

MAREN JENSEN
CHRISTEN CHRISTENSEN AND KIRSTINE SKRIVER WANGSGARD
AND CHRISTEN CHRISTENSEN WANGSGAARD

BIOGRAPHY

Maren Jensen's world existed within the walls of the large estate wherein she worked in Hvidbjerg, Denmark. Maren possessed nothing of the material things of life, but as a normal child of God, she was owner of valuable characteristics -- ambition, aspiration, courage, and above all - love.

During her early years of girlhood she began to work at the Skibsted estate. She was shy in her nature, for the laboring class of people in Denmark was ruled by an iron hand. Maren, therefore, went quietly about her work, scarcely lifting her head when spoken to by "her superiors."

Skibsted's son became aware of her beauty and loveliness and began making it a daily custom to find an excuse to come to the kitchen or wherever Maren happened to be. Little by little he drew her out of her shyness until she looked forward to his visits fully as much as he. There grew a great secret love within each heart -- secret to the world, but joyfully shared with one another. And as a consummation of that love there came a child -- a boy, and she called him Christen.

Young Skibsted then went to his father and told of his love for the little servant girl. He asked parental permission to make her his wife. His father was horrified at the son's request and flew into a raging fury. He declared that the girl was far below their level -- that she would bring disgrace upon the name of Skibsted. He warned his son that any actions as these would relinquish his right as an heir to the Skibsted estate -- that he must leave his home forever, and that no longer should they carry the relationship of father and son.

With these words burning within his ears, young Skibsted left his father. He had not the will power to defend the little girl whose love he had taken. Nor had he the courage and unselfishness to give up his worldly possessions to light a pathway of his own with his two brilliant gems - his longed for wife and his son.

Maren, with her baby, went to live in a little home which young Skibsted bought for them. And although he could not publicly claim his son and his love for Maren, yet the bond that had grown between them was of such power that neither he nor she had strength of body and soul to sever the relationship.

He furnished Maren with sufficient means with which to provide for herself and little Christen and he continued, secretly, to spend much of his time with them. Soon another baby was born to Maren, but when four months of age, little Mads was taken away. Then a third child, a little girl, Dorthea, came to be one with them; but still young

Skibsted failed to claim his children. As time went on his visits became less frequent, and then at last he ceased to come at all.

Maren found her responsibilities rapidly increasing. She often grew very lonely and longed for the companionship to which she had been accustomed. Years went by and the loneliness drove her to seek friendship and love in other directions. On November 5, 1808, she became the wife of Christen Christensen, a sincere gentleman, eleven years her senior, who showed her kindness and devotion, and who, in some ways, filled the barren spot that existed in Maren's home. He was gentle with the children and served as father to Christen and Dorthea, a term which they never before had the chance to claim and enjoy.

When Dorthea grew to young womanhood she became entranced with a young lad of her own age. They married and left immediately for New Zealand. The day they sailed was the last that was heard from Dorthea.

Christen was now a stalwart young man and he, too, felt the pangs of love within his heart, this same magnetic, powerful love inherited from his mother. And so he was married one November day to Kirstine Skrivers. They moved to a little farm house in Gjershol and Kirstine busied herself with the many duties that confront a housewife, while Christen worked by day at his regular trade as mason.

Soon they found themselves responsible for other little spirits which God sent to them, thirteen of these in all, although four did not remain to grow into adolescence and adulthood.

Christen and Kirstine were extremely happy with their family and the spirit of love and companionship permeated their home. Then one day there came a call for Christen to go to war and it seemed to Kirstine that half the world was taken from under her feet. Many months she waited and watched for Christen's return. And although her cares were many and her responsibilities great, yet there remained one load in her heart that outweighed all the rest -- her intense anxiety for her husband's safekeeping -- her desire to have him there by her side to share her joys and sorrow, her responsibilities -- her love. Each night she prayed to her God that Christen would be brought back to her -- whole and unmaimed.

One day as Kirstine worked about the yard, she saw far across the fields a figure gradually loom in the distance. Involuntarily her heart began to beat wildly and intense excitement filled every fiber of her body. She walked a few steps forward and kept her eyes constantly on the outline of the person approaching. At last she recognized the form and ran with all her might to meet him -- her husband. Neither could express the joy within their souls in again being united, and from then they clung more closely than ever before. Conditions of the home were much brighter and easier with Christen there and the days and weeks went by unnoticed.

One morning two missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints called at the home of Christen and Kirstine, and she at once was delighted and overjoyed with their message. The stories of their home land, as told by these young men were intriguing to Kirstine and she became eager to leave this land which caused them such hardships and yet provided them with so little. It was not for some time that Christen was willing to accept the principles of the Gospel. Kirstine, however, continued to persist until finally she persuaded her husband to join the Church and go to this land of America where they might enjoy the fruits of their labors. And so preparation began to be made for the journey.

Christen, from his early youth had had a feeling of bitterness toward his legitimate father. He felt in his heart that Skibsted had treated his mother most unjustly -- that his attitude toward himself and Dorthea and proved him to be a coward, a hypocrite, and far from a gentleman, despite his social rank. Now that Christen was to leave the land, he resolved to go to his father and voice his feelings. This he did. Among other things, he told Skibsted that he should not have cause to worry or be ashamed of his son any longer -- that he was going far off to live, in America -- that he was never to return -- that he would always stand as a gentleman -- that Skibsted need not fear that Christen would ever bow his head in disgrace or bring shame upon his father's name -- that he should forget he had ever had a son, for as far as Christen was concerned the relationship was void.

It was now May of 1886 and the boat was to leave the port on May 13th. Christen and Kirstine, together with several of the older children, went into the water of baptism before they were to go.

Just before the ship sailed, Christen went to a nearby store to purchase some keepsake for his wife and daughters by which they might remember their native land. He had in mind a string of amber beads for each. But when he reached the store, he found their stock exhausted so he went down to the edges of the water where the fishermen's wives had their little stands, and there he bought five strands at a cost of \$5.00 a piece. He gave one to each of his daughters -- Dorthea, Christine, and Sena; and one to his wife, Kirstine, and one to his daughter-in-law the wife of Peter.

It was often the custom to change the surname in Denmark. On the estate where Christen had worked was a large pool of water or meadowland. Upon leaving, Christen and his family took on the name of Vangsgaard -- changed to Wangsgaard (and often Wangsgard) as that was the American style.

Eight of the nine children left Denmark on April 13th with their parents. One son, Mads, remained with his wife in Denmark for ten more years; but they, too, finally joined their parents in America.

Christen purchased a first-class boat ticket for every member of his family. However, upon arriving at Liverpool he was dishonestly deprived of these tickets and they were forced to go on the Kenilworth, a sailing vessel. This boat sailed on May the

25th. There were 684 saints on the boat among whom was Andrew Jensen, who later became Church Historian of the Latter-Day Saint Church. They emigrated under the direction of Samuel T. sprague.

During the voyage the passengers suffered much and were forced to endure almost unsurvivable conditions. Even the drinking water finally became so stale that it formed a green scum over the top which had to be pushed aside in order to fill a cup for drinking. One man became so despondent that he finally jumped overboard and was swallowed up by the giant waters.

As time went on and on, and conditions grew worse, a very tragic occurrence came to Christen and Kirstine. Their baby girl, Christine, just fourteen months of age, was not able to withstand the trip as those with more strength. In due time, her spirit was taken upward, while her body went down to be buried in the depths of the ocean.

An immigration train with oxen was formed under the direction of Peter Nebeker with nearly 400 immigrants. Upon leaving Council Bluffs they crossed the Missouri River on flat boats in order to get to Omaha. From there on to Salt Lake City Christen and his wife and family walked all the way, barefooted.

The plains were hot and dusty, the journey was long, and many were the hardships which they were forced to bear. Another child of the Wangsgaards became weakened under the strain and Christen and Kirstine grew fearful of the life of little Dusine (named thus for being the twelfth child -- a dozen.) Christen was given opportunity to buy a cow, but the leaders of the company disapproved the act, saying she would become sore-footed and they would have no time to bother with, or wait for her. Christen's thoughts, however, were turned toward the life of his child. He felt that if little Dusine were given milk to nourish and strengthen her body that her life could be saved. And, so, he bought the cow. It was only a short time until the cow did get tender footed so Christen wrapped her feet in coarse cloth to enable her to walk. In the same company of pioneers was a man who became very ill. One night his wife came to Christen with a cup and asked if she could get just a little milk for her husband. She said that his resistance was very low but that if he could get a little milk, perhaps it would restore his health. Christen gave her the cup of milk and it acted as a miracle, for in a few days this man was well and able to keep his pace with the others. Long after their arrival in Utah, they secured the Wangsgaard address and walked over the hills from Morgan to Huntsville -- a distance of more than twenty miles -- to again show their appreciation for this favor.

The trek across the plans was an episode in the lives of Christen and Kirstine and their children which left a deep imprint. Always the memory of those weeks and months of suffering brought tears and sadness to Kirstine and she evaded discussing their experience whenever she could.

At last, on September 29th, they arrived in Salt Lake City, but, rather than stopping here, they moved on another fifty miles to a little valley east of Ogden, called Huntsville. It had now been just six months since their journey began.

They chose a spot at once and built a little one-room dugout in which to live. The children were sent out to gather willows on which to make their beds. Here their youngest, their fourteenth child, Christen, was born.

Kirstine and the children carded the wool and dyed it with the wild berries from the hills. Then they spun it and wove it into cloth to make their clothing and bedding and other needed things. Each day a certain amount of spinning had to be accomplished.

Kirstine tried to teach her daughter, Christine, how to knit, for it was necessary that they knit their own stockings. Christine just couldn't seem to do it, and her mother had not the time to show her again. She tried and tried, and then she cried and cried. When her brother Christen came in and found her in tears, he sat her on his knee and said "Now, damn it, do it this way." It didn't take long before she could knit as good as the others.

The children also had to help make candles from the tallow and what we call the "wick", (they called it "bitch"). When the boys grew up and all left home it behooved the girls, Christine and Sena, to go to the fields and work. After a few years Christen built them an adobe house which was much more comfortable than the little dugout. The Indians always camped close around the homes of the white people, and they were extremely afraid of these red men.

Although the Wangsgaard family had been baptised before leaving Denmark, according to the custom upon reaching this country, they were rebaptized in Huntsville by David McKay. On September 9 1872, Christen and Kirstine, together with their son, Peter, and Ingeborg, his wife, went through the Temple of the Lord to take out their endowments and were sealed for time and eternity.

Before leaving Denmark the missionaries had pictured for the Wangsgaards a perfect example of righteous living and cooperation in Utah. Upon arriving in this country however, they found many things far different from those descriptions, and it brought discouragement to Christen and Kirstine. Many people did not practice the doctrines which they advocated; nor did they live according to the Gospel teachings. Christen and Kirstine still believed in the principles of their new religion but the examples set before them had a very marked effect.

Procedures followed by the church officials in this little community were such that if a man did not pay his full tithing, if a family did not hold its nightly prayer circles, and the like, they were excommunicated from the church.

This constant driving irritated Christen. Then, too, he was very straight-laced and honest and the hypocrisy and exaggeration which existed were hard for him to bear.

Christen had at last only one oxen left and this he was asked to donate to the tithing fund. Since this was his only means of earning his family living, Christen refused to make this sacrifice. This, naturally, caused a feeling of enmity.

Christen and his family worked tirelessly to get ahead in the world and were able to save a little money from time to time for future need. At length, when they had a tidy sum accumulated, they were asked by the church authorities to lend it to others who desired to come to this country for the Gospel and to have a chance to advance. Christen willingly lent his hard-earned savings with the understanding and promise that upon arrival and as readily as it could be earned, this money should be repaid by those who received it. Although many of these immigrants soared to prosperity after a short time they refused to repay Christen, or even to acknowledge him or his family either as debtors or as friends. They regarded the Scandinavians as inferior and below their class, and as such they were treated. Christen appealed in vain to the Bishop of the Church in an effort to regain the money which was rightfully his.

To be robbed of their savings, by those who advocated the same principles in which they believed, together with the little troubles which had been adding one on top of another during the past months cut deep impressions on members of the Wangsgaard family.

During that same time a wave of Spiritualism swept the valley and encompassed many of the families and friends of Christen and Kirstine. Being in a somewhat resentful mood toward members of the L.D.S. Church, Christen and his family were swayed toward the influence of the Spiritualistic Church. At the Priesthood meeting of the Latter-Day Saint Church, held on January 30, 1873, the Ward Teacher for their district, reported the Wangsgaard family as "having gone over to Spiritualism."

Christen and Kirstine were not satisfied with the religion of these spiritualists and could not accept membership in this church. They affiliated themselves with it for only a short time, and finally ceased to attend. During the remainder of their lives they attended no church whatever. They still claimed the Latter-Day Saint religion to be ideal, although many of its members, they felt, were on the wrong tract and not living according to the Gospel principles.

It was but a few short years then until Christen and Kirstine were parted, and Kirstine was left to spend her last twenty-eight years alone with her children.

After their deaths, their granddaughter, Mary went to the Temple of God and performed their work again. During the sacred ceremony there came a burning within her bosom which gave her testimony that Christen and Kirstine had accepted these covenants to again be gathered safely into the fold.

Biographical Data:

Christen Christensen
Born March 19, 1769
Died February 7, 1846
Married November 5, 1808

Marenn Jensen
Born December 3, 1780
in Knakkegaard, Denmark
Died June 28, 1856
(Father: Jens Christensen)

Christen Christensen Wangsgaard
Born February 4, 1820
in Hvidbjerg
Married November 20, 1846
Died June 12, 1882

Kirstine Skriver
Born May 24, 1824
in Aarup, Denmark
Died July 13, 1910

Children of Christen and Kirstine Wangsgaard:

Peder Christensen, B. Jan 21, 1847, D. July 1, 1916
Dorthe Christensen, B. Apr. 19, 1848, D. May 14, 1916
Mads Christensen, B. Nov. 8, 1849, D. Oct 19, 1905
*Christen Christensen Vangsgard, B. April 26, 1851, D. Dec. 11, 1919
Peter Skaarup Vangsgard, B. Oct 13, 1852, D. June 12, 1856
Jens Christensen Vangsgard B. Mar. 23, 1855,, D Apr. 8, 1858
Peder Skaarup Vangsgard B. Mar. 18, 1857, D July 22, 1923
Christian Christensen Vangsgard, B. Aug 25, 1858, D. Feb 1, 1859
Peder Skaarup, Vangsgard, B. Aug 25, 1858 D Dec. 8, 1915
Kirsten Christensen Vangsgaard, B. May 21, 1860, D. Oct. 15, 1926
Christen Skibsted Vangsgaard, B. July 12, 1862, D. Oct 15, 1926
Dusine Christensen Vangsgaard, B. May 21, 1863, D. May 16, 1922
Christine Christensen Vangsgaard, B. Apr. 21, 1865, D. June 1866
Christian Christensen Vangsgaard B. Oct. 24 1867

*ChrisApr. 26, 1851
Snedsted, Denmark
Married Oct. 23, 1876
Died Dec. 11, 1919

Anna Christine Anderson
Born Sept. 2, 1858,
Kinne Kleva, Sweden
Died Oct. 22, 1935
Father: Gustave Anderson
Mother: Marie Hokenson

Written by Melva Schade, Granddaughter of Christen C. And Anna Anderson Wangsgaard.

Submitted by: Mary Christine Wangsgaard Schade, Daughter of Wilshire Camp, Los Angeles, California (DUP)

