

Niels Rasmussen, the son of Henrick Rasmussen and Rabbecca Hansen, was born May 29, 1854, in the town of Maderup, the Parish of Saerslev, Odense, Denmark, and was the fourth of six children.

His father was an expert weaver and was very proud of Neil's singing. When Niels was a young child, his father would stand him on the table to sing company. At age 7, Niels went to school three days a week, and in the summer herded cows and sheep for farmers in the vicinity.

In 1864 some Mormon missionaries came to the village where the Rasmussens lived. Mother Rasmussen warned her little family of the perils of even looking at a Mormon. But in spite of her precautions, her eldest two children, Peter and Kirstine, started attending meetings with the missionaries. When their parents found out, they severely rebuked their children. Soon after, Mother Rasmussen was stricken with a sudden, terrible paralysis that left her only able to move her eyes. The local doctors were powerless to help so Peter and Kirstine suggested that the Mormon elders be allowed to bless her. As the Elders administered to her there was a strong feeling of peace in the room and as soon as the blessing was over Mother Rasmussen suddenly exclaimed, "Look! I can move my thumb!". She soon made a full recovery and the family joined the church.

The urge to come to Zion grew very strong in the Rasmussen family so they made their plans to come to America, but before they could start, Heinrick broke his back in an accident and died. Mother Rasmussen worked hard for three years to save money and on May 10, 1866, the family started their journey to the New World. They traveled by steamship from Copenhagen via Kiel, Germany to New York City. The journey from Kiel to New York took 9 weeks and 3 days. They traveled by train to St. Joseph, Missouri and then sailed up the Missouri River to Wyoming.

From Wyoming they started the trek to Salt Lake City. Unfortunately cholera quickly struck the company and 80 out of the original 280 travelers died. Peter contracted the disease and suffered terribly. Mother Rasmussen cared for him, but her efforts were in vain and she also came down with cholera. A few days after Peter died, Mother Rasmussen died leaving her remaining 5 children orphans on the Plains. The eldest surviving child, Kirstine, was crazed with grief and worry as she realized her responsibilities as the oldest of the five remaining children.

As she and her siblings mourned the loss of their loved ones, their mother was permitted to come back and speak to Kristine. Rabecca said, "I can't stay long. I have to go back. It is a beautiful place on the other side. If I had known that it was such a beautiful place I would not have mourned for my son. Never leave the church. It is the true church. Take care of your brother and sisters." Like others who had died, Rabecca and Peter were buried in a shallow grave by the roadside, after being sewed up in sheets.

A relief party sent out by Brigham Young met them 400 miles east of Salt Lake City and helped the company continue their journey. They arrived in Salt Lake City Oct. 7, 1866. The day after, the orphan emigrants were all provided with homes.

Niels lived in several different homes in Salt Lake over the next few years. He worked in the General Tithing store and later he was the bookkeeper in the Presiding Bishop's Office until March 31, 1909.

In 1878 Niels filled a short-term mission in the United States, laboring principally in Nebraska and Iowa from May 7th to December 20, 1878. After his return he was Ward clerk for the First Ward for a number of years. He also served as Superintendent of the Sunday School from December 1886 to 1901, and Second Counselor to Bishop Joseph Warburton from October 27, 1897 to June 1, 1909.

He married Laura A.M. Thorup September 11, 1879 and Christine V. Thorup November 21, 1885, who were devoted sisters. He was the father of thirteen children; three sons and ten daughters.

He was also a lover of music and gave his children a musical education. He played the violin and loved to sing the songs of Zion. One of his favorite songs was "O Ye Mountains High."

For a number of years Niels studied how to become a dry farmer - farming without irrigation, there being enough water in the wet months to last through the summer - so when he left the Presiding Bishop's Office in March 1909, he began farming in Welby, Utah.

He died March 6, 1914 in Salt Lake City, Utah, at the age of 59 years, 9 months, and 8 days. He was the last survivor of his father's family.

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