
Biography of Marie Dorthea Berg

Marie Dorthea Berg married Jens Olsen in Aalborg, Aalborg, Denmark on 23 February 1833. She was 21 years old to the day (she was born on 23 February 1812 in Michaelis, Fredericia, Vejle, Denmark). Although she was born into a family of the working class, they had been closely associated with the gentleman's society, and one is left with the distinct impression that they were a refined people. There was enough of the worker's nobility in them to give Marie the best of all backgrounds, and her life reflected the generous portion, which she inherited from her Danish ancestry.

Denmark is located geographically south of Norway and south-southwest of Sweden. It is made up primarily of a peninsula (comprising 70% of the land mass) called Jutland, or Jylland, which is surrounded by the seas except for a 42-mile common border with Germany. In addition there are 482 islands, the largest of which is Zealand, or Sjælland, which is the location of Denmark's largest city, Copenhagen. Only 100 of these islands are populated. Denmark is located on the 55°-57° north latitude, which is north of most of Canada's populated area. Despite its extreme northern location, Denmark has a mild, damp climate tempered by the winds from the North Sea. Winter temperatures average 32° and summer temperatures average 63°. It rains most of the year, but there may be twenty to thirty days of snow, which melts very quickly. There are frequent fogs and mists, which arise from the sea. Denmark's highest point is 568 feet above sea level. It covers an area 250 miles east to west and 225 miles north to south.

Denmark is made up of small productive farms, gently rolling hills, but no mountains. The west coast is defined by the North Sea and ridges of glistening white sand dunes. Aalborg, where Jens and Marie lived, is part of the northern flat plains area, which was leveled by ancient glaciers. Travelers to Denmark would see many blue lakes, farm homes with red or blue tiled or thatched roofs, storks, castles, and windmills, and cobblestone streets.

The earliest known ancestor of Marie Dorthea Berg appeared on the large eastern island of Sjælland in a parish just north of Copenhagen called Kongens Lyngby, or the king's moor (or heath) town. It was called Kongens Lyngby because it was part of the crownlands from old times.

In the beginning of the 18th century, Hr. Grev (Count) Carl Ahlefeldt built Sorgenfri Slot (meaning palace, or manor house "free from sorrow, grief, or worry") in Kongens-Lyngby. It was surrounded by gardens and parks and had a concrete floor and a little spire in the center of the building, which was surrounded by several office buildings. Niels Andersen Langelaender, Marie's earliest known ancestor, first appeared in the parish records of Kongens Lyngby about 1710, about the same time the Sorgenfri Slot was being built. HE was the only person listed on the 1720 tax list from Sorgenfri. He was listed as a follower and support of Hr. Grev Ahlefeldt and as a judge at court from time to time until his retirement or discharge.

Hr. Grev Ahlefeldt had previously had an estate in Langelaend. Perhaps Niels Andersen Langelaender came with him from Langelaend to Sorgenfri, as his surname would indicate. Or perhaps he became employed at the manor house after it was built and was thus designated as Langelaender because that is where the Count had come from. It seems reasonable to assume that Niels himself came from Langelaend (meaning long island) since he is called Langelaender, and since we have been unable to establish his birth in Kongens Lyngby. The name Langelaender stayed with the family for at least three generations.

By the early 1720's Niels had moved out of Sorgenfri into the nearby town of Lyngby. He had a wife and three children at this time. The reason for his leaving the employ of Hr. Grev Ahlefeldt is not known, but presumably the count had sold the manor house by this time and had gone on to other places. Niels had a family and probably chose to stay settled in Lyngby rather than continue to follow the count around the county.

Niels' second child, Mathis (or Mathias) Nielsen Langelaender, was born 14 March 1717 in Sorgenfri. The child's mother, Anne Margrete Christophersen, died before he was eight years old and his father, Niels, married for a second time. Niels Andersen Langelaender died in 1740 leaving a third wife to inherit his estate.

Mathias Nielsen married for the first time when he was about twenty-five years old. His wife had six children. Three were stillborn. He married again after the death of his first wife. His second wife had two children. (The first died in infancy.) She died shortly after the birth of her second baby.

Mathias married for a third time. His wife had two children (losing one to death) and died, probably at childbirth. By this time Mathias was forty-four years old. He had been widowed three times. He had been given ten children; only five of them were living. Imagine his grief at the loss of his three wives and five children. His two oldest daughters were ages sixteen and twelve. They must have been a great comfort and help to him.

Mathias seems to have been a highly respected citizen Lyngby as he appears as a witness at countless christenings in the parish. He was a church worker, but it isn't known in exactly what sense. He was called "gartner" in one parish entry, so perhaps he was the grounds keeper, though it seems likely that his responsibilities extended beyond that as evidenced by his appearance at so many christenings.

One man who seems to be a close associate of Mathias Nielsen, a Peder Hansen, had a younger daughter of about nineteen years of age named Maren. Mathias must have taken a fancy to her and considered her a fit mother for his five children. He married her in 1762. He was forty-five years old and she was twenty. Mathias and Maren were blessed with ten children, four of whom died before the age of eight. The last one was born in 1782 when Mathias was sixty-five years old. In sixty-five years he had been blessed with four wives and twenty children. Eleven grew to adulthood. After the death of her husband in 1784, Maren Pedersen married for a second time and gave birth to one more daughter.

It was now the latter part of the 18th century and Danish laws were becoming more relaxed. People were no longer required to stay on the land where they had been born, and a great migration began to take place. The daughter of Mathias Nielsen and Maren Pedersen, Maria Mathiasen, born 19 July 1772 in Kongens-Lyngby, left the home of her childhood and moved into the city of Copenhagen. Perhaps others of her family went with her, as they seem to disappear out of Kongens-Lyngby parish about that time.

Copenhagen (meaning merchants harbor) was the main port city of Denmark, and seemed to be a place of refuge for immigrants from European countries, principally Germany. Copenhagen had a garrison for German soldiers with a parish there called Garnisons Kirk, or the garrison church. It was in this parish that Maria Mathiasen and Christopher Berg were married. Family tradition states that Christopher Berg was a German soldier, but the only evidence to support such a claim is the

fact that he was married in Garnisons Kirk. Christopher was the son of Ole Christophersen Berg and Johanne Birgette Christophersen Ronne. He was born 30 August 1775 in Vor Frue, Copenhagen. Ole was forty-eight years old when Christopher was born. Perhaps Ole or his wife Johanne, or both, were immigrants from Germany in support of the family tradition, but there is not as yet any evidence to support the claim.

At the christening of Christopher Berg, his father's occupation was given as servant. All of the witnesses at the christening were people of great prominence—town administrators of justice and their wives. This would suggest that Ole Christophersen was employed as a domestic servant the home of one of these prominent families. He would have been called a gentleman's servant.

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By 1777 Ole Christophersen Berg had moved with his wife and small son to a new location in Copenhagen. He had taken employment as a porter in Almindeligt Hospital. Between the years 1777 and 1784, five daughters were bore to the family. Ole was fifty-seven years old at the birth of his last child.

On 15 May 1799 Christopher Berg a day laborer or working man, married Maria Mathiasen in Garnisons Kirk, Copenhagen. He was twenty-four years old; he was twenty-seven. By 1801 Christopher was working as a carpenter's apprentice and they had one son named Ole. A second son was born to them two days before Christmas in 1801, Ditlev Mathias. The witnesses at his christening were also very prominent people, which suggest that Maria may have been doing domestic work in the home of some prominent family. Christopher and Maria were living in Trinitatis parish in Copenhagen at that time. In 1804 another son, Jens, was born. He died shortly thereafter. When a fourth son was born 1806, he was also named Jens, the custom then being to name children after a previous child who had died. At the christening of this child Marias surname was given as Langelander which identified her conclusively as the Maria Mathiasen of Kongens-Lyngby whose, father was Mathias Nielsen Langelander.

Karl Axel Jacob was born in 1808 in Copenhagen. Within a year or two, Christopher's apprenticeship was complete and he was free to leave Copenhagen. He undoubtedly chose to take his family where he felt that he could find the most work. In 1812, they were living in Fredericia, Velje, another large city located centrally along the main peninsula of Denmark. It was there that Marie Dorthea Berg was born on 23 February 1812. Marie was the only daughter in the family. She must have been much loved by her older brothers and by her parents.

The Bergs did not live for very long in Fredericia. Christopher had become a master carpenter, and in May 1813 he took out a trade license in Aalborg City, located on the northern tip of the peninsula. After settling in Aalborg, two more sons were born to the family—Christopher in 1815, and Jens Nicolai about 1818. Christopher Berg died on 26 January 1824 at the age of forty-eight leaving his entire estate to his widow, Maria Mathiasen. Maria was perhaps comforted by the fact that she still had four living sons and her daughter Marie to care for her. When her oldest living son Ditlev married in 1831 he continued to take watchful care of his widowed mother. By 1854 he had taken her (she was now sixty-three years old) and his two younger brothers into his home. He had followed his father's occupation and was by then a master carpenter. The two brothers worked for him, Christopher (the older one) as a carpenter, and Jens (the younger one) as an apprentice carpenter.

The only daughter, Marie Dorthea, married Jens Olsen on 23 February 1833. An unconfirmed family tradition says that she had been employed in the home of the royal family living in Aalborg prior to her marriage. Jens had come to Denmark as a Norwegian soldier and had settled in Aalborg where he practiced his trade as a tailor. There were few relatives in Aalborg. Marie had her brother Ditlev and his family, her widowed mother and two younger brothers. Jens had no relatives there. Marie's mother Maria became ill in her late sixties and was placed in a hospital for the aged. She spent at least ten years there until her death in September 1851 at the age of seventy-nine.

Eight children were born to Marie Dorthea Berg and Jens Olsen. Only five lived past infancy—Barbara, Christopher, Julia, Waldemar, and Gideon. The family was Lutheran because of the Danish law that all citizens must belong to the Lutheran Church, which was the state Church at that time. When the law was changed in 1849 allowing other religions to proselyte in Denmark, the Mormon missionaries were sent into Aalborg to establish a branch of the Church.

Jens and Marie Dorthea opened their home to the missionaries. By the time their last child Johannes was born in June of 1850, they had become disassociated from the Lutheran Church to the extent that they did not have him christened, as was the usual custom to do. The baby, Johannes, died on 16 November 1850 and the next day, on 17 November 1850, Marie Dorthea and her daughter Barbara were baptized. A few months later both Christopher and Julia were baptized. Gideon was baptized as the age of nine in 1853. Marie's husband, Jens, never joined the Church. However, they continued to entertain the missionaries in their home and to call for their ministrations whenever there was sickness in the family. Marie Dorthea Berg died at the age of forty on 7 September 1853, just three years after she had joined the Church.

Marie must have taught her children well for they were all stalwarts in the Church with the exception of Julia. She was perhaps as strong as the others in the beginning, but she went to Norway with her father after her mother's death where she married out of the Church and subsequently fell into total inactivity. All the others emigrated to Utah where they were among the faithful pioneers who established a strong religion and community in the west.