

THE OLSEN--SEELY FAMILY HOME

In the Spring of 1885 Bishop Henning Olsen called his son, Nad (Abinadi), and his two older sons, Henning Jr. and John Martin, to build a saw mill north of lower Joes Valley in Potters Canyon, to make lumber and shingles to help build up Emery County. The lumber used to build the Olsen home no doubt came from this mill. About this same time, Orange Seely had established an adobe brick mill located in Castle Dale Town at 4th South and 4th East.

Water supply for the town of Castle Dale was provided by the building of the Mammoth Canal two or three miles north of the town. This canal was laid out by Henning Olsen with his masonry level. Water from this canal was brought into the town by specially prepared ditches.

The history of the first home of Abinadi and Hannah Seely Olsen begins prior to their marriage on Feb. 21, 1887. The home is located on the corner of Main and Center Street in Castle Dale, Utah. Hannah is the daughter of Orange and Hanna Olsson Seely.

Only three rooms had been built when the newlyweds moved in. Abinadi had been assisted by his father, Henning Olsen Ungermand, an old country trained mason from Denmark. He built the walls and did the plastering and white washed the walls. The center of the walls was built with adobe brick, which was previously dried by sunlight rather than being burned to a harder finish. He also built chimneys for two fireplaces. The three rooms were finished with space left above for upstairs rooms, which were finished later. In time a kitchen and cellar were added.

A 12x18 foot frame room was built near the home for a Barber Shop. Abinadi, who was commonly called Nad, did Barber work in winter time and worked at lumber mill in summer time, until the year of 1894. By this time four children had been born: Chasty, born 7 April, 1888, Orange and Henning (twins), born 6 Oct. 1890, and Hazel, born 20 Dec. 1892.

During the 22 years that the Olsen family lived in this home pioneer life and hard work prevailed. Abinadi was called on an LDS Mission in 1895 to the Samoan Islands. He was gone for three and one half years.

Information of the Olsen family experiences while they lived in this home is taken from the written record which the oldest daughter, Chasty, recorded many years later.

There was no running water in the house all through the years that this family lived here. Every drop of water that was used for several years had to be dipped into barrels from a nearby water ditch. The water had to stand until the dirt settled. Then it was carried a bucket full at a time across the street to the house for family use. Each morning while water was

cool, it was carried to the cellar down stairs. This water was used for drinking.

Those who could, stored ice packed in sawdust, which was a real luxury. In wintertime the little stream was frozen over, so the only recourse was to load a forty gallon barrel on a horse-drawn sled with nail cleats to keep the barrel from slipping off. A clean cloth was spread over the barrel, then a tub fit down over it to keep the water from slopping over.

In wintertime when the water ditch froze over, trips for water now had to be made to a river some three or four blocks away. This labour was performed by Hannah, the mother of the family, with the help of her oldest child, Chasty, to steady the barrel on its return trip up the bank to the road, and then on to the home.

Whenever possible, Hannah Olsen melted snow and ice, even icicles on the stove in a big tub and emptied the water into the barrel and wash boiler for washing clothes. This water was soft and could be used without lye, and it made wonderful suds. When possible she saved rain water for washing nice things and for washing hair.

Bath water was heated on the stove in the wash boiler. Baths were taken in a wash tub in front of the fireplace or in the kitchen where it was warm from coal or wood stove. All washing of clothes was done by hand on a scrubbing board in a tub.

The first cook stove in the Olsen home was a four hole flat top with no warming closet on top. It burned wood or small pieces of coal. In the front was a small hearth over which a little door opened exposing the fire-box or grate. Opening or closing this door regulated the draft. The oven opened on either side.

The history of Castle Dale written years later indicates that a water ditch was created that brought irrigation water from the main canal to the west side of town. This was about the year of 1883. This provided the opportunity for families to build cisterns near their homes for water storage underground in a small reservoir lined with cement. Buckets could be lowered into the storage tank to be filled with water and carried into the house.

This service reached the Olsen home several years later. Chasty wrote "Mother never knew the joy of having water piped into the house for bathroom and sink. They did have a fine cistern which was considered quite modern."

At night the coal oil (kerosene) lamps were lit and a lantern was kept handy for use for outside chores. The glass chimneys were washed with the breakfast dishes.

Each spring the year's supply of home made soap was made

from the fat, rinds, and meat trimmings saved during the winter for several years. Mother Hannah Olsen made her own sour kraut by fermenting shredded cabbage in a jar by the fireplace. She made her own vinegar by saving all the rinsing from honey, molasses, jelly and jam containers. This was poured into a suitable wooden keg and kept back of the stove where it fermented and became choice vinegar, with additional tips from Hannah, as mentioned by her daughter Chasty.

The home was furnished with new rag carpets, with straw underneath, and new curtains to the windows, new chenille cover on the parlour table, and other little touches that made the whole house like a place of wealth to the young children.

Mother Hannah had corded wool into bats to make a new mattress, the first the family ever had. It was quite a new thing or idea. Always before, the family had slept on straw ticks or bed ticks filled with corn husks, which Mother Hannah liked much better because it did not make so much dust when she stirred it up. They never had bed springs, but instead had wooden slats on which the straw filled ticks were placed. It took a lot of work over a long period of time to card wool bats enough for a 30 or 40 pound mattress. It made a lovely soft bed when finally completed.

The wool came from the Seely family sheep given to her for a wedding present by her father, Orange Seely. While Abinadi Olsen was away on his mission, the sheep herd was cared for by a friend and neighbor and former school teacher, Joseph Page, who lived in Orangeville.

When the children were sick, Hannah resorted to home cures. She was a splendid nurse, and helped others besides her own family. A cold on the lungs called for a plaster. A piece of woollen cloth was coated with lard then sprinkled generously with nutmeg and ginger. Onion cough syrup was made by slicing the onion in a bowl and sprinkled with sugar, then covered and placed on the back of the stove. This drew out the juice to give the patient.

For fever, a bath was given, then the sick person was put to bed with mustard plasters on the feet and plenty of hot ginger tea to make the patient sweat. The mustard plasters were the most hated of all the remedies, according to the daughter, Chasty who has given this history account. For croup, a towel was dipped in cold water and wrapped around the throat. It really brought relief.

In season, corn, squash, and beans were dried, also apples, prunes and apricots. Most of the jams and jellies were made with honey. In the early years there were very few glass jars for canning fruit.

Bread was truly the staff of life. Yeast was made the day

before mixing bread. All potato water was saved for this purpose to which mashed potato was added along with honey or sugar. Later, dried yeast cakes could be bought in packages of six cakes.

During the three and one half years of Abinadi Olsen mission, Hannah worked at several jobs to support herself and children and also some of his mission expenses. She worked as janitor of three school rooms, made quilts, did dressmaking, and cleaned houses.

Other members of her family, and church members assisted when they could, with money donations and labor. Her Father-in-law, Henning Olsen, called most every day to see how the family was. In wintertime when the snow was deep he came in the early mornings to build the fires in the stoves and help with the chores.

The return of husband and father, Abinadi Olsen, from his three and one half years mission to Samoa was a joyous event. He returned in June 1898. He brought with him a young man, George Kennison, and a Samoan boy, James Mackie Jr. age seven from Samoa who lived in the family home for a few years until their parents came. Abinadi was elected to the position of County Treasurer in the fall of that year.

On Feb, 6, 1899, Mother Hannah gave birth to premature twins weighing about 2 pounds each, a boy and a girl. Dr. William P. Winters and Mrs. S. J. Sharp were in attendance. The twins were named Delon and Jenny Lind. They had to be fed mother's milk from a medicine dropper every little while.

An older sister, Hazel, who was six years and two months old when the twins were born, wrote many years later about their birth. She said: " My sister Chasty and I awoke to a happy surprise. We went downstairs to Mother's bedroom. She showed us two tiny babies lying on a pillow."

Jenny Lind lived 11 days and was 11 inches long. Her burial casket was made by the young man, George Kennison, who was 23 years old when father Abinadi brought him home from Samoa, where he had lived with his white parents for many years. He was a good carpenter. Hazel said she watched him while he built the casket upstairs in the north bedroom.

Three more children were born in the family home: Crystal, born 18 Oct. 1900, Wendell, born 6 May 1905 and Foyer, born 28 Dec. 1907.

In the fall of 1901, Abinadi and Hannah Olsen and young children moved to Sunnyside in Carbon County where Abinadi had supervised and helped to build a hotel. The Castle Dale Home was rented to Vollie Acord and family.

The new "Green Front Hotel" accommodated 50 boarders with Abinadi as Manager and Mother Hannah as supervisor of the cooking. The venture would have been a real success, but before very long they realized there was no home life and a hotel was no place to raise a growing family.

Their daughter, Wanda, was born 5 October 1902 in Sunnyside, Utah while the family was in the hotel there. The family moved back to their Castle Dale home in December of 1902.

On August 10, 1904, the eldest daughter, Chasty, was married in the Salt Lake LDS Temple to Albert Harris, a school teacher. The trousseau sewing was done in this house.

The Olsen family lived in their home on the corner of Main and Center street until April 1st 1909 when the home was sold to Hannah's younger brother, Dave and Eiva Seely.

The family lived the following year in the LDS tithing building across the street east where the youngest son, George, was born 28 of January 1910. The tithing building had a full basement and two large rooms on the ground floor. During this year a house was being built on the North Bench section of Castle Dale, where the family later moved to.

Eleven children, five girls and six boys, had been born to this noble couple.

The Abinadi Olsen family did not have the luxury of having running water piped into their house on the corner of Main and Center Street all the 22 years they lived there. Toilet facilities was located in an outside building. Electricity came to the city homes of Castle Dale in 1906, just three years before the family moved.

Delon wrote some memories many years later of his boyhood days in the Olsen family home on main street. "My first memory of excitement as a child was looking out the south window of the old home in Castle Dale to see the Doctor Winters' store burn down. Those leaping flames were so close they really scared me. The George Brandon Saloon which joined on the west brought some more excitement."

"G. F. Hickman, Archer Willie, and John T. Hand were living with us as boarders during those exciting times. Mother would do the cooking while Olive Biddlecomb would help with the house work."

Hugh Brandon, a childhood friend of Delon, wrote many years later of his memories of Delon and his family. He wrote that when the Oisen home was sold to Dave and Elva Seely in 1909 that the Oisen family (quote)" moved to a home upon the Bench which was a much smaller house for the family". It was the desire of Father Abinadi that the children be raised in a more private location than the center of town, and away from city streets.

HISTORY OF THE DAVE AND ELVA SEELY HOME

The Seely family lived in this home on the corner of Main and Center Street in Castle Dale from April 1, 1909 to the fall of 1940. During these years there were building improvements, rooms added and others finished. Five Seely children were born in this house in the downstairs bedroom. The first child, Clara Seely was born March 1910. She died April 1, 1911. Her funeral was held in this family home. Other children of this family are Samuel Hugh, born April 12, 1912, Lowry Singleton, born April 16, 1916, Marjorie, born July 28, 1918 and Preston David, born August 24, 1921.

A long awaited improvement came to this home before 1914. Dave Seely, Edmund Crawford, and Albert Keller had a cistern built on the point of the hill north near where the County Sheriff Department is now located. At that time it was near the Central High School location. Water for this cistern came from the Mammoth Canal which carried water from the mountains and still supplies our needs in 1994. The water was carried by irrigation type ditches right to the cistern on the north bench hill. This cistern water was piped to the three homes located about one to three blocks apart. Running water was now indoors!

It was on July 14, 1914 that the City of Castle Dale awarded a contract to Frederickson and Son for the building of a big water cistern and extension of water pipes to all the city at a cost of \$11,365.00. Those who could afford to build bathrooms and kitchens with plumbing equipment piped the water into their homes. Charges for water supply was 75 cents per month. (See city Records)

The Seely family was already enjoying a kitchen sink, a bathtub and laundry machine. A bathroom and laundry room had been added to this home on Center and Main Street. Bedrooms had been completed upstairs since the purchase of the house. One was the northeast bedroom upstairs which was added for the younger brother, Preston, born in 1921.

A little room was built just west of a closet space in Preston's bedroom for another bathroom but was never completed.

The walls of a little store room in the northwest corner upstairs was never finished, but this room was and still is used for storage space.

Margorie Seely, daughter of Dave and Elva, says her mother referred to the house in 1909 as a "cabin". This is easily understood with no water pipes, and the need for additional improvements. Pioneer days were now passing by and modern conveniences were possible.

This home in the center of town became a social gathering place. Every New Year's morning, Marge says, her mother served breakfast for all their crowd. If someone did not attend the New Year's Eve dance, those who did, went from house to house and pulled people out of bed and they assembled at the Seely house. Delon Olsen was always the cook serving his famous sourdough hot cakes, ham, bacon, toast, and plenty of black coffee to neutralize the "liquid spirits" consumed before arriving at the party. These breakfasts lasted until about noon on New Year's Day.

In early May the Dave Seely's family members would go to Hill Creek to be with their Dad. They would all be gone for two to three months and the house was never locked. Everybody in town knew no one was home. Not once was the home entered or disturbed in any way during the absence of the family. That is hard to believe in this day and age of 1994.

From 1932 to 1937 some of the school teachers lived in the Seely house with the family. Leona Moffit kept house and did the cooking. Mother Elva worked in the store in Ferron.

Margorie Seely says that "in February of 1939 the roof caught fire. The only fire hydrant in town was on our corner. Mother was in Orangeville to basketball game when someone told her the house was on fire. The townspeople had connected up the hose and poured water over, under, and onto the roof. When Mother Elva arrived home she said the stairway was a sheet of ice and water was everywhere.

"The fire didn't do too much damage but the water damage necessitated the replastering and finishing of every room except the washroom on the northwest corner of downstairs section of the house. Since there was a stove in this room she and Preston, the only child at home, lived there for several months until the house was liveable. The front porch was removed at this time and the front entrance hall into the living room and dining room was built. Marge says that at this time her Mother had to go to work every day and Delon came to oversee the workman. At one point he fired someone for not doing a good job.

"Before this time of renovation, the sidewalk went right to the corner of the lot. and there was a wire fence around the yard. Margorie says her mother had the walk changed and in 1940 a picket fence was built around the yard. Margorie borrowed \$125,00 from Carbon Emery Bank to pay for the fence. She was teaching school in Greenriver at the time and was making \$87.50 per month.

"There were vegetable gardens on the north and west side of the house. On the east and south was grass. In 1928 Mrs. Cash appeared at the door with some lilac plants and took Mother out to show her how to plant and care for a few flowers. Marge to continues." That gave Mother the gardening "bug". She went to Salt Lake and had a nursery lay out a plan for landscaping the whole yard. How she worked to get it all finished and maintained! In the spring and summer she would be up at 4 A.M. to water and mow the lawn. It looked like velvet. Her flowers and shrubs were beautiful. I thought it the prettiest place in town.

Margorie says "I know our friends were always welcome and my memories of living in that house are filled with happiness, contentment, and security. It is really a lovely old house and looks so stately as one drives into town from the East."

David and Elva Seely moved to Vernal in the fall of 1940. The house was empty until September of 1941 when a wedding reception for daughter Margorie and Dutch Reeve, was planned to be held in the house on September 17th.

The family came home three weeks before their marriage in the Manti Temple. The house had to be cleaned and furniture had to be borrowed from Grandma Singleton and Aunt Cecil Crawford so the home wouldn't be totally empty. A piano was brought from Grandmas' house and a sofa and dining room table from the Crawford home. Fortunately two beds were still upstairs and by borrowing bedding the family was able to sleep in the house. Aunt Bertrude Winters came every day to help. She was one of the most remarkable ladies you could ever know.

This wedding reception with the response from dear family and friends was the culmination of 32 years of the Seely family memories of life in a beloved home at the corner of Main and Center street in Castle Dale.

Sometime later Delon negotiated with Dave and Elva Seely for the purchase of their Castle Dale home. It was determined after that Crystal and her husband, Angus Rosenberg and their children, Nad, Elaine, and John D. should be the ones to make their home there. They became the new owners of Crystal's childhood home and moved in the fall of 1944.

There was no need for remodeling of this home. It was well suited to the needs of this family. The hospitality that radiated from the walls of this house from its very beginning in 1887 still continued. Crystal was well trained in hospitality and home making. She also maintained a beautiful outdoor landscape of flowers, bushes and trees. Her vegetable garden each summer was a glorious sight to see and became the topic and admiration of all who passed by.

Following the loss of her husband who died in 1947, Crystal became the support of her family. She worked with Neva Jensen in the Castle Dale Elementary school lunch program for several years. When her son, John Delon, was called on an LDS mission, Crystal obtained work at the Governor's Mansion in Salt Lake City as Housekeeper and Cook, which provided the mission expenses.

Except for her two year stay in Salt Lake and occasional visits with her children and their families, Crystal lived in her Castle Dale home until about 1987. She was then about 86 years old and in failing health. This noble woman passed away in the nursing home in Ferron, Utah March 13 1988 at age 87.

Henning Olsen, a son of Delon and Argene Olsen, and his wife Ilene and their two children moved into Crystal's home in 1989 and remained their as caretaker for the next three years.

In 1993 Mr. and Mrs Randy Johnson and their children occupied this home. They moved out in March 1994.

In 1995, Crystal's son, Nad Peterson, directed a major change in this historical home. The entire electrical lines were replaced with new wiring. The old bathroom was changed into a laundry room. A new bathroom with the addition of a shower room, was built on the north side of the building.

In December of 1995, Crystal's granddaughter, Patti and her husband, Mark Young moved from Georgia to seek employment here in Utah. They were welcomed to live in the family home. They are very busy in this year 1996 in repainting, painting and papering the walls to cover the new electric lines. This home is now prepared for its centennial new year.

References: Written Family Histories by Chasty Olsen Harris, and Marjorie Seely Reeve, Hazel Olsen Hill, Delon Olsen, Castle Dale Town and Emery County History Records.

Researched and typed by Argene Olsen, 1994--1996