

By Aaron Jones

Mrs. Laura Christensen of the tiny, central Idaho town of Moore was born in Melsovit, Norway in 1881. She was named for her father, Lauritz, whom she never knew. A sailor, he was lost at sea two months before her birth.

Laura's mother took sewing jobs to provide for herself and her two daughters. In time she became well known for her needlework. Especially for the gay, native costumes and Norwegian flags she made.

Laura and her sister grew into the business when very young.

With three expert seamstresses working, the family's

Nephi and Laura Christensen:

With hard working hands, they stay busy.



Mr. and Mrs. Nephi Christensen of Moore, Idaho, say they know what God gave them hands for — hard work. Though Mr. Christensen is 90 years young and his wife 89, they still run their farm near Moore.

financial situation went from poor to good. Laura herself was able to save money. Before her 21st birthday she had enough money to travel. She went to London first. Then in 1909 she came to America.

"I wanna' t' see what da world is alike, huh."

Laura had enjoyed making the red, white and blue flag of Norway. She felt proud seeing her flags flying from homes and shops in Melsovit. So when in America, Laura continued making red, white and blue flags. This time with stars and stripes.

But the United States flags Laura made didn't excite Americans as her Norwegian flags had thrilled people back home. No one showed much interest in them.

This puzzled Laura: "Could it be the material I used? No, it is the finest silk I could buy.

"Did I make them wrong? No, there is a star for every state and 13 stripes.

"Could it be that Americans just aren't interested in flags? No, that can't be. This great country has such a proud heritage and so many reasons to be proud. Why, every American is proud of their flag. Aren't they?"

Laura was 28 when she came to America. When first here, she lived with relatives of a Mormon missionary she had met in Norway three years earlier. His name is Nephi Christensen. A year after her arrival, Laura was Mrs. Christensen.

Mr. Christensen had 60 acres near Blackfoot, Idaho, when he and Laura were married in 1910. They went there and raised sugar beets and children until the early 30s. Then they moved to Mackay, Idaho and farmed a few years before settling for good near Moore in 1935. The Christensens bought 160 acres near Moore and still farm 120 of it. Forty acres were given to one of their

(continued on page 4)

Story of the month:

Lost River Electric Cooperative
Mackay, Idaho

10 children.

The Christensen farm isn't large, but it has been productive. It is all irrigated. Pumping power is supplied by Lost River Electric Cooperative, assn., Mackay, Idaho, of which the Christensens are original members. Manpower has been supplied by Nephi and his six boys. And Mrs. Christensen and her daughters have done an equally good job in the home.

"She's not one to even sit around," Mr. Christensen, the son of Danish immigrants, said. "She would always find something to do. If nothing else, she would sew. But she doesn't any more. Now she gets tired after a

"Ya, and dey are proud to fly da flag, too."



Immediately above, Mrs. Laura Christensen shows this Ruralite photographer a wall hanging made from blue and purple ribbons won at Idaho fairs for her sewing. She has over 100 ribbons, too.

little of nothing. I guess we're getting a bit old."

Although Mrs. Christensen no longer sews, she has samples of her fine needlework to show. There are a few items saved for each of her daughters. One of them will also inherit several hundred blue ribbons Mrs. Christensen won at Idaho fairs for her needlework.

Mrs. Christensen used her sewing talents in church work. For several years prior to 1947 when the Christensens went on a joint mission to Norway, she was president of the Mormon relief society in Idaho. One phase of her relief work was instructing other church wives in needlework and other crafts. And she taught them how to make flags and told them what the stars and stripes stand for.

Mr. Christensen still holds a high position in the church. He was ordained a patriarch 18 years ago and since then has bestowed patriarchal blessings on over 500 fellow church members. He is now ready to pass the job to a younger man. His hands shake badly and he can't sign the blessing records.

Although he has given up writing, Mr. Christensen isn't ready to quit farming. He still raises sheep and works his field. Friends and relatives help at times. Although his health is excellent for his age, he admits the 120 acres are finally too much. He talks about buying a mobile home so he and Laura can live near relatives in the winter and on the farm during warmer months.

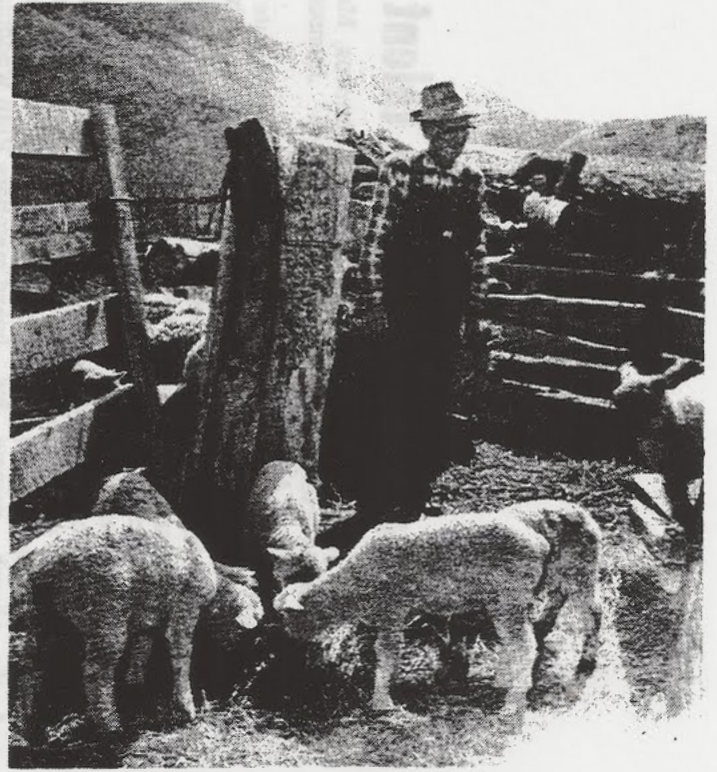
"I had my first major operation this past winter... they took a stone out of my bladder. But I was only in the hospital nine days. And I've been feeling extra good since. I can do a pretty fair day's work right now."

Mrs. Christensen stays busy, too. She cooks and keeps house and also keeps a close eye on Nephi. Whenever he is gone from the house longer than she thinks he should be, she goes out looking for him. When they find one another they walk slowly back to their quaint, pioneer built, log cabin home. Here they spend quiet hours reminiscing.

"We're fortunate people," Nephi said. "We have many friends, good health and, although we've had to be thrifty at times, we've always been provided for."

The Christensens have given many of their belongings to their children. Their land is in their sons' names. Two years ago they gave each of their children who wouldn't receive any land a check for \$2,000. They have given each a little more since then.

Mr. and Mrs. Christensen feel good about being able to help their children. They feel it is a parent's duty, not only to help them financially, but to share with



In photo at top, Mrs. Christensen shows Ruralite more of her sewing. She also made the American flag in picture. Immediately above is Mr. Christensen and a grandson in front of the Christensens' pioneer built, log cabin home.

them the wisdom gained through years of life. Including, as Mr. Christensen noted, to eat and drink what is good for the body, to dress for climate, to work hard.

Also in spiritual things. The Christensens both believe this is most important.

Mrs. Christensen says raising her children by these standards has been rewarding. She delights in talking about her 52 grandchildren and 36 great grandchildren. There are 14 missionaries among them.

"These are good people," Mr. Christensen said. "We love our children and have tried to do what is best for them. They all know the value of hard work and they believe in God and their country."

"Ya and dey are proud to fly da flag, too," Mrs. Christensen said.



At top, Mr. Nephi Christensen feeds his sheep, a job he has enjoyed for over 80 years. Immediately above, Mrs. Laura Christensen with sample of her sewing.