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**Hansen, Carl J. (1850 - )**

Dorothy Hansmann

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## The Story of My Grandparents in Minnesota

My grandfather, Carl J. Hansen, lived in Sweden until he was eighteen years old. His parents, hearing of America as a prosperous country and of the homestead lands here, believed they would be able to make a good living more easily over here. So in the year 1869 Mr. Hansen and Carl made ready to sail for America. They went on board the steamship at Kalmar, Sweden and landed first at Hamburg, Germany. Then they crossed the North Sea to Liverpool; and from there sailed over the Atlantic Ocean and arrived at Boston, Massachusetts on October 13, 1869. The journey took about two weeks. Carl Hansen and his father then went to Detroit, Chicago, and then to St. Cloud. There they found employment at Sauk Rapids, and worked for their board at the Russell Hotel. Then on March 30 they left for Wilmar and got work on a farm for two weeks. After that they went out near Morris and went to work on the railroad. After two months they left for Crow Wing Crossing on the Northern Pacific and worked on the railroad, until spring. Then they started out for Kandota. They traveled with oxen from Crow Wing through Long Prairie, and came to a piece of land about nine miles north of Sauk Centre at the head of Sauk Lake. There they settled down to farming.

Their homestead contained one hundred and twenty acres. There were only about six families scattered around there then, and the land where Hansens settled was covered with timber. There was a small cabin there that was built of logs and with bundles of rushes laid on the roof as shingles. The land was quite hilly; and when Hansens built their house, they built it on one of these hills which was also a bank of the lake. The hill sloped down on the west and the ground was level a little ways. Then another hill rose directly west and

one to the north of this one. Everywhere the forest was so dense that when anyone stood within it, he could not see the sky. The lake mentioned is a small part of Sauk Lake surrounded on two sides by heavy woods mostly of birch and willow. It narrowed off on the west to a river that turned and flowed south. The trees hung out over the water and were reflected in it. Through the woods in many places were Indian paths. **Many** kinds of wild animals roamed through the woods in great numbers. Deer were especially abundant. When anyone stood in the door of the cabin he could see deer walking along their paths on the lake shore. There were bears too, but not in such great numbers. Great flocks of ducks and geese came to the lake in the fall.

The first task that confronted Hansens was to clear away the brush and timber so that they could plant potatoes and other things. When they wanted to go to Sauk Centre, they had to go in a sailboat. Sauk Centre was then quite small with only two or three stores and a post office. The stage coach brought the mail from St. Cloud to Sauk Centre. The few settlers around where Hansens settled soon began to cut a road to Sauk Centre. There were swamps to cross also, and this was done by means of a corduroy. This was simply logs laid across the swamps. They were laid close together and an attempt was made to cover them, but that soon wore off.

My grandmother, Christina Eckman, went to Germany from Sweden in 1869 and stayed at Kiel three years. Then she went on board a steamship at Hamburg and landed at New York in 1872. From there she went to St. Cloud where she worked a while. In 1872 she also came to Kandota. Then in 1876, she and Carl Hansen were married. They began to make their living by raising what wheat they could on their small tracts of cleared land, and by raising other things that they needed. The



only thing which anyone used for cutting grain in those days was the cradle. This resembled a scythe, but parallel to the scythe were four or five prongs that caught and laid the grain in a straight row. In a few years, however, the farmers around there got the self-raking reaper. This had a circle shaped platform and a sickle. There were five rakes that ran on a circle and served as a reel. These rakes push the grain against the sickle and then go on different mechanism. It slipped under the main circle which the rest ran on and ran on an assistant circle. It followed the platform all the way back and laid the cut grain on the platform from where it fell to the ground. Then the rake would go back on the main circle and go around again.

To add to the other hardships of the time, great hordes of grasshoppers came to the fields in 1876, and threatened to destroy the crops. There was no very successful way to get rid of the insects. The grasshoppers have a strange characteristic; they leave the fields in the evening. Therefore, hay was placed around the field; the grasshopper lit on the hay, then the hay was burned.

The people also took large tin scoops that had been tarred and scooped up the insects. There was very little grain saved that year. Because of this, Mr. Hansen had to begin cutting cordwood and selling it in Sauk Centre.

Alexander Moore had built a dam on Sauk River and built a flour mill there also. He bought wheat of the farmers and made it into flour. Therefore, the people could get their flour quite cheaply. He heard that there was a scarcity of flour and that it was very expensive at Black Hills, South Dakota. It cost as much as \$35. a barrel. When he heard this, Mr. Hansen thought it would be profitable to buy some flour.

here and take it out there and sell it. There were a number of others too who thought favorable of this. So it was decided that on June 23, 1877 a company of ten men would take several **loads** of flour out there. On that day they set out with fourteen loads. They traveled across country. There were some Chippew Indians here then, and they sometimes followed hoping to get some tobacco from the white men. When Mr. Hansen told them that he didn't have any, they talked a great deal in their language and acted disgusted. They followed for four or five days. They would leave in the morning and be gone during the day. Then in the evening they would come back again.

The first river that the company crossed was the Red River. This they crossed in a ferry. Then they traveled along without any trouble until they reached the Jim River. There was no ferry here, and the men had to make a raft by which to cross the river. They made this by placing the wagon boxes, which were made perfectly tight, upside down and side by side. These were tied together, and four more boxes were placed cross ways on the first ones. Then a rope was cast across the river, and someone swam over and fastened the rope to a tree. The raft was loaded with about one thousand pounds of flour, and the men got on and pulled the raft by means of the rope. The oxen swam over. The current was very strong, and if the raft was not managed properly it would tip. After the men had crossed this river, they had no special trouble until they came to the Snake River. That was not as deep as the Jim River and so was not as hard to cross. To cross this, the men placed **two** wagon boxes upside down and length ways on the wagon. Then they loaded on the flour and in this way it was high enough above the water to stay dry. One of the men had a team of mules, and they were hitched on the wagon to steer it. A rope was thrown over and



anchored as when they crossed the last river. By means of this the men pulled themselves over. The mules were in too deep water to pull, but they could steer the wagon.

When the travelers left the Snake River country, the wagon wheels began to dry out, and this caused them considerable trouble. They also began to see signs of Indians. Shortly before they reached the Cheyenne River they met some men who told them that the Sioux Indians were attacking some whites near the river. Some of Hansen's company then became very much excited, and nearly all of them believed that they would never get home again. They imagined that they saw Indians every where, and mistook rocks and bushes for the heads of Indians. In spite of their fears they came safely to Fort Piere. From there it was quite a short distance to Deadwood, where they were going to sell their flour. But when the men reached Deadwood, they were greatly disappointed; for flour had gone down in price so that they received only four dollars a hundred for it. This did not more than pay the expenses of the transportation of the flour.

When the men were going back home again, they joined a larger company. They also took a different route and went through Bismark. On the journey over they had no arms but an old gun; but on the return journey they had plenty of arms, so they felt quite safe. Three days before they started back, two men and woman started out along the same route. Then after Hansen and his company had traveled one day they came to a place known as Bear Butte. There they saw a terrible sight. The three persons who had gone before had been massacred by the Indians, scalped, and their bodies set upon stakes. Then the men were again frightened; but though this massacre had happened only a short time before, Hansen and his men saw nothing of the Indians. They all got

home safely after three months of journeying.

After he got home, Mr. Hansen began to farm on a larger scale. He gradually broke up more ground, and he also bought cows and started in dairying. The country too began to be opened up, and new settlers kept coming in. About five or six years after his return from the Blackhills, Mr. Hansen bought his first grain binder. This enabled him to have greater crops because it took so much less time to cut the grain.

Churches and school houses began to be built soon. School districts were organized and a school house was built in section twelve. It is the school house that is now number 130. It has, however, been moved to section thirteen now. That was not the first school house to be built in that part of the country, but it was the first one to which the Hansens belonged. At the same time, in the late seventies, a congregation was also organized and a church built on the Hansen homestead. That church is still there, but it is not used now.

In the year 1899 Hansens bought their first cream separator, which greatly aided their dairying. Mr. Hansen bought land and added to the homestead. Things went quite well with them as long as they lived there. In 1922 they sold their personal property at a public auction and moved to Sauk Centre, where they now live. They still have their farm and are renting it out. Grandmother and Grandfather still have to look after the affairs concerning the farm and buildings, but they feel relieved that they do not have to run it and work there themselves and more for they are now quite old and quite worn out. They like, however, to talk of the bygone days and of certain happenings there. Grandfather especially loves to tell the story of his trip to the Black Hills and the Indians on the way.

The farm has changed greatly now. A bridge has been built across



the river and roads cut through. Most of the woods is gone, but here and there a few patches remain. Along the river bank, too, some woods is left. The trees, however, are small and there is much underbrush. Some of the hills which before were covered with heavy forest are now bare. The river is more shallow; and the lake too has gone down, so that in one place there is a piece of swampy looking land reaching from the drive to the lake.

--Alpha Lyng



FROM THE RECORDS IN THE STEARNS COUNTY COURT HOUSE

FOR THE CARL J. HANSEN BIOGRAPHY

MARRIAGE RECORD BOOK E. PAGE 378

Carl Hansen and Christine Eekman

Married at Sauk Centre July 15, 1876

By: L. L. West, Justice of Peace

Witnesses: Mrs. E. West and Clara West

HANSEN, CARL J.

File No. B-492

Carl J. Hansen was born in Kalmar, Sweden on October 18, 1850 and lived there until he was eighteen years of age. In 1869 he sailed with his father for America. The journey required two weeks. They worked their way from Boston, Massachusetts to St. Cloud. They later secured employment on the Northern Pacific Railroad and came to Crow Wing where they were employed until the spring of 1870 when they removed to Kandota and took a homestead of 120 acres at the head of Sauk Lake about nine miles north of Sauk Centre.

There were six families located in the vicinity of the Carl Hansen homestead. Carl Hansen erected a small cabin of logs which he cut, from his land. Rushes were used for shingles. At this place the forest was so dense that one could not see the sky within it. The first spring the Hansen's cleared a small piece of land and planted potatoes and other necessary vegetables.

The few settlers in the Kandota settlement built a road to Sauk Centre by cutting away the timber and laying logs as a bridge across the swamps and low lands. These first bridges were called corduorays.

In the fall of 1876 Carl Hansen was married to Christina Jacobson.

Christina (Jacobson) Hansen was born at Skane, Sweden on April 19, 1846. She came to America in 1871 coming directly to St. Cloud where she was employed until the fall of 1872 when she came to Kandota.

Carl and Christina( Jacobson) Hansen had four children: Herman Hansen; Jennie (Hansen) Lyng; Vendla (Hansen) Lewis and Carl Jr. who died in 1930.



In 1876 this vicinity suffered a "grasshopper plague" and the entire wheat crop was destroyed by the insects. That winter Carl Hansen cut cord wood which he sold or traded for food, especially flour, in Sauk Centre.

In 1899 Carl Hansen purchased his first cream separator and also a fine herd of cattle and launched into the dairy business in which he was very successful until 1922 when he sold his personal property and retired to Sauk Centre.

Christina (Jacobson) Hansen died on October 11, 1935.

Carl Hansen was one of the Scandinavian pioneers, who through hard work helped to build a splendid farming community. They suffered the hardships of those early days and contributed their share toward the establishment of good townships and county government.

Interviewed: Mrs. Jennie( Hansen) Lyng  
Date: January 22, 1937  
By: Dorothy Hansmann

Publication Granted

FROM THE RECORDS IN THE STEARNS COUNTY COURT HOUSE

FOR THE CARL J. HANSEN BIOGRAPHY

DEATH RECORD BOOK 2 PAGE 26 LINE 616

Charles J. Hansen Born October 18, 1850 in Sweden

Son of John Hansen

Died October 23, 1935

Age 85 years 5 days

MARRIAGE RECORD BOOK E. PAGE 378

Carl Hansen and Christina I. Kman

Married at Sauk Centre, July 15, 1876

By: L. L. West, Justice of the Peace

Witnesses: Mrs. E. West and Clara West



HANSEN, CARL J.

Second interview to affirm or correct information in biography as compared to information as listed in the legal records in the Stearns County Court House.

CORRECTION:

Death of Carl J. Hansen, October 23, 1935, is correct as stated in legal record.

AFFIRMED:

The name Christina Jacobson, is correct as stated in the biography.

Re-interviewed: Mrs. J. Lyng  
Date: October 21, 1937  
By: Dorothy Hansmann