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Becoming American: The Autobiography of C. P. Peterson, D. D. S. (1867-1958)

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Becoming American

The Autobiography of C. P. Peterson, D. D. S.
(1867-1958)

edited by J. R. Christianson

In the western parts of Hvejsel parish in the nineteenth century, the fertile, rolling moraine landscape of eastern Jutland gave way to an immense, sandy plain covered by heath, bog, and streamside meadowland. Settlement was much more scattered on these moors than in the village farmlands of the east. Shepherds sang to the wind and knit their woolen yarn into stockings as flocks grazed on the open heath, and cattle grew fat in the meadows by lonely manor houses.

Along the eastern edge of the moors, all up and down the peninsula of Jutland, ran a meandering network of trails called the Oxen Way (ok-sevej). These trails were many centuries old. Thousands of prehistoric mounds from the Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Viking times stood along their course, including the immense royal barrows at Jelling that housed the earliest ancestors of Denmark's ruling monarch. The Oxen Way in the nineteenth century still carried a traffic of Danish steers and draft horses being driven from northern Jutland to the markets of Holstein and the Netherlands.¹ This edge of the heath was a realm of rambling people with wide connections, horse traders, cattle drovers, lace and hose merchants, gypsies, and smugglers. Some of them did well and hid away hoards of silver coins, lending them out at interest or clinking down bags full of them to buy large landed estates.

Dr. Peterson's ancestors came from this colorful region of movement and trade along the edge of the heath. Both his father and grandfather were livestock traders as well as farmers. Tradition tells that one of his mother's ancestors killed a wolf on Randbøl heath, between Vorbasse Market and Aastgaard, and then drove off the pack with his heavy walking staff.

There was occult learning on these dark moors as well. Two of Dr. Peterson's grandmother's sisters had married brothers, each with his own farm at Amlund in Lindeballe parish. The Amlund family had a library that contained books in Danish, English, German, and French. They were

folk healers who knew how to cast spells and gather healing herbs on Midsummer Eve or Valborg Night. Local folks came to them with broken arms, adder bites, butter that would not churn, and bewitched swine.² Some feared them for their knowledge of the Black Book, but Dr. Peterson grew up knowing them as wise, eccentric relatives. They may have contributed to his early interests in nature and the healing arts.

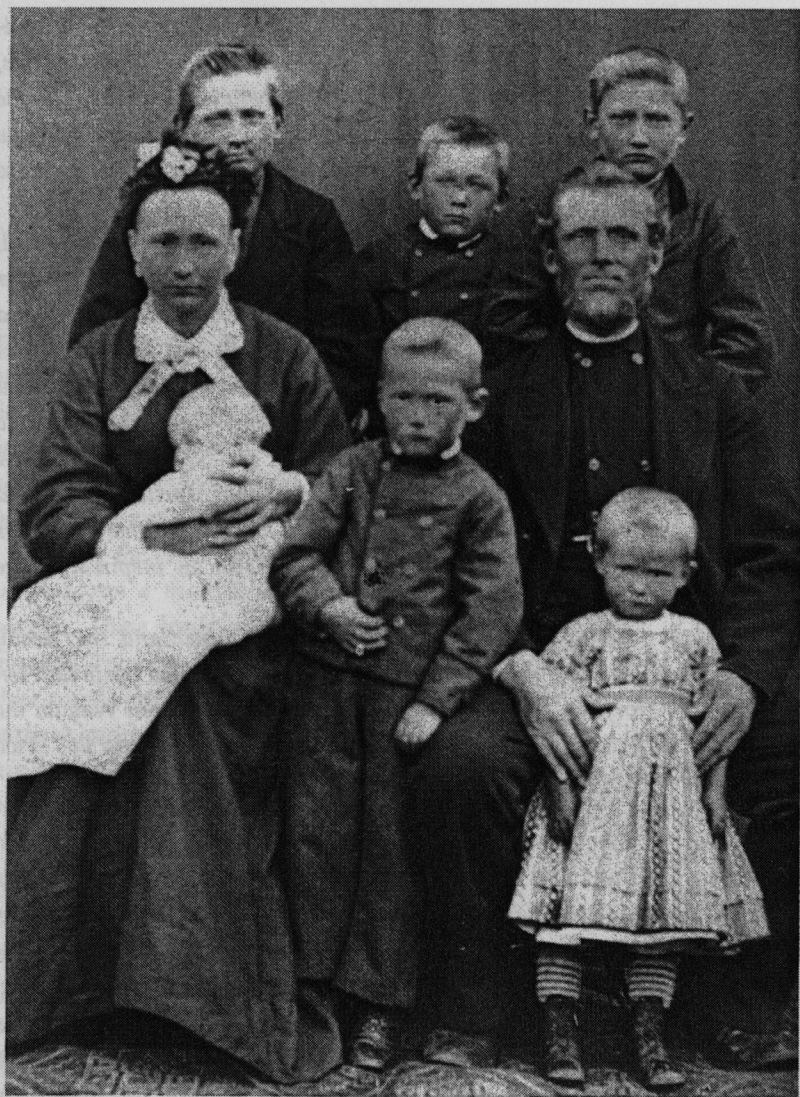
In 1862, Jens Christian Pedersen (1838-1912) from Rubjerggaard, Amlund's neighboring farm to the west, married Maren Gydesdatter (1837-1903) from Aastgaard, Amlund's neighbor to the south. Maren and Jens Christian purchased the nearby farm of Brændgaard in 1865. Jens Christian roved up and down the Oxen Way for part of the year and farmed the rest of the year, while Maren ran things at home. Their family grew to five sons. Hans Gyde was born at Aastgaard in 1862, Johannes in 1864 and Christen Peder in 1867 at Rubjerggaard, then came Marius in 1870 and Hans Christian in 1872, born at Brændgaard. The older brothers got their first schooling under Christian Balling (1843-1916), an inspired village schoolmaster and avid Grundtvigian.

In 1875, Brændgaard was sold to Maren's brother and the family moved to the farm of Ramskovgaard in Give parish, off to the north and ten miles west of Hvejsel. Here at Ramskovgaard, along the Oxen Way on the edge of the Jutland moor, Christen Peder and his brothers grew up. Two sisters were born there, Kirstine in 1877 and Mathilda in 1880.

*The time has come to let him tell his own story.*³

I was born Christen Peder Pedersen on 13 February 1867 on a farm in Lindeballe parish on the peninsula of Jutland, Denmark, to Jens Christian Pedersen and Maren Gydesen, his wife.⁴

At the age of seven, I was sent to a small one-room school to learn the ABC's from written texts. The pupils were required to help get the fire started in the schoolhouse stove. One of the boys was sent to a neighboring farmhouse with a fire-carrying scoop made out of sheet iron, in a sort of closed box shape with a wooden handle on the back and sloping lid in the front end. This would be filled with glowing coals and carried a distance of about two blocks to the schoolhouse and used to start a wood fire in the stove. As nearly as I can remember, there were no matches at this time.



Maren and Jens Christian Pedersen Family, 1880

Back: Johannes, Marius, Christen Peder

Center: Maren, Jens Christian

Front: Mathilda, Hans Christian, Kirstine

When I was about eight years old, the family moved a distance of about twenty miles to a larger farm named Ramskov in Give parish. Here the children attended a very good school, up to the age of fourteen, which would be about equal to the eighth grade. This was all the public schooling the state provided. If further education was desired, it was up to the students or parents to provide it. There were high schools, seminaries, and [other] institutions for those who wished to be doctors, lawyers, druggists, and so on.

During this period, the only medium of lighting the homes was by candles, and these were usually made at home from tallow saved when butchering beef. During the long winter evenings—for winter days were very short in Denmark—Mother and some of the children would gather around a large wooden vessel nearly filled with hot water and tallow floating on top, dipping strings of wicking into the tallow and water, then hanging them on sticks placed across the top of the vessel, repeating the operation until the desired size was obtained. Some were pretty thin. The kids would insist that they were thick enough. Kerosene lamps did not come into general use for quite a number of years, as nearly as I can remember.

Our home, however, was very comfortable, and well heated in winter. There was an outer kitchen with cobblestone floor and a very large fireplace. Here, all the heavy cooking was done over the open fire in immense copper kettles. Also, here the milk from about twenty cows was brought for straining and many uses.

Adjoining this was a large combination dining room and kitchen with a built-in steel range and wooden floor. At one side was a long table, with stationary benches at one end and along the side next to the wall. In front was a long movable bench. This table would seat about sixteen people. There were nine of us in the family plus one, two, or sometimes three hired men and a hired girl, sometimes two. At one side of this large room was a sunken pantry [that served as] a cellar. Here the milk was placed in pans for the cream to rise, to be skimmed off with a large, flat spoon. Here also was kept canned fruit and a number of other things. The floor of this room was cement and about four steps below the kitchen floor. Next to this on the same side was a large pantry, where we used to go and help ourselves to [snacks] when Mother was not looking.

Leading off from the kitchen on the other side was a large living room with curtains and drapes at the windows, upholstered furniture, a table and chairs, a small spinet piano that Father had picked up someplace, and a sectional stove reaching from the floor to very near the ceiling. There was some sort of floor covering, but I cannot remember what it was. Back of this room was the main entrance hall, with the outside door opening into the courtyard. Beyond this hall and living room was a very large guest room; here, also, wardrobes for clothing and other things were kept. To the right, leading off from the kitchen, was Father and Mother's bedroom. This was a large room and was also used as a nursery and sewing room. Beyond this were other bedrooms. Some of the older children had sleeping quarters in another building.

The courtyard was paved with cobblestones, except for a [circle] in the center that was planted with trees and shrubbery. The entire court was enclosed by buildings, except for one corner entrance.

When [I was eighteen] years old, I was enrolled in Askov Folk School on the German frontier of Schleswig-Holstein (Schleswig was returned to Denmark after the World War). While there, I was very much interested in athletics, but owing to illness, I was forced to leave for home before completing the term.

When Christen came to Askov in 1886, it was the heart and soul of the Grundtvigian folk school movement, a uniquely Danish experiment in young adult education. The aim of the folk school was to provide an alternative to formal academic education for young people from rural areas. The constitution of 1849 had transformed Denmark from an absolute monarchy into a democratic society. The world was changing rapidly, and democratic leaders were needed who had the broad background required to deal with the political, economic, and cultural challenges of rural life. The aim of the folk school was to train such leaders.

The school in Askov had begun with three teachers and a handful of students in 1864, when the Schleswig-Holstein War had forced the closure of an earlier school at Rødding in Schleswig. Each summer, a session was held for girls, while boys came for the winter term. Farmers still did not believe in education beyond the eighth grade for girls, so most of the girls at

Askov came from middle-class backgrounds. Perhaps Johanna Fehrr, who became Christen's sweetheart, was among them.

The boys were a less polished bunch. One who came to Askov in the 1880's described them like this: "It was as if they had been shaken out of folk life. Most of them came from the field and forest and workshop, one or two from the sea, and you could see it in their clothing, their movements, hear it in their speech. They were farmers' children who enrolled to try something new, and there were many odd and extraordinary folks in such a big flock. But they had one advantage: most of them knew what they wanted to be, and why they had come to school. They wanted a better general education before they took hold of their life's work as farmers, artisans, sailors, pastors, editors, politicians, authors, teachers."⁵

Some of them were hardly boys. Most Danish folk schools had a one-year, six or seven-month curriculum, but since 1878, Askov had been offering a more advanced, eighteen-month program that attracted many older pupils from other folk schools throughout Denmark, as well as from Norway. Since 1872, Askov had also been training pastors for America, and these students tended to be older as well.

Christen came to Askov as a shy eighteen-year-old farm boy. He was one of seventy-three first-year students, a score of whom were over twenty-five. Among them were some roughnecks who swore and drank.⁶ Over a third would drop out before the end of the term, as Christen did. Not all of them were roughnecks, however. Many future leaders were found among these Askov pupils of the 1880's, including the authors, Jeppe Aakjær and Bertel Elmggaard, several prominent journalists, and a number of politicians, including H. P. Hanssen from Nørremølle, who represented the Schleswig Danes in the German Reichstag and later served in the Danish cabinet. Two Norwegians who later became well-known in America were there as well: O. L. Kirkeberg, founder of the first folk school in America, and Kristian Prestgard, editor of the newspaper, Decorah Posten.

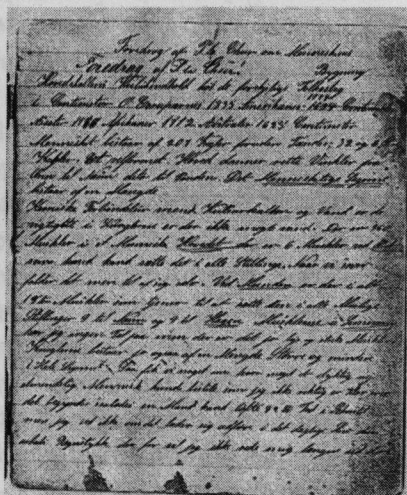
Instruction at Askov was largely by means of the "living word" of lectures, and the curriculum focused on Scandinavian history, church history, Nordic mythology, mathematics, geography, natural sciences, and social sciences. There was a great deal of singing. Gymnastics and marksmanship were popular activities. There were no exams, since this was a "school for life" and not preparation for academic positions. By 1886, however,

there were quite a few pupils who were preparing for exams because they intended to become teachers or pastors.

Christen's favorite teacher was Poul la Cour (1846-1908), who taught sciences.⁷ In 1885, la Cour introduced Swedish therapeutic gymnastics to Denmark. Here was a system to promote modern masculinity and femininity that went hand in glove with the aims of Askov, building fitness, health, and social solidarity while denying harsh military discipline. Daily gymnastics classes were supplemented by la Cour's weekly lectures on the human body. Christen took meticulous notes on these lectures and compiled detailed records of the gymnastic program for present and later use.



Askov Folk School
(Poul la Cour: top left)



Christen Pedersen's notes
from la Cour's anatomy lectures

After regaining normal health, I was elected physical director or drillmaster of the local athletic society in Give, a promising country town. Our society members won some fame among other neighboring athletic societies.

The duties on the home farm, performed by the boys, were those ordinary to farms of those days, such as plowing—sometimes with teams of oxen, other times with teams of horses—or sowing grain, which was broadcast by hand from a bag strapped over one shoulder, walking over the field. Harvesting the ripe grain was done with

scythe and cradle, frequently [by] eight or ten men in a row, one after the other, with women doing the binding in between. To be the leader of eight or ten men, followed by the best girl binder, was great sport for a lad of seventeen or eighteen years, attacking a large field of grain. The grain was later shocked, and when dry, it was brought home in bundles [and] placed in the granary or stacked outside. The stacking was usually my work, after my brother, John, left for America. The grain was threshed with flails on a large clay floor and cleaned by casting from one end of the floor to the other with a wooden scoop.

About the time I left for America, Father bought a small threshing machine, operated by a team of horses, and also a fanning mill for cleaning the grain. All grain [to be] used for food was taken to a neighboring mill, which in our locality was operated by water power.⁸ Here, we would wait until the grain was milled into flour, the miller receiving a certain percentage for his labor. Sometimes, we would have to wait nearly a whole day for our turn.

Hunting and Taxidermy

Of my early boyhood sports and hobbies, two things in particular come to mind: hunting and taxidermy. All five boys loved hunting a species of wild partridge and the hare, which was about the size of a jack-rabbit.⁹ I started very early, not ten years old. Father had a very long-barreled muzzle-loading shotgun, which we would use in turn.

Sometimes, two of us would go out together, mostly on a Sunday afternoon, tramping over the fields until dark. Occasionally, when Father was away, Mother would let us go on a weekday. Sometimes, we would bring home some game, but more often, we did not get anything but very tired legs. Our greatest difficulty was usually to find the birds. To help us find [them], my brother John bought a wonderful bird dog, a pointer, a very intelligent animal. I very well remember when John brought him home and was bragging about the dog's intelligence.¹⁰ "Why," said he, "if I shoot a bird and bring it home and lay it down, telling Balder"—that was the dog's name—"to watch it, you can't pick it up." I [doubted this], so we went out in the pasture, shot a rather large bird, [and] brought it

home. John laid it on the ground and told the dog to watch it. I tried to pick it up, but as I reached for it, the dog grabbed my hand in his jaws, and to this day, I have a scar on my middle finger from that bite.

[If any member of our] family told him to watch a thing, even open food, such as our lunch in the harvest field, while one of us was called away to look after runaway cattle, [for example], he would never touch it himself nor let anybody else touch it. He would lie down beside whatever it was and stay there until the owner returned, no matter how long he was gone.

We could also lift him up, point to an animal that had gotten into the grain field, and tell him to go and drive it out of the grain, and he would sure make it go. At one time, we were a quarter-mile from home. A half-dozen hogs had gotten into the potato patch and were rooting up potatoes for all they were worth. I lifted up Balder and said, "The hogs are in the potatoes. Go and drive them home where they belong." He made a bee-line for them, and he made them scoot for home in a hurry. Then he returned, wagging his tail.

He always slept in the house, usually in the kitchen, under the table, or in a corner near the stove in cold weather.

One time, one of us boys brought home a small mongrel puppy. The two would play on the floor, but the little rascal wanted to get into mischief. Mother was making [thin Danish] pancakes. A stack of them was on the open oven door. The puppy thought this was a good chance for a free lunch and made for the pancakes, but he was not quick enough. Balder made one leap from under a chair, grabbed Mister Puppy by the neck, and flung him clear across the room, yelping. He never tried that again. Balder merely went back under the chair to sleep again.

He was the most wonderful hunting dog I have ever seen. Occasionally, he would go hunting by himself. If he found a game bird, he would point it. I have known him to stand on three legs, tail straight, for nearly half a day, holding the bird with his eyes. Quite often, we would have to hunt [for] him in the field and [take] him off the point. We would walk up behind him, take him by the collar, and tell him very gently that it was not hunting season.

The keenest sport, and one we enjoyed perhaps more than any other thing, was to go hunting partridges [behind] this dog. I have known him to follow the trail of a running bird, with his nose in the air, for more than half a mile, and when the bird finally decided to stop, he would point and hold it until we came up. We would nudge him with a knee, and he would advance until his nose was almost on the bird. He would never try to grab it. When the bird rose, he would keep his eyes on it, and if we dropped it, he would run and retrieve it and lay it at our feet. But, if we missed, he would be very sad, with his tail between his legs. Of course, we would tell him that we were very sorry, and he would start out and try again.

From time to time, we brought home quite a bit of game. This was seldom served at our own table but was sold at the nearest grocery store, where there was always a ready market in season. I remember one time when John and I had [shot] three or four partridges. On our way home, we stopped at a store and sold the birds, receiving cash and ammunition for them. When [we were] half a mile away, here came the dog with our birds in his mouth! Of course, we had to take them back.

With money thus earned, I bought the first breech-loading double-barreled shotgun in the community, and it sure was some prized piece of firearm. With gun and dog, we earned our own spending money. This was spent on reading matter—books and magazines of many kinds—and to further our hobby of taxidermy.

As you know, taxidermy is the art of mounting birds, animals, and fish, placing them in natural positions and sometimes in surroundings natural to the species. Early in our youth, my brother John, who is two years older than me, had become acquainted with a Mr. Larsen, owner of a country store some ten miles from our place. Mr. Larsen was a very skilled taxidermist and had a collection of nearly three hundred varieties of birds, all mounted by him. He took an interest in John, [and] they became very good friends. He offered to teach John the mounting of birds, [and] in return, we were to be on the lookout for rare specimens for his collection (during a period of time, we were able to secure a number of birds that he did not have). John made many trips to his place, usually on foot, and

eventually became very proficient in mounting birds. The other brothers learned from him or from one another.

It became an obsession to secure new and rarer species, until eventually there was not a bird common to our territory that we did not know by sight, song, twitter, or flight. During the migratory season, we would note every bird in the air, in trees, or on the ground, and if it were not familiar, we would track it down if possible. If it turned out to be a new specimen, we would endeavor to secure it at the earliest possible opportunity. We would frequently be up at sunrise during this season, and the sun rose very early during the summer in Denmark. With gun in hand, loaded with the very finest of shot, we would dodge around hedges, trees, and gardens, looking and listening. Many rare specimens were obtained [in this way], and by the time I left for America, we had a collection of upwards of two hundred varieties in a glass case, placed in the guest room of the house.

Incidentally, we got many a scolding from Dad for chasing after birds when we should be working or sleeping. Much of the mounting was done during the noon siesta, when we were supposed to be sleeping.

My youngest brother, Hans, now in California, has a collection of American birds of about two hundred specimens and a license from the state to take birds at any season for scientific purposes. He was awarded a gold medal for exhibiting his collection in San Francisco on one occasion.

Merchant's Assistant

When I was nineteen years old, I wanted to try working for strangers, on my own, so to speak, and [had] become acquainted, through my brother, John—who by now had gone to America—with Mr. Larsen, the merchant at Ejstrup.¹¹ He offered me a position where, among other duties, I was to make trips to the city, some twenty miles away, by horse and wagon over a very fine, macadamized road, starting as early as four o'clock in the morning at times, taking farmers' produce, which had been taken in trade, such as butter, eggs, and hides, and selling to the best advantage in the city, bringing back such merchandise as [was] usually sold in the store.

Mr. Larsen went with me on the first trip, introducing me to the different wholesale merchants with whom he usually did business, and from that time on, he never again went to the city of Horsens as long as I was with him. From that time on, I was always addressed and spoken of as Mr. Larsen in the city, as it was taken for granted that whatever I did, whether buying or selling, was with the full approval of Mr. Larsen, and his credit was never doubted.

While I was in the city, it was frequently necessary to look up foreign consulates for customers, locate pension offices and collect pensions, [or] locate and interview customs officials at the seaport. A memorandum book was kept, and on return, every transaction was carefully checked by Mr. Larsen after each trip.

On one trip during the winter, an amusing yet difficult situation occurred. It was after midnight on the return trip. There was considerable snow on the ground on a dark night, and about five miles from home, a small stream to cross. [There were] deep cuts in the banks leading to the bridge across the frozen stream. Driving the team hitched to a large sled, it was impossible to see the snow banks on either side of the cleared roadway, so [I thought it] best to let the horses follow the roadway by themselves, which they usually would do. A very heavy load was piled high on the sled, and in the bottom of the load was a five-hundred-gallon hogshead of brandy for the store.¹² The horses, probably snow-blinded, missed the roadway. One side of the sled went up on the snow bank, and out went driver, boxes, bundles, and the five-hundred-gallon hogshead.

How to get [it] on again was a problem. It was impossible for one man to roll it into the sled. Fortunately, there was a family living in a little house on top of the hill by the roadside. The man was roused out of bed to rustle planks and poles with which to try to get this monster back on board again, and after [an hour] or two, we succeeded in doing so, but we could not upend the thing, so it had to lie on its side. [This] was dangerous, because any swaying might cause it to break away. [It was], however, brought in safely before daylight.

For my services, Mr. Larsen paid me the very generous salary of 200 *kroner* for one year—fifty dollars. This was about 100 *kroner* above the average of farm hands.

To America

It was during these long trips [to town, when I had] ample time to think matters over, that [I made] the decision to go to America. [I began to make] plans for clothing. A fine new suit of clothes was ordered from a tailor in the suburbs of Horsens, [where it] could be had for less than in the city. [Nevertheless, this did present a problem.] At that [time], a suit such as I wanted cost seventy-five *kroner*, and steerage passage from Copenhagen to my destination in America was 200 *kroner*—and I [did not have that much money].

My folks, who did [not want] me to go, could not very well afford to advance me money. But I could not stay and work another year, as I was coming of age and had already been drawn to enlist in the army when I was twenty-years old.¹³ This [service] would take from eighteen months to two years, and I felt that I could not waste the time, so I decided to leave at once when my time was up with Mr. Larsen.

My mother surely was a pal. She provided me with a wonderful, heavy overcoat, for which she spun the yarn herself from fine wool, dyed it herself, and had it woven into a very attractive, two-tone color. It was then sent to the woolen mill in the city, where it was thoroughly prepared and clipped, and when [it was] made up by the tailor, it was a very attractive greatcoat. She also gave me socks, shirts, and underwear. God bless her dear memory!

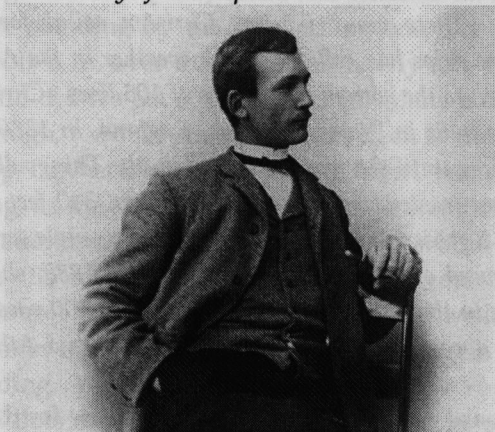
My brother John, as previously stated, had been in the U.S. for three years, [and he] advanced fifty dollars, enough to tide me over.¹⁴

Around about the middle of November, 1888, my father took me to the city of Vejle, from where I was to go by train and boat to Copenhagen. It was a long ride [to Vejle] by horse and buggy—about twenty miles. We had a long visit on the way. I can still remember the advice Father gave me on the trip. He was a man who had been about the country a great deal, as he was a trader in horses and cattle and was seldom at home for any length of time. He advised me to be sure always to avoid trouble and keep out of brawls. If attacked, however, deliver the first blow in a very decisive way and endeavor to gain [the] advantage. In all the many years up to the present time, it has never been necessary in an aggressive way to use

this advice. Yet, I feel that I have at all times retained my self-respect.

Christen's oldest brother, Hans Gyde Petersen (1862-1943), had entered the Royal Academy of Art in Copenhagen in 1882 and had just graduated and begun his career as a sculptor. Two years later, he would win a Gold Medal from the academy, followed by other stipends that allowed him to study in Paris in 1895 and in Italy from 1897-99. He later turned to painting, worked at Skagen, and traveled Europe with the well-known Danish artist, P. S. Krøyer (1851-1909). In his later years, he painted landscapes in the Deer Park (Dyrehaven), north of Copenhagen.¹⁵

The Round Tower (Rundetårnet) at Trinitatis Church, built in 1637-42 as an observatory for the University of Copenhagen, is still one of the sights of Copenhagen. Regarding Kronborg Castle in Elsinore, north of Copenhagen, Christen mentions the legend of Holger the Dane (Holger Danske), but not the story of Shakespeare's Hamlet.



Hans Gyde Petersen, 1893

On arriving in Copenhagen, I was met by my oldest brother, Gyde, who was even then beginning his career as a sculptor. For two or three days, he showed me the sights of the city. He took me up the famous Round Tower. I believe it was built in the sixteenth century and is, I believe, ten stories high, [with] a ramp inside it from the ground to the top, and it is said one of the early Danish princes drove four white horses abreast, hitched to a chariot, from

bottom to top and down again. Also, we saw the fortress in the strait of Kattegat where, in its basement, lies the great warrior, Holger Danske, and legend says he will come again when there are no more men in Denmark than can gather round a barrel hoop.

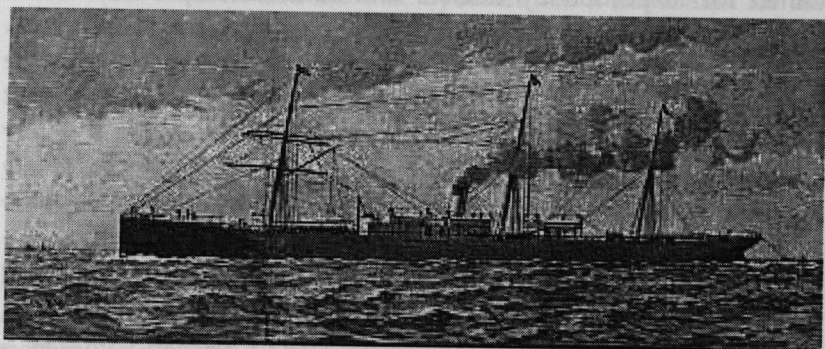
Every emigrant was required to register his or her ticket with the Danish police during that era, as a protection against fraudulent abuse of emigrants. The Copenhagen police registry showed that Chr. Pedersen, age twenty-one, had most recently resided in Ejstrup parish, Aarhus Amt, and was booked to sail on 21 November 1888 on S/S Danmark, contract number 344100. His destination was given as the small community of Randall, Iowa, half a world away. On 22 November, his ship arrived in Christiania, Norway, and then, after a second brief stop in Christiansand, crossed the Atlantic to dock in New York on 16 December 1888.

The S/S Danmark was owned by the ill-fated Thingvalla Line, a Danish line founded in 1879 to establish a direct route between Scandinavia and America. Three months before Christen sailed for America, two Thingvalla Line ships had collided in fair weather in the Atlantic, sending one, S/S Geiser, to the bottom with a loss of 105 lives. Christen's ship, S/S Danmark was built in Walker-on-Tyne, England, in 1880 and sailed under another name until she was purchased by the Thingvalla Line in 1888. She was a three-masted, single-funnel iron ship, 340 feet long with a 40 foot beam and a gross tonnage of 3,414 tons. Her single screw drove her at a maximum speed of eleven knots. On 6 April 1889, she broke a shaft, knocked a hole in the hull, and began to sink with 800 passengers and 100 crew members aboard. She had to be abandoned in mid-Atlantic.¹⁶

From aboard a rebuilt Danish steamer, I saw for the last time my native land of Denmark, not knowing what lay before me. Only those who have had the experience can know the inner feelings of a boy, not yet twenty-one years old, embarking on a journey to a strange land, several thousands of miles away, with only just enough money to get him to a certain destination and no promise of work or any definite object in view.

The steamer on which we left Copenhagen was an old, rebuilt tramp cattle ship. We laid up for a day in Christiania (now Oslo), Norway, and [had an opportunity] to go uptown and see part of the

city. Here, we took on more passengers [and then] headed out into the North Sea and the Atlantic.



S/S Denmark

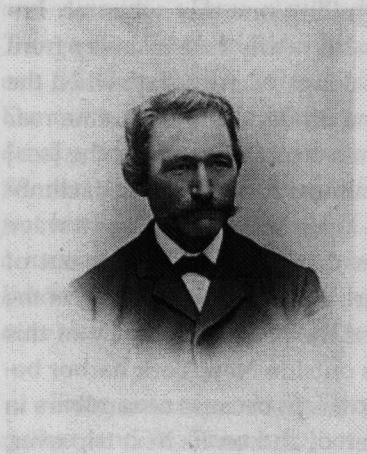
The [voyage] to New York took fourteen days. We encountered extremely rough weather [and] could not often be on deck. A couple of us were standing by the side railing one day when an immense wave rolled in, over the deck, and nearly tore us away from the railing—and did we get a good soaking! Many a day, when the sea was too rough, I would stand alone on deck at the extreme rear end of the ship, my back leaning against a cabin, watching the [sea] and wondering, as the ship [seemed] almost to stand on end, climbing one wave after another, and down again she would go as a wave passed under. So rough was the sea that we were driven out of course three times. The ship was on fire once, and we lost one of the twin propellers in mid-ocean. None of the passengers knew of this until after landing. We lay three days outside New York harbor because of fog. Pilots did not dare to take us in because of sandbars in the channel. The ship was badly battered, and on its next trip over, it sank in mid-ocean.

They arrived at Castle Garden on the southern tip of Manhattan island. Castle Garden was an old fortress, built prior to the War of 1812, which served from 1855-90 as the immigration center for New York. It was replaced by the Ellis Island station, which opened in 1892.

In America at last!

When we landed in New York at Castle Garden, we were detained for inspection by doctors and customs inspectors. From there, we were herded to a cheap hotel somewhere for [the] night. We were instructed by the conductor-interpreter to remain in the hotel. However, I ventured out to see some of the sights of this great city by night, at the risk of being lost and unable to find the way back, as I could not speak or understand a word of English. I saw some tall buildings and wonderful window displays and found my way back to the hotel.

The next morning, we were put on board a train, accompanied by an interpreter-guide, and headed for our different destinations. [Mine was] Randall, Iowa. My uncle, Hans Christian Gydesen, a brother of my mother, had been in the U.S. about ten years and was living on a farm about three miles from Randall. I hoped to be able to stay with them during the winter.



Hans Christian Gydesen



Christen Peder Pedersen, 1888

When the train finally arrived in Randall, in the late afternoon of 24 December 1888, I had hoped to find my uncle there, but not so. No one appeared that looked like the picture I had seen of him. I was beginning to wonder what was next when an elderly man stepped up to me and asked, "Are you Christen Pedersen?" I told him that I was. He said, "My name is Jens Clausen. I live up there

on that farm, about half a mile away. You'd better come home with me." I said that I had somehow expected my uncle, Gydesen, to be there. Mr. Clausen told me that Gydesen had a hired man for the winter, "but you can come home with me."

My brother, John, knew that I was coming, but he was in Omaha at that time, and it seemed [that he] had made arrangements for me to stay at Mr. Clausen's during the winter.

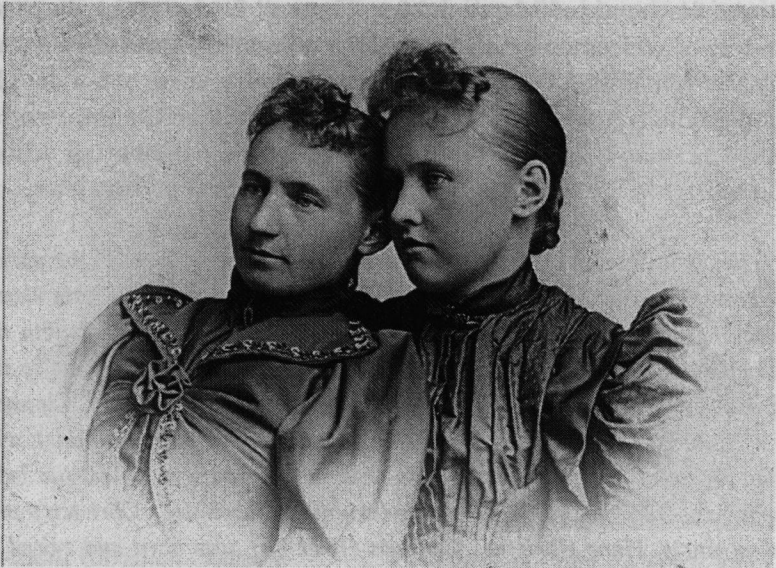
We loaded my baggage onto his spring wagon. [It] consisted of a trunk, made of wood by a carpenter before [I left] home, and a cheap valise. We went up to the store, where Mr. Clausen bought groceries, speaking a language which I could not understand. [I was] truly a stranger in a strange land, and only a few silver dollars in my pocket. The feeling which comes over a lad in such circumstances is anything but envious.

At the home of Mr. and Mrs. Clausen, I was given the very kindest of welcomes by all the family, consisting, besides [the parents], of two young boys around ten and twelve years old, a daughter perhaps fourteen years old, a bachelor brother Clausen, and a Miss Christianson, who was the teacher of the neighboring school and a sister to the young lady whom I married, many years later.

Jens Clausen was a native of the village of Ris in Givskud, the parish between Give and Hvejsel. He married Anna Hansen (Anne Mette Hansdatter), a sister of Else Marie who had come to America in 1868 with the Christiansen family (now spelled Christianson). Mrs. Clausen died in the spring of 1889. Their children were Mary, Hans, and Samuel J. Clausen. The "Miss Christianson" was probably Mathilda (originally Bothilde), who later became Clausen's second wife, and whose younger sister, the baby during the 1868 voyage, was Jennie (originally Jacobine). Christen's maternal uncle, Hans Christian Gydesen (1841-98), was born and raised at Aastgaard in Lindeballe parish and emigrated with his wife, Anne Hansine Pedersen, around 1875.¹⁷ They had one daughter, Mary Gydesen.

By 1890, the U.S. census would show 668 natives of Denmark, 3,437 Norwegians, and 657 Swedes in Hamilton and Story Counties. They comprised slightly over 4% of the 15,519 Danes and 6.5% of the 72,873 Scandinavians in the state of Iowa.

The next day was Christmas day. We had visitors that day, and during the week, a number of neighbors and friends of the family came, I suspected to inspect the newcomer. Among the callers was the teacher's sister, Jennie. I can see her now in memory, a rather small girl with snapping blue eyes, a rather large nose, and a pretty little face crowned by wonderful, short-clipped, light brown, very curly hair, and dressed—why, you should have seen your mother in her prime—in black silk with a little jacket, embroidered with red and brown doodads all down the front. While out in the yard, I asked the Clausen boys who this young lady was, and I was informed, "She is Cousin Jennie, the rich Mr. Christianson's daughter of Randall." No wonder I took quite a shine to her, right then and there, and especially so as she was not averse to carrying on a conversation with me in Danish, but I was afraid to do much talking.



Jennie and Anna Christianson, ca. 1888

They said I was bashful. Perhaps it was not so much bashfulness. However, I will admit that I was very timid in the presence of these people. It takes considerable time to adjust oneself to a new environment. Here I was, transplanted into an entirely new world, where even the landscape was different. The people spoke a lan-

guage I could not understand, and even when they spoke in Danish, the trend of conversation was along lines of which I had no knowledge. The houses, the stores, and even the streets were different and unfamiliar. The food we ate was entirely different. While much better food was served than I was used to, yet it was unfamiliar. The table manners and the actions of people were all strange. So, one tried to be very careful and not appear too dumb and green.

However, as I said, the folks with whom I was staying were very kind to me. Mr. Clausen told me that I was welcome to remain all winter and help with the farm chores for my room and board. And Mrs. Clausen helped to provide means of getting rid of the "cooties" I had acquired on the trip.

Immediately after the Christmas holidays, I was permitted to enroll in the little country school taught by Miss Christianson. In school, I was required to begin in the first grade by learning the A.B.C.'s in the English language. I would march up, along with these little tots, to take part in spelling. Always, I would be at the bottom, to the great amusement of the class, but before the winter was over, I was able to hold my own with almost any one in the school, even though I did not understand the meaning of the word I was asked to spell.

The reading was not difficult, but the meaning of the printed words meant almost nothing to me. So the winter wore on, and I had occasion to become better acquainted with the people with whom we came into contact, and thereby, to gain more self-confidence.

Not long after starting to attend school, I had a letter from my brother, John, in Omaha, in which he stated that he was in the hospital with erysipelas. I felt it my duty to go to see him and made arrangements to do so. I was excused from school. Mr. Clausen protested very vigorously that it was impossible for me to find my way alone, not being able to speak English. When he learned that I was determined to go, he very kindly lent me enough money for carfare and accompanied me to the station in Randall and explained about trains in Ames, where I was to change to another line. I had learned to say, "ticket to Omaha, please," and in Randall, I stepped up to the

window and said, "Ames, please," handed the man some money, and received change and a ticket. Nothing to it.

Arriving in Ames, I had no difficulty in locating the window, because by now, I could read "Ticket Window" and knew what it was about. I went up to the window and said, "Omaha, please." I shoved some money through the window. The agent looked at it, shook his head, and said something I did not understand. He held on to the ticket, so I knew that he wanted more money. I held out my hand with some change and let him help himself. At Ames, I waited for a train that was headed in the opposite direction from the train on which I had arrived from Chicago, about three weeks before. Ames is a sort of junction on the main line of the Union Pacific Railroad between Chicago, Omaha, and the Pacific coast. There are many trains daily, both passenger and freight. The line is double-tracked from Chicago to Omaha.

It was not long before a passenger train pulled in, headed in the direction I wished to go, so I ran for it, ticket in hand, but the brakeman would not let me board. He said something and pointed back to the station. So back I went and waited an hour or more before another train arrived that was going my way. I made tracks for that one. The conductor looked at my ticket and explained something that I could not understand, but he let me get on board. It turned out to be the fast mail train between Chicago and the west coast and carried only one passenger coach with very few passengers, stopping only for water between Ames and Omaha and traveling sixty to seventy miles an hour—the fastest train on the line, I learned afterwards. But I was worried because there were so few people on it, thinking perhaps that I had gotten on the wrong train after all. Eventually, however, I went to sleep. I woke up before entering Council Bluffs. The train stopped here for a few minutes. I got off, and before I could get on again, it had pulled out, leaving me to gaze at the most beautiful sunrise, as the sun was just coming over the brow of the bluff.

I had been told that there was only the river between the two cities, so I decided to walk over. It being early, there would be time enough, but a very dense fog had come up. There were no people around. If there had been, it would not have helped me much, as I

would not have been able to get directions from them, not being able to understand their line of talk. So I tried to figure out the direction. It was self-evident that there could not be a river where the bluffs were, so I assumed it must be in the opposite direction, but I could only see about a block away on account of the fog. However, I found a street that looked long and straight, paved with wooden blocks stood on end. It was the best-looking street I could find, and so I decided it must lead to Omaha.

I continued to walk for a long time, on into the fog, but there seemed not to be a bridge in sight. On my right and a short distance away, paralleling the street, was a railroad track with what looked like telephone poles on both sides of the track. There were wires, strung across the track from pole to pole, and a long center wire suspended from these in the middle and paralleling the center of the track. As I walked, I looked and wondered about this. After walking for a long time and beginning to believe that I must be on the wrong road, suddenly, out of the fog ahead of me appeared a wonderful conveyance, apparently traveling without power, as there were no horses to draw it. Neither was there a steam engine to pull it. All I could see was a long pole, sticking up from the roof, but people were getting off and on, and how I wished that I could talk so I could get on and ride to Omaha, for I was now convinced that it would be coming back and heading for Omaha, which it did in a short time.

Eventually, however, I caught sight of the bridge. There was a fenced-in path on one side for foot passengers. In about the middle of the bridge was a little house, just large enough for one man, and there was a man in it. He stopped me and said something. I shook my head and said, "Jeg forstaar det ikke" (I don't understand), so he held out a dime. I reached for it, but he shook his head and pulled back the dime, so I decided that he wanted a dime. I said, "Saa, De vil have penge" (So you want money) and gave him a dime, and he let me pass. I can tell you that hurt my feelings, because I felt that I could have over ridden for a dime.

At the other end of the bridge, where the track ended, was the wonderful conveyance I had seen, and men were walking around it,

looking it over. Some were down on their hands and knees, looking under it, evidently wondering, as I also did, what made it go.

It was the first electric streetcar west of New York City.

I left it there. I had other things on my mind. I wanted to see the sights of the city, as it was yet early morning. I was not afraid of getting lost in this large city, as I was [already] about as lost as anyone could be. I walked all through the main business district, paying no attention to directions or streets, only I knew that I came from the river and could find it again if necessary. My experiences in cities at home gave me confidence in finding my way around.

About 9:30, I was hungry and tired, so I set about finding the hotel where John was employed as bartender. It was necessary to ask someone, and I had found from experience in Denmark that the most reliable source of information was to ask a policeman.

I had an envelope with a picture and return address of the hotel I wished to find. I stopped an officer and pointed to the address and asked him in Danish, "Vil De være saa venlig at directere mig" (Please direct me).¹⁸ He seemed to understand what I wanted and pointed to right and left and straight ahead. I tipped my hat and thanked him and endeavored to follow the direction he pointed out, but at the end, I could not see the hotel, so again, I tipped my hat to another officer and proceeded to ask him in the same manner. He was also very nice and pointed in a different direction, which I again followed the best I could, and still I could not see the hotel, so I stopped a laborer and proceeded in the same manner. He pointed under an elevated railroad track or viaduct, and sure enough, about three blocks away, there was the hotel.

I walked in, and the landlord recognized me at once from my likeness to my brother and addressed me in Danish. My troubles were over. He took me to the dining room and had a very nice breakfast served to me. I explained that I would like to see my brother in the hospital, and about eleven o'clock, one of the boys took me there. John surely was surprised to see me, as I had not taken time to write him that I was coming. It seemed that he was about ready to leave the hospital, so for the following two or three days, he took me around the city and showed me the sights. Also,

we visited his girl friend, whom I had known in Denmark. However, in the long run, he did not marry this girl.

At the end of my visit, I returned to Randall to continue my studies in the little school house by the road.

In the spring of 1889, my uncle Gydesen offered me a job on his farm at eighteen dollars a month for eight months and a chance to do chores in the winter for my board and room. This I accepted and was glad to get it. One or two incidents occurred during the summer. At one time, I saw a strange-looking cat run under the granary. It had a large, bushy tail and black-and-white stripes running down its back. My curiosity was aroused, and I had to find out about this cat. I tried to get the dog to drive it out, but he refused to go after it, so I got a long stick and poked him, but I was very sorry, for he had an exceedingly disagreeable odor, which clung to my clothing, and I was really very much chagrined. I said nothing to the folks about it, but they found out without having been told. So I told them about chasing the cat out from under the granary. All the satisfaction I received was, "Why, you dumb cluck. That was a skunk," and a lecture on the characteristics of a skunk.

One other time, when the apples were getting ripe in the [orchard], my cousin, Mary, the only child, brought me a fine, ripe, red apple and told me to go ahead and eat it. She was eating one. I took a nice, large bite, and, believe it or not, I thought I was poisoned. Did she laugh! It wasn't an apple at all: it was a nice, juicy, ripe tomato.

During the summer, I gradually became used to the farm work, which was entirely different from what I had known. I conscientiously tried to earn my hire, although my uncle frequently told me I was not worth it. In the fall of the year, I remember loading a double-boxed wagon with corn, which he took to town to sell. When he returned, he asked me, "How much money do you think I got for that load of corn?" Of course, I had no idea. He informed that he had received five dollars for nearly fifty bushels of corn. Fat hogs were bringing two dollars per hundredweight, eggs six cents a dozen, butter ten cents a pound.¹⁹

The first of November, I again started to school, this time in a different school, and the teacher was a Yankee named Miss Templer.

To her I owe much, as she endeavored at all times to help me in every way possible. She would very frequently sit by me during the recess and noon hours, explaining very painstakingly the meaning and pronunciation of words. I worked hard at my English. I would read and study nearly every evening.



Mary Gydesen

In fact, I worked so hard and conscientiously that I would dream in English at night. I remember dreaming one night, before I could understand or speak English, that I was carrying on a conversation in English without any difficulty whatever. When I woke up, I could still remember some words, but then I could not make sense of them. I marveled at this, and I cannot explain how one's subconscious mind can master a language that the true or conscious mind does not understand.

However, I progressed very satisfactorily during this term of school, and by spring, I was able to speak and understand enough English so that I felt I could now make my way unaided, thanks to a very great extent to Miss Templer's gracious help.

Early in 1890, my brother visited me, and we arranged to go to Webster City, the county seat, where I obtained my first citizenship

papers. My full citizenship papers were obtained in Rock Springs, Wyoming, three years later.

My two winters and one summer's stay in Iowa were rather uneventful, except for occasional visits to the home of the little, curly-headed girl that I had met at Mr. Clausen's. I looked forward to these visits with keen interest, although my Aunt Gydesen told me, "It's no use. They are way above you, poor greenhorn." Nevertheless, Mrs. Christianson always treated me very kindly and invited me to be sure to come again. In fact, I made a better impression with the mother than I did with the daughter. Jennie talked Danish very well, and we had some very nice visits. She would tell me about the United States, and I could give her a very good picture of Denmark, as I had been around quite a bit, from the east to the west coasts, which really was not so far in a little country of only about two-and-one-half million people.

I was now ready for an extended adventure and further education, which, as you will learn, I received with interest at times.

The Wild West, 1890-93

My brother, John, had visited Wyoming and had acquaintances there. He suggested I might try Laramie City. It must have been around the first of May when I decided to go west. After buying a few necessary things, I had about an even hundred dollars in my pocket. By this time, John had accepted a position as clerk in the general store in Randall.

So, one fine spring morning, I packed my trunk and, once again, headed for Omaha and the wild and woolly West. This time, I did not get off the train at Council Bluffs but remained on, into the terminal station at Omaha. I stayed over in Omaha one day and went up town and bought a present for the very lovely girl friend I had left behind in Denmark. I had it securely packed and sent [it] on its way.

The next day, I spent an hour at the railroad station, waiting for my train. I was very much interested in a train caller. People of many nationalities would ask him questions, and he would answer them in their own language. I saw and heard him speak Danish, Swedish, German, Italian, Spanish, and others. He even spoke to

some Indians in some peculiar tongue—the first Indians that I had ever seen.

My destination was Laramie City, Wyoming. John had given me the names of a couple of Danish boys whom I was to look up. I did so and found them in a boarding and rooming house. Here, I was also installed by paying the landlady a shiny new twenty dollar gold piece for one month's board and room in advance. She did not wish to take any chances after taking a good look at me. For that matter, neither did I wish to take any chances on losing or spending this money, because it was nearly all I had left after paying the railroad fare.

Laramie, Wyoming, had its origins in 1868 as a shanty town for workers who were building the transcontinental Union Pacific Railroad. It was still a railroad town in 1890, the year when Wyoming became a state. Ranches in the surrounding country had suffered severe losses of livestock during the brutal winter of 1887-88, but Laramie remained their commercial center. Wyoming Territorial Prison had been built there in 1872 and held many tough characters in those days. The University of Wyoming was established in Laramie in 1886. In all of Albany County, there was a population of only 8,865 in 1890, including 184 natives of Denmark among 598 individuals born in the three Scandinavian countries.

Under the circumstances, it was therefore necessary that I secure a job as soon as possible. Chances were very poor indeed for a green lad who could barely make himself understood. I was always rather afraid and timid about asking for jobs. I tried the railroad round-houses for a job as greaser or wiper, but they could not use me. There seemed but one other chance: that was at the Laramie Rolling Mill, where quite a number of men were employed. I went there every morning for about two weeks. I was always there before the whistle blew. The foreman had come to know me by this time, but I was getting a pretty jittery feeling and beginning to believe that I should have stayed on a farm in Iowa.

One morning, a man was missing, and I was told to go to work, right then and there. I always wore working clothes when looking for a job. I was put to work in the yard, and my first job was to help

unload old iron railroad rails, twenty feet long and weighing sixty pounds to the foot. One man at each end, heaving them off flat cars—strenuous work, but I was strong in those days. Before leaving home, I was able to stand with both feet in a bushel basket and shoulder a two-hundred-pound sack of wheat. Many a two-hundred-pound sack of grain I had carried on my shoulder up an ordinary ladder to the second floor.

The next job in the mill was unloading scrap iron of all descriptions, which had been removed from old railroad tracks. From there, I was advanced to bundling up scrap iron into large bundles to be fed into blast furnaces, where [it was] heated and melted into ingots, then brought out and fed into huge rollers at white heat. My next job was on an enormous power shears that clipped iron rails into short furnace lengths. From there, I was advanced at a raise to \$1.75 a day to operate a nut machine, where my work was to heat flat iron bars in a small blast furnace to a welding heat, draw them out, one by one, and put the hot end in the machine, which punched a hole in the center and cut off the nut in one operation. When all the iron in the furnace had been cut as far back as heated, [I turned] on the blast again and [heated] and cut section after section, all day long.

From there, I was advanced to another machine, known as the square-header. This machine put square heads on round bolts, long, short, and medium, such as [are] used in [the] construction of bridges.

From there, I was advanced to the track-bolt machine, a rather delicate machine to operate. Its work was to form a head [that was] round on the outer surface, flat on the inner surface, [and joined to] an oval shoulder, the balance of the bolt round. There were steel dies and hammers in this machine, which had a tendency to get out of alignment, especially if trying to cut iron which was the least bit too cold. The iron, when taken from the furnace, must be welding hot and sending out sparks. We frequently worked overtime at night on these machines, which helped our monthly salary.

It was this machine which was finally my undoing in the mill, and I must admit it was entirely my fault. It was hot in the mill, and some of the boys had formed a habit of going outside between

heats—there was a door near my machine. This day, I stayed outside too long, practicing putting a fifty-pound iron weight up over my head with one hand (try it once). The iron in the furnace got too hot, and some pieces welded together. The foreman came along and saw it, yanked all the iron out of the furnace and threw it on the floor, stepped up close to me, and tried to yell in my ear—there was always a thunderous noise in the mill. He could not speak above a whisper, having lost his voice two years previous. "You are fired!" I took off my leather apron and [the] leathers we always wore on our hands to protect them from the hot iron and made some very uncomplimentary remarks. He came back and told me, "You can go back in the scrap pile," but instead, I went to the office and got my time. I worked in the mill about one year and had saved some money and was just about ready to move on again anyway.

While working in the mill, which, owing to all the furnaces and hot iron, was always hot, we drank a great deal of water. The management was afraid that too much water [would make us sick], so they had a large wooden barrel [filled] with cold drinking water with oatmeal in it, and this we were required to drink. Even now, I detest oatmeal mush.

Occasionally, we had some fun, too. Visitors would frequently come to the mill. The mill was about a quarter-mile out [of town]. Inside the doors leading towards town were twelve blast furnaces, six in a row, back to back. Here, the two-hundred-pound ingots were heated to a white heat, and when the proper heat was attained, the men would bring out the molten metal, [using] a pair of tongs with eight-foot handles. One could not get closer to the hot metal without scorching. These tongs were suspended by chains from an iron track above, leading to huge revolving rollers, over which a stream of cold water was playing. The men would swing the white-hot metal along the track [with] the tongs, running and coasting, [then] shoot [it] through the largest opening in the rollers. Men on the opposite side would grab the tail end and send it back through a smaller opening, and so on, until the required size was obtained, when it was run out on the iron floor, still red-hot. When this white-hot iron first struck the rollers and water, it would crack like a cannon.

The men at these furnaces had a large gas pipe across the top of the furnaces. When the visitors had gotten well into the mill and were standing scared stiff from noises and hot metal everywhere, the furnace men would put their mouths to the gas pipe and let out the most unearthly noises. The visitors would believe the whole building was burning up or someone had fallen into the hot metal. On a dead run, [they would] make for the nearest door and never stop until they were in town. One time, a young man was so frightened that he ran outside and hid under a pile of iron. Some of it rolled down over the hole he [had] crawled into, and the boys had to help him out. He was so frightened that he shook. They had a hard time quieting the poor lad. They tried it on me, after I had been away for two years, when I went back to the mill to visit some boys, but it didn't work.

Up to this time, I had occasions at intervals to converse in Danish. Most of the boarders where I was staying were Danish. I had, however, made use of every opportunity to improve my English and was gaining somewhat in self-confidence.

While staying at this boarding house, which was located near the Laramie River, I had my first opportunity to observe prisoners in a federal penitentiary. This institution was just across the river. The banks on that side had a gradual slope to the water's edge. There was a large rock pile on top. The men would load wheelbarrows with rocks, wheel them down to the edge of the water and unload them, then reload the rocks and push the wheelbarrow back up the slope and unload them, doing the same thing over and over from morning until night, under the watchful eyes of a guard. Draw your own conclusions of how you would like it. For my own part, I decided not to board there.

I had lost my job in the mill and was looking for something to do. Somehow, I had become acquainted with a man who operated a lime kiln, out near the foothills, about one and a half miles out of the city. I walked out to see this man and was hired to pick rocks off the hillside, load them in a wagon box, and bring them in and dump them in the kiln. We had to know our rocks, for only a certain kind would make lime.

Three of us men slept in a rather large log bunkhouse. It was a good house, chinked with plaster in the joints. The logs had shrunk away somewhat from the plaster. I slept alone in a very good bunk with clean white sheets and pillow. In the middle of the night, I woke up with the feeling of something crawling all over me. I was thinking of snakes. I raised up in bed, threw back the covers, and struck a match—and oh boy, a moving sheet of black insects the size of a match head, moving across the white sheets toward the chinks in the wall. I slept no more that night. The next morning, my neck and wrists and any other parts of my body not covered by night-clothes were swollen.

The men insisted that I had been poisoned and made me go to town at once to see a doctor. He asked me some questions and said, "Oh, it is only bedbug bites," and asked if the other men were bitten. I said, "No." The bugs were all on me. He gave me some stuff to rub on, and I went back out. But I never again slept in the bunkhouse. I took my bedclothes outdoors and spread them on the sagebrush. That was all right in that country, but every night, I was awakened by the angry growling of bears, which in the still night seemed right near. I stood it a few nights but soon moved my bed to an empty bin in the lime house.

Lime is burned in a kiln, similar to the way building bricks are burned. Our kiln was fired with cordwood. We had to bring up the wood from burned-over timber in the foothills on the other side of Laramie, a distance of twenty miles. We used a large wagon and a team of four horses, taking two days for a trip. The first trip, the landlord went with me, showing me how to drive four horses. We arrived in the mountain foothills just before dusk. We hobbled the horses and turned them loose to feed and got out our lunch basket. There was no fresh water [nearby], so we dug a shallow hole in a ravine bottom, which soon filled with good water. We spread our blankets under the wagon and turned in. We could hear bears, wildcats, and it seemed a thousand coyotes, howling all through the night. Even the horses stayed right near us and the wagons. In the morning, we loaded up and headed for home. At noon, we camped at a lake to let the horses drink, and [we] arrived home before night.

The next trip, I went alone. I did not like the idea of being alone all night with bears, wildcats, and coyotes, so I hurried and loaded up and got on the way, as far as I could out on the prairie. I hobbled the horses and made my bed under the wagon, but there seemed to be thousands of coyotes howling so near by that I crawled up on top of the load to sleep. I could hear the horses, right near the wagon. They did not like coyotes either. We got home safely, however.

I did not stay at this place very long. Sleeping in the lime house was bad. There was too much dust. I had heard wonderful tales of big wages and plenty of work in Butte City, Montana, so one day, I packed my trunk and headed for the big city, which is surrounded by tall mountains. I hoped to get a job in a stamp mill, where ore is reduced and gold extracted.

Butte, Montana, was a rough, tough mining and smelting town in 1891. The town began as a mining camp in the gold rush of 1864. Silver was discovered ten years later, and by the 1880's, Butte was the world's largest producer of copper. The population soared from 4,000 in 1882 to 22,000 in 1885, with over 300 operating mines, nine quartz mills, and four smelters working day and night. Cornish, Irish, and Chinese miners pioneered the digs. When Chris arrived in town, ten percent of the area's population of 23,744 was still Irish-born, and there were nearly 600 Chinese, growing populations of Finns, Italians, and Croatsians, and some 650 Scandinavians, including ninety natives of Denmark. Three-quarters of the population were foreign-born or of foreign parentage, and there were two men for every woman in town.

I will always remember that first day in Butte. I wandered around to get the lay of the land and so got down near a creek flowing with copper-colored water. The ground nearly everywhere along the creek was glistening with flakes of gold in the bright sunshine. I wondered at this. I picked up handfuls and examined it. Sure enough, it looked like gold, but reason said no, it could not be. I later found that it was nothing more than pyrites of iron, commonly called "fool's gold." Nevertheless, [it was] beautiful to see, spread all over the ground.

During all this time, I had not forgotten my mother. I wrote to her quite frequently. At times, I was very lonely and sick at heart. I was gaining a varied education.

In the following weeks, I covered the city from end to end but could not find a job. Apparently, the city was populated with men only, as one seldom saw women on the streets. There were saloons and gambling houses everywhere, also many houses of ill repute, known as the red light district from the fact that red lights were always present, in or near the buildings. One would see these female beauties, painted and dyed, in saloons and gambling houses during the day, prospecting for customers.

While roaming the streets, I had by chance gotten acquainted with a very nice young man by the name of Charles McConahie. He did not drink, except for an occasional glass of beer, neither have I ever known him, in our long acquaintance, to chase after women. He had been chopping railroad ties in the wooded mountains above Butte for four months and had saved up four hundred dollars. This he lost gambling in less than a week. We visited gold mines, high up on the mountain sides, and smelters down in the valleys, but never a chance for work [did we find]. We roamed the streets by day and by night.

One day, we were going up a very steep street to a gold mine to look for work when two men on the opposite side came out of a squalid saloon. One man was large, weighing perhaps over 200 pounds, the other small, perhaps 140 pounds. Evidently, both had been drinking and quarreling, perhaps about a woman, as there was one in the background. The quarrel was getting hot, so Charlie suggested we duck into a saloon, not wanting to be witnesses, but at the same time wanting to see the fight. This saloon was empty except for a bartender, who came over to the window and pulled the [shade] part way down and joined us to watch the fight. Evidently, it was customary to duck inside, for there were only two men on the street when the fight started. There was a reason: bullets might be flying. One never knew.

In a very few minutes, the big man landed a blow to the face of the little fellow. Quicker than lightning, the little fellow sent a blow to [the] jaw that sent the big fellow staggering to the street, followed

by the opponent raining blows to the head and body of the big fellow, who went down in the middle of the street, bleeding furiously. The little fellow apparently was not satisfied. He stood upon the chest of the inert body of the opponent and kicked the face and head of the fallen man with leather boot heels, time and time again, until blood was running in a stream down the steep street. Eventually, he stepped down and delivered a final blow with the toe of his boot to the apparently dead body. Not another person in sight, anywhere along the street. No one came out. It was not our fight, so we stayed put. The body lay there for perhaps twenty minutes, then some slight movement could be seen. Eventually, the man sat up. Then he got up on his feet, reeling somewhat. At this time, the woman came to his assistance. Evidently, he was mad now and hunted everywhere for the little fellow, who had disappeared.

During my stay in Butte, I had occasion to see gambling at its highest. I had no desire to take any part in it, and no desire for drink. What I wanted, more than anything else, was to get a job of some kind, but no such luck. What was worse, my money [was] fast going for board and room. I was rapidly gaining a very unsatisfactory education. From this time [on], as long as I was in the West, I very rarely heard or spoke Danish.

Charlie had two dollars, and I was down to a few dollars. An employment agency was shipping men down to Utah to work on railroad construction. For two dollars, we could be sent down there, so I had my trunk checked, and we both went to Utah to work on the railroad. Charlie was broke. I had one dollar.

Employers of those days categorized workers in various ways. One book listed "White (Irish and Swedish), Negro, Mexican," and "Hobo or Tramp Laborers." Chris and Charlie were falling into the latter category. The book told how to handle such hoboos and tramps:

"These men should be provided with a reasonably warm, dry place to sleep, but as a rule no special housing is needed for them. They are satisfied to furnish their own bedding and sleep on a pile of hay, and to get plain food ... if ample in quantity and well cooked.

"As a class they are easily disgusted with poor machinery, and if an implement continually breaks, they are likely to quit without notice....

"These men will not stand crowding or pressing. If any attempt is made to drive them they will quit. Yet they can be held to the daily quitting time, although if over-time or extra work is attempted, a clear understanding must be had and extra money be paid.

"Sunday work is usually taboo with the real hobo.

"One cannot afford to allow poker playing or gambling of any kind, or tolerate radical talk or preaching by discontented individuals."²⁰

So here they were, Chris and Charlie, among the hobo laborers.

In due time, we arrived at the construction camp. It was two or three miles from a small town where a deep ravine was being filled by [means of horse-drawn] wheel scrapers. There was no room at the inn, consisting of sleeping tents and a "chaw" or eating tent. In most camps, one had to furnish [one's] own bedding. Charlie had a blanket, and I had a quilt. For a bed, we found an old abandoned wooden bunk. We filled this with hay borrowed from the horses' feed sack. We found an old piece of tent canvas. I made a nice pillow of hay and covered it with a piece of canvas and spread the blanket over the hay to [make the bed, with] the quilt for a cover, reinforced with a large piece of canvas [full of holes]. We parked the whole thing out under the sky, away from the tents and noise of the card games.

We undressed and went to bed. Charlie hung his clothes on a nearby sagebrush and set out his shoes near the bed. For about one week, we would be out during the day, driving teams hauling dirt to fill. The foreman was a mean, profane individual, always nagging some of the men to get more work done. I remember one day he was following me as I was about to dump a scraper-load of dirt. He yelled "haw," and I, not knowing the difference between "haw" and "gee," pulled the horses to the wrong side, and boy did I catch it. He said, "You - - - fool, don't you know gee?"

At night, we would hear tales of other construction foremen. It was said that, at one time, the men on another gang hung the foreman to a tree with a rope around his neck, but his Negro flunky sneaked up and cut him down, just in the nick of time.

At night, while we were resting before sleeping, we would have friendly conversation. Charlie told me that he was born on the line

between New Hampshire and Maine and left home when about twelve years old. He was now about thirty.

A week or so after we had started to work, there had been a heavy wind for two or three days, and the dust was so thick one could not see the horses ahead of the wheel scraper. It got in our eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. At night, we were just about fed up with the job. This particular night, Charlie hung his clothes out and set his shoes by the bed as usual. We were looking at the beautiful display of stars overhead when Charlie remarked, "It will rain before morning." I could not believe it, but just the same, I got up, tucked my clothes and shoes under the bed, and tucked in our canvas bedspread, fixed it so, in case it did rain, we could cover up our heads. And sure enough, shortly after midnight, it rained, buckets full it seemed, and when it rains in that country, it really rains. It was not long before Charlie complained his bed was wet. The next morning was a beautiful, sunshiny day. But at seven o'clock, when we supposed to go to work, Charlie's shoes were full of water, and his clothes, hanging on the sagebrush, were dripping wet. We debated a while as to what to do about [it] and finally agreed not to get up until the clothes dried out, and then go and get our time and go on to Ogden. We figured we would have eight or ten dollars each after paying for our board. That afternoon, we went to the little town to draw our pay. The paymaster kindly let us have our pay, after deducting fifteen percent because we had quit.

Ogden, Utah, was founded in 1845 as a small fur-trading post and grew into the center of a Mormon farming area scattered along the Ogden and Weber rivers, east of Great Salt Lake. The transcontinental Union Pacific Railroad came to Ogden in 1869, bringing an influx of non-Mormons. By 1891, Ogden was a prosperous railroad and commercial center in a farming area that shipped out fruit and garden produce. Of the 22,723 people in Weber County in 1890, 603 were natives of Denmark, while another 851 were born in Sweden and Norway. The majority of these Scandinavians were Mormons.

We arrived in Ogden on a Saturday in August, each with about four or five dollars. Watermelons were ripe. We [bought] a couple

of large ones for five cents each, and how we did fill up on melons. Toward evening, we hunted up a place to sleep. Any place where there was a bed was good enough. We found a ground-floor store building with four long rows of cots where we could sleep for thirty-five cents each. Seeing the sights until about ten o'clock, we crawled each into his cot, side by side. Just about daybreak, the melon or something we ate, no doubt, began to work, and I had to move in a hurry. There were no toilet facilities in the building, so I had to make a run for the back yard. Charlie was there, waiting for his turn. When I got back into my cot, I noticed that my neighbor's was empty, and he had gone. I had placed my purse under my pillow, but now it was gone, and so was [the] baggage check to my trunk, and it was Sunday morning. All the money we had left was Charlie's four dollars.

We were afraid he would claim the trunk also, so we beat [it] to the station. Luckily, I had the key. After describing the articles in the trunk, the attendant let us open it up. I took out the very fine overcoat that Mother had given me, took it up town, found a pawnshop open, and received four dollars on it. I never was able to redeem it.

Sunday was a very dull day. We both felt our loss very keenly. We had decided that Charlie was to go to Rock Springs, Wyoming, to get work in the coal mines, he being an experienced miner. There are a hundred miles from Ogden to Rock Springs, and our combined capital would barely take him there. When he got work, he was to let me know, and I was to join him there.²¹

So it was imperative that I get a job at once. Therefore, early Monday morning, we were on the street. It was not long before Charlie saw a man going in and out of saloons. "There is a man looking for a laborer. Let us ask him." Sure enough, he was a plasterer and wanted a man. I was hired at \$1.75 a day. Charlie went along to the job. When I was installed and promised a boarding place at the home of the boss, I handed all the money I had to Charlie except a quarter for my dinner.

I mixed mortar for the plasterers and had to carry mortar in a hod, up a ladder to the second floor. The mortar and hod weighed nearly two hundred pounds, and only a two-inch piece of board

resting on the bare shoulder. My shoulder was getting raw. I could not properly balance the thing, so at last, when I was near the top, it got away from me, and down went hod, mortar, and all. I kept on going up, found the boss, and told him that I was very sorry, but I just could not do it. He put me to cleaning up the rest of the day and said, "We will go in the country in the morning and build a chimney." Before a week was up, I had word from Charlie that he had a job in a coal mine, and for me to wait a little while and then come on to Rock Springs, where he said he was working in the Qualey Mine.

I stayed on and worked for this man for about ten days. The union men got after me, and I had to join up or quit, so I quit. I expressed my trunk to Rock Springs and rode the rods and bumpers of freight and cattle cars to Rock Springs, and so again, I had added a new chapter to my education. It was decidedly not a happy adventure.

The bleak, coal-mining town of Rock Springs, Wyoming, was as tough as any place in the west in 1891. When the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, the Union Pacific began hiring Irish and Chinese laborers to work in the mines and provide the fuel to power the trains. Mining towns emerged in Green River, Rock Springs, and elsewhere in Sweetwater County. Men outnumbered women by four to one in these towns, and virtually all the Chinese were males. By 1885, when Rock Springs miners went on strike to protest inhumane conditions, over 600 Chinese working in the mines refused to stop working. A mob formed on 2 September 1885 and marched on the Chinese workers, burning down their residences and firing on them with guns. Twenty-eight Chinese were killed on the spot and fifteen wounded before the railroad picked up the stragglers and whisked them out of town. They returned under guard of federal troops on 9 September, were issued clothing and provisions, housed in wagons, and put back to work in the mines.

By 1891, when Charlie and Chris came to town, the mines of Sweetwater County were up and running. The county had a total population of just under 5,000, with 349 Chinese and 264 natives of the three Scandinavian countries, including some seventy-three Danes. Men outnumbered women by more than two to one.



Massacre of the Chinese in Rock Springs, 1885

Adventure in Coal Mining

After two days, bumming rides and walking, I arrived at Rock Springs at about 4:00 p.m. with a quarter of a dollar in my pocket, which I had concealed under my tongue while a brakey went through my pockets for money for letting me ride the pumpers into Green River. Here, he let me in with the cattle in a cattle car to ride the last seventeen miles to Rock Springs.

I had no idea of how to find Charlie. I knew that he was working in one of the Qualey mines. On inquiry, I was told that there were ten or twelve mines in and around Rock Springs, and I was wondering what to do. I was very much tempted to get something to eat, as I was hungry and had not had anything to eat for over forty-eight hours. But, if I did, where would I sleep if I failed to find my friend?

Finally, someone directed me to one of the Qualey mines, about one and a half miles out of town, which I located in a ravine behind a hill. Remember, we are in the Rocky Mountains now. I had never before seen a coal mine. Most of the mines in this region were drift mines, namely, a hole driven into the side of a mountain. At the opening, there was a high building called the Dump. Here, the small cars, which bring out the coal, are weighed and dumped down a long screened shoot into railroad cars for shipment.

After walking around and inspecting this huge building, I made my way up, where I found the weighmaster at work. I inquired if a man by the name of Charles McConahie was working here and was told that [he] was, and to wait, as he would be out any time now. Before long, a short man with a coal-black face, dressed in overalls that seemed to be made of coal, and a little round cap on his head, with a lard-oil torch, still lit, dangling from the front of the cap, came in and inquired of the weighmaster about the amount of his coal sent out that day. He had not noticed me, as a number of men were on the Dump by this time, and only from the way he walked was I able to recognize him. He was a real pal, though. He told me to come along, down to the boarding house, and he would see to it that I got something to eat and a place to sleep, "and tomorrow, you can come with me into the mine, and we will work together." It was customary that two men worked together.

The boarding house in this case was a large, two-story stone house, with a small log house near by. This was used as a wash house. In this place were several stoves, on which were boilers filled with hot water, and a number of wash tubs and basins, also, cold water and soap. Here, all the men came to get cleaned up. They would strip off all their clothing and scrub from head to foot. A woman attendant would dodge in and out among them. This rather bothered me at first, but one can get used to a lot of things. The men had to be washed clean. If there were dirty pillow covers, they would hear from the landlady. The boarding house at this place was clean, and the grub was good (men were eating "grub" out here, not "food").

After supper, Charlie and I went up town to bring my trunk down. He did not have a dime, and I had only a quarter. We could have had the trunk sent down for a quarter, but we decided to carry it and celebrate by spending the quarter for beer, which we did and enjoyed it. We could get a large glass of beer for a nickel, and we took our time [in spending] the quarter.

The next day, I was permitted to go with my friend into the mine as a miner on a fifty-fifty basis with my partner. At first, I was of little use, but Charlie never complained. I could shovel and load the coal into the cars while he mined it.

The tools required could be secured from the company store and consisted of about a half-dozen picks weighing three pounds each, with a wooden handle fastened through the center of the head, which was tapered to both ends and sharpened by the blacksmith to square needle points. An eight-foot drill of three-quarter-inch iron had a chisel blade at one end and a [grooved] head at the other end. A needle, which was also eight feet long, had an oval, open handle at one end and tapered to a needle point with at the other end. [In addition, there were] shovels, brown sheets of paper, a keg of black powder, a box of squibs used for fuses, a cap, and a lamp or torch.

In this mine, the vein was eight feet high from floor to ceiling. First thing in the morning, on entering, was to tap the ceiling with a drill to ascertain if there was any loose slate that might become dislodged and drop on our heads. If not, work was begun to get out the day's coal. We were paid ninety cents a long ton for coal that went over a three-quarter-inch screen.

To get out coal, it was necessary to lie flat on the floor, swinging a pick and chopping away the coal to undercut at floor [level], just high enough so one could get the shoulders under, and thus cutting to a depth of from five to six feet and about eight feet in [width]. A diagonal hole was then drilled as deep as the undercut, using the eight-foot drill. It required practice to drill a round hole eight feet deep with this flat, chisel-like drill. When the hole was completed, one must judge the amount of powder necessary to dislodge the coal without too much breaking up of the coal, as all small stuff would go through the three-quarter-inch screen and would not count. A round stick of wood was used, over which was wound a sheet of brown paper, forming a cartridge closed at one end. One would judge in number of inches, say seven, eight, nine, or ten inches, according to the estimated bulk of coal ahead of the shot. The cartridge was then filled with powder, the end closed, and the sharp end of the long needle inserted into one end of the cartridge, which was then pushed to the bottom of the drilled hole. Slack (fine coal) was wetted with water. One of us would throw this into the opening while the other, using the reverse end of the drill and [sliding the slot in] the drill head along the needle, tamped the wet slack solidly around the needle. When the drilled hole was filled, the needle was

drawn out and the squib placed in the hole and lit. It would travel like a rocket to the powder and ignite it. Sometimes, if we were lucky, we could bring down as much as eight or ten tons with one shot. Usually, two or three shots were fired each day. We never went out at noon but carried our lunches with us. Eventually, I learned to do my share of the work, and I tried to make it up to my partner for the time when I was unfamiliar with the work.

One forenoon, as we were loading coal in a car, Charlie said, "That piece of slate over your head looks bad, Pete. You had better sound it." I stepped out to get the drill to reach it. Just as I touched it with the drill, down came about one-and-a-half tons of slate, right where I had been standing. Charlie said, "That was a close call, Pete. Better be sure to sound the ceiling every morning."

We continued to work in this mine all winter, and both of us saved some money, in spite of the fact that there were forty-five saloons and about an equal number of gambling houses in Rock Springs, a town of five thousand people.

During Sundays and idle days, men would gather in the wash house or in rooms, amusing themselves by telling tales of travels or telling stories. I remember one man who was a wonderful story teller. We believed he made them up as fast as he told them. He was from New York and, it was said, from a well-to-do family. He was always referred to as Whitey, owing to his very light hair. Another man I remember had a .22 caliber pistol. He frequently amused himself by shooting flies on the log walls of the wash house. He shot them all and seldom missed. He would always get away, as far as he could, to give the flies a chance for their lives.

Along about the middle of February [1892], the mine was operating so little of the time that we could barely make enough to pay for board and room, and the men were nearly all drifting away. Charlie and I decided to go to Salt Lake City.

The nation was headed for economic trouble as Charlie and Pete arrived in Salt Lake City. U.S. currency was officially backed by gold, but silver-mining interests had pushed through a law requiring the federal government to maintain the price of silver as well. This resulted in a strong dollar, which in turn, together with overproduction of wheat and the grow-

ing importance of the global market, deflated farmers' income and depressed the Midwestern economy, as we have seen. Meanwhile, runaway railroad and steel expansion and financial speculation by "robber barons" were jeopardizing the economic stability of the nation. In the hard times to follow, the West would be hit particularly hard.

Salt Lake City

Arriving in Salt Lake, Charles suggested that we rent a furnished room and take our meals wherever we wished, and during the day be looking for work. Every morning for several weeks, we would make the round of likely places, asking for work. The previous summer, if one stood on a street corner for fifteen or twenty minutes, three or four men [would] come up and ask you to go to work, but now, there was no work of any kind, and one could probably still be on the corner. It became apparent that we would have to give up our furnished room, which we did at the end of two weeks. We found a lodging, or rooming house, where a cot could be had for thirty-five cents a night.

Eventually, through an employment agency, we secured a job in a rock quarry, about five miles up the mountain side. Five of us would pump a handcar up the railroad tracks in the morning, bringing our lunches. Some of the men would operate compressed-air drills, others would break and shape rocks for shipping down town for building purposes. It started snowing and thawed, and it was cold. I had holes in the bottoms of my shoes, so that my feet were wet and cold all day long. In the evening, we would let the handcar coast down, using the brake when necessary. Arriving in town, we would hunt up a fifteen-cent lunch counter, and after supper, go to bed. After a few days of this, we gave up. Our hands and feet were in a bad way. We collected our few dollars. The very first thing I looked for was a pair of second-hand shoes, so I could have soles under my feet. I found a pair and paid one dollar for them.

It was not long before our money was again spent for food and lodging. Spring was coming along, and Charles could stand it no longer. He urged me to go with him, out into the country on what he called a "bread and milk route," begging from farm to farm, but

this I could not do. He told me, "You will starve to death here." I said, "I will, if I have to, before I will beg." I could no longer pay the thirty-five cents for lodging. The landlord, however, seemed to have taken a liking to me and told me to stay as long as I wished and pay him when I could get work.

It was tough going. I had but little money. I would eat one fifteen-cent meal a day, trying to get as much food for the money as possible. Then my money ran out, and for three days, I only had five cents' worth of peanuts to eat. The landlord at the rooming house got me a job, peddling handbills from house to house at one dollar a day, for an advertising doctor. I covered every street in the city, so I really knew Salt Lake City pretty well. I would collect my dollar every evening. I paid the landlord and had money to eat on, but it only lasted for a week. Just about the time my money ran out again, I got a job, helping to put a railroad engine back on the track. It had gone off the track, into a meadow, and was half buried in mud. In a day and a half, that job was out. I got three dollars out of it, which carried me again for a couple of weeks.

One day, when I was walking the streets, hunting for work, tired and very hungry, I met Tom Reynolds, whom I had known while working in the mines in Rock Springs. He seemed very glad to see me. "How long have you been here, and what are you doing?" I told my story, and that I was very hungry. In his very decided Irish brogue, he said, "Jasus Christ, man, come on over here to a restaurant and get something to eat right away." He ordered me a meal and paid for it. He then told me that he was staying out at a brickyard, five miles out of town, but that there would be no work until about the middle of May. Mr. Makgliney, the owner, in the meantime was going good for his board, and he had struck the boss, Mr. Makgliney, for five dollars to buy a blanket to sleep under. He said that while I was eating, he would go out and get a quilt—it didn't cost much—and for me to wait right there and he would be back. When he came back, he handed me every bit of money he had left, about three dollars, and told me that, "when it is gone, come on out, and I will make the old man board you and give you a job when work opens up." That surely was a break, and old Tom, while a comparative stranger, was a real friend.

I told my landlord about my good luck. He was willing to wait for his money until work opened up in the brickyard. When my money was gone, I hoofed it out and was taken care of as Tom had promised. When work finally started, I was given a place beside Tom in the pit, shoveling clay into a brick mill. When at the bottom of the pit, there was a lift of eight feet to the top of the mill, where the clay was dumped in. Our quota for a day's work was 20,000 bricks. I can well remember how Tom would cuss and swear, urging the young Mormon lads to hurry, so we could go home early. In the afternoon, the sun would beat down on our backs, standing waist-deep in the pit, and not a breath of air. It was hot and exceedingly hard work, almost more than I could endure. Tom knew that, and he knew it was too much for me. I weighed only 150 pounds to his 215 pounds. He would swear at me for not being able to keep up my side but at the same time be reaching over, doing at first almost half of my work besides his own share. Both of my hands were a mass of water blisters and, when the blisters broke, raw and bleeding. They finally healed, leaving large calluses, so that the inside of my hand formed a hard circle to fit around the shovel handle. For a long time, I was unable to straighten my fingers. Later in the season, when Tom returned from the hospital after a very severe illness, I had occasion to make it up to him, when he was unable to keep up his end of the work. This made Tom so disgusted that, at the end of a couple of weeks' trial, he quit.

During this time, I was gaining in [English] vocabulary. Education, however, can at times be a hard taskmaster. Many were the times during these many months that I wished I had the means to go back to my mother. It had been a trying period, but it had resulted in a firm determination never again to permit circumstances to lead me into such dire straits. From this time on, promises of riches at the rainbow's end were considered only after the mist had cleared and [there was] a reasonably clear road ahead.

I stayed with my work in the brickyard until fall. On Sundays and on occasional days when there was no work, I would make trips to the city and to nearby hot springs bathing resorts, where for a small fee one could enjoy swimming and bathing in naturally hot water [in a] very attractive place on the outskirts of Salt Lake City. I

made a couple of trips to Great Salt Lake, where I saw the lake water impounded in small pools to allow the sunshine to evaporate [it], leaving a layer of salt on the ground to be scooped up and wheeled onto freight cars to be shipped to refineries. I went bathing in the lake water, which was so impregnated with salt that one could not sink in it, but you had to watch your feet or they would go up and your head would go under. On Sundays during the summer, there would be great crowds of people, some floating on their backs in strings of ten or fifteen, their toes hooked under the arms of the one in front. I enjoyed these casual trips.

I dressed reasonably well, but I was always wary and suspicious of strangers who professed undue friendship. I had been hooked, two or three times, by men of this type called "steerers." Salt Lake City at this time was filled with gambling places. I had seen Makgliney, the brickyard man, place twenty dollar gold pieces all over the roulette table, alternately winning and losing. I have seen ranchers, in town on a spree, sit at a poker table. It was said they sat there for two days and nights. One man lost a ranch of a thousand acres. I have seen games where many hundreds of dollars were [at] stake in various gambling places.

These houses paid a heavy license fee, and police in uniform were outside and in. These places were orderly and run under rules, but there were also gambling places, hidden away and run by crooks who paid no license fees and [were] occasionally raided by the police. These were the places that employed steerers.

One such [person] persuaded me with friendly conversation to have a drink with him, which I did. He then led me to an upstairs back room, where he knocked on the door. A wicket was opened, a man on the inside peeked out, opened the door, and said, "Oh, hello, Jack. Come in." We entered. The door was shut and locked. I was met by a Great Dane dog—no relation—his back was as high as a table top. He nosed me up and down until the man told him to go and lay down. I was frightened by the big brute and did what I was told to do.

"Sit down and play a friendly game of poker." The man who brought me in would lend me chips when my couple of dollars were gone. Eventually, there would be a great stack of chips on the table.

There were two men besides the steerer and myself. This was the point where a "killing," as it was called, was supposed to take place. I would be given a good hand, but one of the other men would have a better hand, which I was not to know.

My friend, the steerer, would urge me to put in until all the borrowed chips were in the pot, and when I said I had no more money, he would berate and abuse me. I did not dare to get up and leave. The dog was there, and the door was locked. Out of necessity, I had to invent a subterfuge, so I said that I had a friend, only two or three blocks away, who had money. "I will go get enough money to clean up these two guys." They all looked at each other and finally nodded. My friend escorted me to the door and let me out. The dog came up and bid me good-bye. I never went back. The gang may still be there for all I know.

Others tried me. I would take the glass of beer and thank them, informing them, "I don't gamble, and I know your game. Good-bye."

Back to the Coal Mines

In the fall of the year [1892], there was no more work in the brickyard. I had saved some money. I decided to return to Rock Springs and try to get work in the mines during the winter. I bought a ticket this time and traveled [in style]. In a short time after arriving, I secured a job in a mine four miles out of Rock Springs, and who should I find in the boarding house but Tom Reynolds. I went to work with Tom as my partner.²²

We worked together a while, but eventually, the pit foreman, Joe Barker, seemed to have taken a liking to me, perhaps [because], one time in Rock Springs, I had told him about a wonderful machine, over in a saloon, and said, "Joe, come on over and have a glass of beer. They have a machine over there that talks."

"You are a bloody liar."

"Well, come over and see for yourself." So both he and his brother, Jack, came over. I paid a quarter for each of them. The machine was one of the very first phonographs made. It had a small, round cylinder, similar to those now used on dictaphones. It had three sets of rubber tubing with attachments to put in the ears. Joe

became so fascinated that he forgot about the beer and said, "Let's hear it again," and plunked [down] the money. This time, at the end of the record, he exclaimed—I can almost hear him now—"Well, I'll be damned. What the bloody 'ell will they think of next?" I reminded him of the beer, which we all enjoyed. Since that time, both Joe and his brother, Jack, were friendly towards me.

It may have been this, or it may have been because I was always on the job. While working in the mines, Tom and I had been asked by Joe, the pit boss, to open up a new room on a newly established entry. This was rather undesirable work, as one could not make much money at it for at least a week or so. In opening into a solid wall of coal, next to [the] entry where cars were passing, the working space was cramped and limited for two men. One day, Tom inadvertently, in swinging his pick from over the shoulder, drove the pick through the back of my hand to the wooden eyelet shovel handle in my hand. Tom was so scared he could not pull the pick out. I had to do it myself. He filled his mouth so full of chewing tobacco that [he] almost strangled, chewing it to put on [the] injured hand. Then he bound [it] up with a red handkerchief and sent [me] out. I met Joe Barker, the boss. He inquired why I was leaving so early. I showed him my hand. He said, "Cake-ee doodle doo! For all the bloody 'ell! You go right down to [the] office and get an order to go and see the doctor in Rock Springs." I was laid up for a couple of weeks before I could use my hand.

As near as I remember, it was at this time, when I returned to work, [that they] offered me and Dougal McWilliams, whom I knew and liked, the job of driving a new entry out of the corner of one section of land into the adjoining corner of another section. It must hit the corner, because the other two sections were owned by the Union Pacific Railroad, and [they] would stand for no trespassing.

This entry was fourteen feet wide, nearly twice the width of ordinary entries. It was designed to be operated on an incline, where loaded cars pull up the empties, and was therefore quite steep. [We had] the best and most profitable work in the mine. We were paid ninety cents per running yard and were given preference of cars to load our coal.

Management Policy as Seen by Workers

As the winter progressed, Mr. Kelsey, the superintendent, made several trips to Iowa coal fields and elsewhere. A company store had already been put in operation. Men and families were required to supply all their needs as this store at [slightly] higher prices. Strings of two-room shacks or houses were constructed. They would really make poor barns. There were no ceilings. The partition through the center went up to the roof plates only. From there on up, it was open to the rafters. They were built like a cheap summer cottage, with drop siding on the outside and nothing on the inside. These were rented to married people for eight dollars per month, with the understanding that tenants must buy everything they used from the company store. In hiring people, married men were given preference, for, as we saw it, every dollar they earned would go back to the company.

If anyone was known to the office to have bought a shirt or a sack of flour in Rock Springs, he was called into the office or fired outright. I had saved some money. They knew it in the office. They called me into the office, and I was accused of bringing a sack of flour from town for my partner, Dougal, who was a married man. I had acquired a horse and a two-wheel cart, and a .22 rifle. Dougal and I had gone hunting rabbits a few times.²³

Mr. Kelsey conceived the idea of putting in three screens, each eight feet long and one-and-a-quarter-inch, one-inch, and three-quarter inch respectively. The coal was weighed in the railroad cars on a scale below. The miners were paid only for coal that went over the screens. During the rush season, it was the policy at all times to hire all the men possible. So, when orders for coal slacked, the mine would be idle, and the men could barely make expenses.

It was during [the] summer [of 1893], before the new screens were put in, that George Brown, Jack Powers, and myself decided to "batch it," so we found a one-room cottage dugout in the side of the creek bank.²⁴ The roof was just level with the flat ground above and was covered with dirt and a sprinkling of grass. The inside was lined with pink building paper. I had a cot all to myself. George and Jack slept in a double bunk. During June, July, and August, the mine worked only a few days each month, but nearly all the miners

had left, so that when the mind did run, we would be able to send out enough coal to more than pay our expenses.

In March of 1893, President Cleveland had begun his second term with the national economy already in disarray. In April, federal gold reserves dropped to the statutory limit for redeeming currency in gold, triggering a run on the stock market that led to heavy losses. This was followed on 4 May 1893 by the collapse of an industrial giant, National Cordage, which led to full-scale panic. The stock market went into free-fall, banks collapsed throughout the West, mines were shut down, and the nation settled into one of the greatest depressions in its history. In the spring of 1894, a throng of unemployed workers called "Coxey's Army" (after their leader, Jacob S. Coxey) marched on Washington, D.C., to demand action from the laissez-faire government, but nothing was done. Towards the end of the decade, the nation slowly began to recover.

During these idle days, I would lie on the cot, reading. Usually, I would try to select stories that I had read in Danish. I would have the book in one hand and a small dictionary in the other because, even at this time, I would need to look up so many words, [and] that it was rather tiresome. George Brown would also lie and read a great deal. Occasionally, I would ask him for the meaning of some word because, usually, after looking up a word, I was no nearer the meaning than before. George got tired of having me bother him, so I kept my own council, and as time went on, it became less necessary to look up words. Before the summer was over, I could get the meaning of the story without much effort in looking up words.

In the fall, when the mine again began running more nearly normal, work in the entry was shut down for a while. Joe Barker, the pit boss, told me, "Chris, you can go in the old mine and draw out pillars. You will be in there all alone and about a mile away from any other workers. It is very dangerous work, and you will have to be careful, but it is easy work. You can knock down about eight or ten tons of coal with one shot, and I will see that you get all the cars you can load." It seemed it was hard to get men to do this work on account of the danger. [Joe continued,] "Every night, before leaving, you must pull out all props behind you, where the coal

has been taken out during the day, partly for your own safety, and also to save the cedar props. When you come back in the morning, the ceiling slate and stone will be caved in, nearly to surface above, relieving the back stress but throwing the weight of the free ceiling edge partly on the coal in the pillar, making it easy to get out."

I worked at this for some time, making pretty good money. One day, I wanted to knock down at least ten tons in one shot, so I lay down flat on the floor, determined to make an undercut about six feet deep and eight feet long. The pressure on top was always great. Small pieces of coal would pop out from the face of the coal like popcorn in a pan. They would sing through the air, [and when] they hit you in the face, it would hurt. If they hit you in the eye, it was worse. All this meant I must at all times be on the alert for unusual sounds in the coal. I had undercut my way under the overhanging coal so [far] that my shoulders were wedged underneath the outer face of the coal. A large pile of slack had accumulated outside, just beyond my back, when suddenly, I heard a dangerous noise in the coal above me and felt a slight pressure on my shoulder. Assisted by my pick, I leaped out from under. The slack was in the way of my feet, causing a slight hesitation. I threw up my hand against the face of the coal. Instinct told me it was coming down, and so it did, just in that instant, throwing [me] away, out in the clear. I figured there was ten or twelve tons, and not a shot fired.

I pulled out a few props and went home to our humble cottage, but I was pretty badly scared. I went back the next day, however. The ceiling was down, almost up to my pile of coal. I loaded out nearly all of my coal that day. Then, for several days, the mine was not running.

Many incidents occurred in camp while we were batching it in our dugout. [One time], Jack [got] himself and a couple of cowboys drunk at the camp saloon. [He then] rode to town with them, sitting on a grain sack on the rear end of a buckboard. Coming back after absorbing more booze, Jack rolled off the grain sack [and] got himself tangled in the wheel, where he held on until it ran over him three times. The other two men did not notice having lost him until they stopped at the camp saloon. About dark, Jack came limping home.

One morning, before we had gotten out of bed, George Brown was looking up at the ceiling, and all at once, the ceiling started to come down into the bed. George jumped up, put his two hands against a beam, and yelled, "Jack, get up! There's a cow on the roof. Hurry up! Drive it off." Jack made just one leap to the door and got the cow off the roof. I laughed until I thought my sides would split.

In the fall, when the mine was again running steadily, Dougal and I were sent back to our entry to take off a skip along one side. It seemed the engineer had made a mistake and gotten the entry too far west. We had quit our bachelor quarters, and I was boarding in a real, two-story house with Mr. and Mrs. Jim Dunn. He started working in the mines when seven years old in What Cheer, Iowa, and had [received] practically no schooling. He would come upstairs to my room in the evenings, and I would teach him to figure simple arithmetic, as he had gotten the job of weighmaster, and if I had, say, 50,000 pounds of coal, he could not for the life of him figure how many long tons it would make, with 2,240 pounds to the long ton (the weight we had to give for ninety cents).

We had a dance at Jim's house one night. There were two girls and three or four married women in camp, and about three hundred men. The men were not all invited, just a few besides the boarders. The mine was idle this day, so the men had been getting ready for it all day by making frequent trips to the saloon, loading up on beer. They brought home four or five bottles of whiskey and a keg of beer. Jim was working. When he came home, he picked up a pint bottle of whiskey and emptied it without removing it from his mouth.

The party started after supper. I did not dance, so I tended the beer keg and was sure kept busy. Dougal couldn't take his wife home, across the street, and told me to take her home. I did. He was my partner, you know. The women, except Mrs. Dunn, had all gone. I was still sober, but the rest were all pretty well shot. I had locked two quarts of whiskey in my trunk. They wanted it, but I would not let them have it. They had already had too much.

Ed, a lanky southerner, snatched a silk handkerchief from the breast pocket of my coat. I punched him below the ribs and doubled him up. I went upstairs to the washroom and was washing my hands near a corner. Before I knew what was happening, he had me

by the collar and a razor against my neck and said, "I will cut your - - - throat!" I had no way out, so I stood perfectly still and said, "Go ahead, what are you waiting for?"

That seemed to cool him. He walked over to a bench where there were a number of tin wash basins with dirty water in them. The landlord, Jim Dunn, was just coming into the room. Ed threw the basin and water in his face, so everybody was mixed up in a fight. Someone had knocked me down. I was on the floor, lying on my back, a man on his knees on top of me, blood streaming from his nose and face, all over my face and clothes. I got out from under. Someone threw a hatchet and hit a Welshman in the forehead. He ran down the street towards Rock Springs and never returned. Eventually, everybody went to bed.

The next morning, I took stock of myself. My perfectly good, new coat was all smeared with blood, and the back was torn along both seams from neck to bottom, but not a scratch on me anywhere. I hunted up a looking glass—not easy to find after the rumpus—and was I a sight. My face [was] all smeared with blood. I washed up and asked Jim to come up and have a drink from a bottle in the trunk. He did, and we had a good laugh. He had a few minor scratches [but] said, "Didn't we clean them out?" It was probably he who knocked me down and piled the other guys on top of me, as he was doing a good share of the knocking.

I am trying to give you a picture of conditions and environments as they existed. Occurrences of this nature were quite frequent, and sometimes, much more violent. In fact, scraps occurred nearly always when men had too much to drink, and they always drank on or after payday, if there were any money left after the store and boarding place got theirs. Board money was always taken out at the office.

A Cold Trip to Iowa, Winter 1893

I worked on into the winter. I was getting tired of the whole business. It was becoming increasingly difficult to save any money, owing to restrictions in pay and conditions. I had paid off my indebtedness to my brother, John, and had several hundred dollars in the bank at Rock Springs.

I decided to make a trip to Iowa. John was in Randall, but more importantly, so was Jennie, the little curly-haired Christianson girl. My loving girlfriend in Denmark had found another and better man, whom she was about to marry. Her name was Johanna Fehrr of aristocratic German parents. She was a fine girl, one the boys would turn around to take a second look at. She was good-looking and had a head of brown hair that would reach to her knees. I rather believe that she was disappointed with my overwhelming success in the great and prosperous United States, probably because I never had enough money to bring her over and no place to put her if I could.



Chris Peterson, Omaha, 1893

The upshot of it was that I bought a ticket to Omaha, one cold winter day when the temperature was twenty below zero. In Omaha, I bought a new suit of clothes, new shoes, a derby hat, a white boiled shirt, tie, gloves, and topcoat. When I got off the train at Ames, Iowa, it was eight below and oh, how cold! Coming from the high mountain altitude where one did not need to wear an overcoat at twenty below, it was unbearable. I was thin and very pale from working in the mines, where at times there [was] an insufficient supply of oxygen.

On arriving in Randall, John had me come to the Christianson home, which was a very large house. He was married by this time to one of the girls.²⁵ I was made very welcome. There was a very large hard-coal stove in one corner of the living room. I could just squeeze in behind it, the warmest place I could find. Jennie said, "I will warm you up." She would shake out the ashes, open the damper, and try to drive me out of the corner, but I could not get warmed up. I shivered until my teeth rattled. Everyone was very kind to me, and especially Mrs. Christianson. Between shakes, Jennie would tell me of her wonderful trip to the World's Fair in Chicago.

The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 followed the 400th anniversary of Columbus's discovery of the New World. The 600-acre fairgrounds on the Chicago waterfront housed 65,000 exhibits in a series of monumental Beaux-Art buildings around reflecting basins. Exhibits ranged from Bach's clavichord and Mozart's spinet to a fountain of red wine and a statue of a medieval knight made entirely of California prunes. The main focus of the fair was on technology and progress in an America that was making the transition from a democratic producer society to a consumer society dominated by big business. Consumer culture of the Gilded Age featured products ranging from Remington typewriters and Tiffany glass to bicycles, phonographs, telephones, and innumerable electric gadgets. The fair was a glimpse into the future that took the breath away from visitors like Jennie and her family.²⁶

During my stay, I had learned about a cooperative creamery that had been started in Randall, the first of its kind in Iowa, I believe.

The manager or buttermaker was getting a salary of sixty-five dollars per month, which for the times was extraordinary. A vision of a job of this nature was germinating in my mind, but I was so cold and shivery that I could not think, so after three days, I bought a ticket back to Rock Springs. On arriving there, I again deposited in the bank the money I had left.

The creamery in Randall was built around 1893 by Martin L. Henderson, whose Norwegian-born parents had come from Lisbon, Illinois, to Scott Township, Hamilton County, Iowa in 1856.²⁷ It was purchased in 1894 by the Randall Farmers Creamery Company, who organized it as a cooperative creamery and hired a Dane, Henry N. Miller, as manager. Miller managed the creamery until 1914. Miller married Mary Clausen, the daughter of Anne and Jens Clausen.

Coal Mining Again

I secured a job in a Qualey mine. This time, it was a sloping incline downward, and again, it was in an entry. It was so wet we had to wear rubber boots, and then we were in water halfway to our knees, but at any rate, I could keep warm. Water was dripping from the ceiling and oozing out of the sides. A pump had to be going, night and day. One side was in the outcropping of coal. One day, I just missed being buried in a mud slide from that side. Tons and tons of quicksand, mud, and water caved in around me without warning. I was in sand, mud, and water almost to my shoulders. I was sucked into the mire so it was impossible to move. Men worked a considerable time to get me out. So much water came in that work had to be suspended.

I quit and got a job in a Union Pacific mine, where we had to go down one hundred feet in a shaft—and how the engineer would drop that bucket down the shaft when we went down to work in the morning! This vein was low, about five feet, and the ceiling had to be brushed down in the entry to let the cars pass. There was quite a space at a sort of junction. The pit foreman, one morning, as he was directing the mule skinnners or drivers where to work, was hit on top of his head by a piece of slate no larger than my fist. It killed him instantly. There were some Chinese working in this mine. When

they heard of the accident, they all flocked together, and such a hub-bub in the Chinese language! Then they all scooted home to burn candles in their huts.

Shortly after this, Jack Barker, brother of Joe the pit boss at the Sweetwater mine, was killed in the entry where Dougal and I had worked. He was buried under a fall of ten tons of coal, as he was working and singing, and "three little mice" were his last words. Also, in this same mine, the little Scottish driver who had served us with cars was killed by a runaway train of cars on a steep down-grade in the mine. The mule was crushed against the wall and also killed by the cars.

I kept working in these mines until spring. During the evening, I was going to night school at the high school building, where there was a class in bookkeeping. I continued with this until the teacher said that I was capable of holding a position as bookkeeper. He even tried to help me get a position. Mining work in the early spring was very slack. I determined to go back to Iowa. I wanted to be a buttermaker.

The Depths of the Depression

I went to the bank to draw out my money but was informed that I could not get it until sixty days after making application to withdraw. A severe depression was on. All the Anaconda mines shut down. Hundreds of men walked the railroad track. Nearly all [of them] seemed to head for Denver. They were all broke and were fed from soup kitchens until the city of Denver could no longer care for them. Then, they were given a chance to ride free in boxcars, on east, into the agricultural districts. Two trainloads left Denver in one week. They were distributed along the way from Nebraska to east of Chicago.

[That spring], Coxe's army of unemployed marched upon Washington, where they camped, demanding work. Shortly thereafter, the Republican party again came into power in the national government, mainly on promises of a full dinner bucket.²⁸ However, at the end of sixty days, I was at the bank on the very day the limitation was up. I had more than two hundred dollars in the bank. I took it all out and bought a ticket to Randall.

The Agricultural College at Ames

It was a few minutes after 9:00 a.m. My train would leave at ten. I had an hour to spend, so I sauntered over, across the street, to Charly Swanson's Saloon and bought a glass of beer. He was alone. I noticed his roulette table was all covered up. I asked, "What is the matter with your roulette table, Charly?"

"Oh, nothing," said he, "Do you want to give it a whirl before going East?"

I told him I would spend two bucks on it.

He said, "O. K., you're on."

I bought two dollars' worth of white chips. He spun the wheel, and we were off. I placed a couple of chips on three or four individual numbers. If one came up, it would pay seventeen for one. I had number seventeen covered. It came up. In less than twenty minutes, I had all his white chips, and Charly was growling. We were the only two in the place. Soon, I had all the red chips also—about twenty dollars' worth.

I really felt sorry for Charly. He was a good sort. So, I put stacks all over the table, practically giving them away. I quit with my two bucks and eight dollars that really belonged to Charly Swanson. He set up the beer. I bade him good-bye. I made my train and said good-bye to Rock Springs for good.

In Randall, I visited my uncle Gydesen and told him my plans, which were to get work on a farm during June, July, and August. Around September first, I was going to Ames Agricultural College to learn buttermaking. He tried his best to persuade me not to do so. Why, it was terrible!

"How dumb you are. Save your money. You can't even read English."

I tried to tell him I was quite sure that I could.

"You can, can you? Why, even Armstrong, the teacher, an American, had a dictionary right handy when reading while he was boarding with us."

"Don't worry, Uncle. In two years, I will be back here, a full-fledged buttermaker, but broke."

"Ya, you will be broke before that," said he.

I worked on a nearby farm [for] three months at twenty dollars a month with board and room. I had enough good clothes to last me two years, and the sixty dollars I earned during the summer brought my cash on hand up to two hundred dollars again.

Iowa Agricultural College and Model Farm in Ames opened in 1869 as the first coeducational land-grant school established in the U.S. under the Morrill Act.²⁹ When Chris came there as a student, the campus had excellent facilities, including central heating, indoor plumbing, electricity, and telephones.³⁰ A prominent figure on campus was James "Tama Jim" Wilson, who had joined the faculty in 1891 with a mandate to strengthen agricultural courses, establish a dairy school, and open admissions, all of which had been accomplished when he left to become President William McKinley's Secretary of Agriculture in 1897. The Creamery was built in 1892, and the professors of dairying, George L. McKay, F. A. Leighton, and Henry C. Wallace, were already becoming leaders in the field.³¹ While a student in Ames, Chris had a run-in with one of "Tama Jim's" younger sons, either James W. or Jasper Wilson, a lanky boxer with a bit of a mean streak.³²

I had no difficulty entering college. We were required to take quite a number of subjects. I had no more difficulty in classes than the eighteen or twenty [other] students in my class. Chemistry was the hardest. I do well remember the professor asking me, "Peterson, what is colostrum?" When I did not answer, "Oh yes, that is too simple. In what [way] does it differ from other milk?" None of the other boys could answer. I asked all the boys in the dormitory the meaning of the word. None knew. "Look it up in the dictionary," they said. It was not in any available dictionary. Now, you look it up. I found out what it means, and how it differs from other milk, but I was never asked again.

In due time, I got the hang of simple chemistry. Engineering was water on the mill; I liked it and got along quite well. Cream separators were comparatively new, having originated, I believe, in Denmark. [The principle] consisted of separating heavier matter from lighter by the medium of centrifugal force. It was known that cream or butterfat would rise to the surface of a pan of milk, [and]

therefore, it is lighter. In Denmark, men set about building a round machine through which new milk could flow while [it] revolved at a terrific speed. A mechanical cream separator was developed, known as the Danish Weston. Also, at about this [same] time, a cream separator was developed, here in the US, known as the Alpha Cream Separator. Both of these machines were in use in the experimental creamery at Ames, where the students received their training.

There was a large room adjoining the creamery where the boys each had a locker. We were required to wear white clothes while at work in the creamery. I will not go into the intricacies of testing milk for butterfat, weighing of milk, keeping books, and testing butter for buteric acid, which is what gives butter its aroma. With time, I gained in knowledge, as well as in self-confidence.

Mr. McKay, our head professor in the creamery, was very kind to me, perhaps [because] he sensed I was there to get every bit of information possible, and I was always on the job. He frequently took special pains to explain details to me personally.

Time went on, and I was in the second year. We had our fun, sometimes during work, but mostly in between. One day, in the locker room, the boys were boxing with gloves on. A number of them took part. There was a big, tall, lanky boy, not in our class, who was getting the best of all our boys. He was a slugger, if you know what I mean. Our boys all gave it up, possibly because he was the son of Professor Wilson.

They coaxed me to put on the gloves with him. I told him that I had hardly ever had boxing gloves on. However, I was recently from the West and not afraid. He promised solemnly not to slug. We sparred around a few minutes. I imagine the temptation was too great and so simple, so he gave me a wallop to the eye that sent [me] sprawling to the floor. It hurt, not only physically, but mentally. I was mad. He laughed, and so did all the boys. I got up, stepped towards him, hands up. He came at me on the run, evidently to finish me for good. I stepped to one side as he went past me and stuck my foot between his long legs. He went down and skidded along the floor, and oh, what a roar from the boys. I was no boxer, but an athlete. I could have turned a handspring and planted both feet in his stomach. I took off the gloves and went into Mr. McKay's office.

He dressed my eye. He said, "He shouldn't have done that. I believe I had better go in [and] put on the gloves with the big bully." [McKay] was big—around 200 pounds. It took quite a while, and he took some punishment himself, but he gave the boy all he wanted and then some. McKay said afterward, "I should not have done it, but he made me sore, coming over here and slugging our boys."

Buttermaker, 1895-1900

In the spring of the second year, there was a call at the college for a man [to be] assistant to the buttermaker in Randall.³³ McKay had previously promised voluntarily that if [an opening] occurred, he would help me all he could to get a job as buttermaker. When this opening came, he said, "Go on up and make an application. If you get the job, I will keep my eyes open for a better place for you." As a matter of fact, he did not know I could only stay on another month [until] my money would be all gone and I would have to leave.

The Randall Creamery Board was in session when I arrived. I went in and made my application, asking forty-five dollars per month. They said they would let me know. In half an hour, they sent for me and offered me thirty-five dollars. I refused. I said, "I can go back to Ames." They sent me out again. I went to the Christianson house to consult with Mrs. Christianson and Jennie. They said, "Take it."

In another half-hour, they sent for me again. This time, they offered me forty dollars. I refused, though I shook in my boots. I repeated, "forty-five dollars, or I must go back to Ames and await a real buttermaker's job." I really did not much fancy this "assistant" business, but there was nothing else in view. In a short time, they again sent for me. They asked me, "If we hire you, how soon can you come?" I told them I could come just as soon as I could go to Ames and get my things and get back.

"All right, you are hired at forty-five dollars a month, provided you can do the work."

"I can do the work," said I, and that was that.

My new duties started a day or two later.³⁴ I was permitted to board and room at the Christianson home. The creamery was about

one-half mile from town. It was necessary for me to start the day's work at four o'clock. I walked to the creamery, where I put the four large DeLaval separators in operation and started the weighing and sampling of milk brought in by farmers and hired haulers. As much as 40,000 pounds of milk was received in one day. I must watch all separators, heat the milk to the required temperature, keep book accounts of each customer's milk, [and,] at the end of the month, test the composite samples for butterfat, giving each customer proper credit for the total amount of butterfat delivered during the month.

About seven o'clock, the buttermaker would be through churning and would have had his breakfast. He would then relieve me while I went up town for breakfast. At the end of about three months, my salary was raised to fifty dollars. That made the buttermaker angry, so he wanted sixty-five dollars and got it. Later on, my salary was raised to fifty-five dollars. He protested, asked for seventy dollars, and got it. In the meantime, between the two of us, we had succeeded in winning the highest award with a score of 98½ for the best butter in an Iowa State Buttermakers [Contest.]

After having been in the Randall Creamery for about one-and-a-half years, I was offered a position at Eastonville, Colorado, a small town on the mountain divide, half-way between Denver and Colorado Springs.³⁵ Conditions were not to my liking, and I wished to go back to Iowa, where I could be nearer to the best girl I knew.

I now accepted a position in a rundown creamery at Seneca, Iowa, an inland town, ten miles from Bancroft. For a number of years, this creamery had been unable to compete with neighboring creameries. It was in a rather bad way. Customers were leaving.

By testing and analyzing the skimmed milk, I found that the percentage of cream [was] entirely too great. That was one problem. Again, I found some of the large cream vats were leaking into the [cooling] water that surrounded [them]. I suggested [that] the machines be sent to the factory for repair, one at a time, thus permitting us to run during the time of repair. I insisted on having new cream vats and realignment of all machinery, which the assistant and I did without outside help. Eventually, our creamery was in first-class condition. The directors had objected to the cost, which was considerable. After [we got] going with our reorganized machinery and, at

my suggestion, had secured a new market for our butter, we were in a position to pay our customers considerably more per pound of butterfat than any creamery in the surrounding territory. My salary was now seventy dollars per month.³⁶



C. Peterson, Esq.,
Randall, Iowa.

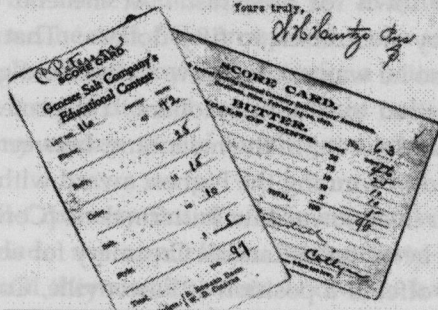
Dear Sir:-

We take great pleasure in saying that the butter which we have received from the Republic Creamery Co. and which we understand was made by you, has given perfect satisfaction.

It was very carefully made, proper in salt and color and perfectly clean in flavor.

Yours truly,

W. H. Hunter



I am ashamed to say that I ruled my creamery and customers during working hours with a harsh and bad temper. I would never allow customers to come into the creamery when the machinery was in operation. The director, of course, had free access at all times. I had a bad temper, and there were good reasons: men had been accustomed to come in, especially in winter, and would bunch up and be in the way. We had much machinery, some [of it] traveling at a terrific speed—33,000 revolutions per minute. It required constant attention. I must at all times have my ears tuned to the slightest false sound. If a bearing ran dry, brass would weld to steel in the twinkling of an eyelash, causing weeks of delay and much expense. If a false sound developed, I must get to it in one jump, because if a bearing welded, the machine would stop so suddenly that the centrifugal force had been known to explode the bowls of the separators, throwing fragments all over the room.

Marriage, Dentistry, and the Rough Riders

During my stay in Randall, I had a very good opportunity to court my best girl, Jennie. When away, we corresponded regularly. I was getting a good salary and had saved my money. There was a nice little house, now vacant, that belonged to the creamery company.

Jennie had competition, however. She didn't know it; she was nearly a hundred miles away. There were two very attractive Anderson girls who made it a point [to see me in the] afternoons, [which were] practically my own, as all operations were completed no later than one o'clock. They would come to the creamery for butter. I was usually there, either reading or doing something. Occasionally, I would call on them on a Sunday evening.

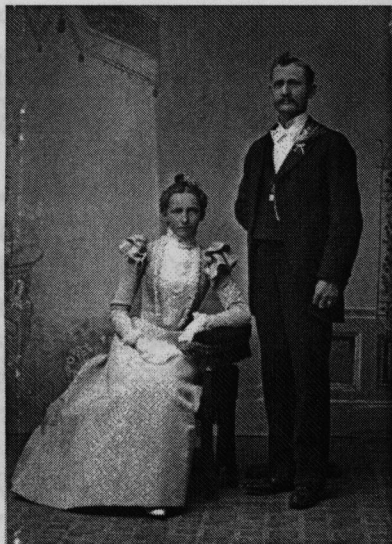
I was getting a good salary, so it seemed logical to get married. I made a trip to Randall to put the proposition up to Jennie. We had known each other for a number of years. She said it would be all right, but I must ask her dad. That was the worst job I have been assigned to, but there seemed no way out, so I cornered him outside, alone, and told him what we had in mind. He politely told me to ask Jennie: "She is the one who is marrying you."

So, that was that. In due course of time, we were married at Randall, on 16 September 1898, just ten years after coming to the United States. Our wedding trip we spent in Omaha, attending the World's Fair. On returning, we departed for Seneca to set up house-keeping in the little company house, our first home.

While living in Seneca, a young married couple, Mr. J. Alden Bliss, his wife, and little daughter, persuaded us to let them live with us in our spare bedroom. Mr. Bliss had two years in the dental college at Keokuk, Iowa, and [had] obtained permission to practice dentistry in Armstrong, a neighboring town. He would come home Saturday nights and stay over Sundays. His father was a blacksmith and lived across the road, where they would spend most of the days.

It was about this time that the incident of the *USS Maine* took place at San Diego, causing the Spanish-American War. Admiral Dewey's Lieutenant Hobson sank the *Merrimac* in the entrance to the San Diego harbor, thus effectively bottling up the entire Spanish fleet [and leading to its] capture or destruction. Teddy Roosevelt

organized the Rough Riders and took them to Cuba to fight the Spaniards.



Wedding Pictures

Anna Christianson & John Peterson

Jennie Christianson & C. P. Peterson

While at our house on Sundays and other times, Mr. Bliss would tell about the wonderful opportunities in dentistry, not, however, with a view of me taking it on, knowing the difficulties into which such a course led, especially with my limited education in a foreign language. Mr. Bliss had been a school teacher before taking [up] dentistry, and he assured me that the requirements were no snap. The number [of courses] one would have to pass were practically equal to those of a doctor of medicine.

Mrs. Bliss, a very fine Swedish lady and also a former teacher, kept on urging me, insisting that I could do it. I was skeptical but finally, very reluctantly, decided to go after it. It would require the equivalent of a teachers certificate [beyond high school] to enter and two thousand dollars to carry it through. I did not have either. Therefore, I must begin at once a course of study in all the branches necessary, as well as saving money.

Circumstances again came to my assistance. Remember, however, that circumstances never come to you unaided or undeserved for long. You must have accomplished something before circumstances look you up. I was offered a position at Ruthven, Iowa, a fair-sized town [with] two competing creameries. My salary would be ninety dollars per month, but during the rush season, I must provide my own assistance.³⁷

This creamery was also in a bad way. The competitor was getting its patrons away, as they could not pay enough for butterfat. I must stop leaks, build up patronage, or go on the rocks. I accepted the challenge.

We moved to Ruthven, rented a very nice little house of five rooms with a lovely yard and garden for eight dollars a month. It was only two or three blocks from my work. I went to work much like when coming to Seneca, except it was not necessary to do much alteration of machinery. In a comparatively short time, we had gained back all old customers and [had added] a number of new ones. Everyone in our organization was happy, and things went on very nicely and amiably. My work started at four o'clock in the morning. I was finished at or about one in the afternoon, except for an occasional trip to stir, cool, and inoculate the cream with pure cultures of lactic acid germs, a practice which apparently did much towards obtaining the very highest price for butter on the New York market.

I also took a correspondence course in the required [subjects for admission to dental college]. We had two upstairs bedrooms, one of which we equipped for a study. Here, I would spend afternoons and evenings for many months, endeavoring to master the required subjects. It took long and faithful application. Even subjects that had earlier been covered needed to be reviewed, as I had [no evidence that I had covered them].

It was in the midst of this struggle that Mrs. Peterson's father made a special trip to see us, having heard of our intention to take up dentistry and perhaps feeling very much as Uncle Gydesen did about buttermaking. He made us a proposition about like this: "Jennie has always stayed at home with us, while the other children, three sisters and one brother, have all been away to school and to

teach school. Therefore, it has always been our promise that Jennie should have the old home farm, and that is just what I came to see you about. There are 200 acres adjoining town. You can have it, if you wish, for forty-five dollars per acre. Here is how we will handle it. The sale price will be divided among the five children, and you assume the responsibility of paying the other four at some future date. What do you think about it? You can think it over and let me know." Then he went home.

Throwing a small fortune overboard to serve humanity? Mrs. Peterson and I discussed the situation very thoroughly. I was willing to take on the farm, rent it, and go to dental college, but she was unwilling to do this. She said, "If we take the farm, we will stay there." About three years thereafter, Jennie's brother bought it at one hundred dollars per acre and later sold it for five hundred dollars per acre, during the period when farm land was going wild. There, another fortune went overboard.

My course of study continued until I felt that I would be able to pass the required examination. Therefore, one day, I appeared by appointment at the office of the County Superintendent of Schools at Estherville, Iowa. Dr. Bliss had previously put in a good word for me. The superintendent happened to be a lady. I handed her a handful of credits and certificates from the Chicago Correspondence School. She hardly looked at them. She asked many questions in a very friendly way, such as how old I was when coming to the U.S., could I speak English before coming, are you married, what have you been doing while in the U.S.? I [answered] her frankly and told her about my schooling at Ames and so on. At the end of three-quarters of an hour, she said, "Any young man who has accomplished what you have and is ambitious to get on, as you are, certainly is deserving, and I will gladly give you a letter, [which] I am sure will get you admitted to the dental college." And she did so.

It should be recorded that on 3 July 1899, at Ruthven, Iowa, our first-born arrived with the assistance of Dr. Beulow, at a cost of ten dollars for medical services, which I paid right then and there.³⁸ One of our neighbor women very kindly looked after Mrs. Peterson while [she was] confined to bed. The next day, I went down town to see the Fourth of July celebration.

Time went on. I continued with my work. Mother and baby grew strong and healthy. I had more leisure time, now that my studies were over. I could make occasional trips to a lake close by, where, in the fall, I shot some ducks.

After having been in the creamery business for six years, we had better than two thousand dollars. We had bought very little clothing, and our household goods were of the very simplest. Jennie proved to be a real helpmate in saving for our three years of schooling. I took out a life insurance policy for two thousand dollars, in case anything should happen to me before we could again begin earning.

Shortly before the beginning of the term at dental college, I resigned my position, giving the board ample time to secure another man. I can well remember the occasion when I came before the board that day. While they did not blame me, they were very reluctant to let me go.

When the time came, we packed our meager belongs and went back to Randall, where it had previously been arranged that Jennie and the baby [would] remain while I went to Keokuk to attend the dental college. It seemed best to make this arrangement the first year, as I was by no means certain that I would be admitted, and if so, had very grave doubts about being able to carry on in such a manner as to be permitted to return the second year.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons in Keokuk, Iowa, established a chair in Dentistry in 1866, appointing Dr. Luman C. Ingersoll to the position, and thereby founding what became Keokuk Dental College, the first dental school west of the Mississippi River.³⁹ The University of Iowa established its Dental Department in 1882 and appointed Dr. Ingersoll as dean and professor, but he continued to reside in Keokuk and simply commuted to Iowa City one day a week. Keokuk Dental College remained a leading center of dental education until the college merged with the university's College of Dentistry in 1913.

Dental College

In due course of time, I arrived [in] Keokuk, a day or two ahead of time, so as to be able to scout around a bit. [I felt like] a stranger

in a strange city on a strange mission. I located the registrar's office, and the following morning, I was among the first to register. The registrar looked at my papers of qualification and directed me to a place to room and board. I was introduced to a young man by the name of Green, who was to be my roommate. In company, we located our boarding place in the residential district, some eight blocks from the college.

The next day, I went about the Eighth Street building, inspecting the clinic room and laboratory where I was to spend many moons. While walking about the laboratory benches designed for student use, a young man came up and spoke thus: "Hello. You look as though you belong here."

I said, "No, I have just enrolled."

"Oh, so you are a freshman. So am I. What do you suppose all this stuff is for?"

I assured him I had no idea.

We were given a schedule of lectures, one for every hour of the forenoon from eight until twelve noon. In the afternoon, we were to be in the dental laboratory. Two nights, from eight to nine, we were to be in the main lecture room for a quiz. A full schedule, as you will see, leaving but little time for study.

We were given a comprehensive list of books which we must have, each costing six dollars and downward. That was hard on the pocketbook.

I will long remember the first night at quiz. It was on anatomy for the Junior medical students (we had to attend many medical student classes). The professor would ask questions, and the boys would answer. I could absolutely not get any hang or understanding of any of it, and I was wondering if I would ever be able to understand the meaning. I was wondering if they were talking Greek or Latin.

I gradually adapted myself to the run of the different classes and came to understand the meaning of many words I had never heard before. I bought a medical dictionary, which was invaluable to me. The mornings in the dental laboratory were much enjoyed. I was more at home here, dealing with mechanics.

Anatomy was hardest. We had to learn the names of some 300 bones and 600 muscles, where arising and where attached, to what ridges of bones. My roommate, Green, a former school teacher, and myself would pore over these and other problems every night until twelve o'clock or later. One night, I had thrown myself across the bed and fallen asleep. Green woke me up. It was after midnight. He had been working all evening on anatomy.

He commanded me, "Listen to a lecture by Dr. Ruth" (our instructor in anatomy). For more than half an hour, [he] discoursed on the femur, named all the muscles of the pelvis and ridges, and the ridges on the pelvic bone, where the muscles are attached, followed them to the femur, where they are inserted. I listened carefully, still lying in bed. When he was through, I got out of bed, into the middle of the floor.

"Oh," said I, "that was fine. You did not make a single mistake. You know I have not studied this part. Now, let me give you a demonstration." Practically word for word, I covered the subject from memory.

All he said was, "Oh hell, what's the use of sitting up all night, studying, and then have you pick it up like that. Let's go to bed."

The following spring, at the end of the term, I had successfully passed all the branches and had gained confidence in my ability to carry through to the end. At the close of school, I departed for Randall to see my dear wife and our little Blanche, whom I found well and happy. The youngster had grown considerably. My brother, John, gave me a job in his store during the summer vacation, counting and candling eggs. You would be surprised how many bad ones were brought in.⁴⁰

Time wore on. Fall was again at hand and school about to begin. This time, we decided that Jennie and the baby should go along, so we packed the very necessary articles of household goods and had them sent down by freight. On arriving in Keokuk, we found a little house of three downstairs rooms and one upstairs room, in an outlying district. We paid eight dollars per month in rent to a very nice old Irish lady who lived alone in the house next door. Here, in the seclusion of our own home, I had a good oppor-

tunity to study. I pored over anatomy, chemistry, physiology, and many other subjects—all together, fifteen subjects.

After once getting the rules firmly established in my mind, I had little or no trouble in Inorganic Chemistry. I spent very little time on Physiology. I took notes at the lectures, and as soon as I got home, I would rewrite my notes, looking up points I had missed. This practice was continued throughout, to the end. Every vital point he had made in the lectures I remembered. (This saved me a great deal of reading.) Physiology was a bugaboo to nearly all the students. They just could not get it. So, also, was Chemistry. To me, they came easy.

In my laboratory work and studies pertaining strictly to dentistry, I got along very well—in fact, so well that the last three months before the closing of the term, I was the only one of our class to be permitted to enter the operating room and do work for patients. This, I was told, was unusual. Rarely was a student permitted to do dental work on patients until the beginning of the final year.

Time went on, and we passed our exams in all branches. At the close of school, we packed our belongings, stored them for the summer, and returned to Randall to Grandma Christianson, where we were very welcome.

Dr. McCarthy, a dentist at Story City, four miles south of Randall, was ill with phlebitis, or varicose veins, or something. He sent for me to come down. He wanted me to come and take charge of his office and practice. He said he would pay me seven dollars a week. I had no license, but he said he would take care of this, which he did. It was a wonderful opportunity to gain in practice. He was unable, most of the time, to be at the office, and when he finally was able, he would sit around and let me do the work [because] I was getting along so well.

I made quite a lot of money for him. When he paid me—I believe it was seventy-five dollars—I can well remember that he said, "Well, Chris, this is not very much money. If you did not knock down more than that, you was a fool." That really hurt my feelings.

I had now disposed [of] dentistry, up to the end of the second term, including our summer vacation, when my own vacation for

the greater part was spent in Dr. McCarthy's office. Somehow, I managed to be in Randall practically every Sunday. For this, I had more than a triple reason. After starting the second term at Keokuk, it was becoming increasingly apparent that our family was soon to be augmented by the presence of a boy, so I must speak to the august, silk-hatted president [of the college], who was also high in the medical profession. He received me kindly at his office in the medical building of the college, his topper reposing serenely on the desk, bottom side up. After I hesitantly stated the reason for my visit, he said, "Certainly, Mr. Peterson, we are always very glad to take care of our students and their families. I will have my assistant call on your wife and make further arrangements."



Christianson and Peterson Families in Randall, Iowa, 1902

From left: William Wier? Else Marie Christianson, Mary Christianson Wier with Blanche and George Peterson, Jennie Christianson Peterson

Center (standing): Christian Paul Christianson, flanked by Mary Gydesen Peterson and Hans Christian Peterson

From right: John and Anna Peterson with Cyrus, Homer, Ina, and Marvin Peterson, and (standing) Roy Clausen?

(Photo by C. P. Peterson)

Early in the morning of 6 January 1902, George Raymond Peterson arrived at our lowly residence in Keokuk, Iowa. Our doctor was very capable and very kind, and made the very nominal fee of five dollars for his services. Jennie stayed right at home in her own bed, attended by a neighbor lady as nurse, both baby and mother getting along very fine. We presented the lady with a very fine dress pattern for her services, as she refused to take pay. Being born before six o'clock in the morning can readily explain the reason for his early-out-of-bed, up-and-at-it, even now.

When we arrived in Randall [for the summer], the neighbors all had to come to see the new baby. Grandpa Christianson never would let him cry but would go and pick him up. Thus went the summer of 1902, far removed, indeed, in [the] peace of mind, comfort, and happiness of earlier days, but not forgotten.

Our last year in college was very much like the previous one. At the end of the term, there were exams and anxieties. Eventually, at a big doings, staged in the Opera House, all dressed up in caps and gowns, we were presented with our diplomas, with Jennie and the two babies present in the audience.⁴¹ Jennie was on pins and needles for fear G. R. would recognize his dad on the stage and yell out for me.

A day or two after graduation, the Board of Dental Examiners arrived. All of the graduates, I believe, took the state board examination. How many passed, I do not know. I only know that, in due time, I received my certificate, entitling me to practice dentistry in Iowa. Also, shortly afterwards, I took an examination and received a certificate to practice dentistry in the state of Illinois.

Shortly after returning to Randall, I came to the University of Minnesota to take the examination of the Minnesota State Dental Board. This was a very stiff exam. It took me nearly six hours of steady writing and half a day's work making a gold-foil filling for a patient. I had had more experience along this line than most of the boys, was the first one to finish in a class of about thirty-five applicants, and had some very nice compliments on my work. One after the other, the board members would come and look over my work; usually, each had a section to look after. In due time, I received my certificate, permitting me to practice dentistry in Minnesota. This

certificate, hard won after sixteen years of toil towards an end, hangs in my humble dental office today.

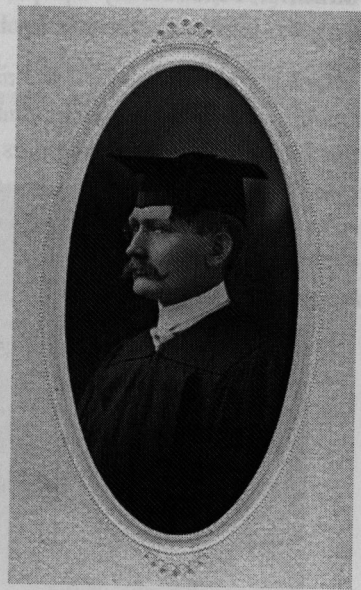
Ms. W. O. Ferrage
 Randall Ia
 Nov 8th 1902

NO. SERVICE.

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Remit to S.P. Cochrane
 your lister see in our
 original bill, & see for
 value at S.P.'s.

Paid Nov 27th 1902
 Dr. C. P. Peters
 Mankato Minn

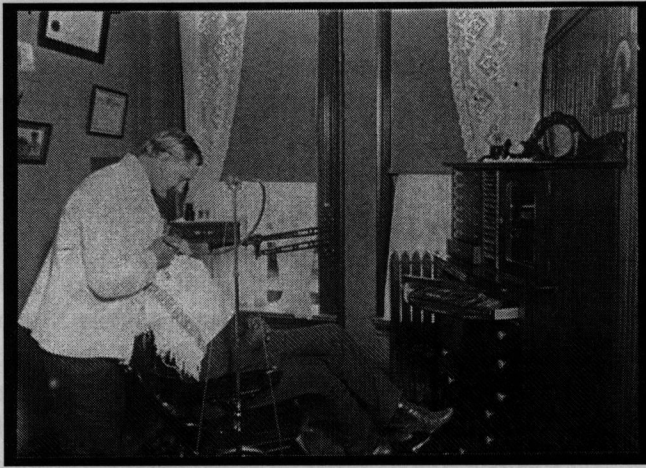


While waiting to hear from the Minnesota Board, I equipped and set up an office in Randall to earn, if possible, some money to tide us over [until] when we should be in a position to move to Minnesota. Our three years of college had taken practically all the money we had, and I was as broke now as when I left Ames. All office equipment had been bought on time—nothing down—from a dental supply company in Keokuk, where we used to hang around before graduating. I picked up considerable practice while in Randall, much to the dislike of Dr. McCarthy. I was not sorry for him. I still remembered [his] parting taunt when he handed me my meager salary.

After finding that I had made the Minnesota board examination, I took a scouting trip of several towns [to look] for a permanent location. A classmate, George Palmer, a Mankato boy, had induced me to look Mankato over and gave me a letter to his uncle, George M. Palmer, and also one to Frank Thomas, the druggist. I called on Mr. Thomas. He encouraged me to locate in Mankato. I stayed a couple of days and succeeded in renting rooms in what is now the National

Citizens Bank building, adjoining a physician, Dr. Webster. Later in the summer, I moved my equipment to Mankato and came up alone, leaving the family in Randall for the time being.

Mankato, Minnesota, in 1903 was a city of gaslights, board sidewalks, and muddy streets full of horses and buggies. The Peterson family settled in and added three more daughters to their family: Edith, born in 1904, Marian Christine in 1906, and Irene in 1908. Dr. Peterson practiced dentistry in Mankato for fifty years. He became active in the G. V. Black Dental Club of Minnesota and demonstrated dental technique at regional, state, and national conventions of his profession.



Dr. C. P. Peterson and Patient, ca. 1905

An avid duck hunter and fisherman, he was a charter member of the Swan Lake Hunting Club and built a family cottage on Madison Lake. He joined the curling club and the Mankato Country Club. He and Mrs. Peterson were members of a rook club made up of Danish and Norwegian professional and business families, and they joined Bethlehem Lutheran Church, a largely Norwegian congregation with some Danish members. Both were avid gardeners. Dr. Peterson also had a wood-working shop and built five boat, several cabinets, and other pieces of furniture.

Neither Christen nor Jennie ever returned to their native land of Denmark. From time to time, they were visited by Danish relatives. His sister, Kirstine (1877-1963), and her husband, Jesper Munkholm (1876-1967), visited them in Mankato around 1903. In 1925-26, his brother, Gyde, re-

ceived a grant to travel and paint in America. He spent several months in Mankato, and when he left, Chris and Jennie's home was full of paintings. In 1947, his sister Kirstine's son, Homo Munkholm (1905-57), visited Mankato with his Viennese wife, Mela. In 1952, a young Danish engineer named Uffe Hindhede (1922-91), appeared and announced himself as the grandson of a Gydesen cousin.



C. P. Peterson and Grandchildren, 1937

Four years later, in 1956, a grandchild of Chris and Jennie became the first of their family to visit Denmark. He met many relatives in Vejle Amt, and saw Ramskovgaard and many other places associated with the family. At Munkholmgaard in Ringive parish, he met his grandfather's sister, "Aunt Kirstine," and came into a living room full of paintings and sculp-

ture by Gyde Petersen. Upon his return to Mankato in 1957, he was able to greet his grandfather, in Danish, from relatives in Denmark.

Jennie C. Peterson died in Mankato, Minnesota, on 3 November 1957.

Dr. C. P. Peterson died in Mankato on 12 May 1958.



Jennie and Chris with Grandchildren, 1945

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- ¹ On the *okesvej* (or *hærvej*) in Vejle amt, see Mads Lidegaard, *Hærvejen i Vejle amt* (Copenhagen: J. H. Schultz, 1977).
- ² Many authors have written about the Amlunds. See Birgitte Rørbye, *Kloge folk og skidtfolk: Kvaksalveriets epoke i Danmark* (Copenhagen: Politikens forlag, 1976), 114-17, 120-24.
- ³ The late George R. Peterson of Mankato, Minnesota, kindly allowed the editor to make a copy of the typed autobiography of his father, Dr. C. P. Peterson. He and other Peterson descendants provided much helpful information to the editor. For information regarding the C. P. Peterson papers, contact the editor.
- ⁴ He was born on Rubjerggaard on 13 February 1867, baptized at home on 23 February, and presented for confirmation of his baptism in Lindeballe church on 16 June 1867. His paternal grandparents sold Rubjerggaard in April of 1867, after it had been in the family since around 1772. .
- ⁵ P. Andresen, 1909, quoted in Hans Lund, *Askov Højskole 1865-1915* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1965), 198.
- ⁶ Lund 1965, 112, 114-26, 161, 217.
- ⁷ Lund 1965, 128-31, 147-51
- ⁸ Probably Langelund Mill on the Ommeå, three miles south of Ramskov.
- ⁹ The grey-brown *agerhøne* (*perdix perdix*) with a chestnut shield on its breast was the most common game bird in Denmark and was considered delicious. The large, gamey *urhane* (*lyrurus tetrix*) of the wild heath, black and white with a bright red comb, was starting to become scarce.
- ¹⁰ Balder may have been a *Gammel dansk hønsehund* (Old Danish Bird Dog), a breed that remains rare outside Denmark. It is strong, tenacious, and intelligent, slightly smaller than a Laborador retriever, and has a short-haired white coat with liver markings, long hanging ears, and a dewlap.
- ¹¹ The author added, in Danish, "ved Nørre Snede, hvor hestene fik husmands kost, alt paa den vide hede" (near Nørre Snede, "where horses fed on crofters' grub upon the wide, wide heath"). This is a line from a song about an incident in the first Schleswig-Holstein War, when a squadron of Danish dragoons under Captain (*ritmester*) N. S. Brock (1803-85) surprised a command of invading Hessian hussars and captured four officers, sixty men, and an equal number of horses. The road from Ejstrup to Horsens ran past the windmill in Nørre Snede that was moved to Elk Horn, Iowa.
- ¹² By "brandy," he probably meant *brændevin* or aquavit, the common Danish spirits of that era. The stream was probably Holtumå on the border between the parishes of Ejstrup and Nørre Snede. Large stretches of both parishes were open moor in those days.

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- ¹³ The Danish military conscription system used a lottery to select conscripts from the pool of eligible young men.
- ¹⁴ Johannes Pedersen had become John Peterson in America.
- ¹⁵ Sigurd Schultz, "Gyde Petersen, H.," *Dansk biografisk leksikon* (Copenhagen: J. H. Schultz, 1936), 8: 458-59.
- ¹⁶ Kristian Hvidt, *The Westward Journey* (Mankato MN: Creative Education [1976] 1982), 54-56. See also "The Solem, Swiggum & Austheim emigration ship index," <http://www.norwayheritage.com>.
- ¹⁷ Egon Vestergaard, *Lindeballe sogn: Skøder, folketællingslister for alle A-gårde* (Lindeballe: Lindeballe og Åst Borgerforeninger, 1989), 184, 188
- ¹⁸ After fifty years in America, Dr. Peterson's Danish was a bit rusty; as a newcomer, he would not have used and inflected the English loan word, "direct" but would probably have said something like this: "Vil De være saa venlig at vise mig vejen hen til denne adresse."
- ¹⁹ Writing during the winter of 1937-38, in the depths of the Great Depression, Dr. Peterson added, "And we of today are complaining of depression when ordinary laborers are getting forty to fifty cents an hour, carpenters want eighty cents to a dollar an hour, and corn is selling at around forty-five cents per bushel, hogs eight to ten dollars per hundredweight."
- ²⁰ Quoted in Gove Hambridge, ed., *Farmers in a Changing World: The Yearbook of Agriculture 1940* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1940), 151.
- ²¹ On the reverse side of the manuscript is the following list: "Jack Powers, Geo. Brown, Frank Lane, Chas. McConahie, Dougal McWilliams, Jim Dunn, Joe Barker, Jack Barker, Qualie Mine, Kelsie Sweetwater Mine."
- ²² This was the Sweetwater Mine.
- ²³ They would shoot them through the eyes while they were sitting, the author added parenthetically.
- ²⁴ Bunking two to a bed was common among workers of that era.
- ²⁵ In October of 1893, John Peterson married Anna Christianson, the youngest daughter of Else Marie and C. P. Christianson in Randall.
- ²⁶ Julie K. Rose, "The World's Columbian Exposition: Idea, Experience, Aftermath," 1995-96, <<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA96/WCE/title.html>>.
- ²⁷ Sara Holt, *History of Randall, Iowa, and Adjoining Area 1673-1976* (Randall, IA, 1976), dates the building of the creamery to 1891 on 18, and to 1893 on 19. On the Henderson family, see 8, 18-19.
- ²⁸ "Try that now in politics," the author adds. "It is not a full dinner bucket they want—it is a new automobile. It is not a dollar they want—it is as high as ten dollars a day they want."

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- ²⁹ Mary E. Atherly, *Farm House: College Farm to University Museum* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995), 48-50, 62-63.
- ³⁰ Atherly 1995, 112.
- ³¹ Earle Dudley Ross, *The Land-Grant Idea at Iowa State College: A Centennial Trial Balance, 1858-1958* (Ames: Iowa State College Press, 1958), 84, 101.
- ³² Jasper Wilson graduated from Ames around 1897, and his brother, James W. Wilson, in 1896, see Atherly 1995, 118-19.
- ³³ A letter of recommendation in the C. P. Peterson papers from F. A. Leighton, Creamery Department, Iowa Agricultural College, Ames, Iowa, 19 November 1894, indicated that Mr. Chris Peterson had taken a course in dairying at the college and recommended him as "a first class Butter Maker."
- ³⁴ A letter of recommendation in the C. P. Peterson papers from Jens Clausen, Secretary, The Randall Farmers Creamery Company, Randall, Iowa, 8 June 1895, indicated that he had been employed in the creamery since January of 1895. Score cards for a sixty-pound tub of butter, rated 95.66 at the Fifth Annual Meeting of the National Creamery Buttermakers' Association on 15-20 February 1897, indicated that C. Peterson was still working at the Randall creamery.
- ³⁵ A letter of recommendation in the C. P. Peterson papers from E. A. Pierce, President, Republic Creamery Company, Republic, Colorado, 14 June 1897, indicated that C. Peterson had been in their employ from April of 1897. A similar letter from E. M. Wentworth, Marshalltown, Iowa, 25 November 1897, endorsed Mr. Chris. Peterson of Randall, Iowa, as "a clean honest man ... a buttermaker who is second to none... His good nature, gentlemanly conduct, and firmness are prominent characteristics."
- ³⁶ A letter of recommendation in the C. P. Peterson papers from Wm. Kerr, President of Seneca Creamery, Seneca, Iowa, 17 January 1899, indicated that C. Peterson had been in their employ since December of 1897. A score card from the Genessee Salt Company's Educational Contest indicated that a lot of Mr. Peterson's butter from the Seneca Creamery was awarded a score of 97. An accompanying letter from F. A. Leighton, Chicago, 14 July 1898, indicated on behalf of the judges that they rated it "the highest flavored tub of butter that they have had in the contest."
- ³⁷ A letter of recommendation in the C. P. Peterson papers, signed by all five members of the board of directors and by the author, Wm. A. O'Donnell, secretary, Ruthven, Iowa, 28 August 1900, indicated that C. Peterson had been the buttermaker in their creamery since 1 March 1899.
- ³⁸ The child was baptized Blanche Marie Peterson.

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- ³⁹ *A Proud Heritage 1882-1982: The University of Iowa College of Dentistry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1982), 9-13, 19-20. Dr. Vincent D. Williams kindly provided a copy of this centennial publication.
- ⁴⁰ C. P. Christianson and George P. Christianson started the first general store in Randall in 1883 and sold it the following year to Seymour and Henderson. After working for them for several years, John Peterson bought the store in 1900 in partnership with C. P. Christianson and William H. Wier (1861-1940), who was married to Mary Christianson (1862-1947). Following a fire, the store was rebuilt as a two-story brick building that also housed the Christianson Bank (later the Randall Savings Bank) and had meeting rooms and the Randall Telephone Exchange above. Eventually, John Peterson bought out his partners and ran the store until around 1946. Holt 1976, 13, 16, 35.
- ⁴¹ C. P. Peterson received the degree of Doctor of Dental Surgery (D. D. S.) at the commencement exercises of Keokuk Dental College in the Keokuk Opera House on 28 April 1903.

