

Larsen Volume, Chapter 2 - Niels (Christensen) Larsen and Maren Larsen

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My great-grandfather, Niels (Christensen) Larsen, was born in 1828 south of Aalborg to Christen Larsen and Maren Christensdatter. My great-grandmother, Maren, was born in 1837 north of Copenhagen to Lars Hansen and Ane Kirstine Jensdatter.

==> Reserved for 1908 photo of Niels and Maren.

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The Lives of Niels (Christensen) Larsen and Maren Larsen

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Overview:

Niels (Christensen) Larsen and Maren Larsen were my great-grandparents. As mentioned earlier in the *Larsen/Larson Family Overview* chapter, both had previous marriages in Denmark that ended with the premature death of their spouse. Niels' one surviving child from his first marriage remained in Denmark. Maren's four surviving children were born in Denmark but grew up in Pottawattamie County, Iowa.

After losing their first spouses, Niels (Christensen) Larsen and Maren Larsen married in the United States and had the three children shown below, all born in Pottawattamie County. Their middle child, Andrew was my maternal grandfather.

Niels Larsen (b. Christensen) (7 Feb 1828 - 8 Dec 1915)
& Maren Larsen (24 Aug 1837 - 19 Feb 1912)
m. abt 1871, Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA

Annie Dorothy Larsen (23 Apr 1872 - 7 Jan 1958)
& Nels Christian Augustine "Chris" Johnson (30 Jan 1868 - 8 Jul 1942)
m. 28 Oct 1897, Pott. Co., IA

Andrew A. Larson (26 Apr 1874 - 22 Oct 1949)
& Karen Margrethe "Maggie" Hansen (31 Aug 1880 - 14 May 1962)
m. 7 Feb 1900, Hazel Dell T., Pott. Co., IA

Henry Larson (15 Apr 1877 - 12 Feb 1957)
& Ellen Marie "Ellie" Hansen (27 Dec 1887 - 25 Jun 1982)
m. 29 Mar 1916, courthouse, Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA

Niels Christensen in Council Bluffs:

Niels (Christensen) Larsen emigrated between 1867 and 1869 from just south of Aalborg, settling in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Ane Dorthe Madsdatter, Niels' first wife, died in 1868. I don't know if Niels emigrated before her death, intending to later send for her and their daughter, or if Niels emigrated shortly after Ane Dorthe's death.

I haven't found immigration information for Niels (Christensen) Larsen. Census records gave Niels' immigration year as 1867 (1900 census) and 1869 (1910 census). A July 1881 Hazel Dell Township farmers list in the Council Bluffs Nonpareil gave 1869 as the year Niels came to Pottawattamie County.

Niels Christensen was listed as a carpenter living on Washington Avenue in three Council Bluffs city directories starting in May 1869. In the Council Bluffs census in August 1870, Niels Christensen, age 32, was enumerated as a carpenter living in a boarding house with several other men.

Aside: One of Niels' fellow boarders in the 1870 census was John F. Drebis, who later, in

1885, lived in Hazel Dell Township, Section 23. John Drebis was active in the Danish RLDS (Reorganized Latter Day Saints) Hazel Dell chapel until he was expelled. John Drebis' second wife, a widow, was the grandmother of the late Irvin Jensen of Hazel Dell Township. John Drebis became a Jehovah's Witness and moved to Washington State.

Aside: The Hans Wissing Michelson family ran the Council Bluffs boarding house where Niels Christensen and John Drebis were living in August 1870. The Michelson family were RLDS members who later lived north of Hazel Dell Township in northern Boomer Township.

Maren Larsen in Council Bluffs:

Maren Larsen, her first husband, Anders Larsen, and their five children emigrated from the Hillerød area through Liverpool. They arrived in New York on the *SS Colorado* in May 31, 1870.

In the August 1870 Council Bluffs census, the Anders Larsen family was living near Maren's future husband, Niels Christensen.

Soon Anders Larsen and their youngest child, little Emmeline, died.

Niels Larsen and Maren Larsen Together:

Upon coming to Council Bluffs, Niels Christensen and the Anders and Maren Larsen family both lived in the first Danish neighborhood in Council Bluffs, located near the future Washington Avenue School and east of the original Our Saviors Lutheran Church. (Danetown, a later Danish neighborhood, was located on the south side, west of the current Our Saviors Lutheran Church.)

Around 1871, the widow Maren Larsen married the widower Niels Christensen, who then took on the name of Niels Larsen. I believe that Niels and Maren's two oldest children, Annie and Andrew, were born in Council Bluffs.

The 1885 Pottawattamie County plat book gives 1874 as the year that Niels moved ten miles north from Council Bluffs to central Hazel Dell Township. Perhaps Niels was one of the several tenant farmers on Graham estate land. (The Graham family still owned 720 acres in the 1885 Hazel Dell Township plat.)

In December 1881 Niels bought 120 acres in Hazel Dell Township Sections 10 and 15 from the Graham estate and soon thereafter the Niels Larsen family built a house near the southeastern corner of the Niels Larsen farm. Niels and Maren lived in this house for the remainder of Maren's life.

Thanks to Chris Wilken, a descendant of the Clausen family of Hazel Dell Township, one can find on-line the assessor's record of Niels' livestock operation as of 1896. As of December 2015 this data is at

<http://www.iagenweb.org/pottawattamie/land/land-1896-assessor-owners.htm>

On his 120 acres, Niels had 18 cattle with a total value of \$130, 7 horses with a total value of \$110, 30 pigs with a total value of \$50, and a dog. The total assessed value of livestock was \$290.

Below is an 1885 plat showing a portion of Sections 10 and 15 of Hazel Dell Township. Niels Larsen bought the original 120 Larsen farm shown on this plat in 1882.

Niels and Maren lived on this farm until Maren died in 1912. Today descendants of Niels and Maren Larsen own this land as well as portions of the surrounding area.

The Andrew and Maggie Larson farmstead was located between the Nels Larson farmstead and the "15" on this plat.

Henry and Ellie Larson's farmstead was located on the 1885 L. C. Bondo parcel on the bottom of the hill just east of the creek.

The Peter Hansen rental farm, where Andrew and Henry's wives lived before marrying, was located just north of this plat and just west of the road.



courtesy of mapworks.com

Of interest: Only one of the four farmsteads mentioned in the above sidebar survives in 2016, namely that of Henry Larson, occupied by Henry's grandson, John Sherbondy. I believe none of the original buildings survive. Descendants of Niels and Maren own the land around all four farmsteads.

Of interest: Lying east of the Larsen farmsteads was a long curved ridge along whose crest county road L34 now runs. For years, much of the land along this ridge belonged to absentee owners, the Graham family. My family called the area around this ridge "Bean Ridge" because the curves in the ridge resembled those in a string bean.

If you are interested in either of the following questions:

- Why did Niels Christensen change his name to Niels Larsen?
- Why did most Larsen family members eventually change the spelling to Larson?

I try to answer these questions elsewhere in this volume.

Niels' last stepchild, Louis Julius Larsen, left home between 1895 and 1898 and moved to Racine, Wisconsin, where he married and remained. Niels and Maren's daughter, Annie, married N. C. A. "Chris" Johnson and left home in 1897.

In 1900, Niels and Maren's son, Andrew, married Karen Margrethe "Maggie" Hansen and moved to a neighboring farm rented from the Graham estate. Andrew and Maggie's farmstead was a scant quarter mile to the southeast of the Niels Larsen farmstead. Andrew and Maggie lived on their farm for the remainder of their lives, even though they rented from the Graham estate for 40 years.

From saved correspondence we know that around 1902 Niels and Maren's son, Henry, went to Oklahoma for a time, but returned before 1905. (Henry's half-brother, Lars Peter Larson of Boomer Township, had earlier lived in Oklahoma for some years.)

From saved correspondence we also know of two occasions when family members returned to live with my great-grandparents Larsen in their home in Hazel Dell Township.

- Around 1900 Maren's granddaughter, Minnie (Linsel) Appel and her baby, Raymond, stayed with Niels and Maren.
- In 1906 my great-uncle, Chris Johnson, was hospitalized. Chris's wife, Annie, and their four children stayed with her parents.

Niels and Maren Larsen's Passing:

My great-grandmother, Maren Larsen, died of stomach cancer at her home in Hazel Dell Township at the age of 74 in 1912.

After Maren died her husband, Niels (Christensen) Larsen, went to live in the household of their son-in-law and daughter, Chris and Annie Johnson, in northwestern Boomer Township. Niels died in Chris and Annie's home in 1915 at the age of 87. Various records and Niels' tombstone inscription give an incorrect birth date and thus an incorrect death age of 90.

The Aftermath of Niels Larsen's Death:

Niels and Maren's son, Henry, lived as a bachelor in his parents' home in Hazel Dell Township until 1916.

In 1916 Henry bought 40 acres containing a newer two-story farmhouse from Alfred Nelson, the son of Lars Nelson who farmed just north of the Niels Larsen farm. Both the west and south sides of Henry's new 40-acre farm adjoined the Niels Larsen 120-acre farm.

Henry Larson married Ellen Marie "Ellie" Hansen in 1916 and Henry and Ellie settled in their new home, where they lived most of their married life. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Ellie and Andrew Larson's wife, Maggie, were sisters, being the daughters of Larson neighbors Peter and Dorthe Hansen.

As of 2015 Henry and Ellie's farmstead has been the residence of their grandson, John Sherbondy, and John's wife, Kip, for many years.

In his will, Niels named his son, Henry, as executor. Niels left 40 acres of his 120-acre farm to each of his children by his second marriage, Annie, Andrew and Henry.

- Henry: the 40 acres where the Niels and Maren Larsen home was located.
- Andrew: the 40 acres to the west of Henry's 40.
- Annie: the 40 acres to the north of Andrew's 40 acres, which Andrew then bought.

Niels also left \$500 to his daughter, Else Marie, in Denmark.

I, along with some of the older Larson cousins, have childhood memories of Niels and Maren's vacant home down the lane from our grandparents' farmstead and just west of the creek that in Niels' day drained into Pelican Slough. The lane from our

grandparent's farmstead turned left just before the vacant house. The lane then went up and over a steep hill and eventually ended at the Dane Hollow road. This lane allowed our grandfather to access the land on his parent's farm. After Henry and Ellie married and moved to their new home, the old Niels Larsen farmhouse was sometimes rented to other families.

Niels did not include his three surviving stepchildren, Mary K., Lars Peter, and Louis, in his will. In January 1916, Niels' stepdaughter, Mary K. Henderson of Council Bluffs, challenged Niels' will. There is no evidence that Mary K. prevailed. However, the estate was not settled until April 1918, when my great-uncle, Henry, made final payments, including Niels' bequest of \$500 to his daughter Else Marie, which Henry conveyed to the Clerk of District Court, along with the information that he did not know how to locate Else Marie in Denmark.

Of interest: My grandfather, Andrew Larson, lost his father Niels' eighty acres during the economic turmoil in the rural Midwest between World Wars I and II. By 1925 Niels' inherited land was heavily mortgaged. Sometime between 1930 and 1935, title passed to the B. T. Dow trust. However, by 1950 my uncle, Vernon Larson, was able to repurchase the land his grandfather and father had once owned. Today the land once owned by my older Larsen/Larson relatives is owned and farmed by their descendants.

A Serendipitous Event:

Until July 4, 2007, I did not know the Danish origins of my great-grandfather, Niels. On that very rainy day in Aalborg, Martha and I cancelled plans to attend the nearby Rebild 4th of July celebration. She went shopping and I walked to the Danish Emigration Archive. There the staff helped me to finally find the roots in Denmark of Niels (Christensen) Larsen.

By an uncanny coincidence, the Danish Emigration Archive is immediately behind Vor Frue Kirke where Niels was first married, and Niels' first child, his daughter Else Marie, was christened and married. It is also less than five miles from where Niels lived before emigrating.

I know of three discrepancies between my previous understanding of Niels' life and what I found during my 2007 trip to Denmark:

- (1) I had thought that Niels was born on February 7, 1825, since that is the date found on his death certificate and tombstone and is compatible with his age as given in censuses in the United States. However, Danish church and census records and a document Niels prepared all indicate he was born on February 7, 1828. (I have no idea how this error first occurred.)
- (2) Niels once showed my uncle, Albert Larson, a scar, which he said was caused by a German cavalry saber in one of the Schleswig wars between Denmark and Germany. However, in Niels' application for a medal for service in the first Schleswig war, from 1848 to 1850, he did not indicate that he was wounded. (Perhaps he also served in the second war, in 1864, and was wounded at that time.)
- (3) I had thought that Niels began farming in Hazel Dell Township in 1874. However, in his 1876 application for a medal from the Danish government, Niels' occupation

was translated as a grocer. (This may be a mistranslation as I'm told the Danish words for grocer and farm owner are similar.)

The Descendants of Niels and Maren Larsen:

My great-grandparents, Niels (Christensen) Larsen and Maren Larsen, had three children and sixteen grandchildren as summarized in the list on the following page.

Fourteen of the grandchildren survived into adulthood and thirteen married and had children. All grandchildren are now deceased. The last grandchild living was Ethel Irene (Larson) Torneten, who died early in 2015 at the age of 102. My mother was Leona Margaret (Larson) Christiansen.

Older Descendants of Niels (Christensen) Larsen and Maren Larsen

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Niels Larsen (b. Christensen) (7 Feb 1828 - 8 Dec 1915)
& Maren Larsen (24 Aug 1837 - 19 Feb 1912)
m. abt 1871, Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA

Annie Dorothy Larsen (23 Apr 1872 - 7 Jan 1958)
& Nels Christian Augustine "Chris" Johnson (30 Jan 1868 - 8 Jul 1942)
m. 28 Oct 1897, Pott. Co., IA

Dorothy Christine "Dollie" Johnson (27 Jul 1898 - 16 Apr 1990)
& Christian Thomsen (29 Dec 1891 - 1 Jul 1967)
m. 10 Jul 1918, Dollie's parents' home, Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Minnie Marie Johnson (8 Mar 1900 - 4 Oct 2001)
& Arthur Otto Wohlers (14 Feb 1896 - 15 Oct 1969)
m. 6 Apr 1921, at Minnie's parents' home, Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Nels C. "Sonny" Johnson (2 Nov 1902 - 28 Nov 1906)

Marvin Chris Johnson (12 Oct 1905 - 16 Jul 1993)
& Cecile Mae Hutchison (23 Mar 1907 - 30 Aug 2005)
m. 29 Oct 1930, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Florence E. Johnson (24 Aug 1908 - 26 Nov 1966)
& Clarence B. Ryan (27 Aug 1907 - 7 Sep 1983)
m. 3 Apr 1929, St. Patrick's Cath. Ch., Mo. Valley, IA

Andrew A. Larson (26 Apr 1874 - 22 Oct 1949)
& Karen Margrethe "Maggie" Hansen (31 Aug 1880 - 14 May 1962)
m. 7 Feb 1900, Hazel Dell T., Pott. Co., IA

Albert Henry Larson (30 May 1900 - 19 Oct 1987)

Edna Marie Larson (4 Jul 1902 - 22 Feb 1946)
& Louis William Petersen (23 May 1899 - 4 Mar 1988)
m. 31 Dec 1924, Pott. Co., IA

Lillian Dorothy Larson (14 Nov 1904 - 16 May 1990)
& Hilding Ferdinand Gidlund (10 Jul 1902 - 10 Apr 1961)
m. 23 Aug 1932, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Florence Edith Larson (4 Dec 1906 - 24 Feb 1945)
& Carl Bernard "Bernard" Larsen (26 Jun 1908 - 2 May 1972)
m. 6 Nov 1935, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Leona Margaret Larson (28 Jan 1909 - 15 Apr 1969)
& Alvin McKinley Christiansen (14 Oct 1901 - 18 Sep 1973)
m. 30 Aug 1933, Evangelical Church, Walnut, Pott. Co., IA

Ethel Irene Larson (16 Jun 1912 - 8 Jan 2015)
& Oscar Adolph Torneten (14 Dec 1906 - 19 Jul 1976)
m. 22 Aug 1934, Evangelical Church, Walnut, Pott. Co., IA

Helen Ruth Larson (19 Jul 1915 - 20 Aug 2013)
& Victor Thybo Petersen (26 Mar 1912 - 17 Aug 2006)
m. 28 Aug 1935, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Vernon Edwin Larson (18 Oct 1919 - 13 Jan 2003)
& Thelma Mae Schroder (10 Dec 1920 - 20 Jan 2002)
m. 26 Jul 1939, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA

Alice Elaine Larson (1 Sep 1923 - 24 Jun 1954)
& Norvin Clarence Oamek (25 Nov 1922 - 28 Oct 2007)
m. 27 Oct 1941, Omaha, Douglas Co., NE

Henry Larson (15 Apr 1877 - 12 Feb 1957)
& Ellen Marie "Ellie" Hansen (27 Dec 1887 - 25 Jun 1982)
m. 29 Mar 1916, courthouse, Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA

Evelyn Dorothy Larson (12 May 1918 - 10 Apr 2011)
& Lewis Henry Temps Rhode (21 Jan 1916 - 2 Jul 1997)
m. 19 Oct 1939, Our Savior's Luth. Ch., Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA

Evelyn Dorothy Larson (12 May 1918 - 10 Apr 2011)
& Charles Wilbur Lindsay (2 May 1914 - 2 Feb 1987)

Evelyn Dorothy Larson (12 May 1918 - 10 Apr 2011)
& Philip Lee Sherbondy (30 Apr 1932 -)
m. 31 Dec 1958, Omaha, Douglas Co., NE

Donald Robert Larson (29 Sep 1930 - 1 Oct 1930)

End of the *Lives of Niels (Christensen) Larsen and Maren Larsen* section
of the *Larsen* volume of *Robert Christiansen's Older Relatives*.

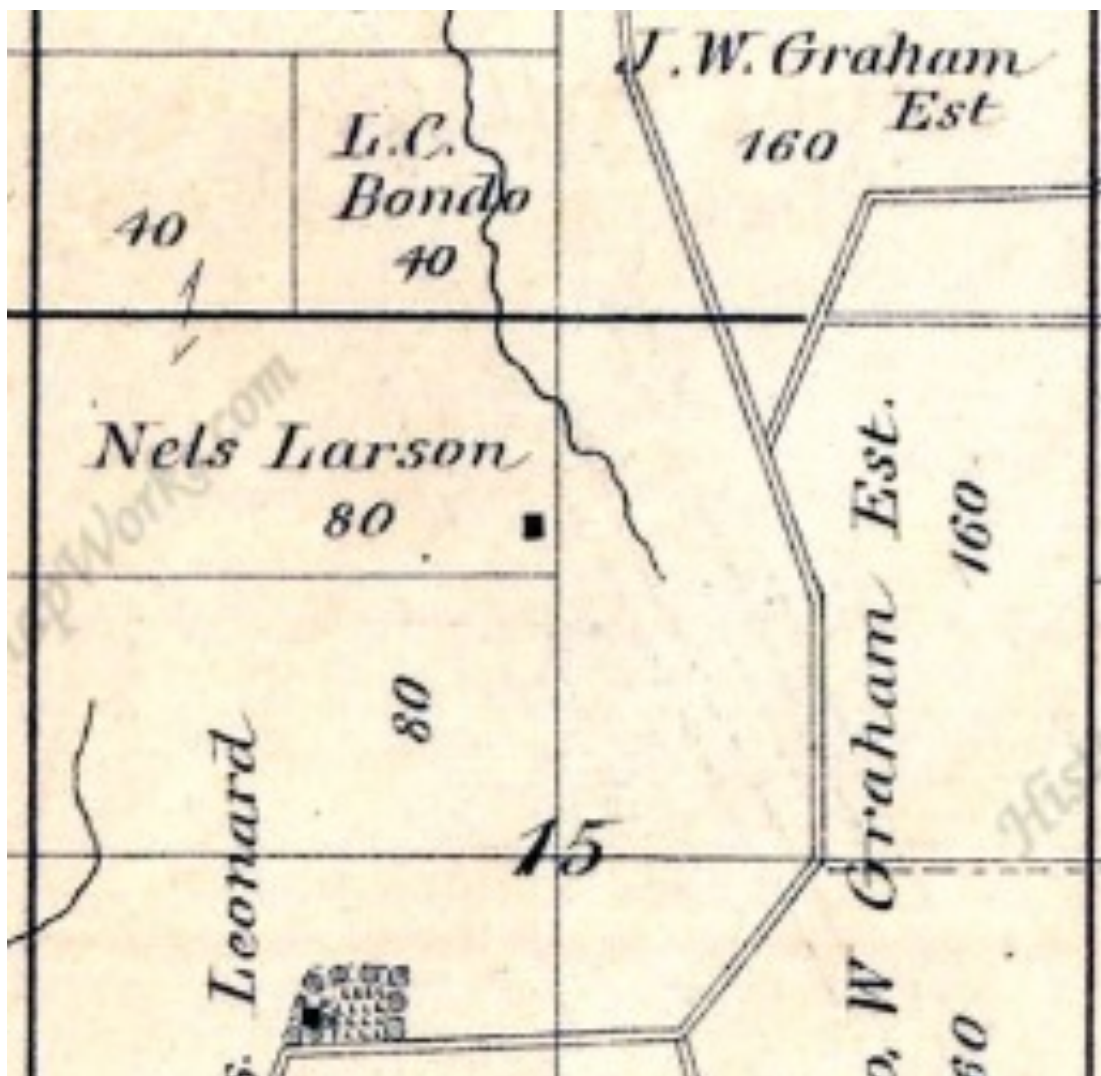
Chapter 2 Appendix – The Early Larsen/Larson Farms

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I believe that my great-grandfather, Niels (Christensen) Larsen, and his family moved to Hazel Dell Township from Council Bluffs in 1874.

In late 1881 Niels Larsen bought 120 acres in Sections 15 and 10 from the Graham family. (John W. Graham, from Canton, Illinois, had acquired original title to all the land in Sections 15 and 10 in the 1850s.) My great-grandfather's farm was just northwest of where my grandparents, Andrew and Maggie Larson, lived and was mostly on the west side of the creek. The partially-brick house on this farm which some of us remember was probably built early in 1885.

1885 Plat of part of Central Hazel Dell Township, Pottawattamie County, Iowa



courtesy of mapworks.com

When my great-grandfather, Niels Larsen, died in 1915, each of his three children

(Annie, Andrew and Henry) inherited 40 acres. In the 1919 plat book, my grandfather, Andrew Larson, owns the west 80 acres (he had bought the 40 acres which Aunt Annie inherited) and Uncle Henry owns the east 40 acres. Sometime in the late 1920s or early 1930s my grandfather lost his 80 acres; in the 1935 and 1939 plat books the B. T. Dow Land Trust owns the 80 acres. Before 1950 my uncle, Vernon Larson bought the 80 acres his father had lost.

The Bondo family had earlier owned the 40-acre parcel in Section 10 where Uncle Henry and Aunt Ellie's buildings were located and where their grandson, John Sherbondy, has lived since 1980. Laurits Christian Bondo bought this parcel before 1885, and sold it to his brother, Oluf Bondo, in 1901. Oluf Bondo sold to Nels J. J. Nelson in 1905, and Nels J. J. Nelson sold it to Alfred Nelson in 1909. Uncle Henry bought this parcel from Alfred Nelson in 1916, and inherited the 40 acres to the south.

The Laurits Christian Bondo home place was in Section 11, where Paul Christoffersen, a great-grandson, has lived for many years.

Nels J. J. Nelson was the son of Swen Nelson. My great-aunt, Ellen "Ellie" (Hansen) Larson, was born in Swen Nelson's house in 1887 when Swen lived in Weston. Nels J. J. Nelson lived across from St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Boomer Township after selling to Alfred Nelson in 1909.

Alfred Nelson was the son of Lars Nelson, who lived nearby on what later became the Henry T. Peterson farm around 1930.

Until around 1940, my grandparents, Andrew and Maggie Larson, never owned the 80-acre farm on which they lived. Rather, it was part of the holdings of the John W. Graham estate. In 1919 the Graham family still owned about 900 acres in central and north central Hazel Dell Township. Unlike many landlords, the Grahams did not maintain buildings for their tenants.

Around 1940, the Graham estate sold the farm that my grandparents, Andrew and Maggie, had rented for 40 years to a neighbor, probably to Hans Nelson. Evidently this sale took place without the foreknowledge of my grandparents or their children. My mother's family had to pay a premium to Hans Nelson to buy back the farm. In the 1950 and 1967 plat books, Uncle Albert Larson owns these 80 acres. Gary Larson now lives on the 80-acre farm of his grandfather, Andrew Larson.

Between 1935 and 1950 Uncle Henry expanded his holdings from 80 to 160 acres by buying eighty acres to the east of his original 80 from the Graham estate.

My great-grandparents, Peter and Dorthe Hansen, and later my great-uncle, Hans Peter Hansen, also rented their farm in Hazel Dell Township, Section 10, from the Grahams.

End of the Chapter 2 Appendix – *The Early Larsen/Larson Farms.*

End of Chapter 2 - *Niels (Christensen) Larsen & Maren Larsen Family*
of the *Larsen* volume of *Robert Christiansen's Older Relatives.*