

Aunt Christine Larsen's Hair Wreath

(by Robert A Christiansen, October 2012, updated Jul 2015)

For many years my aunt, Ethel Torneten, kept an unusual object in her front hall, namely a glass-fronted box containing a hair wreath. This hair wreath was the only known physical evidence of the short life of Ethel's oldest aunt, Christine (Larsen) Linsel.

In 2012, after living in the same house for over 75 years, Aunt Ethel moved to Bethany Home in Council Bluffs and I was asked to find a new home for Christine's hair wreath.

This little five-page history contains some information about Christine Larsen and her immediate family.

Christine Comes to America

Christine Larsen emigrated from Hillerød, Denmark to Council Bluffs, Iowa with her parents and four younger siblings on the SS *Colorado* in June of 1870. Christine was eleven at the time.

Within the year, Christine's father and her youngest sibling were dead. Christine's mother soon remarried, and Christine had a half-sister and two half-brothers by her mother's second marriage.

Christine's Parents

Anders Larsen, Christine's father, was born in Jørlunde parish, Denmark in 1832 to Lars Andersen and Maren Johansdatter. He was said to have been a clog maker before emigrating. He died in Council Bluffs in 1870 or 1871.

Maren Larsdatter, Christine's mother, was born in Ølsted parish, Denmark in 1837 to Lars Hansen and Ane Kirstine Jensdatter. When Maren was a small child, her family moved to Alsønderup parish, near Hillerød.

Niels Larsen, Christine's stepfather, was originally named Niels Christensen. After he and Maren married, he was called Niels Larsen. Niels Larsen was born near Aalborg, Denmark in Visse, Nøvling parish in 1828. When he emigrated about 1867 he left behind a child, Else Marie.

Christine's mother, the widow Maren Larsen, married Niels (Christensen) Larsen in Council Bluffs around 1871.

Within four years after arriving in Council Bluffs, Christine had two new younger siblings, Annie and Andrew. Andrew, born in 1874, was Aunt Ethel's father. In 1874 Niels (Christensen) Larsen moved his family to a farm in Hazel Dell Township north of Council Bluffs. Here a final child, Henry, was born.

Christine's mother, Maren Larsen, died at her home in Hazel Dell Township in 1912. Christine's stepfather, Niels Larsen, died at his daughter Annie's home in Boomer Township in 1915.

Christine and Her Siblings

Christine Larsen, the subject of this little history, was born as Maren Kirstine on January 20, 1859. Like her other four siblings, Christine was born in the Hillerød area northwest of Copenhagen. In fact, some of Anders and Maren Larsen's children were christened in the Frederiksborg Palace chapel near downtown Hillerød.

Karen Marie Larsen, known as Mary K. after emigrating, was born in Denmark in 1861. She married John T. Henderson and lived in Council Bluffs. In her later years, Mary worked at the Pottawattamie County home near McClelland. John and Mary both died in 1934.

Although John and Mary Henderson had five children, there are no living descendants. Their only grandchild died at age three from measles. John and Mary are buried in Fairview Cemetery in Council Bluffs.

Lars Peter Larson was born in Denmark in 1865. He married Clara Smith of Boomer Township in 1889. Lars Peter farmed northwest of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Boomer Township. In the early 1920s Lars Peter and Clara moved to the Downsville area south of Underwood, where Clara soon died. Lars Peter died in 1949. Lars Peter and Clara are buried in the Grange Cemetery in Boomer Township. They left behind many living descendants.

Lauritz Julius "Louis" Larsen was born in Denmark in 1867. In 1898 Louis moved to Racine, Wisconsin, where for many years he clerked in shoe stores. He married Carrie Beck in 1901. They had one child, Esther, and two grandsons, but no living descendants. Carrie and Louis both died in Racine, Carrie in 1937 and Louis in 1950.

Emmeline Elisabeth Larsen was born in 1869 and died in Council Bluffs in 1870 or 1871.

Christine Larsen's mother and stepfather and her three younger half-siblings, who are listed below, are all interred in the St. Paul's Lutheran Church Cemetery in Boomer Township, north of Hazel Dell Township and west of Neola, Iowa.

Annie Larsen was born in 1872 in Council Bluffs. She married Nels Christian Augustine "Chris" Johnson in 1897. Chris and Annie spent much of their married life in northwest Boomer Township before retiring to Council Bluffs around 1940. Chris died in 1942 and Annie in 1958.

Andrew Larson was born in 1874 in Council Bluffs. He married Karen Margrethe "Maggie" Hansen in 1900. Andrew and Maggie raised nine children in a small house in central Hazel Dell Township. Andrew died at home in 1949. After Andrew's death, Maggie remained on the farm with her oldest son, Albert. Maggie died in 1962 after spending a few weeks in a Council Bluffs hospital.

Henry Larson was born in 1877 in Hazel Dell Township. He married Maggie Hansen's sister, Ellen Marie, in 1916. Henry and Ellen spent most of their married life on a farm in central Hazel Dell Township. Their one child who survived infancy, the late Evelyn Sherbondy, lived in Council Bluffs. Henry died in 1957 and Ellen died at age 94 in 1982.

As time passed, family members gradually adopted the spelling "Larson".

Christine (Larsen) Linsel's Life

I don't know if Christine moved to Hazel Dell Township with the rest of her family in 1874. She was fifteen at the time. In May 1878 Christine, who was age 19, married Henry Linsel of Council Bluffs. One child, Minnie Marie Linsel, was born in 1879.

In June 1880 Henry, Christine, and baby Minnie were living in Forest City, Holt County, Missouri, where Henry was working as a butcher. Forest City is in northwest Missouri near the Missouri River.

At this time I know nothing of Christine's later life, but I suspect that she died within a few years of 1880.

Matt and Mary Bartel

Matt and Mary Bartel are not relatives of Christine. Later I'll explain their role in the story of Christine's family.

Matthew Bartel was born in Wisconsin in 1858 and came to Council Bluffs as a teenager.

Mary Grote was born in Council Bluffs in 1859. Her father, Herman Grote Sr., was a brick maker in Council Bluffs. In the 1870s, Herman Grote Sr. moved to a farm in Hardin Township, which I believe was across the road from the Torneten home place where my aunt, Ethel Torneten, lived for over seventy-five years.

Matt Bartel and Mary Grote were married in 1879 and lived in Council Bluffs for the remainder of their lives. Matt Bartel, along with other family members, ran a grocery store at various locations on Broadway for around 50 years.

Matt and Mary Bartel had a son and a daughter. Their daughter died young, leaving one child, Dorothy Stirtz, whom the Bartels raised.

The Bartels are buried in Fairview Cemetery in Council Bluffs.

Minnie Linsel's Life

In the 1970s, my great-aunt Ellen (Hansen) Larsen summarized the life of Christine (Larsen) Linsel's daughter, Minnie, for me somewhat as follows:

“Christine had a daughter, Minnie, who was raised by the Bartels in Council Bluffs. They had a grocery store. Minnie married a man named Appel. I never knew what she saw in that drunk. Minnie worked in corsetry at Beno's Department Store. Later she lived in Florida where she had apartments.”

At the time Aunt Ellen told me of Minnie, she showed me a photograph of Minnie as a beautiful young woman dressed stylishly in turn-of-the-century fashions. Unfortunately this photo has been lost.

The following sad passage tells how Minnie came to live with Matt and Mary Bartel. This passage is taken from pp. 3-4 of "In Those Days", a memoir by G. A. Bartel, a grandson of Matt and Mary. "In Those Days" is available at the Pottawattamie County Genealogical Society in Council Bluffs.

"In addition to raising their granddaughter, Dorothy, my grandparents raised a little girl, Midge (sic). Midge's father came into Grandpa's store one day and told him he had to go to Denver because he had been offered a job. He needed someone to watch his little girl for a few days. My grandparents didn't know him, but they agreed. The man never returned. My grandparents never knew if he had an accident or just left his little girl. Midge was married before I was born."

Minnie Linsel came to live with the Bartels before 1885 and probably remained with them until her first marriage. In May of 1897, she married George Appel, a Council Bluffs resident, in Glenwood, Iowa. Minnie's only child, Raymond John Appel, was born in Council Bluffs in June of 1898. (Sometimes the spelling "Apple" is used for this family.)

After Raymond's birth, Minnie and Raymond lived for a time with her grandmother and step-grandfather, Maren and Niels Larsen, in Hazel Dell Township.

In the 1900 census, Minnie was separated from her husband and she and Raymond were living near her foster parents, the Bartels. She was working as a dressmaker.

A few years later Minnie began working as a saleslady in the John Beno Department Store in downtown Council Bluffs. I don't know where Minnie lived between 1911 and 1920.

Incidentally Minnie's first husband, George Appel, continued to live in Council Bluffs, often with his widowed mother. He died in 1948 and is buried in St. Joseph Cemetery.

In the 1920 census, Minnie was married to Arthur Vane Gibson, a hotel owner who was born in Illinois and raised in Missouri. Minnie, Arthur, and Minnie's son, Raymond, were living in Kalispell in northwestern Montana.

Arthur and Minnie Gibson left Montana and moved to Miami, Florida in the early 1920s.

Christine's daughter, Minnie (Linsel) Appel Gibson, died in Miami in 1951. Members of the Bartel family journeyed to Miami for her funeral.

Minnie's one child, Raymond Appel, was an artist. Raymond died in 1924 in Chicago at age 26 and his body was returned to Kalispell for burial.

Acknowledgments

- My great-aunt Ellen (Hansen) Larson first told me of Christine and Minnie so many years ago. Great-aunt Ellen also is responsible for stimulating my interest in family history.
- Matt and Mary Bartel took in and cared for Christine's child, Minnie.
- George Arthur "Art" Bartel Jr. recorded the story of his grandparents, Matt and Mary.
- Ethel (Larsen) Torneten preserved Christine's hair wreath and kindly agreed to pass it on to an institution for future preservation.

You can find more about Christine's relatives in my extended family history, *Robert Christiansen's Family History, Christiansen, Rasmussen, Larsen/Larson and Hansen*, at the Genealogy Center in Elk Horn, Iowa and at the Pottawattamie County Genealogy Society in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Christine Larsen's Hair Wreath

This hair wreath is the only known physical evidence of the life of Christine (Larsen) Linsel.

Christine Larsen was born in 1859 in Hillerød, Denmark, north of Copenhagen, to Anders and Maren Larsen and emigrated to Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1870 with her parents and four younger siblings.

Christine married Henry Linsel in Council Bluffs in 1878 and in 1879 their only child, Minnie Marie, was born.

We have no trace of Christine after 1880. In the early 1880s Henry Linsel left his daughter, Minnie, with Matt and Minnie Bartel, a young couple who were grocers in Council Bluffs, and never returned.

Christine's daughter, Minnie, grew up in the Bartel household in Council Bluffs. Minnie had one child by her first husband, George Appel of Council Bluffs, and later married Arthur Vane Gibson of Montana. Minnie died in Miami, Florida in 1953.

Christine (Larsen) Linsel has no living descendants.

Christine's niece, Ethel (Larson) Torneten of Council Bluffs, donated the hair wreath in September 2012. The story of Christine and her daughter, Minnie, is elaborated in a brief history, *Aunt Christine Larsen's Hair Wreath*. Christine's grandnephew, Robert Christiansen, may be able to provide additional information.