
Biography of Caroline Sophia Jensen Olsen

Written by Emily Olsen Savage

On 6 April 1849 there was great rejoicing in the home of Hans and Christiana Jensen in Farum. Fredricksborg, Denmark over the arrival of a new baby girl. They had seen their first child, a boy, die, and now watched with tender care this little blue-eyed girl. They belonged to the Lutheran Church so they took their baby to be christened. Assistance at the christening was given by a godmother who even continued her giving of gift when the child was old enough to remember her. The baby was sprinkled and given the name of Karen Sophia. This proved to be a very horrid name, in her estimation, when in later years she left her native land.

In the farming district where the family lived farm work proved to be hard, especially for the girls. They helped in the fields and did the housework and the milking. After dinner the girls did the dishes and made the coffee while the men rested before they all returned to the fields to work. Despite all this, they were happy. The coffee pot was always on the stove waiting for company. It was an insult if visitors were not invited to have coffee and cake, and an insult if they refused to eat. Even children drank coffee, but when Karen learned of the Word of Wisdom she broke that habit. At Christmas they caroled all night and had to eat at each home no matter how they felt.

On 20 June 1854, her parents were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints after having heard the gospel from the missionaries. After that they moved to Copenhagen to live where they found life very different. On Sunday afternoons and holidays everyone went to the parks for a walk, but it was always in family groups.

The schools were good although the boys and girls were separated by a high board wall. Besides the regular work, they studied the Bible and were taught to sew. When her friends found out that she was a Mormon, they would point their fingers at her and giggle; the teacher thought she was lost forever. (She was baptized 5 September 1860 by her father and confirmed 8 September 1860 by H. H. Petersen.) When the children had completed their schooling, usually at about the age of fourteen, they attended Confirmation Exercises, which were similar to our graduation. These exercises were preceded by each student going to the parish priest to take their final examinations. The Jensen children did this even though they were no longer members of the Lutheran Church.

Karen's father was a stone cutter, but when emigration money was needed he did extra work as a street lamp lighter. In the evening he would climb each pole and light the lamp; when morning came he would climb the pole again to turn out the light. Karen also helped in their struggle to get money to go to Zion. She took care of babies and did sewing. Other little girls knew she could sew and they wanted her to sew doll clothes for them while they washed her dishes. Later she sewed in a shop where they made fancy clothes for wealthy women. Her special work was to sew braid on big dolman sleeves because she could do it better than any of the girls.

On 23 April 1863, the family left Denmark, planning to come to Utah in the United States of America. They spent five weeks crossing the ocean in a sailing vessel. It was not a regular passenger vessel so they had few comforts. There were over 700 people and no place to sleep. Each family would unroll their bedding on the floor. This was terrible because there were so many sick who remained in their beds the entire trip. A big storm arose but the Captain said not to be afraid because there had never been a ship go down that had Mormons on it.

Someone died enroute and Karen saw the burial at sea. For fear of whales tipping the ship over because they could smell the body, it was disposed of the same day that death occurred. The body was wrapped in a sheet and mapped on a plank which had a heavy weight at one end. (The weight

was supposed to carry the body to the bottom of the ocean so it would not float) The body was then pushed off into the dark water.

After landing in America, they began their trek across the plains which lasted eleven weeks. They traveled in Captain John R. Murdock's company with ox teams. They soon found that their names were not the kind that was used in America. In Denmark they were known as Hansen because Hans was their father. Here they were told to take the same surname as the parents and were put on record as Jensen. Some of their given names were changed also. There were five children; Karen Sophia was changed to Caroline Sophia, Emma's name was not changed. Maren Kirsten was changed to Mary Christine, Johannes Jullies was changed to John Julius, and Marie Magdalene's name was also unchanged.

Karen, now Caroline, was only fourteen years old yet she walked across the plains while her mother and the younger children rode. They had no serious trouble with the Indians although they saw them and were always afraid of them. They saw buffalo and ate some of the meat. At that time the place of arrival in Salt Lake City was where the city county building now stands. They arrived in Salt Lake City on 31 August 1863, paying the required \$30.00 immigration fees.

Rasmus Jensen, a brother of Hans, lived in Hyrum, 10 that is where this Jensen family settled. Hyrum was then a fort, consisting of a row of houses on each side of the main street. The first winter the family lived in a dugout and used candles for light. This must have been a hard change for them. They were used to city life where they had a good home and good lights, and where they were able to buy their food already cooked if they wished. They had good clothes when they came to Hyrum but found very little in this new settlement to replace them. They had to spin, weave, and dye their cloth, then sew their clothes by hand. The older children soon found work in homes where they could get their board and a little money.

The next spring Hans moved his family to Bear Lake Valley where his brother Lars lived. The first year the wheat froze so he came to Cache Valley to buy flour. The canyons filled with snow, and he had to stay for the winter. The family, still in Bear Lake, had a hard time that winter eating the bread made from frozen wheat because it was black and nasty. Caroline fared better for she worked for a family by the name of Hopkins. They had a store so they had a floor and a carpet on it. This lady wanted her to darn the stockings, saying she knew Caroline could darn because the first time she had seen her she had been wearing a worn dress that had been mended by darning a small hole with such fine thread that it could hardly be seen.

In the spring the family moved back to Hyrum. People began to move away from the fort so the Jensen's located two blocks south on 1st West. It was in the old days of polygamy, and the girls were sought after when about fifteen years old. Caroline, who managed to stay single until she was eighteen, was considered old when she married Christopher Olsen as his polygamist wife.

Christopher Olsen was an educated man. He was not robust, so his work was in line with his learning. He had been a bookkeeper and secretary of the Danish Mission before coming to Utah. Here he took care of the post office and helped with the tithing. Later he was tithing clerk for Cache Stake and bookkeeper for the ZCMI store in Logan. He married Caroline C. Johnson and they had three little girls. On 18 May 1867, he married Caroline Jensen as a plural wife in the Endowment Home in Salt Lake City. They made the long trip there and back again in a wagon drawn by two horses.

Caroline's sewing ability was greatly appreciated in that family of girls. On 18 September 1868, a baby girl was born to Caroline & Christopher. They named her Elizabeth but always called her "Lib" or "Libbie."

Christopher was called by the Church to move from Hyrum to Richmond to take care of the tithing there. They moved in October 1868. When he and his two families were on their way they came to the hill overlooking Nibley. From the top of this hill they saw an Indian Camp. There were so many Indians that almost a mile of roadway was swarming with them. It was really a serious matter for they did not know if the Indians would be friendly or not. But they could not turn back for the Indians would know then that they were afraid and would follow them. Parents and children all climbed out of the wagon and knelt behind it to pray, then something unusual happened. The Indians began to move to either side of the road leaving the center clear for the thankful family to continue their journey.

In Richmond, while Christopher cared for the tithing, one Indian chief came often with an order from the bishop to get food for his tribe. He expected to be invited to a meal, so the two Carolines had to cook the best they had and set the table just right or the Indian chief would be offended.

Caroline had two boys born in Richmond—James Ezra born 3 March 1870 (he died two days later), and Willard born 17 July 1871. In her leisure time Caroline taught herself to read and write the English language which she spoke without any foreign accent. She did a great deal of embroidery work and sold it for a dollar a yard, a high price in those days.

Christopher was called to go to Logan to settle tithing for Cache Valley with Peter Maughan, Samuel Roskelly, and Lionell Farrel. Caroline lived in Logan with him. He became ill with pneumonia and died 9 September 1873. Mr. Roskelly related and recorded a dream he had, referring to Christopher being needed on the other side. (See Christopher's story in Section VI.) Christopher was buried in Richmond, Utah. After his death Caroline moved to Hyrum to live with her sister, Christine Bradshaw, whose husband worked in the canyon most of the time. They both have said that during that winter there was not a single cross word spoken between them. Three months after Caroline's husband died their baby Emma was born, on 20 December 1875.

When Christopher's property was settled Caroline bought a two-room house from Charles Stephens located 1 ½ blocks west on 2nd North in Hyrum. Mr. Stephens' family was going to move to Bear Lake in the spring, so until then the two families had to share the house. Willard was almost four years old and played with the Stephens boy who was the same age. Both boys took sick with diphtheria. Just as the Stephens boy was dying he gave a strange call and Willard, in the next room, answered him. It was different from the usual calls and whistles the boys had used in their play, and everyone who heard it felt sure of what it would mean. In a few hours Willard was also dead. The two little graves were made side by side on the west side of the Hyrum Cemetery. That occurred on 12 April 1875.

Shortly after this Caroline's baby, Emma, who was 1 ½ years old, also took sick. As Caroline gave her some medicine from the doctor, she became so much worse that it looked as if she would die. The only place that Caroline could be alone was in the barn. She hurried there and begged the Lord to let Emma live, at least long enough so she would feel that she had not killed her with the medicine. The child got well but died three months later on 29 October 1875. In less than eight and

one-half years, Caroline had been married and was the mother of four children. Now she was a widow with only one little girl.

Christopher had a younger brother whose name was Gideon Elias Olsen. He was healthy and strong and used to hard work. His honesty, goodness of heart and strong faith in the gospel were his outstanding characteristics. He was married to Johanna Danielson and they had four children. On 12 June 1876, he married Caroline and moved her to Paradise to live. She knew he would be good to her little Libbie, his new stepdaughter, and she was not disappointed.

Caroline was living in polygamy again. In speaking of it later she said there was not the slightest doubt in her mind that it was a principle revealed from Heaven. It was necessary for the quick up building of the Church. Her testimony was that it was right but that the people were too selfish to live it in the proper spirit.

There were four children born to Caroline and Gideon. The first was born on 22 February 1878 and was named Walter Julius. On 30 August 1880 another son was born. They named him Orson Mariner, (Max). He looked more like his father than any of the other children. On 13 April 1883 their son Jesse was born. He looked like his mother, and in later years he developed the same strong faith that she displayed. Emily was born 6 December 1885.

When Walter was about four years old he was injured while playing with some older children. One of them pulled his feet from under him and he fell striking the back of his head; he developed brain fever and died 19 January 1882.

When Emily was about eight years old she was stung by a bee. It must have poisoned her, for she was soon covered with hard white lumps as large as a dime. Caroline knew there was no one to administer to her and no doctor was within twelve miles, so she would have to do the best that she could. She told Emily not to be afraid for the Lord would hear their prayers. After they had knelt in prayer she poured consecrated oil in a saucer and then rubbed it all over the child's body. Twice she gave her a spoonful to swallow. The lumps disappeared as quickly as they had come and she was healed by her mother's faith.

After the Logan Temple was opened in 1884, Caroline did a great deal of work for the dead. In early years they had to ride twenty-four miles in a wagon or sleigh to do the work for one person.

On 7 December 1887 Caroline's daughter Libbie was married to Joseph B. Obray and eleven years later, on 21 June 1899; she died leaving three small children. Caroline cared for them all for about two years. Hilary and Stella then went to live with their father and stepmother. Avilda remained with her grandmother and was a great comfort to her the rest of her life.

When Caroline's boys were old enough they moved to a farm in Avon each summer. This was hard because the children had to go to school. Mariner went to the Brigham Young College and then went on a mission to the Eastern States. It was a great joy to her to have her son preach the true gospel, and all her sacrifices were made with willingness. Her mother died on 20 March 1893, and for the next nine years, her father made his home with her most of the time. He was eighty-five years of age when he died 6 April 1902. Everyone loved him for his happy disposition.

Caroline's husband died on 1 November 1919 and was buried in the Paradise Cemetery. Once more she was a widow, the mother of eight children, only three of whom were living, and all of them were married. She sold her home and moved to Hyrum where her daughter Emily was living. Max helped her financially and she bought a home on 2nd West. She was released from her position as Relief Society visiting teacher in the Paradise Ward, a duty she had faithfully performed for thirty-six years. She did not sit around waiting to die; she was a great reader, and her fingers were always busy. Knitting for the soldiers, crocheting, or sewing took up a great deal of her time. She was ill for two weeks and then died of pneumonia on 31 May 1923. She was buried beside her two children in the Hyrum Cemetery.

During Caroline's life there had been so many of her loved ones who had died that it was a wonder she could find time to be happy. She was; however, appreciated so much what she did have and used to say, "It doesn't do any good to cry all the time. She didn't like quarrels and ill-feelings; in fact, she suffered many injustices because she could not quarrel over things. She was a hard worker and took care of everything. Her neighbors loved her for she never imposed on them and was always willing to help them. She tried never to hurt their feelings. She tried to keep the Sabbath Day holy. She nearly always had company on Sunday afternoon, but that did not bother her for she had plenty of food prepared on Saturday; Sunday was a day of rest for her and everybody around her. She was a thorough Latter-day-Saint every day of the week; she wanted the respect of other people, but she used to say that what other people thought of you was not as important as what the Lord thought of you. The greatest desire of her heart was to have her family live the principles of the Gospel that she loved.

Her children have a fond memory of twilight at home with mother: The chores would be done early and then they would sit around the open fire and tell experiences or stories or talk of the Gospel until it was dark outside, then she would rise and light the kerosene lamp. Peace and love mix with the memory of her and her home.