

HISTORY OF MARIANE PEDERSEN GEERTSEN

By Marilyn Geertsen Erickson, Great-Granddaughter

Mariane Pedersen Geertsen was born in Taars Hjoring, Jutland, Denmark, on January 14, 1836. She was a daughter of Peder Nielsen and Johanna M. Christensen and was the youngest of six children. She was well educated and was able to study the English language while still in Denmark.



Mariane Pedersen¹

She was about 17 years old when she joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She was disowned by her family when she became a member of the Church. Her father told her that she could not spend another night in his home. An older brother, feeling that this was a rather harsh edict, came to her defense. He told their father that he had paid rent on his room and that he would let her spend the night in his room, while he slept elsewhere in the house. She was the only member of her family to ever join the Church.



Peter Christian Geertsen

She married Peter Christian Geertsen on May 15, 1862 in Aarhus², Denmark. His family had also rejected him when he was baptized, but later relented. A predominant family legend relates that Peter was a fourth generation from the crown of Denmark. He was raised much as a prince, and had many opportunities and a good education. Our research has failed to uncover any proof of this link to the crown. However, it is believed significant that all of the male children born to Peter's parents were given the middle name of Christian, which is the name of several of the Danish kings.

While they were residing in Aarhus, Denmark their first child was born in 1864. They named him George³. Marian's husband was president of the Aarhus Conference.

They immigrated to the United States and then to Utah also in the year 1864. Upon leaving Denmark, they went to England, where in Liverpool on Tuesday April 26, 1864, they boarded the ship "Monarch of the Sea." The actual sailing date was Thursday April 28, 1864. This must have been a rather large ship for those days, as there were 974



Monarch of the Sea in 1864

immigrating Saints aboard, 700 of who were from Scandinavia, with 388 from Denmark. I quote from the Millennial Star about their departure:

“We had the pleasure of clearing the ship “Monarch of the Sea” (Captain Kirkaldy) for the port of New York, On Tuesday the 26th inst. This ship was chartered to sail on the 23rd inst. But, owing to unavoidable detention in loading and unloading the cargo, through having to change her berth in the dock, she could not be got ready for clearing before Tuesday. She did not sail until the morning of Thursday the 28th inst. This further delay was attributed to the difficulty in obtaining sailors. So many ships having been prevented from reaching the port by the strong easterly winds which have lately prevailed and the bounty offered by the American Navy inducing so many sailors to enter into their service, there has been a great scarcity of that class of men, of late, in this port.

“This goodly ship has sailed with 974 souls of the Saints on board, nearly every one of whom have paid their way through to Wyoming (Nebraska). This is the largest company of Saints, we believe, which has ever sailed from the shores of Europe to America. Though they had some inconveniences to endure, through the ship not being completely prepared to receive them at the time they were advised to come forward, good feelings and good order were noticeable in their midst....”

On Sunday April 24 before sailing a public meeting was held on board the ship in the Bromley-Moore Dock. At this meeting several of the Elders spoke and gave much instruction pertinent to their journey and circumstances. The company was organized and Elder John Smith, Patriarch to the church, was appointed to preside. Also Elders were appointed to preside over the various wards into which the passengers of the ship were divided.

Measles broke out during the voyage, causing 46 deaths (principally children). Four more died on the night the emigrants landed. They arrived in New York on June 3 having been at sea for five weeks. I quote again from the Millennial Star of July 2:

“By favor of the 7th ult., from Elder Joseph A. Young, we learn of the safe arrival of the ship `Monarch of the Sea` at the port of New York, on this morning of the 3rd ult. On board were the first Saints of this season’s emigration, and from the time of her starting from Liverpool to arriving in New York, we can infer that the winds and the waves were propitious to her voyaging. There had, however, been considerable sickness on board, which dampens somewhat our joy on hearing from her, the deaths that occurred being mostly among the children. The Saints were landed at Castle Gardens and forwarded on to Albany by train on the evening of the same day of their arrival in port.”

They continued their journey by rail to Wyoming, Nebraska, which was the outfitting station for the trek across the plains to Salt Lake City. They came by handcart, although they were not in a company of handcarts only. The last handcart company, as such, arrived in the valley in 1860. It was while on the journey across the plains that their little baby George became ill and died. He had to be buried on the lonely plains. One can image the grief and sorrow these two valiant souls must have felt at this time. At one time while reminiscing, Mariane told her granddaughter, Genevieve how hard that was to bear – leaving her little baby out there all alone.

It is not known which pioneer company they were travelling in, but it is assumed that it was either the John Smith Company, of which no roster was kept, or the Isaac A. Canfield Company, which kept a partial roster. The rosters of all other companies arriving in Salt Lake in 1864 have been researched to no avail. The John Smith Company arrived in Salt Lake October 1, 1864. Mention was made earlier in this history that John Smith presided over the Saints as they crossed the ocean. It may be assumed that our grandparents remained with him as they made their way west. The Isaac A. Canfield Company arrived in the valley on October 5, 1864.

They settled in Huntsville, Utah where Peter's brother Laurtz⁴ had settled a few years previously. Huntsville is in a beautiful valley at the top of Ogden Canyon. While living here there were five more children born to them: Georgina Petrina, 29 June 1865, Peter Christian, Jr., 15 Sept. 1867, Joseph, 6 Feb. 1870 (my grandfather), Mary Elizabeth, 31 May 1872, and Johanna Emilia, 27 Jan. 1878.

Peter, Mariane's husband was a very good speaker, and when he would speak, the place would be filled. The people would say "Peter Christian Geertsen is talking, we must go hear."

Life was very hard for them and for the first little while they lived in a dugout. The winters were very severe there and they often saw the snow depths up to the tops of the fence posts.

It was a time of great trial to our dear little grandmother when her husband took another younger wife, and subsequently two others. The first was Mary Anne⁵ Bingham and she was the belle of the community. No doubt some were quite surprised when she chose to marry the Danish man Peter C. Geertsen. They were all living together in a small house. It was very hard for her to watch her husband paying attention to this young and pretty girl, while Grandmother would do the work. She told my father, Joseph E. Geertsen who was her grandson, how this young, haughty bride would treat her. She would meet her on the pathway to the meat house, behind the main house, and stand on the path defiantly, making Grandmother walk out into the waist deep snow, as



Mary Ann Bingham

she was not about to budge and inch. Very hurt and humiliated, Grandmother would come back to the house and get down on her knees to ask the Lord to give her strength to go through these trials. She said the Lord did bless her and gave her the strength to overcome her weaknesses of jealousy and selfishness. She bore testimony to the principle of Plural Marriage, with tears in her eyes. In fact she said this principle was one of the greatest blessing in her life. Mariane was about 80 years old when she related this to my father. He remembers her taking his hand in hers and patting it with her other hand as she would tell him of her trials. She would call him Joseph Edwin. She was a small woman, about five feet tall. She wore her hair parted in the middle and pulled tightly back. He remembers her with grey hair.



Joseph Edwin
Geertsen
about 1922

Grandmother spent many lonely years as Grandfather was in the mission field for a total of thirteen years, although not consecutively. She had a gift of being able to handle money wisely and got Grandfather out of debt many times. By this time it seemed he had received an inheritance from Denmark which enabled him to go on several missions back to his homeland⁶. Quite often he would help finance passage for Danish Saints to come to Zion. He was a very successful missionary and baptized many people.

Grandmother was the financial manager for the ranch while he was away on his missions to Denmark and she managed very well. She was responsible for all of his families. Their farm was adjacent to the McKay family ranch, and Peter C. Geertsen baptized David O. McKay, as his father was away on a mission at that time.

They were called in to the Temple for their Second Anointing. The date is unknown.

When he was 57 years old, Peter C. Geertsen was stricken with an attack of acute appendicitis. He died a few days later on August 22, 1894. Mariane then moved to Salt Lake City and lived for many years thereafter alone in a little house on the northwest corner of 7th East and 8th South.

Toward the end of her life, she lived with her daughter Emilia in Salt Lake. From a beautiful letter which I received from her granddaughter, Genevieve Geertsen Spooner I take the following account:

“I suppose I should begin by telling what she looked like. She was a small lady about five feet tall...she weighed ninety pounds. Grandma loved to go to the Liberty Park and watch the Merry-go-Round for hours at a time and that is where I would take her once a week...She always dressed in her beautiful satin dress with puffed sleeves. She wore a bonnet the style of 1898. Even though this was not the style, it was what she liked to wear

and I was very proud of her, because I took her many places. Her hair was mixed with gray and was brown and quite thin and worn in a knot on top or in the back. In other words, she looked like a doll. I remember once when I took her on the street car and she had a little trouble with the long silk dress, she said to the conductor, `Remember, young man, you will be old some day, too.`”

A rather sad thing occurred on the night of her death. As she lay in the bedroom dying, her son Peter C., Jr. and Oscar, her stepson were in the other room arguing about politics. My father was there that night, also Genevieve and others. It seemed to me rather insensitive of them to not be able to put their political differences aside this night out of love for their dear mother. She died on the night of Feb. 19, 1919. She was 83 years old.

On the same night of her death, the family received news of the death of Alonzo Felt, a grandson, in Idaho. On his death bed he said that Grandma and Grandpa Geertsen had come to get him. They told him that Grandma wasn't dead and he said, “I don't care, she is standing right over there.” He could see them, but no one else could. The messages informing of the deaths had crossed each other on the wires as they were sent by telegram.

She was buried in Huntsville, Utah next to her husband. My father travelled to Huntsville to attend her funeral. I have just recently visited the cemetery and was very impressed with the beauty of her final resting place. The cemetery is located at the very tip of a peninsula jutting out into Pineview Reservoir. It is very well kept and was very peaceful and quiet. The view of the mountains to the west was magnificent across the waters of the reservoir. The sun had broken through the clouds and the shaft of light on the beautiful green hills was a most inspiring sight. She was a great little lady, full of courage, faith and a determination to do the will of the Lord. I feel a great and overwhelming love for her as I have researched her life, and I have grown to appreciate her and the hardships that she endured for the Gospel's sake.

One more thing should be added to this history. On a Sunday afternoon in Feb. 1978 I was doing some work on this history – I was writing in more detail some of the notes I had taken a few days previously. It was rather late when we retired that night, and I was very tired as I went to sleep. Sometime during the night I awakened with a strange feeling. I was aware that someone was in our bedroom standing at the foot of our bed. I knew that it was my great grandmother, Mariane. She was holding out her arms to me. I didn't actually see her, and yet I knew it was she. It may be rather hard to understand how I could know that it was she without seeing her, but nevertheless it was so. I knew without any doubt that she was there. I was so very tired that I fell asleep again, only to awaken again with the same feeling, knowing that she was there. This happened several times during the night. I don't know if she was trying to tell me something or if

she was merely showing her approval and appreciation, but after this experience, I really feel as if I know her personally.

NOTE:

Pictures and footnotes have been added for clarification. The history as written by Marilyn Geertsen Erickson, Great-Granddaughter, has not been changed.

History contributed by Linda Lee Geertsen who is the great granddaughter of Mariane Pedersen. Linda is also the sister of Marilyn Geertsen Erickson the author of the history.

History re-typed and pictures and footnotes added by Stephen A. Hansen (3 x great grandson) on 13 January 2010.

Footnotes contributed by Jeff Geertsen (great grandson of Peter Christian Geertsen and Mary Ann Bingham).

FOOTNOTES:

1. Mariane was born Mariane Pedersen, the daughter of Peder Nielsen Gjøderum. The name Gjøderum is what is called a "bought" name, or an additional surname that some Danish people added on to their birth names to distinguish themselves from all of the other (in this case) Nielsens in town. This was caused by the fact that the Scandinavian patronymic system left the country with very few surnames, and duplication was very common.

When a "bought" surname was adopted and used by the entire family, the practice has been to regard it as the true surname. However, in the case of Mariane's family, little use of the Gjøderum name has been found (Her father and one of her brothers used the name Gjøderum), so Mariane has always been referred to as Mariane Pedersen, the name that appears on her parish birth record. It is not believed that Mariane ever used the name.

2. They were married in Hjørring, at the courthouse. Source: Hjørring Parish records.
3. Full name George Peter Geertsen
4. Lars. Source: Vust Parish Records
5. Mary Ann Bingham, per death certificate and numerous mentions in Peter's journals.
6. He went on just two missions after immigrating: 1873 - 1875, and 1886 - 1888. Source: Peter's mission journals, also LDS Biographical Encyclopedia.