

# LAURA

Our Family History

Written by Clara  
Christensen Larsen



## LAURA ANTONIE LORENTZEN CHRISTENSEN

A brief history of the life of Laura Antonie Lorentzen Christensen beginning November 13, 1881. Share her journey and life experiences beginning in Stoke, Norway then to Hyrum, Utah on to Blackfoot, Idaho then to Lost River, Idaho and finally Home again.



# LAURA ANTONIE LORENTZEN CHRISTENSEN



Retyped by Muriel Brittain Tew

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Laura Antonie Lorentzen Christensen was born November 13, 1881 in Stokke, Norway, the second child of Lauritz Antone Lorentzen and Clara Olava Kristiansen Mikkelsen. Her father was lost at sea thirteen days before she was born, so the care of Laura and her sister, Clara Helena, was left to a loving mother; who worked at dressmaking and millinery to supply the needs of the family. She was a devout Lutheran and read from the Bible and other religious texts. Both girls were required to listen even though other children often played outside.

Laura's father, a handsome gentleman with black, curly hair, had been a very efficient ship's carpenter, a violinist, and a man with a keen sense of humor.

When five years of age, Laura suffered a chronic stomach ailment. It is thought that her life was spared because of the earnest prayers and tender care of her mother. From her seventh to her fifteenth year, Laura attended public school at Haugan, Norway. The education there received was comparable to that of our Elementary and High Schools of today. A year later she attended Lutheran Seminary or Minister's class and graduated in a year with high honors. The course included Bible Literature and History and Lutheran Literature.

The confirmation which took place at the time of graduation gave the outstanding students an opportunity to display this ability. Boys and girls were lined on either side of the center aisle in the beautiful House of Worship where the Minister tested the knowledge of each one. The girls wore long black dresses, the boys wore dark suits.

After graduation, she was permitted to partake of the Sacrament of bread and wine. The wine (*the true blood of Christ*) was passed in a tall silver glass. Each was privileged to moisten the lips. The bread, served from a silver dish or a small tablet, was readily dissolved in the mouth. This Sacrament Service, performed by the minister, was very impressive.

When Laura was sixteen years of age, her mother married Antone Olausen, her girlhood sweetheart. They moved to a small city, Melsomvik, where he had a nice home. He was a tall, handsome sea captain who was always kind and considerate.

Laura studied art, needlework, and handicraft at Stokke until she was able to teach it in Melsomvik and Tonsberg. Arts such as knitting, crocheting, embroidery, and millinery were the principle subjects taught.

She became interested in photography and took a course at Tonsberg. She worked at this for four years. She and Emma Bargin, a dear friend, rented a room, batched, and went to school. While in Tonsberg, Laura met Carl Jergeson. They became devoted sweethearts.

When eighteen, Laura and her sister, Clara, went to London to work for the Powers family. Clara was a cook and Laura set the tables and served the meals. Maids cared for the house and children. This place of employment was near the Crystal Palace Gardens. Here she acquired a knowledge of the English language. Crystal Palace was a beautiful glass building where a great many different commodities could be purchased.

At this time, King Edward V was to have been crowned in August. Flower gardens and people's apparel were predominantly red, white, and blue. Elaborate preparations were made. Seats were covered with red velvet, and everything was in readiness when it was announced that Edward was seriously ill. Later in the year, with less pomp and Ceremony, the crowning took place.

At about this time, Antone Olausen Suffered a broken leg as a result of a ship wreck. He discontinued work as a sea captain and began taking charge of provisions at a Naval Port, where he worked until his retirement at age 66.

The Powers family went to Australia on business in 1902, so Laura and Clara returned home Just before Christmas. Laura and a friend, Marie Anderson, attended a Christmas Service at the Lutheran Church. Marie, keenly observant and critical, questioned the "sprinkling" of water on a baby's head, the Christening or baptism. Together they studied to learn more of the ordinance.

Laura had begun nurse's training at the Hospital in Sarpsberg, but she returned home to care for her mother who was suffering from a heart ailment. On adequate recovery of her mother, Laura went to take care of the beautiful home of a friend, Ida Rotewit, who was on a honeymoon in Germany. A Swedish care-taker and family lived at this estate. Laura visited this humble Latter-day Saint family, not knowing of their religious beliefs. On seeing two young men dressed in Prince Albert suits, Laura asked the mistress concerning their purpose for coming often to their home. Fearing Laura would not visit them if she knew the men to be Mormon Missionaries. The Swedish lady hesitated. When L. K. Larsen of Hyrum, Utah and Joseph Nelson of Manti. Utah came again. Laura was introduced and was given a card-the Articles of Faith. Books were loaned to her and questions answered to help her understand L.D.S. Gospel principles.

When she went to Oslo to work, she attended the Mormon Church at Osterhouse, Gotten 27, a Mormon home. Laura became eager to compare Mormon principles with those of other churches in an effort to prove Mormonism to be wrong. At one time, she attempted to attend services of another church. The building was lighted, but for Laura, the door would not open.

From Lutheran Literature, Laura understood that punishment for sin was everlasting and that Heaven was only for the righteous. The pamphlet left by the L.D.S. Missionaries seemed to confirm the doctrine that what was everlasting, was everlasting. She closed her Bible feeling that the Latter-day Saint church was wrong. Having studied for weeks with insufficient sleep, her weary eyes closed.

The concern of her mother, sister. and step-father: the taunts of people on the street and the questions and searching eyes to learn about her Mormon "horns" were matters of grave weight to Laura. Her mind was not at rest. She could not sleep.

In desperation, she knelt in fervent prayer, "Oh, Father, help me to know what is the truth". The Spirit of the Lord gave her reassurance that God would show her the right, as Joseph Smith had received the answer to the same question.

She turned on the light, opened the Bible, and her eyes stopped on one verse--Jude, Verse 6, which reads: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." As her eyes caught the word unto, she felt so sure the Lord had acknowledged the turmoil in her soul and the burning desire to know the truth, that she seemed to see His divine finger pointing to the word. Doubt left her aching heart and mind, she knew this was the work of the Lord, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. She knelt again to voice her gratitude. Since that time, there has been no doubt in her mind.

On New Year's Eve, 1905 after receiving the answer to her prayer in the fall, Laura was baptized by L. K. Larson of Hyrum, Utah, in a beautiful font in Oslo, Norway. On three walls of the room were scenes of the Jordon River. The experience impressed her deeply!

The next two years were spent pleasantly at home, although her mother had implied immediately following her baptism that she would not be accepted by her family. Her mother said later, "I am glad that you have been home this long, and that I have learned that Mormonism has not changed you for the worse."

When Carl Gustav Jergensen, the wealthy, early girlhood sweetheart and business man, learned Laura had Joined the Church, he thought she had become ill. He suggested she be sent to a sanitarium for a complete rest. The engagement to the much-loved and admired gentleman was broken.

At her mother's home, Norman Skanky and Nephi Christensen, Mormon missionaries, called on Laura as they were tracting in that District. Laura attended the meeting place at Tonsberg often after that.

On September 9, 1909, Laura left her native land, family, and friends and began her voyage to "Zion". This required a great courage and faith in the Gospel! Her mother and stepfather assured her that she would be welcomed home. And money provided if she desired to return.

She arrived in Hyrum, Utah on September 25, 1909. Emma Frogner Peterson, Nephi Christensen's sister, met her at the depot. For a short time Laura worked for a man whose wife had passed away, leaving small children to care for.

Laura felt very alone! She had been accustomed to green forested hills; a profusion of moss, wild flowers, and leafy trees and shrubs which blossomed; no dead wood lying on mountain slopes; roads kept up--many of them of carefully laid stones or bricks; road sides trimmed and "unlittered"; and fjords and other coastal fronts of extreme beauty. She missed the well painted homes and buildings, the neatly fenced gardens and yards, and the flags so neatly and commonly flown.

The Western stores at that time did not display fine linens, expertly hand-crafted silverware and jewelry, elegant fabrics, hand-made laces, delicate china and crystal, nor the intricately designed woolen articles she had been able to choose from in Norway.

It disturbed and hurt her to observe the lack of Reverence shown in L.D.S. Chapels. She appreciated the quiet which had been maintained in European houses of worship. Business dealings with "Saints" were sometimes less honorably executed than Missionaries had led her to expect.

Recognizing that the dry and dusty West was just being "peopled" and developed was some comfort. To a home-sick convert, she knew her faith and courage were being tested. Not being a lady prone to look back nor express regrets, these disappointments were rarely mentioned. At ninety she said, "God had made her back equal to the burdens she'd been called to bear".

After a brief courtship with Nephi Christensen, the returned Missionary from Norway, Laura and he were married in the Temple in Logan, Utah on January 19, 1910. A week later they moved to Nephi's home, three miles East and North of Blackfoot, Idaho.

Laura immediately scrubbed, calcimined (*painted*), hung curtains and pictures, placed doilies started potted plants, and made the one room "homey". Nephi soon began building a lovely four-room house with walk-in closets, pantry with screened elevator, screened back porch, full basement, hardwood floor and picture windows in front room, and storage closets on the porch.

This house sat on a hill. Wide dirt walks circled the house, with long board paths in front of the back door to prevent dirt or mud being tracked indoors. Large lawns were on all sides with flower beds artfully placed. Poplar, apple, pear, plum, cherry, and pine trees were planted. Gooseberries, currants, raspberries and strawberries were next to the large garden plot. All of this area was watered by flooding. As the sun warmed the water on the lawns, the children ran splashing and laughing through it!

There was a wood-pile and pump north of the house. All of this was enclosed by a high net fence with neat gates to keep animals out. A big area, "park" we called it, south of the house and lawns, was also enclosed by the fence.

West and North of the house, Nephi built a garage and grainery, chicken-coop, "bunk-house" and barn. There were pig pens, sheep sheds, and large corrals. Machine shed and hay and straw stacks were beyond this. Together the couple made this a "choice farm home".

Shortly after her marriage, Laura was sustained as Supervisor of the Needlework Department on the Blackfoot Stake Mutual Board. Four years later she was released to serve in the Primary of the Blackfoot First Ward with Serena Vance-whom she came to love dearly!

New babies were welcomed often. Names and dates are: Clara Lorentzen -- December 2, 1910; Olive Lorentzen -- October 5, 1912; Ove Lorentzen -- September 1, 1914; Thelma Lorentzen -- August 26, 1916; Coston Lorentzen -- August 17, 1918; Noma Lorentzen -- July 23, 1920;

Anton Robert -- August 18, 1922; Christian Raymond -- August 18, 1922; Nephi Lorentzen -- July 30, 1924 (stillborn); and Harold Lorentzen -- December 28, 1925.

The first two babies were delivered by Dr. Mitchell, who later had a "drinking problem," so Dr. W. W. Beck attended Laura at the birth of all others. All were born at the home except Harold, who was born at the home of a nurse, Mrs. Nelson. Laura suffered long, hard "labor" each time! Dr. Beck was very impressed and looked long at the doilies and other hand-work Laura had made. This was the beginning of a close friendship between his wife and Laura.

Before Noma was born, Laura wove the strips from fruit baskets into a larger basket to be used for a baby crib. She fastened to one end to make a canopy. The entire interior was padded. Sheeting was dyed a delicate blue and so tied and quilted over the padding as to make it beautiful and durable enough for daily use. Off-white lace from curtains was cut and gathered to provide three pretty ruffles. The canopy was also covered with blue and lace to look delicate. It was deserving of the great praise it received from friends who called to see the new baby. It cradled the twins for several months.

The twins were the only "bottle-fed" babies. When they were only a few months old, Laura gave each one a bottle (a medicine bottle was used). Soon Raymond would cry. When Laura arrived on the scene, Robert, having drained his bottle, was smilingly finishing Raymond's. Laura would chuckle and refill a bottle for Raymond. This happened often.

Many nights Laura carried the kerosene lamp to our sick beds; changed our night clothes, sheets, and other bedding if, necessary; or warmed oil, cotton, and a hot-water bottle to ease the pain of earaches. She rocked and sang to us after she'd done all possible to make us physically more comfortable. Nephi was asked to administer to us when suffering was great.

When the twins were tiny, the washing machine--which had to be pushed from then pulled toward the person operating it - broke. Laura stood on the screen porch through the cold winter and rubbed the clothes for all ten of us on a board. Then she boiled them on the kitchen stove and hung them to freeze on the lines outside to help bleach them. Her arms ached from wringing every article so many times. For a while that winter, after rising at four A.M., bathing the twins, preparing breakfast, combing and braiding our long hair, getting us off to school, cooking and serving meals to hired men, doing all other household duties of the day, Laura's feet were so swollen at the close of the day that she couldn't step on them. She'd sit on a low rocker and move it forward, one side at a time, to get herself to the twin's bed to prepare them for the night. She never complained at the pain or discomfort. She played and talked with all of us children and showed us her love. To decrease this stress, Nephi took the laundry, except for diapers, to Davis Laundry for many months.

In summer the milk kept in the basement elevator, would curd or clabber. Laura skimmed the thick cream off and made it into butter which she washed, salted, and "pated" into pound moulds. This was delicious, as was the clabber or "yogurt" which we loved for supper with sugar or honey. Laura also made delicious cheese. Just before the curds were to be pressed, Laura salted them and let us enjoy all we wanted of them. We also enjoyed the "aged" cheese on our sandwiches for lunch.

Much washing, scrubbing, and the use of screen doors and windows and "mosquito netting" over the babies' beds helped her maintain her high standard of cleanliness and sanitation. Every spring all bedding was taken out for washing or shaking, furniture was washed, stained and varnished, woodwork was washed and varnished, our prized hard-wood floor was scrubbed and varnished to give it a lovely gloss. Walls were calcimined, curtains were washed, stretched, and starched if necessary. Drapes were re-dyed, sometimes in coffee grounds. Silver was polished after tarnish had been removed.

Each year Nephi butchered a steer and a pig. After it had hung and cooled adequately he cut the carcass into small pieces to be cured, smoked, or bottled. Laura bottled much beef to be enjoyed all year. She ground pork, made sausage and rendered the lard. One year, she cleaned and sterilized the entrails, then stuffed them to make link sausage. This was a rare treat, but too much work. The fat "cracklings." were boiled to get fat for making soap. The annual summer outdoor picture of the camp stove with a boiler of bubbling soap and the strainer, or screen, over the tub for straining, cooling, and cutting, is vivid in my mind.

For years Nephi was in the Blackfoot First Ward Bishopric. Laura gave him total support. Saturday evening every child's hair was shampooed with egg yolk and each child was bathed in the round tub in front of the Majestic cook stove. If no cookies or cake were being baked for Sunday's lunch, the oven door was down and that extra heat was enjoyed as our clean clothes absorbed it before we put them on. Each Sunday morning a lunch was prepared for all of us and we took our polished shoes from the line where they had been placed the night before. Our clean, pressed clothes we got from our closets. We rode in car, buggy, or bob-sled (with heated bricks at our feet) to Sunday School at ten A.M. At noon, after others had gone home, the lunch was brought in and we sat together to eat egg salad or cheese or jelly sandwiches and cookies or other "treats". (Nephi was usually in a Bishop's meeting). We children walked around in the building, played the piano and sang as we held "pretend Church". This was closely watched by Laura so that we would not harm anything in the building nor soil our clothes.

At two P.M. Sacrament Meeting began. All our family sat on the front row and knew that we were expected to sit quietly. When the twins were small, Laura held one, and Clara or Olive held the other. After the Sacrament Service, all children marched into "Religion Class" where songs were sung and lessons were given to each age level, At four O'clock Church was dismissed, but we were often required to wait until Nephi had finished with helping people with their problems. It was hard to wait, especially in the summer, because Nephi usually took us to the Bon Ton for an ice-cream cone. We were careful not to spill on our best clothes.

On arriving home, our Sunday clothes were removed, hung or folded, and put away. Soiled items were prepared for laundry, and shoes were lined up in the closet in order of size ready to be dusted or polished on Saturday afternoon.

Laura took all the children in the buggy to Blackfoot to Primary each week. On one occasion, the horse became frightened and ran. Somehow she kept four little children from falling out of the buggy as the horse crossed two narrow bridges and sped down the lane to the corral gate.

Laura had Olive and Clara carry kettles of chicken soup with Danish dumplings or pies, cakes, cream puffs, or other delicious food to sick neighbors. On April 1977, R. M. Johnson told Clara how much the Moore family had enjoyed her generosity on many occasions. When W. Jensen's home burned down, Laura cooked meals and prepared beds for six people for many weeks until they got a temporary shelter prepared to move into.

Laura loved to prepare and serve elaborate dinners using her beautiful linen and silver, much of it from Norway. Drs. Beck and Hoge and wives, the Parkinsons, Claytons, Browning, Ipsons, Bills, and Johnstons and other Stake Relief Society Board members were often thus favored. The foods she prepared had "eye appeal" as well as great taste.

Her meals for hired men or neighbors who exchanged work with Nephi at haying or thresh season were much anticipated. When Noma was one year 'old, Olive carried her from the kitchen to the pantry to give the baby a drink, and keep her happy and content. On returning, the baby on her arm prevented her seeing Laura, who was carrying a large kettle of beans from the stove to drain the liquid off--there was no sink in the kitchen. Noma was burned on the face, neck, and chest. Olive's arm was burned, Laura ran to the pantry with the girls and covered the burns with the cool cream and milk from the basement elevator. Then she sprinkled on baking soda. Laura's tears and prayers as she and Dr. Mitchell removed clothing and daily dressings are unforgettable. In her characteristically organized way, she finished preparing and serving the fried chicken dinner with hot rolls, smashed potatoes, vegetables, and pie for twenty eight men, and for three meals daily until the grain was hauled, threshed, and the straw stacked. They loved to play in those stray stacks.

Recognizing Laura's pleasure at keeping the home clean and neat, each time she left home to help the sick or go to meetings, Olive and Clara divided the responsibilities of scrubbing floors and making each room orderly and making and frosting a cake to place, with flowers a "welcome" on her return. Her JOY and appreciation of our efforts were most rewarding to us.

When Clara and Olive were 16 and 14 years old, arrangements were made for them to take piano lessons from Mrs. Parkinson, a gifted pianist who walked with a crutch and was sixty years old but always Jovial. Each week the buggy had a box in which Laura put meticulously cleaned chickens, eggs, milk, cream, fresh fruits and vegetables, and freshly baked bread to help pay for the lessons. Though the lack of time for practice made our progress slow, Laura praised and encouraged us. She was especially pleased when we were able to play hymns and other songs which we could sing harmony to. At times the entire family stood around the piano and sang together. Nephi had sold the Oldsmobile to buy the piano.

School teachers taught Olive the soprano and Clara the alto to many lovely songs, some of which they sang alone for programs at Wicks school. One was a Japanese number telling of native customs. Laura made flowered kimonos and styled their hair on top of their heads. She taught them to gesture with fans and parasols from the Orient. She taught them two pretty Norwegian songs and dressed them in national costumes she'd made. All the family went in the buggy, sleigh, or Oldsmobile when the girls sang at Wicks, Wapello, or Ward or Stake programs.

Very often Laura could be heard singing hymns or Norwegian songs as she stood over the long kitchen table fitting patterns, some of which she had made, and cutting fabrics; or sat at the treadle sewing machine by the East window making clothes for each child. To fit them perfectly, she stood the person on a chair or the table and pinned the fabric to personal contours. Clara and Olive were dressed almost alike. The detail and "class" in the styling of dresses, coats, hats, muffs, suits, etc. often caused people to ask where the clothing had been purchased. Proudly "Mother" was announced to be the seamstress or person who had done the delicately embroidered design.

Picking raspberries every day for weeks in the summer was often rewarded by the delicious pies Laura made of some of them and served with whipped cream. Meals in summer were often served on the screen porch or in the yard under the trees to escape the heat of the kitchen stove. She never seemed to object to the many extra steps involved to provide this pleasure.

On July 4, it was necessary that hay be hauled all day. Characteristically, all children were unhappy. Laura prepared fried chicken, made salads, and cream puffs to eat on the lawn to help make dinner seem like a celebration.

Laura helped cut potatoes for planting each spring. Sometimes she stood or sat by the "sorter". When the time to thin beets came, she gave breakfast at four o'clock, thus making it possible for thinning for several hours before the noon-day's greatest heat. After lunch the children went swimming to have fun and to "cool off". Laura swam with and taught the swimming strokes--occasionally.

One summer the weeds in the beet field grew taller than we were and very tough and hard to cut down. Laura worked with us to keep us encouraged, sharpen our hoes, and show us how much she loved us. As a result of this extra exertion and the intense heat, she became ill and was confined to bed for several days with a bladder infection. Clara was ten years Old, and from her bed Laura told her how to reactivate the "live yeast" and make eight loaves of bread. Neighbors seemed amazed to see the beautifully baked bread. Clara mixed bread frequently after that to lighten Laura's responsibilities.

When her day's duties of cooking for family and hired men, cleaning, washing, ironing (with heavy irons which were heated on the stove), mending, canning, care of garden, picking berries and meeting the needs of small children were completed; Laura frequently sat most of the night embroidering and sewing. She made most of the clothes for sons and daughters. Her children were often stopped on the street or in church to be told how "well dressed" they were. On seeing an especially beautiful light blue wool dress with white satin lined coat and hat and muff with fur trim in a Salt Lake City shop as she attended Conference one fall, she purchased the necessary materials, and after cutting her own patterns, reproduced "elegant outfits" for Olive and Clara. With tan kid buttoned shoes with brown trim and tassels, the girls looked magnificent! Her sewing skill was unsurpassed!

She taught the girls first to mend and darn, then to embroider, fit patterns, sew, set table properly and beautifully, cook, bake, and can fruits, vegetables, pickles and Jellies. She was particular that

foods looked appetizing whenever meals were prepared. She was meticulous in the cleaning of chickens and other meat and in handling milk, cream and butter.

In the winter of 1922, the family was moved from this much-loved home to a larger farm on Rich Lane farther east. This house was old, had no closets and no cabinets. Nephi put the cabinets from the other pantry into this dining room, and those from the porch into a bedroom to make a closet for the boys. He built a large bedroom for the girls with a "walk-in" closet. He made a kitchen with a bench all along the South Wall. This provided storage space underneath (hinges were on the lid) and seating place for several beside the table during meals. Behind the bench was a large South window, which made the kitchen very bright and cheerful. The wash-stand cabinet, dish and cooking utensil cabinet, water bucket stand, and cozy stove with reservoir completed the contents of this room.

There was a living room with wainscoting on all walls. This was scrubbed to remove milk and other dirt, since the separator had stood in here. Woodwork and floors were scrubbed and painted immediately. A rug was laid, telephone installed, and the folk's solid oak table, writing desk, and other fine furniture moved in. A new floor was laid in the dining room, and a huge poplar tree Just outside the window was cut down to allow more light to enter. Laura put plants on the stump of this tree when spring came.

A "milk house" Just South and West of the new kitchen, became the room for the separator, the screened milk cabinet, tables for emptied fruit bottles, trunks of clothing seldom used, and boxes of books. The garage was attached to the East end of the milk house, and a nice room to house hired men was upstairs. A large orchard where luscious transparent apples and other fruits blossomed and matured was farther East and toward the barn, which stood on a small hill. A row of picturesque poplars grew North of the orchard along the road to the barn. North of the orchard was space where garden and raspberry and strawberry plants were planted. A large canal ran North of this. Across this canal, hidden by willows and vines Laura planted, she had Nephi place the "out-house". Papers were burned in a big can.

All woodwork inside the house had appeared to be a dark gray-green, but after Clara and Laura had it scrubbed, it became pale blue. This was painted a pleasant tan immediately. When all was cleaned and Laura had made pretty curtains and placed her lovely pictures, doilies, and plants in the right places, this new abode felt like home. To Clara, Olive and Thelma, Laura assigned particular room to dust and keep tidy. Each Saturday these rooms were to be thoroughly cleaned. Help with care of younger children, cooking, and dish washing was also delegated, but rotated frequently. Sandwiches for school lunches were prepared of home-made bread, wrapped in wax paper, and put in lunch boxes in the evening. On rising, the boys, and often Thelma, dressed and hurried to the barn to help milk cows, and feed calves, sheep, pigs, cows and horses. They were called to come to wash, change clothes, eat breakfast, and with Bolly and the buggy, go to school. Some years each family took turns supplying foods which the girls heated and served in dishes brought and washed at home. These hot vegetables or soups tasted delicious with cheese or egg salad sandwiches. Laura had a hot dinner ready when the children returned, starved, from school. After eating, and changing clothes, they did chores and came in to do home work and play with each other.

From 1926, the Blackfoot Stake Relief Society Board enjoyed the services of Laura as Art and Needlework Instructor for fifteen years. Blanche Johnston and Mary S. Bills were Stake Presidents. For twenty years Laura was Supervisor of the entire Needlework Department of the Eastern Idaho District Fair in Blackfoot, Idaho. Here she enjoyed the association of many capable and appreciative people. Her arrangements of the various displays was most beautiful! She also won hundreds of red, white, and blue ribbons and many cash prizes for items she had made—dresses, suits, coats, pants, gloves, purses, hats, table cloths, quilts, pillow slips, dish towels, drapes, and many embroidered, crocheted, or knit doilies and pieces to beautify the home. Her creations were made from all types of fabrics, and many were remodeled. She made hats from velvet, felt, fur, feathers, wool, and wove hats and purses from Iris leaves. Many American flags she's made of silk or ribbon so carefully hand-sewn that it is difficult to see the stitches. These have received honors at the Fairs in Blackfoot, Arco and Salt Lake City. She presented one to the General Board of Relief Society. It was gratefully received and beautifully displayed in their S.L.C. Office.

Artificial flowers she made of numerous materials have appeared almost to be alive as a result of her genius and deftness. She created many paintings; braided items; plastic crochet hats, purses, rugs; and afghans. She's made wall hangings and pillows from men's ties, wool embroidered tapestries, leather tooled articles, fur stoles and capes from fur coats, dolls she's "dressed for table decorations and scarves and muffs. Her embroidered pieces were neatly finished on the wrong side and elegant on the right.

A year after moving to Rich Lane, the huge stump was dug, chopped, and pulled out; a new lawn was planted; and board walks were laid. Grass-cut to lie on the side was laid to hold the dirt for Laura's flower garden. The roses and cannas in it were gorgeous!

When Transparent Duchess, or Wealthy apples ripened, the apple peeler was fastened to the end of the table. An apple was pushed onto three prongs. By the turn of the wheel, an extremely thin peel was quickly removed, leaving the fruit ready to be cored. Much apple sauce and many crocks of spicy apple-butter were put in the basement to be used on our sandwiches for school. Hundred of quarts of other fruits, jellies, Jams-some had seeds of apricots added to them. vegetables. pickles, and meats were prepared for winter enjoyment. Some "vegetables and fruits ere dried. Laura made a delicious "sweet soup" of dried fruits.

One warm summer afternoon, Laura washed her hair in the soft water in a metal "flume" which crossed the canal. She used egg yolks to keep hair soft and glossy. From the egg whites, she made high, fluffy Angel Food cakes.

One summer the wife of a hired man had head lice. She came to our house every afternoon. Laura was "heart sick" when she observed that Olive and Clara had lice in their long hair. After calling the Dr., she poured kerosene over their hair and scalps, then used her home-made soap for shampoo. The problem was ended. Laura cut the hair of Nephi, the boys. and the girls whenever it was needed.

When the twins and Harold were about five years old, they had whooping cough. They spent a very miserable summer and lost a lot of weight before they were completely recovered.

In June of 1928, Laura took Harold, her two and one half year old son to visit with her family in Norway. She found her relatives and friends there eager to show her a joyous time. The last evening of her stay, her girlhood friends entertained her at an elaborate dinner, and expressed regret that she had to leave. Everyone showed love and gentleness to Harold also. They returned home in October.

While Laura was in Europe, Olive and Clara picked a bushel of pie cherries at Tanners'. The next morning, as they were washing and canning the fruit, Coston walked into the kitchen, cap in hand, and blood streaming from a huge head wound. Nephi was called. He phoned for Dr. Beck, who came immediately. Nephi ran to see that horses and hay mower were stopped. Clara prepared Lysol solution, removed bloody clothing, and washed Coston-around the wound and changed his clothes. She and Olive got clean sheets, hot water, and other necessities and prepared the kitchen table to lay Coston on while the Dr. took twenty-two stitches and bound up his head.

All the cherries were canned as were many quarts of other fruit, pickles, Jam and vegetables. The two girls made denim shirts for the twins, and covered two quilts to surprise Laura. She brought gold watches with Mother of Pearl faces, and each child received a special gift. She expressed great appreciation for their efforts in keeping meals, cleaning, canning, and religious activities continuing smoothly in her absence. The credit was hers, for having taught all to take such responsibilities. Olive and Clara had alternated weeks to come in from the field early at noon and at supper time to prepare the meals for the family. Nephi supervised children daily, and worked hard right with them.

Not long after their return from Norway, Harold 'got an abscessed ear. It drained for many days. Dr. Beck examined it and prescribed the care to be given, but Harold suffered great pain and grew pale and thin. The area behind the left ear became very swollen. Arrangements were made and Nephi took Laura and Harold to St. Mark's Hospital in Pocatello where Dr. Pond, an eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist operated on his mastoid. Laura stayed with Harold full time. The family at home, prayed and continued with school and other daily routines. There was great gratitude and jubilation when the loved brother was healed enough to return home!

Long before each Christmas, Laura made a Norwegian pastry "Futigman' s Buckles". It was flaky and delicious. She also made doughnuts, fruit cakes, filled cookies, mince pies, divinity, peanut brittle, caramels, taffy-which we were sometimes privileged to help pull and chocolates with several different fondant flavored fillings.

She made Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners so special with such delicious dressing in turkey or chicken, mashed potatoes with savory gravy, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce or jelly, hot rolls, home canned vegetables and Jam, plum pudding, mince pie, or home made Candles in candle holders had to be carefully fastened to the pine boughs so their light would not ignite decorations or branches when the family danced around the tree as they sang Christmas carols.

Santa's gifts were opened on Christmas Eve, and all stayed up late to play with toys and books. When Olive and Clara got doll buggies, they walked miles pushing them around the kitchen table

giving their dolls rides. The boys got wagons, sleighs, skates, ropes, guns; and everyone received clothing, books, games, and school supplies. Girls got hair-ribbons, beads, dolls, and doll clothes. One Christmas the two big rockers with leather seats were added to the living room furniture, stockings each held an orange, apple, candy and peanuts. Both parents made the holidays a happy time. Sleigh riding, with bells on the horses jingling, was most delightful. Sometimes the children tied their small sleighs behind and wove from side to side of the road, or held to ropes and followed on skis. Apples, nuts, and popcorn popped in the popper on the top of the stove were eaten in the evenings along with Laura's cinnamon rolls, cookies, or doughnuts.

When there was no bread for breakfast, Laura made, pancakes, scones, or her light baking powder biscuits, and for lunches she'd make doughnuts rolled in cinnamon and sugar. Her rice or bread puddings baked slowly in the oven were luscious, as was the rice she stirred full of whipped cream and served with a fruit flavored sauce. She also made a steamed apple pudding with white sauce that usually caused all to ask for "seconds".

Laura's meals for "haying and threshing crews" were referred to as being banquets. She usually served fresh raspberry, strawberry, or apple pie or Angel-food cake with fresh fruit and whipped cream. In mid-afternoon, she took cream puffs, jelly roll, doughnuts, cinnamon rolls, or cake; with a cold fruit juice drink; to the workers in the field. One fall many High School students were brought out to pick potatoes. They were fed the same types of luscious foods. When it rained in the afternoon, they all went indoors, muddy feet and dripping clothes to wait for cars to take them home.

One April 1st Laura made a beautiful pie and put boiled potatoes in the filling instead of bananas. After each hired man had tasted his, without registering his surprise, Laura brought in another banana pie. They all joined in her fun.

In the winter of 1921, Laura was bedfast with stomach ulcers. She lived on nothing but milk and cream for many months. She lost much weight and became weak, but was recovered enough by spring that she was able to make Clara's wedding dress and Olive's bride's maid dress. Both were very beautiful! She also made the wedding cake, and dressed the doll which stood on top of it, and prepared a delicious dinner for many wedding guests.

Shortly after Clara's marriage, Nephi moved the family to a two-room yellow house on the Asylum Lane. Laura made a clothes closet of cardboard and brown paper on the North end of the kitchen. She put the pianos back against the end of the bed on the East wall the writing desk against another bed, thus separating the East room for a living room and sleeping quarters. Another building was moved near to provide bedrooms for the boys. The roof leaked so pans and buckets were placed where necessary when it rained. A lawn was planted to help hold the blowing sand. Laura made a rock flower garden at the North and several flower beds at the South of the house. A large vegetable garden farther west provided summer victuals.

Regardless of the location or the type of house, Laura made the interior beautiful and artistic with her wall hangings and doilies, plants and pictures. Her talent and ambition in landscaping created floral scenes so appealing that people came from far off to feast on her imaginative skills. On April 20, 1977, Laura's niece, Eva Bernszen, told Clara, "Your mother lived in some homes

that weren't too nice, but she fixed them up and kept them like a mansion. They were always immaculate, and she kept herself like a queen." It was while living here that Laura began having pain in the sciatic nerve of her left leg; so in the fall, a move was made to the large Parkinson home in Blackfoot. In this dining room, with windows along the entire North and East walls, a couch was placed where Laura could recline and enjoy the light as rest, time, and hot pads helped her to recover. They learned that white home across the street, also a Parkinson property, was for sale.

The next spring they moved into it. A screened porch reached across the front, the East. On the South side was a room with windows all along the wall. This became Laura's sewing room, and just outside it, she built a gorgeous lily pond. Coston arranged that water could come flowing down over the rocks. She and the family built a rose arbor, a well with an old Oaken Bucket, a fish pond, sunken garden, and elegant arrays of all kinds of vines, flowers and shrubs. Laura's love for plants and "green thumb" produced a profusion of blossoms.

Depression made it necessary for Laura to help provide for the family's needs by sewing dresses, coats, skirts, blouses, purses; and buy cutting apart men's suits, pressing and making them into lady's suits. She remodeled suits for the wives of Drs. and Attorneys. She won first prize at Eastern Idaho's Fair for many of them. They were lined and tailored meticulously. Many relatives and friends were fortunate enough to be fitted by Laura into such a wool suit. She sewed long hours in the night to get her orders filled.

Tomlinsons, neighbors, went for an extended vacation, and left three children in Laura's care. She kept house, cooked, and slept at their home; but went to her home to sew while those children were in school. The twins had paper routes, and gathered coal from along the train tracks to help heat the home that winter.

Nephi bought land in Moore, Idaho. The boys were with him to help farm it in summer. In 1941, Laura moved to join them at a place in Mackay, Idaho. She was immediately sustained as Needlework Instructor and later as President of the Lost River Stake Relief Society. It was while she held this position, that the Flower Show with garden and house blossoms- needle work, hobby displays, and an elaborate musical program was originated. On August 22, 1952, Laura, in costume, sang the Norwegian National Anthem and was the narrator for the Stake Relief Society's Scandinavian program at that annual Flower Festival. Each Ward in the Stake participated every year. Clara directed Arco's Relief Society Chorus that year in a Scandinavian number. This festival has continued to be a much anticipated and enjoyed annual cultural enrichment for Lost River Valley!

Laura worked diligently in this capacity, under the guidance of the Lord, until she was called, with her husband, to fill a mission to Norway in 1947.

While Laura was President, Sister Belle Spafford, Church President of Relief Society, came to visit the Stake. Under Laura's supervision, and using Laura's fine linens and Silverware, a lovely banquet was served. An American Flag Laura had hand stitched, centered the table, and was presented to Sister Spafford after the dinner and program, given in her honor. This flag was placed in Relief Society's Museum of Arts in Salt Lake City.

In December 1947, Nephi and Laura were called to labor in a Norwegian Mission. Apostle Mathew Cowley of the Council of the Twelve, when setting Laura apart, said, "If ever a time should come when words fail you, bear your testimony that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God and you will be able to speak fluently". They were promised a safe return to family and yet greater work to be accomplished by both.

Caring for the Mission Home at Stavanger, feeding Missionaries and Saints who came there, teaching Norwegian ladies how to prepare many American foods, showing how to sew and remodel clothing were her chief duties. Saints had suffered privations during the war and were eager to learn to become better home makers. Laura also taught Gospel principles in their Branch meetings.

The couple was permitted to visit Laura's parents and sister, Clara, before they returned home. Their Mission was largely financed by Laura's inheritance from her parents. Monies extended by them to assist Saints with families come to America also came from this source.

During the winter following their return from Norway, Laura took care of Clara, who had a fractured left leg, and her family in Arco. Nephi lived on the Moore farm to care for sheep and cattle, coming in frequently to visit and have meals. Laura told Clara she felt it had made winter easier for her to adjust physically because the house at Moore would not have been as warm. In the spring Laura joined Nephi to help with planting and other garden and farm responsibilities. Flowers and shrubs were planted and their typical home beautification routines repeated.

Laura was immediately made Moore's Ward Handwork Director to aid the Ward and Stake Relief Society fill their Welfare quotas and to up-grade work done in leather, flower making, sewing, knitting, painting, and clever and useful gift items. In August, 1951, Laura and husband began serving on the Lost River Stake Genealogical Committee.

Laura usually rose first, started the fire, heated water in the teakettle, and put oatmeal in the double boiler. Toast was made in the oven or on top of the stove when she saw Nephi coming in from chores. Fresh fruit or jam and butter completed their breakfasts. If Nephi was out in the field longer than she expected, Laura would go to the corrals and call and search. She was much relieved when he found him.

In 1950, Clara nominated Laura as Idaho's Mother of the Year. Many choice letters were written by friends to recommend her for this honor.

Outstanding in her life is the Patriarchal Blessing given her in 1928 by Hyrum G. Smith, the Church Patriarch; which begins: "*Thy faithfulness hath prevailed for good with the Lord; thou shalt be blessed in body and mind for good. If thou wilt hearken unto that sweet prompting voice that will be thy guide, thy duties shall be made plain and thy pathway marked out*", have been a directive for accomplishment and a source of strength as she's excelled in all her activities.

"Never an Idle Moment nor Worldly Property Wasted" has been Laura's life! She's made beautiful things from what she's had! Though mother of ten, and always active in Church assignments, she has made most of her family's clothing. She has braided hats and purses from Iris leaves, for daughters and daughters-in-law and friends; made afghans and pillows from

men's ties; made and dressed dolls for table decorations; has done leather tooling; crocheted a rug and hand bag from plastic bags; embroidered wool wall tapestries and sofa pillows; made corsages from wood fiber; made hats of velvet, fur, felt, crepe paper, feathers, and wool; made fur capes and stoles from fur coats; and made embroidered pillow cases and sheets and quilts and bed spreads. At 89 years of age, she was still making beautiful embroidered articles and doilies with intricate crocheted patterns. She kept her home clean and neat, made cakes and breads and canned fresh fruits and jams and jellies. Her meals were delicious with special salads and dishes of savor and much "eye appeal".

She attended Church regularly, going early *as* Nephi went to Priesthood Meeting, sitting in Sunday School with him where she helped with Sacrament; then returning to Sacrament meeting after she had prepared and served a lovely dinner. When Nephi gave Patriarchal blessings, he paused to wait for her to write them down. This was difficult for her since she'd had little formal training for writing in English.

The Moore Ward Relief Society, with Sister Kotter and a helper, honored Laura on her 88th birthday. They invited Nephi to be with her on this happy occasion. About 60 women were in attendance. A sextet sang three numbers, there was a violin duet, and a clever reading. Relief Society President, Beatrice Sorensen, gave some of Laura's Life History. She closed by saying, - "And that's why we love you so much, Sister Christensen". Then she bent and kissed Laura. When asked to speak, Laura very sweetly thanked them all for their kindness and thought-fullness to her and Nephi. They presented her with a lovely purse. Olive was able to be there to enjoy this - "Choice Tribute". Refreshments were served as guests extended personal expressions of gratitude and love to Laura. Nephi had Olive buy Laura a new dress for this grand occasion, but Olive was unable to arrive early enough for her to wear it; Laura had lost much weight in the last months because she had become diabetic.

In the fall of 1970, Nephi felt it unwise for them to spend the winter alone on the farm, so crops and animals were disposed of. With hearts full of emotion, Clara, Olive, Marco, Thelma, and Noma packed boxes with life time treasures to be distributed among the nine sons and daughters. Clothing and other personal needs for Nephi and Laura were placed into suitcases. Furniture, appliances, tools and machinery were taken to Sayers to be stored or delivered to family members who could use it. Nephi guided all this activity saying little, but indicating the extreme heaviness of his heart! A life-time of "Home" for this wonderful couple was at an end! They would spend their future with different ones of their children.

It was a great joy to the Larson's to have Ove and Buelah bring them to Logan on December 20, 1970. Thus they were able to attend the Wedding and Dinner for Gilbert C. and Joyce Gunnell on December 21, 1970. Their presence also made the Larson's Christmas more delightful that year.

Going into different homes and making the adjustments necessary was strenuous for the aged couple. Laura's sciatic nerve again troubled her, and on one occasion, she fell. She was taken to a Dr. for x-rays, and though she screamed and sweat with pain, he left her fractured hip as it was; nor did he prescribe insulin for her though tests proved her to be diabetic. It was not until December 29, 1971, that Ove's Dr. in Salt Lake City having been called after Laura fell a second time at Ove's then found two breaks in the hip. He was extremely angry that Laura had been left

to suffer such excruciating pain for those many months. This Dr. was able to secure both breaks with one pin. Laura's hip healed magically after Nephi and Ove administered to her. Insulin shots were given daily, which relieved her constant thirst and desire for sweets.

Though she was now very thin, it was difficult for one person to help her to balance as she walked. It was hard for Nephi to help her at night and all day. His strength was over taxed. He needed more rest, as did the adults in each home where they stayed. The wheel chair did not meet all Laura's mobile needs. Consequently, Nephi and the children discussed the advisability of placing her in a Nursing Home. Several were examined, but after Nephi was escorted through Sunshine Terrace at Logan, Utah; he felt. It to be most acceptable. He and Clara made all arrangements for financing all her costs there, there they put her name on the long "waiting" list. the opening available on March 28, 1972, Nephi declined. Another call on August 1, he accepted.

Following a day of boating, water-skiing, wading, swimming, sunning, visiting and eating at the North end of Bear Lake with 60 family members participating and Laura there in her wheel chair; Marco, Nephi, and Clara took Laura and her personal articles to Sunshine Terrace at 6:00 P.M. on August 5, 1972. She was given a semi-private room, meals served regularly, daily baths, and insulin shots, weekly Dr. visits or oftener when needed, weekly hair appointments, full time nurse observation, opportunity to participate in crafts and handiwork. liberty to attend weekly Relief Society and Sacrament meetings, freedom for visitors at any time, very gentle and loving care and attention always by all employees, laundry service and place for holiday or other special family gatherings.

It was here that Clara brought Nephi daily to spend the day or visit with Laura for a few hours. He was assured that she had excellent care and comforts of a consistently regular schedule. He missed her constant companionship, but expressed an inner peace, knowing all her physical needs would be met. Visits, flowers, and gifts from family were frequent. When Clara's school began, she and Gilbert took Nephi to Barclay's so he would not be alone during the day. Clara went many times weekly to always find Laura-receiving efficient succor, and though she gradually became less aware of her calls, Laura thanked her for coming.

Laura's courtesy and graciousness to attendants brought a reciprocation of tenderness and love from ail. Often they coaxed her to sing hymns or Norwegian songs for them.

The ulcer she'd had on her left leg for many months, was healed with the loving attention of Dr. and Nurses. Clara took Laura out for short rides in her wheel-chair when days were pleasant and flowers blossomed in adjacent yards, but she seemed anxious to return "home".

On Thursday, April 3, 1975, enroute to Salt Lake Conference, Harold, Alice, and family brought Laura a gorgeous Easter Lily. They, and Clara after school that day found her in bed. Friday morning Sunshine Terrace's manager called Clara to say the Dr. would meet her in Laura's room at 8:00 a.m. His diagnosis was kidney failure and pneumonia "condition grave". He offered to put Laura in the hospital, but after Clara notified family and discussed it with them; it was deemed wiser not to move Laura. Clara spent April 4, 5, & 6 with Laura. Nurses turned her, gave aspirin suppositories and sponge baths to reduce temperature. swabbed mouth and put Vaseline on lips, put drops in her eyes, changed her beading when she perspired, propped her knees and shoulders with lamb's wool pads, and spoke lovingly to her. Olive, Thelma, Noma, and Raymond

came Saturday. Together burial items were examined and arranged for along with funeral plans. Ove was called to let Harold know. He and family returned Saturday night. Terrace management provided pillows and blankets for all of us to sleep and served us a delicious breakfast. On Sunday morning some watched S. L. Conference on T. V. and went to dinner at Craig's. Laura passed away 4:00 P.M. April 6, 1975.

Laura, though always very dignified and "Queenly" in appearance and action, was tender and affectionate. After reprimanding a child for wrong doing, she'd say, "Kiss Mamma" to indicate love for child but disapproval of his conduct in that particular circumstance. She slipped money to Olive and Clara on one occasion to go to the on Ton after music lessons and shopping to have a Cherry Soda. She let them wear her kid gloves she'd brought from Norway to protect their hands when they picked gooseberries. She seldom sent Olive to the basement alone, because Olive had come up once in tears saying, "I pretty near saw a mouse".

She heated flat iron or children to wrap in newspaper and cloths to put at the foot of the beds to help warm them. Bedrooms were not heated then. She heated bricks to put by feet in the sleigh to go to school or church.

She stood many hours in the pantry cutting cookies, some of which she filled, for snacks with cold milk and for school or church lunches.

Once while grinding pork for sausage, she pushed her left, ring finger down too far and crushed it. She moaned and prayed for help as she walked the floor in pain. It was hard to see her suffer so intensely!

She lightly swept up leaves and other debris around the yard to keep it neat and orderly in appearance.

Repeatedly she said through the years, "Oh, I hope the day will never come when I will have to be a burden to anyone." At Clara's on July 21, 1971, Laura said, "I'm so mixed up. It feels like a fog in my mind. It's awful when the mind withers. It's a lot extra for you, and I know you are a widow. Thanks, I appreciate all you do for Dad and me." Clara's response was, "We are very happy to have you here with us".

She answered, "That's surely good and generous of you. This will probably be the last time I'll come to see you. I'm failing fast. The sight in my left eye is about gone. I can see two flags on the piano. Clara had her eyes checked and changed her glasses.

At the Christensen Reunion on June 26, 1965, Marco and Gilbert Larson sang this tribute to Laura L. Christensen:

## **Grandma**

Each day of the year, the memory's more dear,  
Of that wonderful Grandma of mine!  
The things that you've done, we recall one by one,  
Of that wonderful Grandma of mine!

All your work in each Stake,  
The prize food that you make,  
Stitching things for the fair—  
so much praise you won there!

You are a wonderful Grandma!  
Dearest Grandma of mine!  
Wise words & kind deeds, you've met other's needs,  
That's the way of your life so fine.  
You've taught us to praise our Maker,  
to love the flowers He's giv'n,  
Your dignity rare,  
You're loved everywhere.  
Oh, that wonderful Grandma of mine!

During summer visits, Clara repotted plants, defrosted deep-freeze, washed windows, scrubbed walls and floors, cleaned basement, weeded garden and flowers, and did any other tasks which would be too difficult for Laura. The last few years, her left leg sometimes “gave way” causing Laura to clutch furniture to keep from falling. Non complaining as she was, she'd say, “I guess I'm getting a little clumsy in my old age”. She never swore nor used slang. She was glad to have visitors, and stepped to the porch to welcome them. It was customary for Laura and Nephi to stand to the porch to wave “goodbye” to all who had come to see them. Often, through the dust down the road, they still stood waving.

Laura stood straight and tall in reality and figuratively. She was an Ideal wife and mother. She and husband strove to attain their desire for higher education and religious training for their children. Their speech and actions were lofty and honorable. Their example was of thrift and Christ like daily conduct.

Her testimony of the Gospel never wavered. Just three months before her passing, she said to Clara, "In this troubled and wicked world, isn't it a blessing that we have the Gospel to cling to and give us hope"?

I, Clara, have written the histories of Nephi and Laura Christensen 11-5-80 to 5-25-81 humbly and prayerfully with intent, only to leave to my children and grand children truths that will help them to know, love and revere their grandparents. Information contained was collected during my visits with my parents from 1937 and while they stayed with me until 1971 from personal experiences I enjoyed with them, and from incidents family members had related when we've happily recalled our youth.

In 1965 and again in 1970, I read to Nephi and Laura all I had written to that date. They approved all I had then included. I regret any errors and welcome additions from family to complete and make more "vivid" Laura's biography.