

JENS JENSEN SKOW

Person #18 on chart #1

by Hazel A. Watts

Jens Jensen Skow (Scow) was born in Lime Sogn Viborg, Denmark. His tombstone says 26 Jan., 1792. His temple card says Mar. 18, 1792. He died 18 Dec.. 1877 in Ephraim, Sanpete Co. Utah, at the age of eighty-five. He was the fourth child in a family of ten children. They were Claus, Jens Jensen, Ingar, Maren, Anne, Niels Jensen, and Anne Margretha who lived, and Niels, Karen, and Anne Margretha who passed away as children.

He was the son of Jens Nielsen Bbojer (Boier), born 16 May 1756, and Mette Jensen, christened 3 Mar. 1765 have been born in Lime Viborg, Denmark.

Nothing is recorded of the early life of Jens Jensen Skow. We do know he was a tall, stately slender man, nicely proportioned with blue eyes, brown hair and fair skin. He had a very kind and gentle nature. He maintained his stately bearing throughout his long life, probably because he was so well trained and sternly disciplined in the Danish Army, and at the age of twenty-one he was one of the many Danish boys sent to France to fight in the French Revolution. While there he suffered the many hardships of war, but did not spend all of his time and energy with the implements of destruction. He was a very serious scholar and decided to take advantage of his travels to learn about the people and their country. While on the continent he learned to write and speak French fluently and obtained a good foundation in the German language which he enlarged upon later.

On his return to Denmark, he became a school master, a position of honor. He was especially well trained in mathematics.

He first married Mathilda Ostergaard (a priest's daughter). To this union was born one son--Mathias or Martin. He was born 30 July 1821. The mother died in childbirth, and this young son was raised in the home of his grandparents. Martin later went to sea and was last heard from as being in Australia.

Jens Jensen Skow then married Kirsten Nielsen, born 27 Oct. 1793, in Lime Viborg, Denmark, or in Ebbersgaard, Norden Viborg, Denmark. She died 17 Feb. 1851. She was the daughter of Niels Bertelsen and Maren Pedersen.

To Jens and Kirsten were born four children, Mette, born 13 Mar. 1823, died 1905; Niels Jensen, born 12 Sept. 1824, died 25 Apr. 1864; Maren, born 25, Dec. 1828, died 12 Jan. 1829; and Maren (Mary) born 20 Dec. 1830, died 29 Aug. 1900.

Jens and Kirsten had a good life in Denmark. They were financially independent. He was a highly respected school master. His major interest was in mathematics and languages. He read and spoke three languages while in Denmark. These were Danish, French, and German. After coming to America he mastered English.

In the summer he made rope, tended a large colony of bees and was the caretaker of an extensive forest. He owned a tract of forest land himself in which he had a comfortable home. While in Denmark, Jens was active in the affairs of the Lutheran parish in which he lived, and was well liked and respected by his friends who came to him for advice and council.

On 14 June 1850 Erastus Snow opened the Danish Mission in Copenhagen with three missionaries. It took some time for these few missionaries of the Lord to find their way to Lime Viborg, but when they did come into the beautiful country side where Jens

Jensen Skow lived they found a family ready and anxious to learn all about this new gospel of Jesus Christ being preached. The mother, Kirsten, who had been ill for seventeen years, had died very recently of breast cancer and did not have the opportunity to hear the story of the restored gospel; but Jens and his three children opened their home and their hearts to the missionaries and were baptized 6 May 1852.

The persecution of the people who accepted the gospel began immediately. Sometimes trouble was started by rough necks who stood on the benches with their hats on, smoking cigar while church services were being held. At others times they would break windows, doors, and other parts of the meeting places. Sometimes the violence was personal; homes of new converts were scenes of attacks. Sometimes the violence of special vengeance in the villages when neighbors allied themselves against those having accepted this foreign "ism" as they called Mormonism.

Homes were burned; mobbings became common; and peasant girls held stones in their skirts while others threw them chanting, "Call on your God now, and see if he will help you."

The missionaries and the Saints whom they had converted employed many devices in order to avoid breaking the many laws of villages which had been passed to keep the people from hearing the new gospel. While going about preaching, if the local magistrate declared that standing up before a group of people was preaching and against the law, they would sit down and preach. If religious services were forbidden in homes, they held "conversations", while neighbors sat about the room darning stockings or mending fishing nets to disguise the fact that they were listening to the gospel.

In many places where missionaries were banned, the Danish converts, who were acting as local missionaries, would go into a village or special neighborhood, find work in their particular trade, and then pass the glad news of the gospel in many unique ways. A shoemaker stuffed tracts in shoes he had mended; a tailor would sermonize as he sewed those standing around in his shop while they waited for their clothes. They baptized at night along river banks and the seashore. Jens and his son Niels were very active in this work.

Every new convert bore witness to his neighbor. They were certainly honest in heart and listened to the message. It is almost unbelievable to realize that there were only thirteen missionaries from Utah who served in all of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway in the first nine years, 1850 to 1859, while the gospel was first preached there; yet there were 9,854 baptisms and 2,357 Saints who emigrated to Utah during this period of time. It has been said of the Scandinavian converts of that time, "They heard the gospel preached one day, were baptized the second day, and on the third day they were out preaching the restored gospel to kinfolk, neighbors and friends, and within a year they had emigrated to Utah, establishing new homes and doing their share to make the desert blossom as a rose.

This was literally true of the Skow family. On Dec. 20, 1852, just seven and one half months after their baptism, the family stood on the wharf at Liverpool to bid farewell. Niels and Maren were sailing for America and Zion, Jens and Mette to remain for a short time yet in Denmark. There were a large crowd around to wish them well, but there was a larger crowd who were blasphemous and insulting at seeing the "Swedish Mormon priest" (Forsgren) taking many of their countrymen with him. However, there was no violence.

They set sail on the ship Obtritt for Kiel. There were storms encountered on the way but no great damage. After a trip by railroad from Kiel to Hamburg, the Saints boarded the ship Lion which sailed for Hull, England. They arrived there Christmas day, 1852. A severe storm was raging in the North Sea, a storm so wild it claimed over 150 ships, and the people of Hull were very much surprised when the ship Lion appeared on the horizon. After a train ride to Liverpool the emigrant Saints went aboard the packet ship Forest Monarch, which was hauled out of the dock and anchored in the River Mersey. They went aboard Dec. 31, 1852. There the ship lay at anchor for two weeks waiting for the weather to calm and for a favorable wind.

Finally on Jan. 16, 1853, they set sail for Zion. There were 297 Mormons aboard under the direction of Elder John E. Forsgren. This was the first large organized company of Saints to leave Denmark.

The trip across the Atlantic Ocean was tedious, taking thirteen weeks. Their fresh water supply gave out causing much distress. They reached New Orleans on Mar. 16, 1853. They went up the Mississippi River to St. Louis where they stayed a month. Then they went on up the river to Keokuk, Iowa. From there they left by ox-team across the great American plains, arriving in Salt Lake Valley Sept. 30, 1853.

Meanwhile Jens and his daughter Mette who had remained in Denmark immediately began planning for their trip to America. We can only speculate as to why they remained in Denmark. It could have not been for financial reasons because Jens is known to have paid the fare for quite a large number of his fellow countrymen to come to Zion. He never asked for or received on cent of this money back. He only rejoiced in his ability to be of help. He and Mette probably stayed to dispose of their property in Denmark. It may have been because it was hard to secure passage on the boats for all four of them at once. It is well known that at this time the Scandinavian countries "were a field white all ready to harvest", waiting for the sickle of reapers (missionaries) to gather them to their promised home in Zion. All boats were crowded.

They were ready when the second large company of Saints left Denmark. They left their home in Viborg, setting sail in a small vessel from Frederikshound, Denmark, in Dec. of 1854 headed for England. But a storm in the North Sea blew from the wrong direction, and they landed in Norway. After a stay there of about one week they embarked again, only to be blown back to their starting point in Frederikshound. Another try was made. The winds were favorable and they landed in England some time during the day of December 25, 1854. They immediately took the train for Liverpool where they arrived that evening. Liverpool, England, was the European headquarters for the Church at this time. From here all ships were chartered for all the Saints bound for America.

Peter O. Hansen, a wonderful Danish Saint and interpreter of the Book of Mormon into the Danish language, was in charge of this company of Scandinavians. They waited for thirteen days for favorable weather conditions and then boarded the vessel 'James Nesbir' and sailed for Zion on Jan. 7, 1855. There were 450 Scandinavians and one British Saint aboard.

They landed in New Orleans February 23, 1855. The condition of the sailing vessels in which these Saints traveled was extremely poor. Their drinking water had to be stored in large wooden casks. It was not filtered and soon became stale and unpalatable. A scum formed on the top from the impurities making the water bad for their stomachs,

causing cholera. Their diet was limited because of the crowded condition of the ship, and scurvy was also present.

Tar was used to fumigate the vessels every week because there was no ventilation in the hold where the people had to sleep. In most crossings forty to fifty people died because of the poor conditions.

They left New Orleans by boat going up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, Missouri, where they stayed for one day. From there they took a flat boat to Leavenworth, Kansas, where they landed at a place called 'Mormon Grove'. There Jens secured a good wagon, a team of oxen, two cows and other needed equipment for the journey across the plains to Zion. Jens drove the team, and Mette drove the cows most of the way. They finally arrived in the Salt Lake Valley Sept. 9, 1855.

Almost immediately President Brigham Young sent the greater portion of this company on south 118 miles to a location near the geographical center of Sanpete County. It had been named Pine Creek a few years before by Isaac Buhunnin, who had tried to settle there but had been run out by the Indians.

It was probably the latter part of Sept. or the early part of Oct. 1855, when Jens and his daughter Mette drove their team of oxen up over the last cedar ridge and looked down in to the valley of Pine Creek.

Niels and Maren who had preceded them by two years welcomed them with open arms into their home which was situated inside a fort they, had helped build. They found many changes had come into the lives of Niels and Maren. Maren had married two years previously, to Niels Petersen, She had a little son named Jens Peter, born 13 Feb. 1855 Jens Jensen Skow stayed at Pine Creek and began the task of getting a farm going and Mette stayed for a short visit with her brother and sister. Then she went to Spanish Fork where she spent the winter. There she acted as a housekeeper and a weaver for a family. She was an expert weaver, having developed this skill in Denmark. Her services were much in demand because of her ability with the loom. When she returned in the spring she brought with her a sheep and some flour she had earned as her winter's wages. When she returned she found her father and Niels had built a small home inside the fort. She became her father's housekeeper.

In 1857 Mette married Rasmus Johnson. They like the rest of Saints, lived in the fort. Some time before this, their community, when it was only a tent town, had changed the name from Pine Creek to Ephraim and had incorporated it as a township. This required that fifty men be living in the community. Niels Jensen Skow was one of the fifty incorporating males

Jens Jensen Skow drew the building lot on 200 North between 100 and 200 East streets. It was near the lot drawn by his daughter Maren and her husband Niels. Here he built his home making the adobe himself and his own carpentry work. His daughter Mette lived here with him for a while.

Jens was a man of great industry and integrity. He taught higher mathematics among the adults and arithmetic of more simple nature to the children of the community in the evening after his day's work was done. All daylight hours must be spent wrestling food stuff and clothing from mother nature. Only evenings could be spent for culture.

He became a successful farmer and was a tanner of leather. He and his son Niels owned a tannery together in which they made leather for shoes, harnesses, some clothing,

etc. He learned the art of rope making while in the army in Denmark and France. Rope was needed here so he contrived an apparatus in which to make the rope. Because of the lack of other material he used at first the hair from the tails of horses and cows. Finally he was able to raise hemp and make a good quality of rope.

Jens learned to knit during his later years and made many pairs of full length wool stockings for himself and his grandchildren. These stockings were practical and warm, but certainly not very comfortable.

He took an active part in church and civic affairs and was a great influence in building up the new community they were trying to establish.

On Feb. 14, 1868, Ephraim, which had for the past fourteen years been a township, was incorporated as Ephraim City, with an area of one and one half square miles. It had no indebtedness, and taxes were very low. It was known throughout the territory as "Little Denmark", and was well on its way to becoming one of the most beautiful cities in the area.

A number of years after Jens arrived in Ephraim and after his children were married and had homes and families of their own, he married a Danish widow who like himself had lost her mate in the old country. She had two children, Peter and Stena, who had emigrated with her. Jens adopted them and cared for them until their marriages. This marriage was not sealed for eternity but Anna Johanna or "Ann Yo-Han" as she was called, made a very comfortable home for Jens and was very good to him. Their home was close to his daughter Maren who by this time had children of her own and was acting as mother to her brother Niels Jensen Skow's two orphaned children, John and Dortha Christina, who lost their father and mother a year apart when the children were only three and seven years old.

By their industry and ingenuity, Jens and his family remained as they had always been in Denmark, independent and self-sustaining. They soon had hand made chairs, tables, beds, cupboards, and other furniture carved out of native pine and other materials mother nature provided for them.

They had their own cows for milk, butter, cheese, meat, leather and fat for soap grease. Their chickens and ducks provided meat, eggs and feathers for pillows, comforters and feather ticks. Their sheep served a dual purpose, meat and wool. This wool was one of their very important commodities. It was used for clothing, blankets, quilts, and many other purposes. Their valley was fertile and after 1857 food stuff from the soil was abundant enough to sustain life in comfort. There was also very good fishing and hunting.

We may be sure that Jens and his family, like all the other pioneers, arrived in the valley sick and tired from their long journey, but they also arrived ready to help at once in the tanning of the surrounding forbidding desert. Life was not easy. They had to learn a new language and adapt themselves to new conditions and new laws. This we do know for a certainty, they were not afraid of toil nor hardships. Whatever came into their hands they used frugally. They had been promised that through the help of God they would make "the desert blossom". This promise became, after a few years, their hard earned reality.

From a life of comparative ease as a school master in beautiful green Denmark to life in the sand, clay, and drought of the everlasting hills of the Great Basin was a drastic change for Jens. He freely and willingly gave up his old life and came to Utah to become a humble plowman of the fields, drawer of water, and hewer of wood, but from his loins have come

many of the architects and planners of Zion; men and women respected both in church and civic circles. Among them are found an assistant Apostle, a temple president and coordinator of all temples of the church, a mission president, stake presidents and bishops, many missionaries and faithful and respected seminary teachers. There are university professors and educators in all fields. Bachelor and master's degrees are common among his posterity, and doctors of medicine, veterinary, and education, name him as their progenitor, as do men of science, working in the atomic and other fields. Successful farmers, stock raisers and men in industry follow his example of honesty and integrity. Many of his descendants have served their country in time of need; some have paid the supreme sacrifice in its defense.

The women of his posterity are true mothers in Zion, having taken advantage of the wonderful opportunities in education, Church and civic service presented to them.

It can truly be said that his sons and daughters, even to the sixth and seventh generations are living rich, full lives in his adopted land of freedom. They honor him and "rise up to call him blessed" for his many sacrifices that they might live in peaceful Zion.

Jens Jensen Skow died 18 Dec. 1877, in Ephraim, Sanpete Co., Utah. He is buried in the old cemetery. His wife Johanne is buried by his side.