

SOPHIA CHIRSTINA MOLLER NELSON

--by Eunice M. Nelson

Sophia Chirstina Moller Nelson was born in Hornslet, Randers, Denmark, May 15, 1848. The place is also referred to as Rodskove. Her father, Soren Jensen Moller, had a home named Stattsgaard. He died in 1853. Her mother's name was Anna Kirstina Rasmussen. One source calls her Anna Christine Hirsch. She died in 1857.

After the parents' death the Moller children were taken to their grandmother's home, "Mollerup", to live. This home had been in the Moller family for generations and was originally a government grant as a reward to an ancestor for extra valor in battle. This grandmother at Mollerup gave the children a good education, including a trade which would enable them to always earn a good living. The children we know of are:

1. Rasmus, who married Caroline Jensen. They came to Utah later than Sophia and Camilla, and lived with Sophia and Andrew Nelson;
2. Jens, who remained in Denmark for a time, then came to New York City and followed a musical career;
3. Christine, who married Mr. Jorgensen and remained in Denmark;
4. Maria (Marie) who married Jens Johnsen and joined the L.D.S. Church, and then died on the plains coming to Utah;
5. Karen Camilla, who married Andrew Nelson;
6. Sophia Christine, who married Andrew Nelson.¹

Rasmus was trained as a carpenter and cabinetmaker. Jens was a musician. Karen Camilla and Sophia Christine were tailors.

By 1867, grandmother Moller had died. The ancestral home had been sold in order to divide the estate among the heirs.

The girls Camilla and Sophia, and Maria along with her husband, Jens Johnsen, had been converted to the L.D.S. Church. They had been Lutherans.

Andrew Nelson of Manti, Utah was a missionary for the L.D.S. Church and serving in

Denmark. He became acquainted with these people. He was due to return to Utah in the spring of 1867. Jens and Maria Johnsen wished to emigrate to Utah with him. The girls, Camilla (21), and Sophia (19), wished to emigrate, too.

Andrew Nelson, knowing of their luxurious raising, tried to dissuade the girls. He was afraid the hardships of Utah pioneering would not satisfy them. He tried to dissuade the two girls from emigrating at this time. Sophia and Camilla had a problem to solve. Their grandmother's death left them homeless. The sister, Maria, with whom they chose to live, was emigrating with her husband, Jens Johnsen. The two girls had their inheritance in cash and were amply able to pay their own way to Utah. Their profession of tailor insured their being able to support themselves if their money ran out.

Other friends tried to dissuade them. Sophia answered, "If I like Utah, I will write to you. If I do not like it, I will never write." She never did write back to Denmark, but at the time, to nineteen-year-old Sophia, an ocean voyage and the trip to Utah must have seemed an exciting adventure. She and her sister had been counseled to wait, but almost all of the converts wanted to go to Utah. This was where the Latter-Day Saints were building their own cities, their Kingdom of God on earth. The call had gone out to "gather to Zion" and they felt that this must be the time for them to go.

The Church had usually been helping the immigrants in part with the expense of coming to Utah. One aid was sending the ox-team train from Utah to meet them at the railroad terminal. But the Church was unable to do so in 1867. Because of this, only such Saints as had ample means to help themselves had the opportunity to emigrate that year. For this reason, the whole year's emigration from Scandinavia was only 290 souls who left Copenhagen on June 13, 1867 by steamer "Waldemar". They were accompanied by 10 returning missionaries. Andrew Nelson was one of these missionaries.

The "Waldemar" arrived in Hull, England, June 16. From Hull the journey continued by railway to Liverpool. From here the Scandinavian emigrants. Together with 190 English Saints, sailed June 21 on board the

beautiful steamer "Manhattan", a vessel equipped to carry 1,000 passengers. On board the Saints were divided into seven divisions. Andrew Nelson presided over one of these divisions.

The ship carried about 700 other emigrants. The L.D.S. passengers were located from mid-ship to stern by themselves on this ship. This was the first Scandinavian emigrant company to cross the Atlantic in a steamship.

After 12½ days on the ocean, the Manhattan arrived in New York on July 4, 1867. The next day the emigrants landed at Castle Garden and continued up the Hudson River to Albany. From there they went by rail to Niagara, where they stayed overnight. This gave them ample time to enjoy the view of Niagara Falls.

They proceeded westward via Detroit and Chicago to St. Joseph, Missouri. From there they sailed up the Missouri river by steamer to Omaha. From Omaha the pioneers traveled on the newly built Union Pacific railroad 291 miles westward to North Platte. Here they stayed for four weeks, presumably to outfit for crossing the remainder of the plains. The ox-train formed was captained by Leonard G. Rice from the North Platte to Salt Lake City.

While waiting for final arrangements, the girls, Sophia and Camilla, got acquainted with the scenery. They were standing on the bank of a river when a gust of wind blew one girl's hat out into the water. She was appalled at the thought of crossing the plains bareheaded. In sympathy, the sister threw her own hat into the river. Both went the entire distance bareheaded. My mother, who was Sophia's age, remembered seeing them when they reached Manti. She said they were both as brown as Indians.

It was the L.D.S. Church's custom to arrange for buyers to prepare outfits ordered by companies who were going to cross the plains. The girls said they gave their money to the buyer to change it into American money, whereby he could pay for their teams, wagons, and provision. Camilla told him, "I want to keep two dollars to buy chocolate so I can serve it on my birthday." The man said, "You are selfish." No doubt there was a good laugh at this joke. But she kept the two dollars. After all the bills were paid the man told them there was money left over, but it would be safer if left in the captain's hands until they reached Salt Lake City.

There were no written accounts kept of the price of outfitting. There were no receipts given for money supplied the buyers. There is no record of the verbal agreements and arrangements for procedures. But we do know that the road was long and rough; that cattle died and wagons broke down and sickness occurred and additional provisions and equipment had to be bought from settlers along the way. We know that the misfortune of one pioneer could well be a misfortune for all if it caused a delay. They had to make repairs at any cost to keep the wagon train moving and get to Salt Lake City before winter set in. When supplies had to be bought along the way the cost was enormous and could literally "bust the bank."

We have no record of what did happen along the way, except that as they neared the mountains Maria Johnsen gave birth to a baby. She died. The baby lived for a time. Sophia and Camilla cared for it. It, too, died and was buried in a lonely grave beside the trail.

Camilla kept a diary. It was written in the old Danish script. Anna Nelson, wife of Andrew Nelson Jr., tried to translate it. She had been a small girl when Denmark changed to the use of English letters. Anna had started to learn to read and remembered some letters. She had a hard, slow time trying to translate this diary.

We hope someday this book may be found and translated. Then we shall have the facts concerning this journey.

The company arrived in Salt Lake City on October 5, 1867. For most of the company it had been a successful trip made in good time. But the two sisters were heartsick from the loss of the loved sister, and in a quandary as to what to do next because they had planned on living with their married sister. They went to the official who had handled their money and asked for an accounting. They were told their money had all been used. That they had no receipt for their money was very unusual and in violation of the procedures set up by the Church for the safekeeping of the money while en route. Several things could have happened. Someone could have taken advantage of them or perhaps spent their money in getting the company to its destination. It may even have been that the sisters overestimated the buying power of their money and it was used up.

When the girls received no money their grief knew no bounds. They had expected to have means to care for themselves until they got into the tailoring business. Not only were they unable to set themselves up in business, but it was apparent that Salt Lake City was only an overgrown town in the desert. The people were poor and could ill afford hiring a seamstress.

They learned that there were many Danish people in Manti where the missionary Andrew Nelson had his home. They decided to go to Manti, letting Andrew Nelson drive their teams. They had confidence in him.

Andrew took them to Metta's home in Manti. She took the girls into her home and gave them sympathy and comfort. This home was the usual small pioneer dwelling. It was crowded. Metta had four children of her own. Then there was the twenty-year-old pioneer boy, Peter Madsen, whom Andrew had asked while in Denmark to go to Metta and help her care for the farm and livestock until he returned from his mission. Peter had arrived in the fall of 1866. He was trained on a dairy farm in Denmark.

Now Metta had these two young orphan ladies, making nine in her home. The winter passed. When the spring of 1868 arrived the townspeople were feeling sorry for Metta in her crowded home. Someone pointed out that Brother Dennison could support another wife. Someone else mentioned a man in Gunnison who could well afford another wife.

When these opinions came to the attention of the girls Sophia and Camilla they said if they must marry in order to be taken care of they preferred marrying Andrew Nelson. And so it happened that on March 28, 1868 Camilla and Sophia Moller both married Andrew Nelson in the Salt Lake Endowment House. Church records list Sophia as third wife and Camilla Moller as his fourth wife. Homes were provided for these two new wives. The different homes of Andrew Nelson's wives in Manti were near each other. Sophia and Camilla were always close neighbors and very devoted to each other.

From here Camilla's history is recorded elsewhere. Sophia's married life was one of constant toil of the pioneer type. She was a strong young woman and a willing worker.

There was now the pleasure of making the acquaintance of earlier Danish settlers. There was the difficulty of learning a new language in

order to be able to associate with the community. Also, there was the bearing of eight children and the rearing of six of them. Two little girls, Fannie and Matilda, died in infancy. The Nelsons were hospitable and loved entertaining in their homes.

A detachment of Johnston's Army was stationed at Shumway, a few miles northwest of Ephraim, for guard duty. These soldier boys liked to visit in the nearby settlements. They bought fresh vegetables, fruits and dairy products from the pioneers, paying for them in cash, or trading hard-to-obtain groceries, such as sugar, etc. They also brought playing cards to the towns. Many people welcomed the diversion of a game of cards after a hard day's work. There were so few diversions.

The Nelsons liked to play cards with their friends. True, the authorities of the Church frowned on card playing. Sophia ignored this advice. The fact is, Sophia never did recover from the shock that the journey had cost all her inheritance money. She felt that in some way she had been cheated. She became indifferent to Church teachings and took no part in Church activities. She never did have any of her children baptized. When they grew up several asked for baptism. As time went on Andrew's men friends got in the habit of dropping in for a few games of cards. It soon became a regular habit. There was no gambling involved, only amusement.

A man in the ward complained to the local Church Authorities. They charged Andrew and his friends with playing cards instead of attending their priesthood duties. A trial was held. Andrew was found guilty. He was required to beg pardon and reform. Andrew could see no wrong in their games of cards. He refused to beg pardon, or to reform. He was promptly disfellowshipped for insubordination.

This was a severe shock to the whole Nelson family. The townspeople were shocked, too. This had never before happened to anyone in the town. It had a devastating effect on the Nelson children. They felt ostracized. The boys sought employment out of town, mostly herding sheep. Hyrum was the only boy who clung closely to the Church and its teachings. In later years several Nelsons joined the Church. The next generation was replete, or nearly so, with faithful L.D.S. members.

Then came the manifesto. This seemed a logical time to separate two wives from the family. Christine had already withdrawn soon after Andrew's return from his mission.

Now in 1889 the four parents, Andrew, Metta, Sophia and Camilla held a council. By mutual consent it was decided that Sophia was the logical wife to continue in that position. Metta and Camilla withdrew. Metta was past 60. Her children were all grown. Camilla was a frail, small person who would be unable to care for Andrew Nelson's large home and entertain the numerous visitors from the married children's families from Ferron. Sophia, the youngest wife, was still strong, lively, and loved entertaining.

Andrew divided the property, giving Metta \$1,000 cash which she took with her and moved to Ferron to live with her son Christian. Camilla had her own home. She was given a portion of the land which all the Nelson boys still at home gladly worked for her.

Andrew Nelson remained estranged from the Church until 1940 when his granddaughter, Selma Nelson Bromley, went to the head authorities of the L.D.S. Church and explained her grandfather's trouble. She said to them, "My grandfather felt he had been dealt with unjustly. Will you open your record and see if he was right in his claim?" The authorities agreed to examine the records. A few days later they reported to her, "Yes, we do feel that Andrew Nelson was dealt with too harshly and did not merit being disfellowshipped. If you will send on of his male descendants to us, we will perform a baptism and restore to Andrew Nelson his membership, his priesthood, and his blessings." Selma contacted her brother Victor Nelson in Idaho, who came immediately and stood for his grandfather's restoration to his full Church status.

Andrew Nelson had died in 1909. All his wives were long since dead and several of his children by the time of his restoration. It has had a rejuvenating effect on many of his descendants.

Sophia was a strong energetic person who kept a good home for her husband and children. There was always a warm welcome for the loved sister Camilla. They spent much time together. On an afternoon they talked long and feelingly over a cup of coffee. The grandchildren of all the family were always welcome. At one time

Metta's granddaughter Kate Lemon went to Manti High School. Sophia kept and cared for her. Nearly all her married life Sophia took in sewing. She also taught sewing to classes of young girls.

In sympathy with their husband's estrangement from the church, Camilla and Sophia joined the Presbyterian Church whose property was across the street from the Nelson home. They both sent their children to the Presbyterian mission school. They enjoyed the association with the well-educated teachers from the East.

The Pastor, the Rev. Mr. Martin, and his wife, two daughters and son were a comfort to Sophia. Then there were the teachers, the Misses White, Galbraith, Reynolds and Wilson, who lived in the cottage across the street by the church. They were constantly visiting back and forth with Sophia and Camilla.

Sometime in the 1890's Sophia's oldest brother Rasmus Miller and wife decided they needed a better home. They were getting old. Andrew and Sophia persuaded them to build an addition onto the east of their own home. In this way they would always be near and could be cared for in their declining years. This was done. They all lived very happily together until Uncle and Auntie died. All the Nelson children and the townspeople loved Uncle and Auntie Miller.

Around the turn of the century Andrew began suffering from asthma. Later there were other pains, starting in one foot. These pains later extended upward into his body.

Thorvald was now herding sheep and building a herd of his own.

Sophus and Oscar were married and living in Ferron.

Guy was farming his father's farm under Andrew's supervision.

Maria was married and living nearby.

Myrtle was about ready to graduate from Collegiate Institute in Salt Lake City.

Soon Thorvald married and lived in the west portion of the home. Andrew and Sophia occupied the rooms built for Uncle and Auntie Miller. Guy married and moved to Ferron. After her graduation from Collegiate Institute Myrtle taught school in Panguitch.

Andrew was getting more feeble. He sold his home and farm to Thorvald on a long payment plan. He retained the right to continue living in the Uncle Miller wing of the house.

Andrew's pains in his abdomen were pronounced cancer. The pains increased. Finally in September 1909 he died and was buried in Manti City Cemetery.

Myrtle resigned her teaching in Panguitch and remained home to comfort her mother in her bereavement. Later Myrtle decided to enter Presbyterian Hospital in Pennsylvania and train for nursing.

In the spring of 1912 Thorvald sold the farm in Manti and moved in Ferron. Sophia could not stand being left in the old Nelson home alone. She gathered up her belongings and moved to Ferron with Thorvald, his wife Ethel and two children. She lived with her son Sophus and family in Ferron. She enjoyed her grandchildren very much during the fifteen months before her death in June 1913.

Sophia sewed constantly during this 15-month period. She was returning to Sophus's home after visiting an afternoon at the home of a customer. Returning home she was caught in a

rainstorm. She caught a cold. It developed into pneumonia, from which she died.

In order to place her remains beside those of her husband Andrew Nelson in Manti Cemetery, a trip had to be made over the mountain. There were snowdrifts at the summit, but no serious delay occurred. On this trek were her four sons: Sophus and his wife, Mary; Oscar; Thorvald, his wife, Ethel; and two children; and Guy, his wife, Eunice and three children. Oscar's wife could not leave her large family.

The corpse was taken to Camilla's home where it was dressed and prepared for burial. The funeral was held in the Presbyterian Church with Rev. G. W. Martin conducting and preaching the sermon. Sophia's casket was placed beside that of her husband Andrew Nelson in Manti City Cemetery.

NOTE: Since the reunion in May 1963 the following account about Karen Camilla and Sophia Moller has been called to our attention. It was written by a daughter of Camilla, Anna Nelson Geck, and published in the Daughters of Utah Pioneers Historical Pamphlet, January 1942, pp. 359-360. It was also reprinted in Heart Throbs of the West, Vol. 4, pp. 359-360. It is interesting because of the additional detail it gives.)

AN INDEPENDENT COMPANY

Karen Moller, her sister Sophia, her brother Erasmus, and his wife Caroline, a married sister Christine and her husband Sophus Jorgensen, were members of an independent company of Latter-day Saints who chartered and provisioned the steamship "Waldemar" to take them from their homeland, Denmark, to England. This was the beginning of a long journey for they were bound for Utah, their Zion. Andrew Nelson, a missionary from Utah who had presided over the Danish Mission, was a member of the group.

According to the diary of Karen Moller Nelson, she left Randers, Denmark, January 8, 1867, arriving in Copenhagen the next day, where she remained with a sister until June 13, when the party sailed for England. They arrived in Liverpool June 17, where they stayed until the 20th, when they embarked on the steamship "Manhattan" bound for America. They neared the coast of the United States on July 4th, for Karen wrote in her journal of the beautiful display of fireworks on the shore. On July 5th they landed at Castle Gardens.

A few days later they joined a party of Danish people and sailed up the Hudson River, visiting Albany, Niagara Falls, a few places in Canada, Rochester, New York City, and other important places. They went to Chicago, then on toward the west. After crossing the Mississippi River, they traveled to the Mormon camp, near Omaha. Here they secured their outfits and as an independent company followed the regular route to Salt Lake City.

While crossing the plains they had their share of trouble, for sickness and death visited their

group. A baby born was born to Christine Jorgensen, and a few days later Christine passed away. She was buried by the wayside. The company moved on, taking the infant child who was blessed and named Jorgen Sophus. But the child was not strong enough for such a journey and just a few miles farther west from the mother's grave, her babe was buried.

The prairie was gay with flowers for the diary tells of the women gathering beautiful flowers and fashioning wreaths to decorate the lonely graves on the plains. At last they arrived in Salt Lake Valley, October 13, 1867. Here Karen spent her last two dollars to buy chocolate which she desired to serve her friends on her birthday. They started for Sanpete County and as they neared the present town of Mona, they were met by the Andrew Nelson family who had come to greet them. The meeting occurred on Karen's birthday, October 13. They had a real celebration and Karen never forgot that day. They went to live at the home of Andrew Nelson and Karen and Sophia later became his wives.

"As a young girl I often heard of different ones in the company, but did not pay much attention. I did not know until the summer I was married that my mother's grandparents were Danish lords. I have pictures now of their magnificent ancestral home, which is a show-place in Denmark today. It is called 'Mollerup' and is in Jutland. Second cousins own it now."

--Anna Geck

NOTE ON CAMILLA NELSON

Mrs. Ellice M. Moffitt of Manti said Camilla had picked flowers on the plains as she crossed and pressed them in her Bible. She still had them when she died. At her funeral the dried flowers were made into a small bouquet with a ribbon and placed in her hand. The sight was very touching, and many people when they saw it broke down and cried.

ⁱ Additional research has revealed another adult sister and three children who died young. As soon as the information is complete it will be sent to the family.