

# William Christopher Christensen:

## Early Years

(As remembered by his oldest daughter, Ora Maren Christensen Sharp. Also included, as noted, are excerpts from history written by Leona Christensen McGee.)

In 1880 when the church authorities called for stalwart families to settle San Luis Valley in southwestern Colorado, Grandpa Otto took Wilhelmina and new baby and journeyed to pioneer this new area. He left Grandma Maren, and her five young children (Dorthea Gurena, Amelia Jeannette, Mary Eliza, William “papa” age 5, and Frederick Thorwald age 3) in Fairview to get along as best they could. In 1882 he sent for them and they made the long wagon trip to Colorado with the assistance of a young man named Christian Crusier. They traveled with a large group who were also going to the San Luis Valley [a distance of 500 miles].

Papa’s first home, with the family in Colorado, was a tent in the little settlement of Ephraim. Then Grandpa Otto built a one-room house of rough boards with a dirt roof. This first winter, they really suffered with the cold and their food supply was very meager. True, at age 7 papa was reunited with his father, but he was a man that his little son scarcely new, never having been around him very much. Even though Grandma Maren did as Grandpa Otto wished—sold her home and belongings in Fairview and came to him—the situation did not improve much. Grandma Maren was still faced with the big job of continuing to support herself and her children. She and the older girls did custom weaving and spinning and did every kind of work they could find to get along. In the summer of 1883 a two-room log house was built which afforded the family more comfortable living conditions.

As grandfather’s 3rd family increased, finally numbering ten, his concern became less and less with his 2nd family. Consequently a separation was inevitable—happening in 1887 [Young William was 12 yrs old] . Grandma Maren was allowed the team of horses, wagon, 2 cows and a few sheep. Grandpa Otto gave her the deed to the 80 acres for the little boys, 8 and 10 years old. Papa and Uncle Fred, at a very young age were obliged to take the responsibility of trying to farm the virgin soil of an 80-acre plot of land, which was mostly hills and hollows covered with sagebrush. Ephraim was not considered a suitable place to live on account of water seepage, so the people were advised to move to higher ground, 3 miles north. This community was named Sanford. Grandma Maren’s house was moved from Ephraim to the new town. Before this was done, the family lived in a one-room log house. Papa always told how diligent his mother was in teaching her children the gospel principles in the home. They felt the need of calling upon the Lord in prayer night and morning. Grandma Maren set an example in accepting church positions by acting as Primary President for many years. She encouraged the children to give service in the church, so their testimonies would be strengthened. She taught them to be honest and follow the Golden Rule. Her example of industry was a thing that stayed with them all their lives. Papa was able to attend the school afforded the young people of Sanford at that time. He was quick to learn; his music ability and quick wit, made him a general favorite among the young and old. He had a pleasant personality and was good company in a crowd. He was a good singer and played the fife in the school band.

Retyped by Camille Clifton July 24, 2015 (Great-Great-Granddaughter of William Christopher)