LAND OF OUR FOREFATHERS

SWEDEN with its characteristic saw-tooth coast on the Baltic side of the Scandinavian Peninsula is a lowland where agriculture is carried on. Notable is her production of iron and steel, and general high state of industrialization; the water-power resources being enormous and highly developed. It is an extraordinary country with unsurpassed beauty and splendor. SWEDEN in Swedish is Sverige. Sverge is probably compacted from an original, Zwerijke--“Two realms”, for Sweden was made up or what had been two separate countries, one in the North" the other in. the South.

DIPPING INTO THE PAST

Our progenitor, or his family were Teuton and were Teutonic people. They are descendents, and very strong with the blood of Jacob. This designation pertains to the tail bold race characteristic of northern Europe and includes the Burgundians, Goths,
Franks, Vandals, Lombards, Angels, Saxon, Jutes, Danes and Scandinavian-Swedes. They belong to the subfamily of Indo-European languages which include the Scandinavian, Gothic and high and low German tongues.

**REGION OF THE VIKINGS**

The HANSON are of Israel, as we know, and perhaps also of the race of sailor adventurers who were bred on the shores of the Baltic and who issued forth in the 8th and 9th centuries to make their name famous and feared on every shore of the civilized world and known as Vikings. Here was the cradle of one of the strongest and most enduring elements of the British race.

Here were bred the instincts and the ideas, here was formed the character of the race which was first to threaten Roman civilization with ruin, and afterwards to transform and rebuild it into the quite different thing which we call Western civilization, the ruling force in the World today. Viking ships, no doubt, may have borne settlers in different parts or the World and harried the coasts of England. They founded and settled Iceland, and even are reported to have landed on the Coast of America.

The Northmen ravaged the coast or England in the 9th Century, and like a Viking, he lived by the sea. His ship was his home, his throne or state, the key that unlocked the treasure house of far distant shores.

**NAMES IN THE SUNLIT LAND**

The surname HANSON falls into the category of those formed from the given name of the sire. Such names were forced by an added of an added prefix or suffix denoting either "son of" or diminutive. Thus Han’s son became HANSON; Nel’s son--NELSON.

The meaning or the name Hanson as given in the Dictionary of Names: The Son of Hans, a diminutive of reduction of the Teutonic word (Swedish) Johannes (gracious gift of Jehovah).

NELSON (Sw.,Dan): the son of Nel or Neil (Champion).

MORTENSON: The son of Morten (from Mars, the god of War).
A BIOGRAPHY OF AN UNPRECEDENTED ADVENTURE

Their History is crowded with many wonderful events and a succession of choices-more than bald statistics and statements, and may we literally try to immerse ourselves in the history of the times in which our forefathers lived. As near as possible it is an authentic, beautiful and true dramatic story. Feel one with them, share with them re-live with them their truly exciting and perilous life experiences. We thus can enliven and enrich our lives by knowing them in this way.

Their story might have been hidden like a beautiful undiscovered flower in a tropical jungle, if it were not for a few who preserved in writing and by tradition the events in their live. Some or the intimate information on certain subjects were told to their children and passed on to us. It comes to us as a refreshing bouquet of biography, for the stories of their lives is a better monument to them than one in granite. Who are our loved ones? A grandmother grandfather, father, mother, sister, etc., who have lived, sacrificed and died to give us comfort and the blessings of life. And so, the charm of their story unfolds a fascinating tale of these noble characters which we dedicate to their memory.

YE CHOSEN SEED OF ISRAEL'S RACE

Uniquely, the glorious and radiant light of the Gospel was not to shine upon them until they had sailed almost around the world from their beloved Sweden to a far off distant Island of the Pacific. Upon going there they stumbled onto their greatest discovery-THE ELIXIR OF LIFE--which was an infinitely greater discovery than they had set out to find aid secure.

However, the important part the sons and daughters of the Northland are playing in carrying forth the work of the Lord in this Dispensation is shown by the somewhat startling fact that nearly 45% of the Church are of Scandinavian descant. For full details of the Swedish Mission see "Under The Midnight Sun" by Albert L. Zobell, Jr.

Originally the Scandinavian Mission--the gospel was taken there about 1850. The Swedish Mission as a separate mission was organized out of it In 1905.
THE WORK IN SWEDEN

Elder John E. Forsgren, a native of Sweden, at October 1849 General Conference in Salt Lake City, was called to fill a mission to Sweden. He arrived about June 20, 1850. The first baptisms in Scandinavia were performed in Sweden) although the first missionary work occurred in Denmark.

THE PILLARS OF OUR FAMILY

NIELS S. HANSON was the third child born to Hans Mortenson and Sissa Bengtson in Swedberg, Sweden on the 26th day of October 1851. The names of the other children are Magnus, Bengt, Johannes, and another child they named Johanna as is the case frequently in the old country. His father died when he was 10 years old. Han Mortenson had served honorably in the Swedish Army, and although he did not leave his wife and children much in a material way, yet they were a family who had a traditional reverence for the Lord. The religious fervor of our forebearers we expressed in the very name of their children. Names such as Johannes, Joseph, Hyrum, Oliver, etc. After Niels' father died, he stayed with his mother and helped provide for her until he was 23, or until he immigrated to New Zealand. His mother died 14 years later or 3 years after he had become settled in Logan.

Niels was a second cousin to Johanna Neilson, who later became his mother-in-law. As boy he used to call into see her everyday when going to school, as he would have to pass through her yard. One day this Swedish lad went home elated and told his mother that his second cousin had given birth to a new baby girl. He was thirteen years of age at the time. The new-born baby was name Elida Nilson and was born July 9, 1864 the daughter of Johanna Nilson.

Mr. Nilson (given name unknown), the father of Elida, was a Seaman by trade, like the ancient Mariners or Vikings, and left on a sailing vessel bound for Africa. While there, it is reported, he contracted a fever or plague which caused him to temporarily lose his memory or to become too sick to return to his native Sweden. After about three or four years he regained his memory and health sufficiently to return to his hometown. In the meantime, because no word had come of him that he was alive, he was declared or presumed dead, and his beloved wife Johanna had married Ola Larson on November 28th, 1870 and was continuing to raise a family. When her former husband suddenly
came back she was heartbroken, and felt bad to think she had remarried, but under the circumstances he stayed with her present or second husband, Ola Larson. Her first husband left, but felt that she should have been given her choice, or more careful consideration, between the two. A thousand memories must have rolled upon him as he told her of his voyage, sickness and fighting his way back. However, he had indicated that in the event she did not choose him that he would stay out of her life and not see her again. His please failed and he held his purpose till he died. What happened to him thereafter could not be traced and so we are without any further information about him or his life.

As a result of this unfortunate episode in the life of our great-grandfather Nilson, and his wife Johanna marrying Ola Larson, our lineage in temple sealing is not reckoned through our paternal great-grandfather, for after their conversion and subsequent coming to Utah, Johanna was sealed to Ola Larson.

It is noteworthy that Mr. Nilson acted like "Enoch Arden" whose poetic story is very similar" and we recommend it to our readers. See “The Poetic & Dramatic Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson” entitled "Enoch Arden", page 227, Ogden Library Reference: 821 T25 Cop.2

You will see therein that Mr. Nilson, like Enoch Arden, would not intrude his life upon them or their happiness, although he loved his wife and daughter. His family was taken beyond his reach here in mortality. We learn a great moral in this epoch of the sea. If this could happen to him, what will be our lot in eternity if we reject the eternal marriage covenant offered to us in the Temple which is absolutely free of charge, except for obedience to the gospel and performing works of righteousness. He lost his family because of circumstances not to his liking. We can through disobedience. Enoch had lost his family through their loss through unrighteousness. What about Eternity? What if our family is taken away from us there as Enoch’s was here. Will not our anguish be more great than that of Enoch? Let us, therefore, not lose or have taken away that which we might secure. If we want to live forever in the Celestial Kingdom with our mate and families, we must be willing to pay for those things which otherwise could become lost to us and never received back. Let not our circumstances materialize as they did in this beautiful, but tragic poem. We cannot get back lost opportunities for Eternal Life--any more than Enoch could get back his beloved Annie and children, or our great-grandfather
could--after the time had passed for obtaining it. We must earn it before we need it by accepting and living the fullness of the restored Gospel. Hence, a most important message to convey to our dear relatives and friends is to: "Look ahead!" What shall we want in a few years?

**FACING NEW FRONTIERS**

Because of this circumstance, and the fact that the British Government was opening up New Zealand for colonization, Ola Larson and his family, together with Elida, his step-daughter, Niels S. Hanson and his brother, Bengt, immigrated across the green waters of the Atlantic into the blue Pacific to the islands of New Zealand.

**FABULOUS NEW ZEALAND: South Sea Island Atmosphere & Impression**

As islands, these of New Zealand are among the most beautiful and richest prize of the South Seas. They are situated about 1,200 miles southeast of Australia. These remote but lovely tropical islands of the Pacific have a charm which is immediate, direct, and timeless. Brilliant colors fill the landscape. Surrounding the magic slams is the blue expense of the Pacific in a most beautiful and fascinating part of the world.

These islands have little in common except that they are both mountainous. North Island is of volcanic origin and consists chiefly of forested hills and plateaus. South Island is more rugged with glaciers and snow-clad peaks that rival the Alps of Switzerland. The most important industry on the islands is the raising of livestock. The climate is so mild that the animals can be left to graze throughout the year. Wool, meats, hides and dairy products are the principal exports. There is also good hunting and fishing, and wonderful swimming in the silver flaked leas.

**ISLAND PARADISE**

"There's a schooner in the offing,
With her topsails shot with fire,
And my heart has gone aboard her
For the Island of Desire."

They left their beloved homeland Sweden in 1874, and after braving the dangers of a long and hazardous voyage successfully lamed in New Zealand which was about half-way around-the-world.
Their trip, so far reaching on the earth, was to lead them to a knowledge of too restored Gospel, and many anxious moments filled with religious persecution. (For full account, see Diary History of Ola Larson, his step-father-in-law which contains a parallel of his life to that of Ola Larson)

**POLYNESIA MISSION**

An outgrowth of the Australian Mission. New Zealand consisting of the two main islands and several smaller islands were opened in 1854. (See Manuscript History of the New Zealand Mission from the files and on file in Church Historian Office)

The Mission was fruitful as evidenced of the first company leaving for Utah on December 30, 1871. In 1881, it is reported, that John P. Sorensen, a Zion Elder, labored quite successfully in a Danish Colony in Wairarapa Valley (North Island). In 1885, the membership was 1,238 and over 1,038 were Maoris. By 1867 the mission membership had increased to 2,573 with 2,243 being Maoris members.

In August 1878, Elder Thomas A Shreeve -- beloved friend of the Hansons and Larsons, a Utah Elder, arrived at Lyttleton, New Zealand which was a stopping-off place of our fore bearers--as a Mormon Missionary. It was this mission, resulting from a divine call, that led to the baptism of grandfather Niels.

**THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE: THEIR CONVERSION**

It was while in New Zealand that they heard the Lord's true servants of the latter-days and embraced the Gospel. Niels S. Hanson was baptized, February 1, 1880 in Timaru, New Zealand, by Elder Thomas A. Shreeve and was confirmed the same day also by Elder Shreeve.

**FROM ACCEPTANCE TO PERSECUTION**

At one time the dominant earthly power called the gospel “a deadly superstition” and sought to crush it at any price. This philosophy towards the gospel they felt while in New Zealand, and they were sorely harassed and persecuted for having accepted the gospel, and for attending and holding meetings. Our forefathers were humbled by more than episodes or abuse and ill-treatment. Their love and devotion to God and the up building of His kingdom on earth gave them this deep-seated attributes.
UNCHANTED SEAS

His brother Bengt, who was baptized into the Church at the same time, and because of his love and zeal for his newly-found religion desired to return to the old country as a Missionary but was advised to go to America first. It is supposed that this counsel was given so that he could be endowed and more properly prepare for his mission before proceeding for England and Sweden. But being too anxious to start his labors he set sail on a ship bound for England. A fatal tragedy befell him and the ship, for they shipwrecked while sailing because of wrathful seas off the coast of New Zealand, and his body was never found or recovered-being cast away and lost. His drowning occurred on April 29th, 1881. Years later, after his brother Niels had settled in Logan, Utah his endowment were taken out by proxy on February 20, 1885. Niels and Bengt together with the other children were sealed in family capacity in the Logan Temple on March 15, 1895 by N. C. Edlofsen. Neither their father nor mother accepted or even possibly heard the gospel while in the flesh.

FULFILLMENT OF AN EARLY PROMIS

Years before, while still living in Sweden, young Niels had told his second cousin, Johanna, that he would wait for and marry her first daughter Elida, even though she was 13 years younger than he. They had thus come along ways together, and were now desirous to gather with the Saints in Zion. ..

"So much do I love wandering
So much I love the sea & sky.
Where is “the land” of our desire?"

With similar thoughts to these in mind, Niels and Elida, who was to become his wife upon their arrival and marriage in Utah, left with a company of Saints from New Zealand arriving in their new "land of Desire" after again traveling nearly half-way around the world. Three days after their arrival in Utah—which was on May 23rd, 1881, in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City, their marriage for time and all eternity was performed by President Daniel H. Wells, of the First Presidency of the Church, on May 26th, 1881.

“When any great design thou dost intend
Think on the means, the manner and the end”
They had left the comforts of the old world as well as New Zealand to find far
themselves a land of promise and opportunity, and with it a place of religious and
political liberty. They were of sturdy stock, these late-arriving Pioneers, but, ones who
only needed to be convinced of what was right am they would dare and do that right. Thus
they became a part of the noble pioneer frontier and helped to found and develop this
blessed commonwealth, and assisted in establishing the true Church of Jesus Christ in
the "tops of the mountains" which they and all nations were destined to flow. And so
they sacrificed much, even their all, to find a place where they could build up God's
Kingdom on earth and worship Him in truth, peace and safety. Struggling against
poverty, disease, persecution and the hardship or frontier life, these builders of the church
and the west evidenced such character, sincerity, and devotion to principle such as the
world has seldom witnessed. Truly, they formed a part in one of the greatest episodes in
United States history by helping to settle and colonize this mountain region.

IN THE WEST

In Logan, where they spent their remaining life, is developed a system of
irrigation which is certainly among the wonders or the West and which Niels employed
on his farm. One writer said: "Logan Is without any parallel, even among the wonders or
Western America, for rapidity of growth, combined with solid prosperity and
tranquility!" Their first years in beautiful Cache Valley were strenuous but happy and
whatever they did--plowing" gardening, or other things--was done to establish the
Kingdom of God. J.D 61103. The Vikings, we recall, were from Denmark, Sweden and
Norway. The age of the Vikings looked to Valhalla as the piece of true happiness. These
modern Vikings from God’s own place of true happiness in the Gospel and its repository:
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They were of those who President
McKay spoke when he said: “They helped fill the World's greatest need: Wise mothers.
and exemplary fathers."

For Theirs is the Kingdom

Niels S. vas ordained a Priest on July 18th. 1880 by George Batt while still residing in
New Zealand. His ordination to the office of Elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood was
also by Elder George Batt on March 20th, 1881 in Timaru, New Zealand. He took out his
own endowments at the time of his marriage to Elida in the Salt Lake Endowment House on May 26th, 1881. It is of interest that he records in his family history and journal that he received the Second Anointing in the Logan Temple, July 12, 1916 by President Young. In his family record is his line of authority as a High Priest, which office he received by ordination on October 27th, 1904 by Elder B. M. Lewis in Logan, Utah. B. M. Lewis was ordained by Lorenzo Snow who was ordained by Heber C Kimball who was ordained by Oliver Cowdery who was ordained by the Prophet Joseph Smith, John the Baptist, and Peter, James and John, the holy apostles of the Lord, etc. (For tribute to Benj. M. Lewis. see SUNLIT LAND, p8)

His beloved wife Elida Larson Nilson, was sealed to her mother and stepfather and family. Her son, Hyrum E. Hanson, tried in vain to get genealogical data on her real father, who was the seaman that returned from Africa only to find his wife married to another man. She received the Gospel also while in New Zealand--being baptized in Styx or Styx on October 6th, 1878 by P. J. Nordstrand, and confirmed October 8th, 1878 by Elder Thomas Shreeve in Papanus, New Zealand.

Upon settling in Logan, Niels S. engaged in railroad work for the Oregon Short Line for three years. Being a nurseryman by profession, he quit the railroad and followed his trade as nurseryman for many years. During this time, He and his family lived in the old family home in the city of Logan, but later, or about June 1911, he built a modern farm home and produced one of the most beautiful and fertile farms in Cache Valley, which is plain from the photographed account.

We can be proud our heritage. Settling there was an uphill struggle for them--but they made the grade. Since landing in Zion" they and their posterity have played an important role in the growth of the nation, the Church, trade, industry, farming, defense, government, and in every field they have played an honorable role. The patriotism, pride, industry, and sacrifice is a priceless achievement of which all may be justly proud. That struggle was possible and the success sure, because or the fact that God Is our Fortress-our Refuge!
NATURALIZED CITIZENS

Inseparableness marked these two men, Niels S. and Ola. They left Sweden together, sailed to New Zealand, accepted the Gospel at the same to America, settled in the same city and were naturalized the same day as evidenced by this entry:

**FIRST DISTRICT COURT MINUTES, MAY TERM 1891**

Tuesday, the 12th day of May, 1891
Application of
Ola Larsen and
Niels Hansen

On this day came Ola Larsen, late of Sweden, at present of Cache Co., Utah, and Niels Hansen, late of Sweden, at present of Cache Co., Utah, with their two witnesses Thomas Shreeve and Alderson Thomson and made application to this Court to be admitted as citizens of the United States pursuant to the several acts of Congress in relation thereto and the said applicants having taken such oaths and made such proofs as are by the said several acts make and required thereupon the Court ordered that Ola Larsen and Niels Hansen be admitted and they were accordingly admitted as citizens of the United States of America.

James A. Miner Judge
Territorial Minute Book, Vol F, page 334
kept in Custody of the Weber County Clerk,
at Ogden, Utah.
Naturalization Record Volume A, p-48

THEIR CHILDREN

The children of Niels and Elida developed as follows: Neils Joseph became a machinist and farmer; Ettie Josephine married in the Logan Temple and raised a large family; Hyrum Edwin worked as a recorder in the Logan Temple for about 30 years, was a scholar and teacher, and attained the satisfaction of completing most temple work for our departed ancestors where their data could be found; Oliver Moroni became a bookkeeper, and filled a mission to Australia on the Island of Tasmania; Alma Wilford became a government inspector, insurance man and musician, Ernest Leroy was in the medical corp. during World War I and became a Medical Doctor thereafter; Elida May married and also kept house for her father until his death--at which time she and Neil Joseph run the farm until it was sold, June Lenora married had two children, and engaged in church
activity. June’s father and her father-in-law, whose name was also Neils Hansen—and who immigrated to Utah from Denmark, used to get their mail mixed long before their children met and married. Because of this, June's father took the initial "S", and her husband's father took the initial “H”. It is strange that after Neils “M” moved to the Teton Basin that his son David Newell should meet June the daughter of Niels “H” years later when returning to his home through Logan from his mission to the Southern States—fall in love with her and get married.

Elida, after having this large and wonderful family passed away March 29th. 1904. Niels S. later married and was sealed to his 2nd wife, Christine Margaretha P. Brandt, who was born in Odense, Denmark, on September 6, 1905. She passed away about six years later on March 27th, 1911.

**SUNSET OF LIFE**

On July 24, 1916. Niels took a group of High Priests to celebrate the day at a Parade in Logan. When coming home his team of horses was frightened by a freight train on a siding which caused them to bolt and to run away. This resulted in his being thrown from the buggy and breaking his right hip which caused a lameness from which he never totally recovered. Through the ten years that followed, he suffered from great disability and kidney trouble which finally caused his death on May 30. 1926. He had grown to be a highly respected member of the church and the community. He was ward teacher, temple worker, and the secretary of the Stake High Priest's Quorum of Cache Stake for many years.

No other members of his immediate family accepted the Gospel except his brother Bengt who was ship wrecked and drowned at sea. When his son, Hyrum Edwin, was called to serve as a missionary to Sweden his father told him to visit the relatives there and to bear the same testimony to them in person that he had borne when writing to them. After serving for some time in Sweden the missionaries were banished from that nation for awhile and he finished his mission In the United States.

In passing, it should be mentioned that Niels S. helped his father and mother-in-law and family in emigrating to San Francisco and Utah from New Zealand by paying most of their expenses over here.
Niels and Elide passed into the next world, the reality or which was their life's certainty. They had kept the faith with each other, and their beloved children, and with their fellow men, as well as with themselves and their Father in Heaven. They had given much in keeping their life's trust, and they truly had received such in return. They exhibited great faith, courage and determination in honoring their calling in life and fulfilling the measure of their creation.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The true conception of a Biography is "a faithful portrait of a soul in its adventures through life." These we have attempted to depict—even though forced to point out only the highlights. It is impossible to describe all, but what has been written for us, and for the generations to come. Psalms 102:18. If this short historical review has a tendency to bind our family closer together; cause us to seek our own salvation as they did and to be sealed to our families; awaken a deeper feeling of gratitude and humility help originate a greater degree of devotion and help us to more earnestly strive, no matter what our career—to give our best, it will have served its purpose.

We also express the burning hope and trust that this account of their miles of travel, hardships, labors, and attempts to find the true church and religious freedom will contribute to arouse the faith of all their posterity to live and walk as they did.

**A FAMILY MOTTO**

They believed unreservedly in the First Article of Faith Which is: ‘We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ” and in the Holy Ghost."

In Swedish it is: "Vi tro pa Gud, den Evige Fadern, och pa hans Son, Jesus Kristus, och pa den Helige Ande."

May our faith continuous to be the same, and may we honor and admire our stalwart ancestors, who sacrificed everything for their belief; admire them for their set ideals, determination and other virtues. Their lives are and can be an inspiration to us, an encouragement to be steadfast and to strive nobly towards more dedicated service to kinsmen, country, church and God.
They tried to be of service in this respect, their lives and wanderings exemplified a Motto, which we could well adopt:

"…and this 211&11 be our Covenant-
THAT WE WILL WALK IN ALL THE ORDIANCES OF THE LORD."
Doctrine & Covenants 136: 2, 4

As we know, there are few families that can trace their ancestry to the time when the family name originated. The fact remains, that the person who knows his descent and family history has an inborn pride and desire to uphold the family name. It is just that background itself which is an inspiration and motivating force to higher ideals, to a greater search for truth and salvation, and to becoming a more useful and better citizen.

Compiled & written by
Wendell L. Hansen
10 April 1969