

HISTORY OF OLAUS JOHNSON

I will begin with my father and mother. My father's name was Johan Olsen Nordstrand. He was born in a place called Grave in Roken Songd in Norway, 17 December 1805. He graduated as a shoemaker and worked at this trade for several years, until he met and married Karen Olssen, who was born at a place called Winnes Lier, 16 October 1807; they were married on 4 January 1830. After their marriage, father took a trip to Bergen in Norway and upon his return he decided to become a fisherman, which later became his trade. At the same time he purchased a piece of ground near the seashore where he built a house. This was called Nordstrand, due to the fact that it was built near a harbor called Narsnes Briten. Being closely settled each house had a name of its own. While they lived here I and my twin brother, Martin, were born 17 November 1833.

From this time on until I was eight years old, my time was spent with my mother at home. Mother used to spin fish nets for father, and while working at this, she taught us children, this being the only education we had. At the age of nine I was advised by my father to go out in the boat with him to learn the fishing trade. This we did in the summer months. During the winter months my father and I prepared for the next summer's fishing by repairing boats and mending nets. When the weather became warmer the mackerels came in schools of thousands. At first father used the smaller nets, 16 meters long, but later used the larger nets which were 240 meters long. This net enabled us to catch thousands at a time. Six or eight men were hired to bring these to shore.

My parents lived in a homestead called Elnes, in Roken Songd, Buskerud County, with a nice home and enough land to raise the necessary things of life. Being very thrifty they were able to save what we earned by fishing and lived on what the farm produced. I remained there with them until I was fifteen (15), when I left to become a sailor. I wanted to become independent; to control ships of my own; so to this end I worked to the best of my ability gaining the respect of all with whom I came in contact, both on land and sea. In time I had the responsibility of directing the ships along the northern coast. After six years I was appointed Captain of the ship. I could now sail the ships alone to my satisfaction by day or night along the Danish and Norwegian coasts. By this time it was so late in the season we had to prepare for winter quarters, so we returned to Norway until the next spring.

Although I was confirmed into the Lutheran Church I had given little or no thought to religion, as I had lived on the sea until the age of twenty-nine. But the Lord had other plans for my future. While sailing along the shore of Denmark I became acquainted with a servant of the Lord clothed in the Holy Priesthood. He told me that what I had believed in was not the doctrine of Christ and that I was a long way off from the Plan of Salvation. He said that the Lord had again revealed the true gospel to a young boy named Joseph Smith. Bearing his testimony to me he taught me the true Doctrine of Christ until I could understand that the Lutheran religion was wrong; and by humbling myself before the Lord in Prayer, I obtained a testimony that of which he had preached was the true Gospel.

A short time later, he and his missionary companion visited the home of my parents, revealing the gospel, of which they accepted 31 October 1860, but before I could be baptized I had to overcome the tobacco habit, which took me two years. July 10, 1862, I was baptized and confirmed by Elder Evan Thorgensen in Drammen, Norway. In the Winter of the same year by brother Martin was baptized. My parents had already decided to leave Norway and emigrate to Utah for their religion. Selling their homes, namely Norstrand and Grundvick, they obtained enough money to take us all to Zion. On the 10th day of April 1863, I left the home of my childhood and came to the land of Zion in company with my parents, brothers, and sister.

We left Christiania the 13th day of April on the steamer Excelensen and arrived in Copenhagen on the 14th. Here we remained eight days until the Saints had gathered from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Among these Saints was a sister by the name of Anna Helena Dyresen, whom I later became engaged to. She had been staying in Denmark with her sister, Maria Hansen, who had also prepared to sail in the same company.

From Copenhagen we left by steamship to Keil, from there to Hamburg by rail, then by steamship we crossed the North Sea to Grembsy, England where we were joined by more Saints, again by rail to Liverpool. Here we boarded a steamship called the John Boy, captained by J. H. Thomas. The same afternoon we were given our respective cabins where we took quarters for our journey, being one thousand in number of which seven hundred sixty five were Mormons.

After 29 days on the ocean we arrived in New York May 29th, 1863. All members had to remain on board until examined by the doctors to make sure no disease would be spread. This took considerable time. After being examined we were transferred to a place called Castle Garden, where we remained until evening. Here we were transferred by rail across the Hudson River and further across the states. Due to the Civil War at that time we were transferred to several trains a day, sometimes being forced to ride in cattle cars. This was not very comfortable as there were no seats, and we had to sit on the floor. In transferring our baggage, the Negroes would often break into our trunks and cut holes in our leather satchels to steal our belongings. We had to be on guard constantly day and night. By doing this they got little for their trouble. After three days we arrived in Florence, Nebraska on the 13th day of June.

Dyre Amundsen, a brother of my wife, who had come to Utah in 1860, in Captain Hooker's company, was called to go back to Florence, Nebraska to meet the Saints and bring them back to Utah. While there he met his sisters, Anna Helena and Berta Maria, her husband Ole Hansen, Olaus, Martin, Charles, Lillie, their father, Johan Olsen, and mother, Karen Olsen. We stayed here until July 1st when we continued our journey by ox team over the plains with John Young as our leader. While here Anna Helena and I became engaged. Three days before arriving in Salt Lake City, we were married in Echo Canyon, Weber Valley, 9 September 1863. The reason of our early marriage was because I wished to follow my parents to Salt Lake. It was the wish of my wife's sister that she be married before leaving their company as they were to travel to Northern Utah, but later decided to come through to West Jordan, where they lived in a dugout. In doing this they dug a large deep hole in the ground, enough for two rooms. These were lined with adobes, and covered with a roof of willows, grass, and dirt. At times when a heavy rain storm

came the water soaked through and had to be bailed out with buckets. Ofttimes a snake would be dipped up in a bucket. One time the rain soaked the adobes, which then fell in moving our bed to the center of the room. We were so frightened we thought the end was at hand.

My parents settled in Mill Creek. Sometime later Ole (and Berta) Hansen moved to South Cottonwood where they lived in a four room house. Because my wife's sister needed her help, we lived there with them a year. Then I bought fifteen acres of land, living in a dugout until I could make enough adobes to build a house. Through not having horses or implements to run the ground, or money with which to buy some, I rented the land to a man who planted wheat. The clay ground lay beyond the wheat field, so the adobes had to be made there and carried over to where I wished to build my house. Only six could be carried at a time as they were of unordinary size being twelve inches long, six inches wide, and four inches thick. My shoulders became so sore I had to give up for two or three days until they healed. This I kept up until I had made and carried six thousand adobes. In the fall I started the foundation for the house. This was all new work for me as I had never done any of this before. In those days we all did our own work, as masons and carpenters were not available and no money with which to pay them if one could be found. Therefore we had to be satisfied with our own work.

In the winter of 1865 we moved into our new home, after which father took a trip to Bear River to locate land for stock raising. In his company were a group of men, my brother, Charles, Fred Petersen, who married my sister, and Hans Halversen, a blacksmith by trade. After arriving at Bear River they settled at St. Charles, but being so late in the year they lived in a dugout during their stay there. This region generally being snow bound it was difficult to send or receive mail. Father wrote to mother telling her to dispose of their property as he had found a satisfactory location. Mother asked me to assist her. We found a buyer by the name of Andrew Hammer who lived in North Weber. I had not decided to dispose of my home until later. I then sold out, paid Ole Hansen, bought a pair of oxen and a worn out plow and prepared to move North where I could also get started in stock raising. The snow being packed deep and heavy, the mail was carried on skis over the mountain that divided Bear River and Cache Valley. By this method mail traveled very slowly. In time mother received a letter telling her not to dispose of their home and if she had by all means get it back, which she did in a short while. In the Spring father and his followers arrived back. This caused much confusion as I was now homeless again. There was a great deal of land that could be taken up, but as land was not worth much and people were afraid water would be scarce by which to irrigate, I hesitated to buy more and decided to rent or run land on shares.

In 1865, I was successful in renting land from Eric Dahl in West Jordan who had come here two years earlier. He owned horses and wagons and some implements. After the crops had been planted it was turned over to me to irrigate, harvest, care for the thrashing, dispose of the crops, of which I was supposed to get one third. As there were no irrigation ditches the ground had to be flooded, and as we had no boots, we took off our shoes and socks and rolled our trousers over our knees, to go ahead of the stream to guide it over the high places. This year the ground was so dry it had to be flooded three times before the grain came through. Being an unusually cold spring I remember well how cold my feet and legs would be. They would swell and be so tender

I could hardly lie in bed at night. I suffered so much from this that I could not have kept up with my work if Brother Dahl had not helped me along, but thanks to my Heavenly Father who helped me overcome this condition so I could again go on with my work. Between my other work, I had made 71,000 adobes for which I was to receive a milk cow, at that time considered a high price. After the fall work was done and the crops harvested, we moved back to Ole Hansen's in South Cottonwood where I took up some ground opposite his. Later I sold it to a man named Labrum.

In the spring of 1866 I began to prepare the ground for sugar cane and other crops. We lived in a cellar, the roof being made of willows, straw, and dirt. After this was done, I fenced my ground a few acres at a time. The same year at Sanpete the Indians were causing considerable trouble by driving the people away, killing some and stealing their horses and cattle. Not being enough white people to defend themselves, they called for help from their northern brethren. I was fencing when two brethren came along with Dyre Amundsen saying they had been sent by the Bishop to tell me that one of us had to go south to defend the saints at Sanpete. We decided that Dyre being alone, his wife having died a month after their marriage should go and I was to stay and also care for his farm. The day after the brethren had called, I left my home to care for by brother-in-law's until his return. Through leaving so suddenly the front side of my farm was left unfenced where a large irrigation ditch ran north and south. Leaving thus my wife was left with the responsibility of everything both inside and out.

The sugar cane was three feet high and needed weeding, which my wife undertook to do. She took our 18 month old son along having to watch him constantly. Within five minutes he had disappeared and could not be found. After a futile search she sought help from her sister and her husband. One of the farmers who was irrigating at the time missed part of his water and began a search for the gate where the water came from. On arriving there he found the body tightly wedged against the gate where it was found dead. I was immediately notified. Leaving the farm I went home to comfort and console my wife. After the burial I again had to leave for my duty and remained until after the Indians had calmed down and the men could return home to their loved ones. As soon as Dyre came home I was released. I returned home and commenced to remodel our cellar dwelling which by now was caving in. I made adobes and lined two sides and put on a new roof before winter set in.

In the fall some immigrants had come from Norway. Among them was a young sister named Pauline Thomasen, whom my parents and sister were well acquainted with in Norway. Upon their arrival in Salt Lake, father went to meet them and brought this young lady out to his place. Not long after this she came over to our house to assist my wife who needed help. Our second son was born at this time, September 4, 1866. During her stay my wife asked her to stay and make her home with us, which she gladly accepted. Being together the two women learned to love and respect each other more each day.

After a few months stay it seemed that Pauline and Helena were as one, working together no matter whether it was inside or out. Our baby seemed as contented in Pauline's care as his mother's. My affections for her prompted me to ask her to become my second wife. Pauline consented to this which made Helena very happy. After the Fall plowing was done and we were

prepared for Winter we decided to go to the temple. The two women prepared for this occasion which took place in the month of January 1867 when the three of us were sealed in the Endowment House by Brother Daniel H. Wells.

This same year I sold the ground opposite Ole Hansen for what I could get out of it and purchased more land two miles south. I made adobes and built a large room that was ready to move into by fall. Later I built a stable having two horses and a cow. After this I began preparing my ground for crops. In the spring of 1868 I planted grain and potatoes, but due to the shortage of water I did not plant as much as I desired. After the crops began to grow grasshoppers flocked the area eating everything on their way, leaving the farms barren. The price of produce soared high, flour sold at \$18 per hundred pounds, sugar \$1 per pound, wheat \$5 a bushel, calico 65 cents a yard, and nails 65 cents a pound. The grocers had everything under their control and paid us such a small price for our butter, eggs, and chickens that in order to get the necessities of life we had to go to the canyons for wood which could be exchanged for our needs.

The following year wheat dropped to \$2 per bushel. Although much grain was raised when it was ground, we had little flour. This was due to rust which blighted our crops. Not having much farm produce to live on, I left home to work on the railroad being built through Echo Canyon to Ogden, thence to Salt Lake. I worked here until Spring when I returned home to care for my summer farming. During the summer I purchased 5 acres of land with good water rights and an option for ten more acres adjoining mine. Then I sold my other home to John "W" Sharp.

In the fall of 1869, leaving Pauline with the children at home, Helena and I left for St. Charles to work for Ole Hansen in his grain. We cut the grain with a scythe, called a cradle, because machinery was not known of at this time. In this way we earned fifty four bushels of wheat which kept us in flour until the next summer. The roads being rough and muddy, two trips had to be made to haul this to our home. In the spring of 1870, I began to make adobes for a larger house as my family now consisted of four grown ups and four children. The fourth grown up was Helena's mother, who had recently come from Norway. A smelter had been built two miles north where I labored three winters earning enough money to pay for the 15 acres I had, also for five acres more adjoining mine. In 1871, I put out 50 apple trees, some peach trees, also fenced my land and built a granary with a cellar under it, and dug a well. Shortly after I built another granary and an adobe stable. I bought five acres more land, but as it was inconvenient to care for I traded them for a cow.

Eleven of us were called on by the Bishop to homestead a quarter section of land. I had charge of this and had titles of some, after which I had to make out deeds to all who wished to sell. By this method I had to buy the land from those who wished to sell. I bought seven acres from a man who wished to move away, ten acres from Magnes Olsen, which I deeded to my second wife, Pauline. I sold the first seven acres to Rangvald Carlsen, who had married our oldest daughter, Annie, and 15 acres to a poor man named Nichols, who sold it to Nils Lindahl.

My family now consisted of 13 children, 9 of whom were living. On 17 October 1882, I left to fulfill a mission to Norway, having been set apart by Apostle Lyman in the Council House 9

was released from prison, I was again taken before the authorities by the same parties. My wives were called to testify in my case, but as no proof could be furnished the court held nothing against me. I was thrown out of the court and I was released.

After Father's death 2 August 1879 at Levan, mother came to make her home with Pauline, and was nursed by her until mother's death on 2 March 1890. She was buried in Murray, Utah.

On 24 December 1896, I received a call to fulfill a second mission to Norway. Due to circumstances at home I could not leave until 3 April 1897 at the Historians Office. I left with my son-in-law, Rangvald Carlsen, Andrew Johnson, and Andrew Andersen from Union, and several brethren from Salt Lake who were en route the same way. After an enjoyable journey both by land and sea, we reached Liverpool, England, 23 April 1897 where we were met by W. Wells and others who welcomed us. We resumed our journey by rail to Grembsy where we boarded a steamboat that took us to Hamburg, from there by rail to Keil. Here we boarded a steamboat Korseir, Denmark, where we went by rail to Copenhagen. On the 29th we were sent to Norway by President Lund and C. K. Brown met us there. The day after we received our appointments, we went to Drammen to labor under Brother Christopherson, while Brother Carisen was sent to Arendah. I went from house to house leaving my testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel. Some were interested, others not. I thank my Heavenly Father for this wonderful opportunity of again visiting my native country. November 11, 1897 President Christopherson was released and I was put in his place. This position I held until the Fall of 1898 when I was sent to preside over the Larvik Branch. Due to ill health, I was released to come home being met by my family 21 December 1898. After my return on 2 August 1902, I was ordained a High Priest.

Suffering from asthma for many years, I was unable to do manual labor so I spent my time making miniature furniture, ships, and children's articles such as tables, cupboard, benches, desks, rockers, and comb cases of which I made enough for all my children and those grandchildren who were married at the time. In my declining years I could no longer work or do any kind of carpentering, so I spent my time in writing the history of my life and other things of interest to my children and the generations to come.

After a lingering illness, Pauline died at the home of her oldest daughter, Caroline, 1 June 1911.

In the time I have lived in Cottonwood, I have built many houses for other people, most of them were built of adobes of unusual size, as brick or lumber were not known of. After living underground in dugouts and cellars, this seemed a paradise. We were grateful to be among those who had received the gospel.

Helena and I celebrated our Golden Wedding on 9 September 1913 having most of our children and their families, number 46, with us. A lovely supper was served after which a picture was taken. A genealogical program was given in our honor in the Fall of 1913 at the Scandinavian Church on State Street just north of our home. Musical numbers and readings were furnished by the family, refreshments were served by the genealogical committee followed by dancing.

After a prolonged illness, Helena passed away 14 April 1915. Now alone my thoughts drifted back over my life. The Lord in His mercy has always heard my prayers and been my protector and I can bear testimony there unto. To me it appears wonderful when I in my lonely hours think back over the time when I was a sailor. At that time I had many storms on the sea to contend with and often time it was a battle between life and death.

I remember one time I had to fasten a top sail, and in some way I lost my foot hold and fell, but managed to get hold of a rope far down in the rigging, and I hung there, balanced in the air, until I was able to get down without injury. Another time I was knocked overboard by a sail which the wind took hold of in such a manner that I fell under the keel of the ship, but was saved. Another time I fell into an open place in the water and came to under the ice. But each time I was saved because of the protection of the Holy Angels of the Lord.

After I came to Utah I have also seen the wise guidance of the Lord, I will mention two or three such instances. One time I was to bring home some horses. Not having any knowledge of handling such animals, I was knocked down and became entangled in the ropes and not being able to release myself, I was dragged after them like a log. But through the goodness of God I was saved by a miracle, for in the center of the field was a willow tree and there I was stopped as my body was thrown on one side of the tree and the horses ran on the other. I was fastened to the tree and could not release myself. The horses were compelled to stop, although they tried to get loose to continue running. In this way I was saved.

One time I was hauling a load of wood to Salt Lake City. During Fall and Spring the roads were rough and almost impassable and we had to drive on the sides of the road where but a few had traveled. Therefore I had to follow their tracks. It was not long before I came to a place where the wheel tracks were two feet deep and no room to pass or make other tracks. I stood straddle over the load with my whip in one hand ready to lash the horses. As they jumped the sudden jolt gave me no time to put myself in a safe position. I fell down between the wagon and the horses. The wagon settled down into the ruts up to the hubs. I lay still while the horses were prancing and kicking about me. I continued to talk gentle to them until they quieted down and then I crawled up and was saved.

Again I am grateful to my Father in Heaven who has always heard my prayers and sent his angels to watch over me, and I give my testimony that I know the gospel is true and leave my blessings to my children and the generations to come. Dressed in the robes of the Holy Priesthood, I give my choice blessings to all my posterity, meaning my children, my children's children, their children, and so on after me, with all the blessings the Lord sees in His wisdom would be for their best good for time and for all eternity. That the Holy Spirit would be their guide until death. These are my wishes for each and every one of my posterity through all generations of time and through all eternity. May the Lord's blessings be upon you all is the wish of your father.

Olaus Johnsen Nordstrand

"Amen"

True to the faith, Olaus Johnson slipped quietly away 22 March 1922 at the age of 89 to join his loved ones in the great beyond.