

HISTORY OF ELIAS OLSEN AND PETRONELLE PEDERSEN



Elias Olsen was born 7 September 1827, in Loiten, Hedernark, Norway, the son of Ole Eriksen and Oliv Larsen. His parents were considered poor and humble but were hardworking and industrious.

Petronelle Pedersen was born 13 February 1834, also in Loiten, Hedmark, Norway, the daughter of Feder Torkildsen and Petronelle Prebensen.

School was very meager and expensive in Norway at this time. The children of poor people were often not able to go to school at all. Elias had only two weeks of schooling in his life.

Both families belonged to the Lutheran Church. Fourteen was a milestone in the life of a member. At that time, they attended classes taught by the priest and were schooled in the Ten Commandments and the beliefs of Lutheranism. Then they were examined to see if they had learned all that was required for communion. Elias passed the examination successfully and became a confirmed member of the Lutheran Church. Petronelle became a confirmed member at the age of fifteen.

After confirmation, young people were expected to assume adult responsibilities. The young men were supposed to take up an occupation and earn their own living. Elias obtained employment on the farm of a successful farmer. He enjoyed the work, but the earnings were small. He went to work in an iron foundry named Aadals Brug, and he became a successful stove moulder.

Elias and Petronelle were married 20 April 1853 in Loiten. Their first child, Ole Eliason Olsen was born 9 July 1853.

The second child, Peter, born 20 September 1855, lived only a short time, dying 14 Feb 1857. This was a very common occurrence at that time.

The third child, and third son, Peter Elias, was born 10 October 1857.

Next, two little girls were born. Olina, the first, was born 4 April 1860 and died 28 Jan 1862. Olina, the second, was born 14 February 1863 and died 29 March 1865. This made three of their first five children dying in infancy.

About the time of the death of the first Olina, Elias and Petronelle heard of the Mormon Church and listened to the elders. They were trying to find some solution to their grief and answers to their religious questions. After the first visit of the elders, they both requested baptism. After baptism, Elias was told by his employer that he had to give up the church or lose his job. Elias chose the church.

After years of struggle, Elias and Petronelle decided to come to the United States. Four more children had been born to them after the second little Olina died. These children all lived. They were Andrew Peter, born 28 October 1865, Elias, born 11 May 1868, Johannah, born 25 April 1870, and Marie, born 22 October 1872. All the children were born in Loiten.

Circumstances made it impossible for the entire family to come together. Elias, Petronelle, Andrew Peter, Elias, Johannah, and Marie came to the United States on the ship "Idaho." They left Liverpool, England on 24 Jun 1874 and landed in New York City on 6 July 1874. This was a fairly quick trip for the times.

They then came to Salt Lake City by train and arrived there on 15 July 1874. Peter P. Dyreng, a cousin of Petronelle's, helped them to make the trip, and the two families were always close after that.

Elias and Petronelle settled in the Provo area and lived the rest of their lives there. The other two sons, Ole Eliason and Peter Elias came to the United States in 1875, also on the "Idaho."

Two more children were born to them in Provo, Teana, born 30 November 1875, and Anna, born 22 March 1878. This made a total of eleven children, eight of whom lived to adulthood.

Many of the early immigrants did not become naturalized American citizens. There was room and enough for all, so there was not a lot of pressure to become citizens. Elias however, became a citizen on 19 September 1881.

Elias died 9 November 1897, at 70 years of age. Petronelle died 2 November 1917, at 83 years of age.