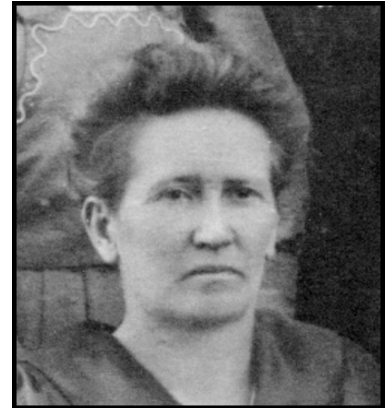


History of Sarah Emeline Robinson

Sarah Emeline Robinson was born in Richmond, Cache, Utah, 23 May 1866 to John Robinson, born 14 Feb 1824 in Bury, Lancashire, England and Ann Gregson born 7 Feb 1828 in Bury, Lancashire, England. She was the seventh child in a family of nine, five boys and four girls. She was baptized 22 Jul 1877. Her Father was a schoolteacher in Richmond, Utah. Not much is know of her childhood years.



She and Frank Cornelious Christensen, born 13 Oct 1865 also of Richmond were married in Logan, Cache, Utah 18 Jun 1887. Their first child, Ray, was born in Richmond and the following spring in March or April they moved to Gentile Valley, so called because a group of Gentiles vowed they would let no Mormons settle in the valley; also known as Gem Valley, first Oneida County, then Bannock and now Caribou.

All their possessions were piled high on a sleigh and they were leading a milk cow, "Old Pet", given to them by her parents. Grandpa Frank told me that she was very proud and didn't want to be seen on that outfit going through Preston, Idaho so she got out at the south end of town and walked through town and met him at the north end. He got quite a chuckle when telling me this about Grandma. They came on to the valley and settled in the little community of Bench.

The following are sketches written in 1964 by Jane Christensen Thompson born 25 Jan 1889 the second child and Florence Christensen Rison born 1 Aug 1897 the seventh child and Gayle Christensen Evans born 7 Apr 1911 the fourteenth child and last girl. Some things may be repeated but I've tried to edit them so as not to repeat too many things.

They acquired a number of acres of land and traded here and there. A piece of land was bought from George Rainey, a brother-in-law who moved to Star Valley, Wyoming. When they left Richmond, Peter, Frank's Father, was very disturbed to think they would start out on such a venture and said they would starve to death fighting the coyotes and sage brush, but I guess he underestimated them and what they could do.

Looking objectively at their lives and the raising of fifteen children, one dying in infancy, the responsibility of such a brood seems insurmountable; but to them it was a way of life. With all the children, Sarah, or Sade, as she was lovingly called, had a doctor for only the last birth. Dr. Hubbard and Sister Jensen were there. A Mrs. Steadman was the midwife for most of the children.

They were members of the Trout Creek Ward at Lago, Idaho. The church was about eight or nine miles away and whenever she rode in a wagon, buggy or car she would get so seasick and come home with a terrible headache and sick enough to die. This was a trial of her life and she never did get over it.

Cleanliness was Mother's first order of the day. I can never remember seeing her in a soiled dress or apron. She always had her hair nicely combed before breakfast. She was a very good cook and no lumpy gravy! Mother had a strong desire for her children to have an education but in our tender years there was only enough tax money to run the school for six months or less and one teacher for all eight grades. Fortunately some of the older members of the family did get to attend the Oneida Stake Academy in Preston for the winter months but as soon as the ground was bare in the spring it was necessary to leave school and get the crops planted.

About the first spurt of prosperity prior to World War I, they purchased several pieces of furniture in Soda Springs; the tall oak cupboard, still in beautiful condition at Dean and Laura's, a leather bottom rocker for Father, a white cane rocker for Mother, some china and glass dishes and their first set of silverware. Mother said it was a debt Father owed her from the offspring of "Old Pet" the cow they had led from Richmond when they first came to the valley. With the reckless use of the branding iron, Mother lost track of her stock.

In her early life her brother John provided clothes for she and her mother and she had some lovely dresses. Mother wasn't a seamstress but she could make beautiful buttonholes, sheets, pillowcases, diapers and a Mother Hubbard or, in other words, a maternity dress or apron. I remember a beautiful "Basque" dress she had. It was a dress with a fitted jacket-like waist all silk lined and feather stitched. It was so beautifully made that it could be worn inside

out. Aunt Susie Canfield made it for her. Her neighbors, Mrs. Jensen and Sorenson, used to make dresses and aprons for the girls. In those days ready-made cloths could not be bought so Jane learned and took over the sewing as soon as she was able. Mother and Father were very strict about our going to dances, who we went with and what time we came home. They allowed no quarreling and abhorred smoking, lying, drinking or swearing. We really didn't have anything to quarrel about.

It was hard for Mother to accept going in debt but Father convinced her that they never would have anything unless they invested, so Mother went along with him, especially in buying more land.

Ed Whitman, a merchant in Soda Springs, carried them on his books through good times and bad and said "His name is as good as the bank". Who would want more!

Father always had a lot of consideration and love for Mother. On wash days he would get up early, put the boiler on, and run several batches of clothes through the washer for her, and carried out or saw that the hired man carried out the wash water for her.

After each child was born, Father would never let Mother do very much physical work for at least three or four weeks and he saw to it that she didn't put her hands in very cold water or hang clothes out on the line. I guess that is the reason she almost always got along so well. He had lost a sister from over exposure after childbirth.

After a visit to her brother John's in Star Valley and seeing the lush meadows and all the water she used to say, "Why do we have to stay here and struggle for water?" Father's answer was, "That is a cattle country and we don't have cattle. Here we can raise what we eat." Father piped spring water down from the canyon and into the house. We were the first family in the community to have and it surely helped with such a large family. They irrigated and raised a beautiful garden and orchard. People came form far and near for the produce.

When Father worked on the "dam" or "Last Chance Canal" which was ten or twelve miles away, Mother would bake ten or twelve loaves of bread, pies, cakes and cookies, ham hocks and beans, cans of butter, buttermilk, and milk and get ready to make the trip with the food.

She would put a layer of green alfalfa, the food, wet paper, canvas and alfalfa on top for the horses lunch. Ray used to stand on the manger to harness the horses, then they were off on the long trip for those days, hoping Mother would not get sick but she usually did. From where I stand now, was she seasick or pregnant? They didn't talk about things like that in those days, and if any sewing was done for a new arrival it was kept a secret or well hidden. John Kirby, Father's right hand man and his foreman when he couldn't be there said, "When that wagon rolls in it is a welcome traveler". They all shared alike with the good things to eat and all said Mother was surely a good cook.

Mother wasn't an outdoor woman in the sense of riding horses or driving a team. She had enough else to do. Our neighbor, Mrs. Willard Hubbard, was good with a team. Even wild horses didn't scare her. She and Mother used to take butter which sold for 20 cents a pound, strawberries, raspberries, red, yellow and black currants, stinking or what was called bedbug currants, garden vegetables, new potatoes, peas, etc. We had a standing order with the Idanha Hotel in Soda Springs for all the produce we could bring. Old Cap, one of the horses we drove, always threw a fit whenever he saw or heard a train coming, and there always was one or two when going through Alexander. Father warned Mrs. Hubbard what to do and to not take a chance. Sure enough a train was coming but she insisted she could handle him. We all got out of the conveyance and through Mother's persuasion she unhooked the team and tied Old Cap to a post as Father had instructed. She said she thought he was going to jump right out of his harness and was glad she had followed orders.

After thirteen years of married life, on the 20 June 1900, they went to the Logan Temple and were sealed for time and eternity and had their eight children sealed to them: Ray, Jane, Inez, Melvin, Lucy, Veir, Florence and Leslie who had died at the age of one year, one month and one day. The rest of the children, Anna, Josie, Dean, Alvin, Card, Gayle and Joe "Buzz" were born in the covenant.

I am printing Gayle's "Life with Mother" in full as it deals more with Mother's later years.

Many furrows had been plowed, planted and harvested by the time I was born into the Frank C. Christensen brood.

I, Gayle Christensen Evans, was the fourteenth child and last girl of Sarah E. Robinson Christensen. I was born 7 March 1911. I was four years old when Joseph Bonnett was born. My first impression of him was that of the older girls and boys who thought Mother had had enough children. My second impression was that they had christened him with a wrong name. He was nicknamed "Buzz" by Florence. He developed into a fine looking baby so was accepted into the brood. My first impression as to Mother's age was that she would be too old to have any more babies. At my tender age I didn't know what too old meant and it was many years later before I comprehended what too old meant. She just lacked twelve days of being forty-nine years old when he was born. However, it didn't seem to interrupt the farm work or the home life.

Mother didn't seem "too old" to me as she worked and supervised the cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, soap making and canning by the two girls left at home, Anna and Josie. I didn't really count as I was too young and too busy being a cowgirl. The two story log and frame house still had five men and boys plus Father and several hired men to care for besides baby Buzz. My first recollection of doing a girl's work was to help push the wooden washing handle for at least nine to ten batches of wash on Mondays. Of course there were always dishes to wash.

I always got the impression from Mother that Father was pushing us all a bit too much. After the homestead and "desert" fields, located three miles from the farm house, were seeded and the first crop of hay stacked, we had to load up mowing machines, rakes, harnesses, saddles, bridles and hay nets and a lot of other farm necessities on to the hay wagons and make the two day trip to the Goose Lake Ranch for six weeks of haying. Mother stayed at Bench for a rest. She only had one or two men to care for. I couldn't understand how or why she could be angry at Father, or how she could be too tired to give up the excitement of the open range. Goose Lake bustled with hay hands, cowboys, Six Shooter Sal, coyotes, Indians, shepherders and the frontier town of Henry where Jim and Virginia Chester maintained the Henry Store and post office. It was here where cowboys, shepherders and cattle owners wrangled over the range land and poker hands.

Mother apparently knew she had performed her work well in providing good cooks for the hay hands and cowboys. Goose Lake Ranch emerged into a company affair as “in-laws and outlaws” worked together. The kitchen became a restaurant and bakery as fifteen to twenty loaves of hot bread, hot biscuits, pies by the dozen and cakes by the half dozen were served daily by Mother’s daughters and daughter-in-law. Though the ranch was the home of her eldest son and wife, Elvera, each member of the family seemed to feel it was his or hers as we each lost our identity as the winds brought the feeling of freedom from the open range, and the melodious symphony of the wild geese, ducks and frogs from the slough. We younger ones got lost from the work by hanging out at “Robber’s Roost” and at the north edge of the ranch.

There we could pick up the bumper lambs from the sheep herds and get to visit more with Six Shooter Sal. We weren’t old enough to realize that the Indians were from the Blackfoot reservation, just over the mountain, so we looked upon them with Daniel Boone eyes

This may sound like the story of my life, but it has to be Mother’s for we were, the fifteen of us, her life. The first memory I have of her getting away from home, except for a few trips to Richmond, Utah was probably the first Robinson reunion at Freedom, Wyoming. That trip I remember was in the Model T Ford. We had to back up several mountain trails in order to get over them. Why the Ford had more power in reverse I will never know. Mother’s weakness for seasickness carried over from her buggy days, so the ride really wasn’t a pleasure trip for her; but the reunion was. Uncle John’s big house overflowed with children.

It was after these reunions that Mother seemed to pressure Father more to give more attention to getting his boys a better education. Some of Uncle John’s boys were wearing white shirts and working in the bank and mercantile business at Freedom and Afton. Tom was planning on being an M.D. I remember Uncle John saying “Well Frank, I figure one of these days there won’t be enough land for all of these boys to make a living on”, and Father, with a chuckle, “Yea. I know, but I need them now to take care of what we’ve got”. The First World War had taken Melvin away from the farm and any dreams of further education. The flu had made it’s marks on many of our neighbors by it’s death march. There were five needing high school education when Father bought Mother her third home, the “town house”

at Grace, located eight miles from the farm home. We had all taken turns staying with Aunt Cozy Whitehead at Grace, so she wouldn't be alone but she didn't have room for all of us.

1921-1925? These were the impressive years to me and I am sure to Mother. Veir was married to Dr. W. E. Smith, the town dentist. Anna was married to Willis Page, grade school principal. Josie was married to Floyd Dewey, and I was in love at the tender age of 13. Mother was of a mild disposition until she wanted to make an impression about discipline. She made a good impression on me with her shoe about being home nights by 9:30, after I had disobeyed her several times. Also, she had convinced Father that she finally thought she had musician in the family so I was to take music lessons. The mistake Father made was that he had bought a player piano. The old homestead house burned in the spring of 1925. A small two-room house was moved up to do the cooking in and we slept any place we could put a straw mattress, until a new house was built.

Mother wasn't an adventurous woman. She could neither learn to drive a car nor would she ride with Father if she could avoid it. After his backing into the chicken coop and also driving through the wagon shed doors, she didn't consider him a safe driver. Neither was she a gambler. She resented Father's desire to get "rich" quick by investing in oil, coal and gold mine stock. She was always considerate of him and us children in not wanting us to work too hard. Though, in a sense, I had run away from home and became a registered nurse she didn't seem to resent it. However, she couldn't comprehend my desire to fly airplanes and thought for sure I had lost my mind when I made a parachute jump on April 29, 1934. She said, "I wake up nights and think of you falling through the sky and I get cold chills".

At the age of seventy she finally convinced Father that he should divide the ranches among the boys. Though she hadn't been able to get them through collage, mostly because they would rather be cowboys, she had instilled in them the necessity of an education. So eight of us took a school teacher for a wife or husband which would be the same as a home correspondence course for life! It was while Merrill was in dental school in Washington D. C. in the spring of 1941 that Father wrote from the Goose Lake ranch that we come and see Mother. She had become diabetic and it was necessary for her to take insulin. Her baby, Joe Buzz, had gone into the army and she was worried and disturbed.

It was April 1943 and Mother had to be cared for almost constantly. Father was still holding on to his interest in mining when he had a slight stroke. It was almost impossible to keep him down as he fought to keep going. I came from Washington D. C. to help relieve Dean and Laura and others from the nursing care. It was 21 Aug 1943, fighting to keep his feet on the floor, that he passed away. Mother's comment when she saw him in the casket was "Dear, oh dear, you just worked too darn hard". When she saw the picture among the fourteen living children, taken the day of Father's funeral, she said "Why didn't someone comb my hair pretty?"

Mother's health continued to fail and memory reverted back to the years when her children were small. In September 1944 I came from San Francisco to again give relief in the nursing care. So in came the bed that Father had passed away in just thirteen months before, fighting for more time for adventure. Mother passed away quietly asking "Where are my babies?' In the home of her son Dean and daughter-in-law Laura, who had taken my place in my runaway years and given her the love, sympathy and humor that would do honor to any daughter. Mother, at the age of 78 years, looked like a waxen mannequin doll in her casket, with few wrinkles to show she had borne fifteen children, fourteen to adulthood, with all of the hardships of those pioneer days.

Only flying through the sky can you see the overall patterns of the trails and furrows these pioneers cut through the sagebrush of the West.

I am sure many more things could be told of Grandma Christensen's life. This is a brief history and I hope it will be of interest to her many descendents.

Compiled by her daughter-in-law Mrs. Melvin (Burgetta) Christensen,
Grace, Idaho Aug 1973.

Put into digital format by Stanley D. Hansen 19 Feb 2007