



"Emigrants departing for America" Painting by Edvard Petersen

MARIA SHAWCROFT--HER STORY

My name is Ane Maria Jensen. I was born on a farm near the village of Borglum, in the county of Hjorring in Vendyssel, Denmark and I am pleased to be able to tell my story. I lived my first nine years in this beautiful country, and although I emigrated to America and never returned to my land of birth, I always carried memories and Danish traditions on in my life. It pleased me to pass some of the culture of my homeland on to my children, and perhaps even to their children after them.

The village of Borglum is rich with history, being very, very old. The villagers of Borglum have always been fisherman and farmers, fiercely independent and hard working. For centuries before I was born, the people who lived as peasants were forbidden by very strict laws never to move or travel from place to place, so I know that most of my ancestors were born, lived and died right around this area of Denmark. Borglum is located near the beach in the most northern part of the peninsula. Even though the area was known to have poor soil with a great deal of sand that was always being blown in by the North Sea winds, the farmers toiled to make it a very productive, fertile area. My own father was a farmer, and my uncle was a tailor.

Religion had a very strong influence in our area and for a time the Catholic headquarters in northern Denmark were located in Borglum. Monasteries and cathedrals were the most important buildings in our city. After Lutheranism was declared the state religion all of the Catholic properties were confiscated by the state in 1568 and the buildings all fell into disrepair. Fortunately, a man purchased the monastery and restored it and it is now one of the most popular tourist attractions in our area because it is so ancient.

My father was Jens Jensen Loth. I'm sure that you notice that there are many, many Jens Jensens, Jens Christensens, and so on, so it was common to add some other surname to help identify one Jens Jensen from another. My father was born in an area called Loth--so he chose the surname of Loth, although he dropped this name when he went to America. He was born in Tolstrup on July 5, 1801 and my mother, Maren Anderson was born nearby in the village of Vijby on July 15, 1813.

My brothers were all required to attend school, but in those days it was considered much more important for girls to learn how to run a home than it was to learn how to read. I enjoyed a happy childhood and remember outings to the sea and playing with my brothers, sister and cousins. I worked around the home herding milk cows, making butter and cheese, and caring for the chickens and geese. I most enjoyed learning the art of Danish cooking alongside my mother. My favorite times were when our neighbors and friends would come over to help with a quilt, sew, eat and visit the entire day. I mostly enjoyed playing with the children and eating the delicious food that was common in our home. Neighbors were close to each other in those days and were always helping each other with whatever they needed. This was an important tradition that I carried with me to my final days, and I hope my descendants are carrying on this same practice.

A major turning point in our lives and in the lives of many around us was when missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints came to preach in our area. My uncle, Jens Christen Andersen Weibye, was very enthusiastic and joined with them right away but my parents were very independent and wanted to study it out and make up their own minds. I was the first one in my family to choose to join with the Mormons and I can clearly remember watching the men chop a hole in the ice in the river for me to be baptized in on the 13th of April, 1861. Later on, one by one, my whole family was baptized. Perhaps they waited so that they could have warmer weather for their baptisms!

We had heard of others who were treated badly for joining with the Mormons, but we were not exposed to this persecution in Borglum. Many of our neighbors and friends also listened to the missionaries and joined the Church and at one time there were 700 members in our area. At this time in Denmark poverty was high, and living conditions were difficult. With our newfound religion we were anxious to join with the other Saints in America, so we joined with many others who emigrated to America about the same time. After we got permission to emigrate, traveled to Hamburg, Germany and left the port there destined for New York on a wonderful sailing ship called the "Franklin" with 323 others church members. To a young girl this was more adventure and excitement than I could stand!

My uncle, J.C A. Weibye kept meticulous records and journal entries and this is a description of our journey in his words:

"We went on board the Franklin in the evening of Tuesday and I was appointed to locate the emigrants in the bunks below deck. These bunks were so wide that three persons easily could have room in one of them side by side. After getting our baggage in order, we received our rations and provisions. These consisted of beef, pork, peas, beans, potatoes, pearl barley, rice, prunes, syrup, vinegar, pepper, coffee, tea, sugar, butter, rye bread, sea biscuits, water, flour, salted herring, salt and oil (for the lamps). We lighted 11 lanterns every night, 6 of which belonged to the ship and 5 to the emigrants. We hired an extra cook in Hamburg for 90 rigsdaler and besides him two of our brethren served as assistant cooks. We thus had our dinners nicely cooked in about the following routine. Sunday we had sweet soup, Monday, pea soup, Tuesday and Wednesday, rice, Thursday, pea soup, Friday, barley mush, and Saturday, herring and potatoes. Some of the emigrants carried the measles with them from home and

the disease soon spread to all parts of the ship, so that no less than 40 persons, mostly children, were attacked at once. Many of the emigrants were also suffering with diarrhea, which caused very much weakness of body. We lost the appetite for sea biscuits, but learned to soak them in water or tea from 8 to 12 hours, which softened them so that they could become more palatable. The sick were served twice a day with porridge made from them so that they could become more palatable. The sick were served twice a day with porridge made from barley rice or sago, and almost every day pancakes could be had by the hundreds for the sick who could not eat the "hard tack". Wheat bread was also baked for some of the old people. We held a council meeting every night and the sanitary conditions of the ship's apartments were attended to with great care. Three times a week the decks were washed and twice a week the ship was thoroughly fumigated by burning tar. A spirit of peace prevailed and very few difficulties occurred. The Captain and crew were good-natured and abliging, and so were the cooks, who even served the sick when they were not on duty.

At times we held meetings of worship on the upper and lower decks and every morning at 5 o'clock the signal for rising was given by the clarinet or accordion. At 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. a similar signal was sounded calling the Saints to assemble in their several districts for prayer. Most every day we amused ourselves a short time by dancing on the deck to music played by some of our brethren or a member of the crew. We could thus have had an enjoyable time had it not been for the sorrow occasioned by the many sick and dying among us on account of the measles. Up to this date (May 27) 3 adults and 43 children have died, nearly all from measles. During the last few days the chicken pox had also broken out among us and four cases have already developed. We have had head winds most of the time, otherwise we could have been in New York before now, for the "Franklin" is a first-class ship. We have been very little troubled with sea-sickness."

By a blessed stroke of luck my brothers and sisters escaped the measles, but my cousins Anemine and Petreane both got the disease. They survived the voyage but were weak. When we reached Hannibal, Missouri little 2 year old Anemine died. It was heartbreaking to lose our family and friends.

We had travelled by train and steamboat until we reached Florence, Nebraska and purchased the necessary supplies. Can you imagine being able to travel so far in just 10 days? After we purchased the supplies we needed we prepared for the journey to the west. Some of our party decided to stay behind in the States. Just a few days before we left a huge tornado and windstorm struck, with rain, thunder and the most frightening lightening. Two men were killed and one was badly injured. I remember holding on to my mother as we huddled in the wagon for shelter. Many tents and wagons were torn and damaged by this storm, but it wasn't much longer and we were finally traveling. My little heart was thrilled at the idea of meeting other children and joining with the other Saints in Utah.

The journey was long and slow and difficult but we found ways to have fun along the way. We traveled from July 14th to September 23rd, making about 7-10 miles per day. I remember that we had to stay on the north side of the Platte River all the time. We saw some Indians in Omaha--the first Indians I ever saw. They were all friendly to us as we traveled, for which I was very thankful.

We were very happy to finally arrive in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake where we were greeted and fed. After a few days we traveled south to the town of Moroni. My father was always a very frugal man and we were fortunate to have enough money to purchase some of the supplies we needed. Since it was September when we arrived it was too late to start farming so we worked on finding a place to live and getting feed for our livestock. We had

cows to milk and managed to get along. People in that town were very good to help each other. I learned English quickly and for the first time I got to attend school! I enjoyed learning, and most especially being able to read. We were taken in by all the people of Moroni and soon were invited to dances and parties and had friends and neighbors gathering at our home again.

Tragedy struck just nine months after we arrived in Moroni when my dear mother passed away. I think the trip across the plains must have been hard on her--I was never really sure what the real cause of her death was, but I think she was just worn out from the long trip and hard work. We missed her terribly and things got even worse when my father was remarried to Mary Jacobsen. She was a hard and mean woman. I found myself staying at the home of my married sister, Annie, most of the time and eventually went to live with her in a town close by called Fountain Green. Annie and I were always very close and her husband didn't seem to mind having the younger sister around.

In 1866 there was much excitement in Moroni and Fountain Green when the Black Hawk War began. We had to be constantly on guard to protect our homes and livestock. Finally a fort was built, but the troubles didn't end for at least six years. One of my friends, Louis Lund was killed and Jasper Robertson was wounded by Indians while herding stock near our home and forty horses were stolen. The boys were the only casualties but our livestock was constantly being stolen.

When I was living in Fountain Green I met the Shawcroft family who had joined the church in England and emigrated to Utah a few years earlier. John, their oldest son, was the main support of the family since his father William was crippled from a coal mining accident back in England. He was hard working and kind and we were married on February 9, 1874 when he was 27 and I was 22. I was the only one of my family who didn't marry someone of Danish descent.

We started having our family and I remember it to be a very busy time. John was away from home much of the time with his freighting business so it was up to me to care for the home and children and help John's family. I was quite good at milking a cow with a child on my knee at the same time!

It was about this time that John and I, along with a few other families from Sanpete County received a call from the President of the Church, John Taylor, to go to Colorado to help colonize and assist the other members of the church there. We had very mixed feelings about this challenge ahead of us. We couldn't bear to leave our home and friends, but I did not want to turn down the request of our leader, President Taylor. John left the decision up to me and I decided, after prayer and pondering that we should go. It was difficult to leave so many loved ones behind, but many of my family decided to relocate to Colorado with us.

The journey was long and hard and is a story for another day, but we finally arrived in the San Luis Valley and were again greeted and cared for by those who had gone before us. They had already begun planning for a town called Richfield. John's knowledge of freighting was very helpful as the men went to the mountains to haul out logs for cabins. We were lucky to have a long spell of mild weather because John was able to build us a nice three room cabin and the town built a meeting house before the winter came.

Life was good to us, but it was a busy time. John built a beautiful brick home in 1891 and more children came along. Besides our home and children to care for, I did whatever I could to help in the church. We women were always being called upon to sit up with sick people, sew burial clothes for those who passed on and sit up with them also. My specialty was making the shoes. I can recall having three quilts up at one time--one in the kitchen, one in the living room and one in my big bedroom. It was such a joy when some of the other Danish sisters would come over and we would work on our quilts together. I didn't feel so

alone in the world when they came over. On Sundays when people would gather here after meetings we would pile up the food and enjoy the afternoon together. I can still see the platters of ham and beef, tapioca pudding and much more. We also had the tradition of letting the grown-ups eat first!

Some of my favorite memories are travelling up to the mountains for family outings and working with the cattle. When my grandchildren started coming along it was even more fun. I can still picture little Howard asking for a treat--a piece of homemade bread with cream poured over it and adding a little bit of sugar and he would run out and eat it under the trees. I had a reputation for being the best cook in town and my specialty was Danish pastries and other Danish cooking. Of course, I tried to cook the English meals that John liked.

We worked hard all our lives to help our neighbors. When my children were sad that I was leaving to care for another family, I always asked them "What would happen if we needed someone's help someday?"

One summer day we were shocked with the news that my husband of 48 years had passed away suddenly while on an outing at the La Jara Reservoir doing what he loved best--fishing. He was such a vital, active man and such a leader for our family that it seemed unbelievable that he was gone. I threw myself into caring for my youngest daughter, Pearl, who was born with multiple handicaps. My greatest fear was not knowing who would care for her like I did after I was called home.

Eight years after John's death I caught pneumonia and I knew of only a few older people that survived it. I was ill for a long time, and finally I was laid to rest on April 10, 1930, leaving behind 10 wonderful children and a lifetime of rich experiences and traditions which I hope my descendants will remember me by.

"There was a flower whose petals were faith, courage, love, service, humility, work, sorrow, kindness, thrift and devotion--a flower long gone, whose fragrance lingers on--and on--and on". author unknown