

## **When Christian Met Karen**

### **The early lives in America of Christian Bondo and Karen Jensen**

from *Immigration to Boomer Township from Dronninglund Parish*, Version 2

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I first wrote this for the 2011 Bondo family reunion held at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Boomer Township. In November 2013, I also copied it into the *Christian Bondo and Karen Jensen Family* report in my *St. Paul's Boomer-Neola Early Families*. Those interested in the older relatives of Karen "Carrie" Jensen (Bondo), also known as Karen Hendriksen, should also see my report *Kirsten Pedersen's Relatives*.

This sketch contains the immigration stories of Laurits Christian Bondo and Karen Jensen, such as I know them, along with the context during which they lived during their first years north of Council Bluffs in Boomer Township, Pottawattamie County, Iowa. I have tried to indicate the portions that are conjectural on my part.

#### **About Christian Bondo:**

**Laurits Christian Fog "Christian" Bondo** (1846 – 1907), also known as L. C. Bondo, was born in Denmark to Niels Gumme Bondo and Ana Petrea Elisabeth Fog. Christian was born in Faaborg parish, Svendborg County, where his father was a parish priest at the time. Faaborg is a scenic town of about 7,000 in the southwest part of the island of Fyn. Later Christian's father became parish priest in Vallensbæk, near Copenhagen.

Many members of Christian Bondo's family were Lutheran clergy in Denmark. Christian's uncle, Bruun Juul Fog, was bishop of Sjælland for ten years and Christian's younger brother, Peter Bruun Juul Bondo, served as dean of Roskilde Cathedral.

Christian Bondo immigrated around 1865 and by 1867 was employed by Peter Peterson of southwestern Boomer Township.

#### **About Peter Peterson:**

I believe that the Peter Peterson mentioned above was the first Danish settler in the Boomer Township area. Peter Peterson had been a miner in California and in 1862, after returning to Denmark for a visit, bought and settled on the Robert Kent farm in Boomer Township, Section 36. Peter Peterson married his housekeeper, the Civil War widow Rachel (Cady) Shadden, and Peter and Rachel had eight children.

Peter Peterson, like many of the later Danish settlers in the Boomer Township area, came from the Stevns peninsula on the island of Sjælland south of Copenhagen.

The Peter Peterson farm and several nearby farms were located on the site of Bybee's Camp, established in 1847. Bybee's Camp along North Pigeon Creek was one of many temporary settlements in the Council Bluffs area where Mormons paused for several years before continuing to Utah. When the United States Government opened Pottawattamie County land for sale around 1853, speculators acquired most of the land. Thus in 1862, when Peter Peterson bought his farm, speculators still owned large amounts of raw land, both timber and prairie, just a few miles distant.

Peter Peterson's farm was well situated to serve as the nucleus for the Boomer Township Danes who began to arrive in the late 1860s. The road north from Crescent

into Boomer Township forked at the Peter Peterson farmstead. One branch continued north along the west side of North Pigeon Creek. The main branch turned east, crossed North Pigeon Creek, ascended McKeown hill, and then turned north and followed a ridgeline for several miles, as county road L36, also known as Clearwater Avenue, does today. From 1879 to 1884 the Harrison post office was located at the Peter Peterson farm.

Peter Peterson's two oldest children married siblings, sons of Thomas Thomas and Martha Evans, Mormon immigrants from Wales who had returned to Boomer Township from Utah. The Peter Peterson and the extended Thomas families are the subjects of an interesting family history, *Two Families from Boomer Township*.

### **... back to Christian Bondo:**

Perhaps Christian Bondo ended up in Boomer Township because of a chance encounter between a Bondo relative and Peter Peterson, a meeting that happened to be documented in the Peterson/Thomas family history mentioned above:

*"Upon his return to Denmark, Peter Peterson went to his old home in Skjorpinge, and the following was entered in his Book of Recommendation:"*

*'Peder Pedersen, having been six years in California, has notified me of his arrival here. He is stopping with his stepfather, Peter Jensen, in Skjorpinge. August 4, 1860, C. D. Fog, Pastor'*

C. D. Fog is Carl David Fog, the pastor in Lille Heddinge Sogn, not in the adjoining Havnelev Sogn where Skjorpinge was located. Lille Heddinge and Skjorpinge are about four miles apart. Carl David Fog was the first cousin of Christian Bondo's mother.

In January 1868, Christian Bondo and John Sorenson, another recent immigrant from Denmark, jointly purchased 123 acres of wooded land in Boomer Township, Sections 29 and 30, from William Selvy for \$1,600.

### **About John Sorenson Jens Sorensen/John Sanderson:**

Christian Bondo's partner, who in 1868 called himself John Sorenson, was born as Jens Sorensen in Denmark and was later known as John Sanderson. We have been unable to find his roots in Denmark. In 1881, he was a charter member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Boomer Township, but he died in 1882 and is buried nearby in the Grange Cemetery.

### **About Karen Jensen:**

**Karen M. "Carrie" Jensen**, sometimes known as Karen Hendriksen, was born in Dronninglund Sogn in northern Denmark to Jens Christian Hendriksen, a smallholder, and Kirsten Pedersen. Jens Hendriksen died when Karen was a child, leaving behind a pregnant wife and several children.

Karen's mother, three of Karen's siblings, and other of Karen's relatives converted to Mormonism and immigrated to Utah. I have sketched their story in my report *Kirsten Pedersen's Relatives*.

Karen Jensen immigrated from Dronninglund to the Council Bluffs area of Iowa in 1867 with Gregers Marcus Poulsen Acton, his wife, and their seven children who ranged in age from fifteen down to an infant.

### **About the Gregers Acton family:**

On June 5, 1867 Gregers Acton bought land in Boomer Township, Section 29.

Why did the Acton family, newly arrived in the United States, happen to pick Boomer Township in which to settle?

I may now know the answer, and it lies with another family from Dronninglund.

### **About Christian Pedersen/Peterson:**

Christian Pedersen (Peterson in the United States) and his wife, Ane Margrete Christensen, along with Ane's parents and four of her siblings, emigrated from Dronninglund with Mormons in 1855. Christian and Ane did not go on to Utah, perhaps because Ane's parents died near Atchison in northeastern Kansas. Christian and Ane and their growing family lived in Kansas and Nebraska and came to the Council Bluffs/Omaha area in 1867.

On April 25 and June 5, 1867 Christian Peterson bought land adjoining the later Boomer Township hall site and in 1868 the Christian Peterson family moved to this farm, where Christian and Ane remained until their death. Their farm later became the George Darrington farm and then the Floyd Ochampaugh farm.

Christian Peterson and Gregers Acton were both from Dronninglund. As explained in my report, *Kirsten Pedersen's Relatives*, Mrs. Christian Peterson and Karen Jensen, who lived with the Acton family, were first cousins. Christian Peterson and Gregers Acton both bought land in Boomer Township, 1 ½ miles apart, on the same day, June 5, 1867. This suggests to me that the Acton and Peterson families were acquainted prior to the Acton family deciding to move to Boomer Township

### **Christian and Karen together:**

The road to the Acton farmstead in Boomer Township went past the Peter Peterson farm. Evidently Laurits Christian Bondo, employed by Peter Peterson, and Karen Jensen, the Acton's hired girl, soon met. In *Karen, A Forsaken Little Girl*, based on an interview with Karen (Jensen/Hendriksen) Bondo in 1925, their meeting is described thusly: "When Laurits first saw Karen it was as if 'someone had hit him on the forehead with a mallet'."

Laurits Christian Bondo and Karen Jensen were married by a local justice of the peace on May 5, 1868, about one year after Karen's presumed immigration date.

I suspect that Karen Jensen's departure from the Acton family, who had brought her to America the previous year, was not easy for the Acton family. Mary Acton's eighth and final child was born in June 1868. And in February 1869 Gregers Acton died and was buried in the Reel's Cemetery just northwest of the Peter Peterson farm. Mary Acton's boys were old enough to do the farming, but the oldest Acton girl was only thirteen when her father died.

The Acton family and Karen Jensen shared one bond. Several Acton family members adhered to the Seventh Day Adventist religion. And Karen (Jensen) Bondo, before St. Paul's Lutheran Church was established in Boomer Township in 1881, sometimes sent her children to Adventist school for religious instruction.

After marrying, Christian and Karen Bondo are thought to have worked on railroad construction in the area, perhaps with Christian as a teamster and Karen as a cook.

Christian and Karen Bondo settled in a "simple block house" near the west end of the Bondo/Sanderson land. Here their first two children were born, my great-uncle by marriage, Peter Bondo, in 1869 and Minnie Bondo, later Minnie Christoffersen, in 1870.

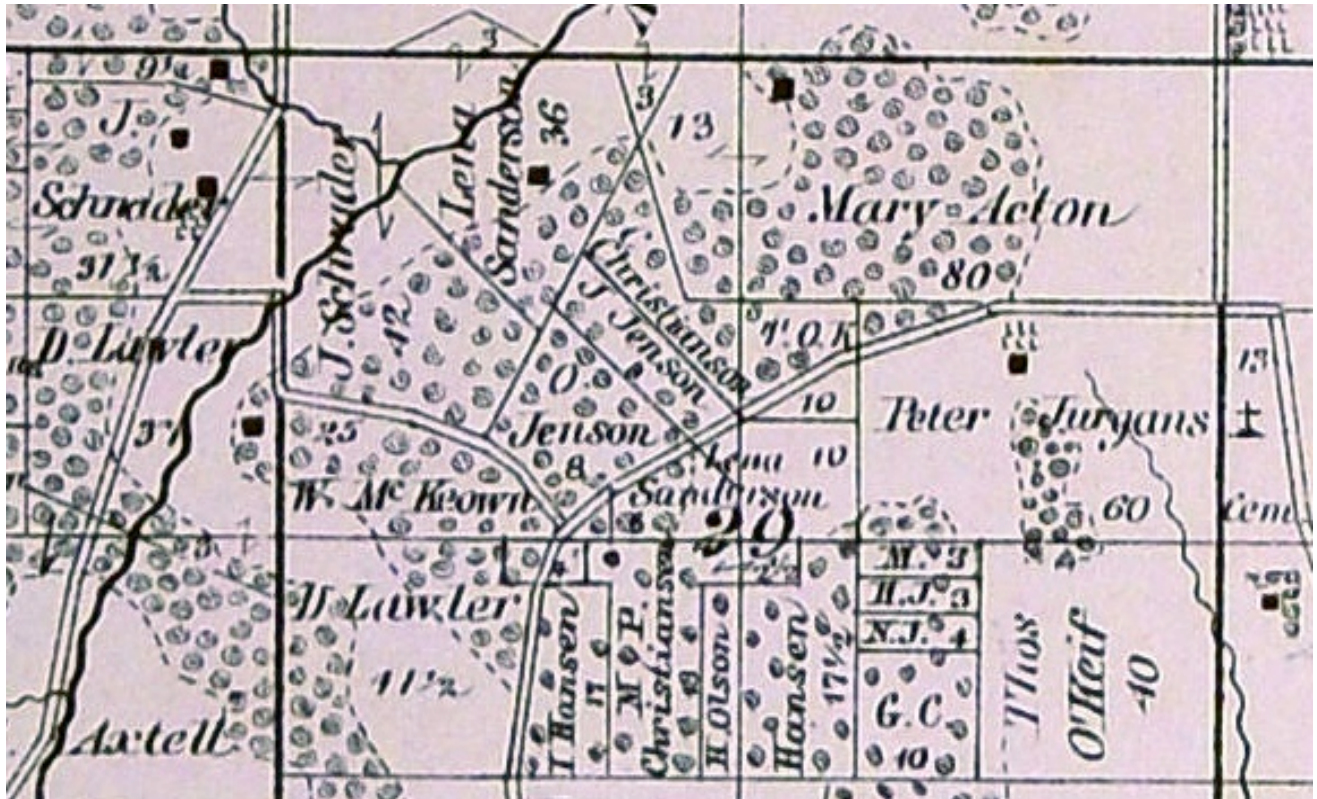
In May 1870, Christian Bondo and John Sanderson split their 123-acre property in Boomer Township, with Christian Bondo assuming ownership of the west portion of 86 acres.

In 1872, the Christian Bondo family left Boomer Township. They moved about eight miles to the southeast, to prairie land in Hazel Dell Township, Section 11. Their home place in Hazel Dell Township has remained in the Bondo family and is currently owned by Paul Christoffersen, a great-grandson of Christian and Karen Bondo.

### **The first Bondo farm:**

When Christian Bondo left Boomer Township in 1872, he sold his Boomer farm to Christen Skaksen, the great great-grandfather of my late aunt by marriage, Thelma (Schroder) Larson Jensen. Aunt Thelma's grandmother, Anna Matilda Nielsen, then 10 years old, had immigrated with her grandparents from Dronninglund Sogn earlier in the year. Anna Nielsen married John Schroder in 1878 and by 1883 ownership of the Bondo/Skaksen farm had passed to John Schroder. Anna (Nielsen) Schroder remained on the Bondo/Skaksen/Schroder farm for the next 81 years. After Anna Schroder's death, the Schroder family sold this farm.

The following 1885 plat shows the J. (John) Schroder farm, which had been the first Bondo farm. It appears to comprise about 80 acres ( $37 \frac{1}{2} + 42$ ), lying on both sides of the road and both sides of North Pigeon Creek. Note the two houses on the property. Note also the farm of Lena Sanderson, the widow of John Sanderson, Christian Bondo's partner in the land purchase. See also the farm of the widow Mary Acton, where Karen (Jensen) Bondo first lived. Peter Peterson, who employed Christian Bondo, lived about two miles south of the Bondo/Skaksen/Schroder farm.



### Finding the first Bondo farm:

One can locate the original Bondo farm in Boomer Township, Section 30, by taking the Old Lincoln Highway north from Crescent, turning right onto Coldwater Avenue, and then left onto 190<sup>th</sup> Street.

- ☛ After about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile, look for a one-story house with a block foundation on the left-hand side. This is the Peter Peterson farmstead where Christian Bondo worked. The current home was built around 1913. On the right-hand side note the remains of a steel bridge across North Pigeon Creek. The old county road crossed this bridge and ascended McKeown Hill before turning left and following the ridgeline.
- ☛ Shortly after the Peter Peterson farmstead site, note a small sign on the left-hand side pointing to Reels Cemetery where Gregers and Mary Acton are buried.
- ☛ About 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  miles past the Reels Cemetery sign, look for a modern log residence, well screened by trees, on the left-hand side of the road. This is the approximate site of the Bondo home in Boomer Township. The original Sanderson and Acton home sites were on low land across North Pigeon Creek and may be lost.

I don't touch on subsequent Bondo family history here. Rather, see the *Christian Bondo and Karen Jensen Family* report in my *St. Paul's Boomer-Neola Early Families*. A recent Bondo family writing is the 2009 document *The Bondo and Henriksen Families United – The Story of Henry Bondo and Lilly Henriksen*, subsequently updated with *Appendix J*, by Donald Pedersen, a great-grandson of Christian and Karen Bondo.

Incidentally, around 1912 Ernest Bush, a Danish-American outlaw, burned the house on the Peter Peterson farmstead, a farm which had been so instrumental in the early Danish-American history of the Boomer Township area. But that is another story ...