

Peder Andreas Hartvigsen



1843 - 1909

*Dates and Historical Events Collected and arranged by
Emma C. Dunn (His Oldest Grand-daughter)*

Read before the Wilford Woodruff Camp of the DUP 1937

Peder Andres Hartvigsen was born February 16, 1843 at Kjffjord Trumso Ampt County, Norway. Kjffjord is about 350 miles beyond the Arctic Circle in the land of the midnight sun. The country is known the world over for it's scenic beauty.

His father's name was Hartvig Neilsen; they had a small farm and a few cows and a small gristmill, which was run by waterpower. Here the neighbors came to get their wheat ground as they needed it. The father was a kind of doctor for those days. He believed in the medicinal powers of herbs and in bleeding the patient for various complaints. He seemed to have been very good at that work and was also a very good hand with sick animals.

His sons, Niels, Peter and John were fishermen from the time they were large enough to help sail a boat. They were true descendants of the old Vikings and were typical hardy Norsemen, rough, hard workers with unusual strength.

Peter was the first man beyond the Arctic Circle to be baptized into the Latter Day Saint Church, which event took place January 6, 1860. His brother Neils was the second and their cousins Mary Israelson and Teralina Neilsen, the first women; their date being January 26, 1860. They were baptized by Ola Orstend, then a captain of a training ship; later he came to Utah and became postmaster of Cottonwood, Utah.

It took courage to accept Mormonism at that time. Their father did not accept the Gospel and was outraged and drove them from home. The mother was dead. But, being a just man he gave them their share of their mother's property. They sold it immediately and used the proceeds to immigrate to America.

Their father had married again.

Peter left home and went to stay with their cousin, Mary Israelson and her husband, Telif John Israelson. There was a range of mountains between Kjffjord and Kastijord where the Israelsons lived.

Shortly after they were baptized they began planning to emigrate.

They sold their farm to another cousin, Israel Jorgensen, to get money to come west.

So, in the spring of 1864, Peter and Anderas Bendejsen and Miss Teralina Neilsen along with the Israelsons and their four children left Kastijord for Harsted, eight miles away where they took the coast steamer, "The Karl John." It took them 140 miles north to Trumso, from which they later sailed across the Atlantic in a sailboat. Niels came six years later.

This was the northern route and had never been crossed by Mormon emigrants before. They had a very hard voyage, even for those days, and were eleven weeks on the ocean. They landed in Canada and took a steamer up the St Lawrence River and then by rail to Florence, Nebraska. There on July 18, 1864 Peter Hartvigsen and Teralina Neilsen were married by Patriarch John Smith.

Florence was a recruiting place for the trip across the plains. When they reached this frontier town they learned that the Mormon immigrant train had just gone. This was very discouraging as not one of them could speak or understand a word of the English language. Fortunately for them there was a man by the name of Christofferson from San Pete, Utah fitting up a freight outfit in the town. He told them that if they would get an outfit they could join his train across the plains. So between them all they bought four oxen and two cows which also could be worked and a wagon. None of them had ever seen oxen worked but they soon learned by watching the others and got along very nicely.

Thus nine of them crossed the plains with the one wagon, hauling their own provisions. One black cow was a good milker and that helped out a lot.

They brought her on to Hyrum and there are still many of her descendants living there to this day.

Only one accident marred the trip across the plains. The oxen became frightened by Indians or buffalo, some wagons were tipped over and the tongues broken, but with that exception they got along fine until the day they crossed the Utah line when the Israelson baby, a child of two years died and was buried by the roadside.

They arrived in Salt Lake in the fore part of October 1864 and after resting a few days they came on to Hyrum. There the Hartvigsen and Israelsens made their home. Andrew Bandejsen went on and settled in Weston.

Peter Hartvigsen was an unusually large man being over six feet and two inches tall with dark eyes and sandy hair and beard. He weighed 307 pounds when in his prime and later reached the record of 340 pounds. All of his clothes and shoes had to be made to order. He was known to be the strongest man in Cache Valley and liked to perform stunts to prove it at their celebrations. Many times this great strength was used to advantage in the daily tasks of pioneer life.

We are told that many times when loads of lumber were stuck in the mud on the canyon road that he would take hold of the wheel and lift it up while other men poked rocks in the hole so they could go on. At celebrations he would tie an inch rope to a large tree and the other end around his waist and pull until he broke the rope and it did not take him long to do so. While in a pulling match he could pull any six ordinary men down.

His chief occupation was operating a sawmill up in the white pines of Blacksmith Fork Canyon. He built one of the first mills there and his brother John was the sawyer, and a very good one, too. When mineral was discovered at Mineral Point and La Platte, Peter and his brother worked hard to make roads and cabins and to develop the claims. Peter and Edward Norman (a cousin) hauled the first wagonload of ore from La Platte. The load consisted of one great lump of galena²¹. It was left on one of the main street corner for all doubting ones to see and believe. In spite of the fact that the ore was there, the mine was never developed because of the difficulty and expense it entailed.



Peter Hartvigsen

Peter also owned a ranch in Blacksmith Fork Hollow where he operated one of the first threshing machines in Cache Valley. Like his father, he was somewhat of a veterinarian, and whenever animals were sick the neighbors far and near sent for him. He was always willing to do all he could and was never known to charge for his services. He was good hearted and jovial and had a keen sense of humor.

He liked to have a good time and loved to dance, being an outstanding figure on the dance floor in spite of his great size. It is told of him that when he and his second wife (who was also built on generous proportions) took the floor, everyone else had to leave it as when that good couple danced they did so with such noise and vigor that others preferred to watch them rather than to meet them on the floor. Even the floor joists would groan under their weight and stamping.

He could also enjoy a glass of beer and other liquors, but knew when to quit drinking and not make a fool of himself. In fact in those days alcohol was used a good deal for medicine and the average freighter thought his equipment was not complete without a bottle of whiskey to be used in case of snakebites and if they did not get bitten they would celebrate at the end of the journey. Those men could handle their liquor and be trusted with anything from fine merchandise to your wife or small children. It was not the white-collar men that tamed the west; it was the real he-men, the ones that were not afraid to put their shoulder to the wheel and work with bare hands. And alcohol, like polygamy, was not considered a sin until it was abused by fools that did not know when they had had enough. Even Jesus drank wine and he was above reproach.

Peter's first wife, Teralina died Jan 16, 1876, leaving seven children, six girls and one boy, the youngest being a pair of twins. After her death he married Annie Carlina Jensen Cummings. She had been married in polygamy and had one son of her own, a baby at the time name Alma Cummings. All the children loved their step-mother and her son as a brother. She had eight children by this marriage, then she died in October 1893, leaving Peter with fifteen children, some of the girls were married by that time.

The girls were all very good workers and loved to sew and did the best they could, all of them earning their own living as soon as they were old enough and helping the younger children all they could. About 1895 Peter married Mary Vangulas. She had a son named Charley, but they could not get along and soon parted.

²¹ Galena is the chief ore of lead. In its purest form it is 86.6% lead and 13.4% sulfur by weight. *World Book 1991*

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The father, Peter, was a very strict disciplinarian, even for those days, and his word was the law among his children. Nobody talked back to him. He was of the old school that believed to spare the rod meant to spoil the child and they were taught to obey or to suffer the consequences.

In 1895, the family moved to Idaho and settled in Moreland, thinking they could do better as that country was just being settled. There he met a good woman by the name of Rachel James Meacham from Lehi, Utah. She had been married before and a son named Alvin Meacham. They were married Jun 5, 1901 and had two children. Later they moved to Lost River where Peter ran a freight outfit for hire taking charge of the men and teams that hauled freight from Corinne to Montana. He and a great many more who tried to dry farm in Idaho found that they could not make a living in that way and after breaking up the land had to move off and lose what they had paid and all their hard work. The land was too dry for successful farming and one can see the mute evidence of their efforts all over Idaho. Only here and there were they successful in farming except on the irrigation projects.

He worked so hard that he broke down in health when was about 61. He contracted dropsy and died Feb 16, 1909 on his sixty-fifth birthday at Lost River. He was buried in Hyrum by the side of his first and second wives, Teralina and Annie.

Rachel died Jan 16, 1924 at Pocatello, Idaho and was buried in Moreland by some of her children.

Please note: The original history of Peder Andreas Hartvigsen was written and submitted to the Daughters of Utah Pioneers by Emma Crookston Dunn in 1937. Geneva Crookston, wife of Thomas Crookston (great grandson of Peder) re-typed the history and submitted it to the DUP on Feb. 28, 2006.