
Meant more than having to roam.

But while upon that Mission
In serving her country and her God
Her husband and her only daughter
Were lain beneath the sod.

She bravely met the trials,
She felt a sustaining power
Humbly, uncomplainingly she went to work

And done her best every hour.
Pray God to bless the memory of her
For those that are left behind
And lead them on to success
By knowing of her kind.