

Pioneer Parasols

“Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever” (Moroni 7:47).

By Marli Walker

Based on a true story

Sarah! Sarah, wake up!” five-year-old Christiana Larsen said to her little sister. “It’s time to leave.”

Three-year-old Sarah struggled to open her eyes.

“But it’s still dark outside,” she complained sleepily.

“I know, but Mama says we have to get an early start. The ship to America leaves soon.”

The Larsen family had joined the Church in Denmark. Now they would be making the long journey to join the Saints in the Salt Lake Valley.

Christiana helped Sarah get dressed. Then the little girls tearfully took one last look around their comfortable bedroom. They knew it would be a long time before they would sleep in a real bed again.

“Don’t forget your parasol, Sarah,” Christiana said as she picked up her own lacy silk parasol. “Mama said she would pack them with the bedding.”

Mama and Papa had said they couldn’t take anything besides necessities on the trip to America. After the bedding, clothing, and tools were packed, there wouldn’t be much room for anything else.

But Christiana and Sarah had begged to take just one favorite thing to their new home. After all, they were leaving behind their dolls, books, and toys. Each girl chose her pretty parasol.

As the sun rose, Christiana and her family boarded the ship that would sail to America. They were excited to go to Zion, even though they had to leave friends, family, and their home.

The ocean voyage was long and tiresome. During the hot afternoons on the ship, the two girls used their pretty parasols to keep the sun off their heads. If the wind blew in the right direction, the ship sailed steadily on. But if it changed course, the ship was forced back, often as far as it had already come.

When the Larsens landed in America, they bought a wagon and oxen and began the long journey to the Salt Lake Valley. The ride in the wagon was bumpy and hot, so Christiana and Sarah often walked instead.

Like many other pioneer families, Christiana’s family experienced hardships and tragedy along the way. Christiana’s newborn brother

died during their journey and was buried on the plains.

After the Larsen family reached the Salt Lake Valley in 1857, Christiana loved to go to church with other children her age. Christiana and Sarah happily carried their parasols to church every Sunday to keep the hot desert sun off their faces.

As the days and weeks went by, the family’s money and food began to run out. One night Christiana heard her parents discussing the problem. Her father said he knew of a family who had been blessed with a good harvest of grain. The Larsens could trade something they had for some flour. But what did they have to trade?

Christiana spoke up. “You can trade Sarah’s and my parasols, Papa.”

“But you love your parasols, Christiana. I couldn’t do that!”

“It’s all right, Papa,” Christiana said. “We need the food more than we need the parasols.”



ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN CALL

The next day Christiana's father traded the beautiful lacy parasols for some flour. The flour provided food for the whole family.

That night, as Christiana got

ready for bed, she looked sadly at the corner where her lovely parasol had stood. But as she remembered the wonderful bread she had eaten for supper, her sadness turned

to gratitude. As she said her prayers that night, she thanked Heavenly Father for her lovely parasol, which helped to feed her family. ■



Sacrifice is the crowning test of the gospel. It means consecrating time, talents, energy, and earthly possessions to further the work of God."

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Are You a Saint?" *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 96.