

DUP AF Book 1 page 108

Biographical Sketch

of

Martin Hansen

written by himself

Pioneer Year: 1857

Sailed on The Westmoreland

Born: 30 Jan 1847, Denmark

I Martin Hansen American Fork Utah. Was born in Denmark January 30, 1847. When ten years old, I with my parents. Christian Hansen and Enger Mortensen Hansen, his wife and family left Denmark in the year 1857 to come to America. Father loaned the Pettersons what money they lacked to pay their fare to Utah. So both families with other saints left Copenhagen Denmark for Liverpool England. From there we boarded a sailing vessel named Westmoreland, this ship sailed from Liverpool England with 544 saints mostly Scandinavians. The saints were under the direction of Mathias Cowley.

The weather being unusually calm our progress was very slow. We were thirteen weeks on the ocean. Hardships were endured while on the ocean, and a number of deaths occurred during the voyage. The dead were wrapped in sheets and a weight tied to their feet, they were then laid flat on a board on their backs, one edge of the board was laid on the edge of the vessel the other end held on a level with the edge of the vessel, then after a short service was held, the inner end of the board was raised up and the Body slid of feet first into the ocean. The weight at their feet sinking them to the bottom of the ocean.

[I remember being very sick. My father brought me upon the deck and I was nearly choking to death for a drink as we were out of drinking water. I begged father to give me a drink out of the ocean and he told me it was salty and not fit to drink. Nothing would do but that I have a drink and so to satisfy me he tied a string to a can and let it down and got it full of water for me. He handed it to me and when drinking I nearly strangled to death. Then father had a good laugh at my experience, but it cured my sea-sickness.]

When after a tiresome voyage we landed in the harbor of Philadelphia in a heavy rain storm. The next day we boarded the train and traveled west to Iowa City arriving there June 9, 1857. A handcart company was then formed. And the saints loaded their belongings on the handcarts, and started west. We endured many hardships pulling and pushing the carts up and down the hills and through sand and mud, wading streams of water and crossing rivers, we found we had to much load and were nearly all worn out. A halt

was called and a meeting was pronounced, that we might counsel as to what was best to do, and it was agreed that we lighten our loads by leaving on the camping ground such things as they could spare the best. It was a shame to see so many good things left such as feather beds, beddings and many other articles that would have been of grate use to them on their journey.

We then traveled on until we came to Omaha here Ole Petterson and family gave out had to stop their journey. This was either the latter part of June or the first part of July 1857 as near as I can remember. Biding our friends the Petterson family goodbye we continued our journey. But before leaving Omaha the saints concluded they still had too much load. So the Captain called a meeting to ascertain how much money and would donate to buy a team and wagon, to haul our trunks of clothing and heavy parts of our loads. The wagon and mule team costing \$700, when the team and wagon was loaded. Fathers heavy trunk of all our best clothing was put in the bottom of the wagon and covered up with everybody's goods in the company, were now ready to leave to leave Omaha and continue our journey westward. We got along fine until we got 100 miles west of Omaha when father took sick and was not able to help mother pull the handcart. So the captain sent a man to help mother thinking father would soon be better, we got twenty miles farther west then mother gave out, this was then 120 miles out of Omaha, we were now camped on a branch of the Missouri River, across the river from our camp was a small settlement called Genoa, they were nearly all Mormons, except a few cattlemen. A man across the river seeing our camp came across to our camp to see what chance there was to go with the company on to Utah. He told the captain he had 260 acres of land he would give for a chance to go with the company to Utah with the saints. So father being sick and mother not able to go on they decided to remain and let the man go in our place, our trunk with all our best clothing in, our trunk being on the bottom of the wagon and being too much trouble to unload. It was given to a friend of Fathers to take care of until such a time that we might be able to continue our journey to the valleys of the mountains. Then bidding our friends and saints goodbye, we crossed

the river to our new home, and the company started again on their journey westward.

Our house was a dugout a square hole dug into the side of a hill with a log front with one window and a door, the roof was logs and willows and dirt, a fireplace in the back to cook on and keep us warm, a few steps down to a dirt floor.

This man had broken up a few acres of land and planted some potatoes and squash. We lived on those potatoes and squash for three weeks. Boiled with the jackets on and had to eat them with no salt or pepper, and never tasted bread or meat during the three weeks. Father had to go back to Omaha to work for flour that we might have bread to eat as we could neither buy flour nor bread there. In fact we had no money to buy with so it was necessary to hunt work or starve, which we nearly did before we heard from him. But at last low and behold 100 pounds of flour and a piece of bacon arrived after 3 weeks for waiting, and how it did gladden our hearts, when mother opened the sack of flour. I shall never forget it, how us nearly starved children stood around mother while she opened the sack ready to dive our hands into the flour which we surely did, we ate dry flour until we nearly choked. But mother soon had some of the flour mixed up with water without salt or raising and baked it in the skillet. Now just imagine us eating this kind of bread and calling it good like you would enjoy a piece of cake.

During the winter of 1857, father kept sending us something to eat and clothing to wear. Here I want to relate a little thing that happened while father was away. This was before father sent us our flour. Mother sent me to a ranch to get some buttermilk, when I got to the ranch they were just eating their dinner it was a chicken dinner and of course I had to wait while they got through, and as I stood there waiting and watching them eat wishing all the time that they would give me a crust of bread or a chicken bone to pick. But no all the crusts and bones went under the table for the cats, and I had none. At last the dinner was over and I got my buttermilk and was ready to go home. Crossing the dooryard of this house I spied the feet of the chicken they had killed for dinner. I picked up both feet and took them home. I scalded and cleaned them up nice and put

them in a saucepan to boil. And while they were boiling I peeled some potatoes, mother watching me all the time. I looked up into her face and said, look mother, there is beads on our soup. Yes, she said, with tears in her eyes. It looks like real chicken soup put your potatoes in and your dinner will soon be ready when ready Mother and I sat down and ate our chicken dinner together. The rest of the children were out playing with some of our neighbors boys and girls and missed the chicken dinner.

Now this place Genoa was a very nice place to make homes. The country to the north was small rolling hills where different kinds of wild animals roamed. I remember me and my 2 older sisters took a stroll one day up over some of the hills and down into a swamp where tall bunches of wheat and grass or as some call it crazy grass, this was in the spring of 1858. While tramping this grass we run into a little baby deer it raised its head and looked at us but never offered to get up. I said to my sisters I was going to take it home and show it to father, and I went up to it and picked it up in my arms no sooner done had I done so till it began to struggle and make a noise and it soon brought help for coming down the hill on the opposite side we beheld a bunch of deer coming our way. I dropped the deer and we made tracks as fast as we could for home. When the deer found their offspring alright they stopped and we were glad of it. When we got home and told story to father and mother our story quite excited father as he was a great sportsman in his younger days with a gun. He left his work, got his gun and told me to come along and show him where you seen the deer and maybe we can get one, and away we went. When we came to where we had dropped the baby deer, there was no deer to be seen but father knew we had seen the deer alright for their tracks was there. So we followed their tracks over hill and down another until we came to a stream of water where grew both brush and cottonwood trees, and we lost their tracks and gave them up and turned to go back home. But, instead of going back the way we came we took the way to the valley around under the hills. And as we were about half way home father drew my attention to something I would not have noticed. He pointed in front of us, do you see this place is where there has been a city some time. Do you

see all those mounds that looks like piles of dirt. I said yes, Well them piles of dirt is where building has been. See here between are the streets as plain as can be. We farther investigated and found he was right. For on these mounds where we found pieces of glass and crockery, brick dust and broken dishes streets running both ways leaving square blocks. Well it was getting late and I tired so we started for home. This was a most beautiful place for to make homes looking east from our home for miles was a field of grass. Father with his sithe mowed quite a lot of grass and had little stacks of hay over all the best parts of the field. Along about the center of our land there was a knoll-like raise, this nole was the home of Prairie Dogs and rattlesnakes. The dogs had holes all over the nole and the dogs and snakes lived together in the same house. In the fall the snakes would crawl down in the hole and lay on the bottom, the dogs keeping them warm. Looking south was a branch of the Missouri river running through our 160 acres of land. On the banks of the river on both sides grew much timber of all size, also wild grapes Potawatama plums and Raspberries both red and black on every hand.

Father concluded we had lived in the old dugout long enough and decided to build a log cabin. And I being the oldest son helped all I could to get the logs cut and the new house put up. Father got the loan of a neighbors team to haul the logs from the river bank to where we built the house, not far from the dug-out. When the house was built and we moved into it we began to enjoy life a little better, and enjoyed better health. It was now time to put in a crop that we might have something to live on the next coming winter. So, by the help of our neighbors team we were able to put in quite a good crop of wheat and potatoes and other little things to live upon. Father bought a few chickens and a cow and we began to get on our feet again.

Soon after we moved into our new house two young men came to us with their bedding on their back, and wanted to know if they could have the use of the dugout and bunks as they wanted a place to sleep that night. Father told them they could and welcome. They having their own bedding they made their bed on one of the bunks and soon went to sleep. When morning came one said to the other,

what has been the matter with one of your legs? It has been as cold as ice all night. The other says to him it was your leg, not mine. As they began to move to move they heard a hissing noise, they jumped and threw the covers and there lay a large rattle snake that had crawled in between them during the night, the snake was as much scared as them. It crawled up on the pillows and one of the men shot it with his pistol. Such was the story told to us the next morning.

During the spring and summer of 1858 we did fine. Father killed plenty of wild game for us to eat, and I went to the river very often and caught plenty of fish. One day I caught one that weighed twenty lbs. I had a time to land it, not before I had been pulled back into the river three times did I succeed. Another time I caught a large turtle which put an end to my fishing that day for I did not dare to get the hook out of his mouth for fear of getting bit. Pretty soon he started to walk off and tried to run so I walked behind him and headed him into the road and made him walk all the way home. On my way home I met a man who told me that he was good to eat and that his meat was like a chicken. When I got home I pulled the turtle's head over a block and father chopped his head off. The back of the turtle very beautiful so many different colors, the under side was ruff. But he sure made us a good dinner we could not tell it from chicken. Father made a little doll cradle for my sisters by putting two rockers on it.

The next day I went to the river for more fish, and as it happened there was a small company of emigrants at the new ferry boat, that they had just built to take wagons across, one wagon at a time. One team to each wagon. A man seeing me fishing up the river come to see what I was a doing. He asked if I had caught any. One, I told him. Will you sell it to me? I told him yes and got him the fish. Oh, that is a nice one I will give a dollar for it. He gave me the money and went for camp. He had not been gone long before I had another the same size, as soon as the man got to camp another come to see if he could get one, and I sold the other to him for one dollar. When he got to camp another man came but I did not have one for him, quite disappointed he started back and had nearly got there when I caught another. I picked up the fish and started after him. The wagons were

all across and they were on the move again. But seeing me coming, came back to meet me and got his fish and I got the dollar. When I got home and handed Father the three dollars it gave him quite a surprise and of course I had to tell it all as it had happened before he was satisfied. But he thought I had done pretty well for one day.

Soon after this fishing trip we hear a grate noise down by the river. And standing by our house we beheld a Battle between two tribes of Indians. This sure made us feel kind a funny when some of the Indians came up to us and wanted us to help them. We told them we could not do that. But soon the tribe that wanted our help drove the other tribe across the river on their own hunting grounds. Then that ended their trouble for the time being. But not for very long with us, for along about harvest time of 1858 the Indians urged on by some big cattle men or ranch owners gave the Mormons of this little settlement just 48 hours to pack up what we could take with us and leave the rest. Our houses and our land, and our crops ready to harvest and go back to Omaha.

When we got to Omaha, father with his family crossed the river to Council Bluffs. Here we met our old friend Ole Petterson and Family. And father had found many kind friends while he was here working for our flour and other things for our support in Genoa the place we were driven from. These friends of Father's were ready and willing to help him and his family on every hand. Pettersen did not live in Counclebluff but came there to do their trading or shipping. We lived on a farm and was doing fine. Father stayed in Counclebluff through the winter of 1858 and also 1859.

When we move to Council Bluffs we could not rent a house in Counclebluff so we had to go to a small place called Crisent City where we got a frame house to live in until a vacant house could be rented in Counclebluff. But we did not have to live there very long before we found a vacant house in the Bluffs.

Here I will relate a few things that took place while we lived in Crescent City. This little town was located between two small rolling hills, that I could almost throw a stone from side to the other, The

house we lived in was close against the hill on the north side of this kind of a canyon.

This side of the hill facing the sun was a grate place for land turdels. They were all over the side hill. One day I was left home alone on the hill catching these harmless things, and packed them to the house and put them in the kitchen and turned them loose. I kept this up as long as I could find any, until the kitchen floor was alive with them all sizes of them. I tell you I was proud of my turtle pets. They were tame, when you would go near them they would draw their head and legs in their shell, and let you pick them up and never offer to harm you now this was a day of joy for me until mother came home and went into the kitchen and almost screamed and wanted to know got in the house. I told her I had caught them and put them in here so they would not get away. Well I had to get them out and mighty quick.

While in this place my father got in with a man named Benson, who was a carpenter and a wagon maker. And he gave father quite a lot of work helping him with his work. But in time Benson and all of us moved to Counclebluff where business was much better. I remember that I and Neils Benson drove a large pig and it was hot whether and we had to let the pig rest quite often, and while we were resting a little snake of many colors came between us. Father had plenty of work all the time we were in Counclebluff. And sometimes playing his fiddle to parties at night making quite a lot of money that way.

In 1860 we began to think about making preparation for our journey to Utah. Intending to do so the following year. While father and mother was doing this, us children were not idle for we were all going to school learning all we could. Father bought him a second-hand wagon and had it overhauled and fixed up in good shape. Here is where Ole Petterson came in to help father out in return for the help father gave him. For Petterson and family had made good on the farm, and as able to help father out, and enough to see himself and family through to Utah. Petterson let us have enough to buy one yoke of cattle, we had 2 cows so we yoked them up along with the cattle. So in the spring of 1861 we with a small company of Saints Ole

Peterson and family came with us. We had a very pleasant trip crossing the plains while us children had to walk nearly all the way we surely had lots of good times at nights around our camp fires having all kinds of games, singing songs, and telling stories. When traveling along in the day time we very often run across berries of different kinds, wild currents both yellow and black, and sand cherries which were as large as our tame cherries. I remember one day a bunch of us boys and girls made up our minds to go barefooted and ahead of the wagons. We got quite a ways a head when we saw a bunch of chokecherries bushes a little way of the road side. Just loaded with cherries, well nothing would do but have some of those cherries so we left the road for the bushes. We broke a lot of limbs till we all had our arms full. By this time the wagons had got quite a little ahead of us, so we thought would cut across lots for the road took a turn.

So we started but had not gone far when we came to a little knoll facing the sun, just then one of us spied a rattler and I was going to stop and kill it. But before I could do so we heard the rattle all around us. We were in a rattle snake den and us all barefooted. We got away from them alright. But run into something worse for we ran into a lot of prickly pears and sure had a time of our life pulling those prickley things out of one another's feet, for we could not sit down for fear of getting them somewhere else. Places I do not care to mention. But we got back to the road again all right with thankful hearts.

The wagons by this time had got quite a start on us and it took quite a while for us to catch up. We did not try leaving the road barefooted anymore. It was some lesson.

When we neared the valleys of the mountains we met the soldiers of Johnson's army returning from Utah on the way East. Then soon after that we arrived in Salt Lake City. We rested a few days then we started south for American Fork where we made our home.

We did not live here long before we lost our dear mother and also a little brother. Mother died February the 5th, 1862 and was

followed by our little brother Joseph 3 years after, dieing February 20, 1865. They were both buried in the old cemetery.