

MY MISSIONARY HERITAGE

By Alexandra Warner

We may identify our ancestors through family history, but learning about our ancestors helps us to identify ourselves as well.

For a long time, family history was nothing more to me than writing names on a pedigree chart, but I have learned that one of the rewards of this endeavor is getting to know our ancestors better.

My Great-Grandfather's Conversion

A few months ago I felt prompted to begin compiling some of my ancestors' life histories. I was overwhelmed

with the wonderful information I found when I read the life histories of my paternal great-grandparents. One of the most touching experiences for me was tracing the story of my great-grandfather's conversion to the gospel.

My great-grandfather Ole Hansen was converted to the gospel as a young man while living in Norway. His mother was a Latter-day Saint, but his father was a member of another church, and Ole was baptized into

his father's faith. Then, when Ole was 20 years old, he prayed to know which church to follow. After a week of offering many humble prayers to his Heavenly Father, he felt an overwhelming feeling that his mother's religion was true. The next day, he quietly went into town and sought out the missionaries. To avoid persecution, Ole was baptized in the dark, early-morning hours of February 2, 1910, in an icy Norwegian river near his home.



WE'RE ALL PART OF A GREAT MISSIONARY HERITAGE

Whether you have an ancestor who served as a missionary or not, we have all been touched by the missionary heritage of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Do you have ancestors who served early missions in the Church? Would you like to know more about their experiences? FamilySearch now has a missionary heritage site at:

familysearch.org/missionary



Learning More

The insights I gained from reading about my great-grandfather's conversion led to questions about his decision to immigrate to the United States and about other aspects of his life. I wanted to learn more, so I began to research his story. I found a wealth of information about him at FamilySearch and other genealogical websites. I found ship manifests detailing Ole's immigration to the United States, information on his service as a missionary called back to Norway, and copies of his passport and other documents. I also contacted relatives who had copies of photographs and other documents.

Throughout my research, I spoke with my grandmother and her living siblings numerous times, hoping to

understand my great-grandparents better. Stories were told, tears were shed, and testimonies were strengthened. My great-grandparents became more than just names on a pedigree chart; they became family. Even though they had always been part of my family tree, I had never fully appreciated the roots from which I had sprung. I began to appreciate my great-grandparents' lives, their faithfulness, and their examples. I understood my own identity as their descendant better, and I felt my testimony strengthened as I read of their sacrifices and lives of service. Hundreds of Ole's descendants have followed him into the waters of baptism, into the fields of missionary work, and into lifelong service in the Church.

Sharing My Discoveries

I realized that my discoveries needed to be shared with other family members so that my great-grandparents' lives and contributions may live on forever. I compiled photographs, notable documents, journals, letters, poems, pedigree charts, tributes, newspaper clippings, histories, and family memories into a bound book now enjoyed by hundreds of relatives.

When I began my research, I had not intended to turn my heart or my family's hearts back to my great-grandparents, but that's one of the blessings of family history—helping people understand their identity and the rich heritage of their forefathers. ■

The author lives in Idaho, USA.