

Christoffer A. and Henrietta Eunice Anne HARDMAN Christensen

Retyped by Dean Bones November 2022

Christoffer A. Christensen was born in Harsens, Denmark, April 11, 1846. His parents died when he was a small boy. He and his two sisters were cared for by a cousin who was a photographer. One of his sisters was named Loni.

He came to America when he was 18 years old going directly to Shoalwater Bay, Washington, where he worked with a cousin harvesting oysters. After learning the trade he went to Netarts, Oregon, in 1870 to continue in the work of harvesting oysters. The oysters were packed by horse and pack mules over a rough mountain trail to North Yamhill and shipped by train to Portland to Keith's Oyster House. Indians were hired from the Nestucca Indian Reservation to cull the oysters. They were promised provisions and ponies as pay. The Indians wanted the ponies to race which they loved to do.

Later on arrangements were made to ship the oysters by water to San Francisco. The Jeanette, the first schooner to enter Netarts Bay, took 3 cargoes of oysters, about 1500 bushels each, to San Francisco. The commission merchants there who handled his oysters proved to be dishonest. His loss was so high that he grew discouraged, and he gave up the business.

In the meantime the William Henry Hardman family had moved to Netarts in 1865. Christopher met their daughter, Eunice Anne, and they fell in love. Her father considered her too young to marry as she was only 17, but the young lovers managed to slip away one day, October 11, 1874, to Tillamook where Judge Crawford performed the ceremony at the home of the Quicks. Rather than lie about her age Eunice Anne wrote "18 years" on a slip of paper, put it in her shoe and swore she was over 18. Her father refused to forgive her for some time.

The following year Christoffer and Eunice move to Trask where they ran the toll-gate for Mr. Quick. That fall when the Nestucca Indian Reservation was thrown open for settlement Christoffer decided to file on the claim where the Indians had their race track, the present Redberg property, but found that James Upton, an Oregon City attorney, had already filed on that land. Not to be outdone, Christoffer filed on the adjoining 160 acres west of the Upton claim which bordered the Little Nestucca Bay.

He bought the Indian cabin belonging to old "Skookum John" for \$30.00. It was built of heavy planks which had been washed ashore at the mouth of Slab Creek. It had a fireplace with flue and firebox made of wood with a few rocks in the center. Baking was done in a round iron box set in a bed of coals. The wooden chimney would catch on fire many times.

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Christoffer and his wife arrived at their new home the day before the soldiers came to take the Indians to the Salmon River Reservation. Eunice Ann was the first white woman to make her home in the Little Nestucca Valley. They had to hire 4 Indians to bring their 6 months' supply of provisions in on pack horse from Grande Ronde. It took the Indians 6 months to make the trip, and as they were caught in a heavy rainstorm everything arrived badly damaged. Many things were lost. This proved to be a real hardship on the young couple. During the winter they were forced to make 5 trips to Tillamook for more provisions with 2 mules. They swam the mules across Nestucca Bay behind a canoe, traveled up the beach to Sandlake, forded the lake and made it to Netarts the first day. The second day they climbed Cape Lookout, crossed the sloughs and river and made it to Tillamook.

On the return trip their mule, Little Jennie, tried to cross the Nestucca River by herself and became over-balanced by her heavy pack. She drowned with her precious load of provisions. This was another serious loss to the couple.

On July 27, 1876, a new member joined the household named William Henry, the first white child in the Nestucca Valley.

With new responsibilities, Christoffer went to Grand Ronde to work at Rowell's sawmill to earn enough to live on through the coming winter. Eunice Anne and the baby, Will, went to live with her parents at Netarts. Little Will found his way into his Grandfather's heart, and at last he gave his daughter a belated wedding present, the choice of a cow or a keg of butter. She chose the cow.

Christoffer was the first one to take up dairying in the area. He made the kegs and ferkins to ship his butter in to Sheridan. In the fall he ran a pack train of 5 oxen and 2 mules to Grande Ronde hauling out his butter and bringing in freight for his neighbors. He packed in the first plow, disc, harrow and wagon for James Upton. He even brought in a Melodian strapping it across 2 barrels on the back of an ox. The kind-hearted store keeper at Grande Ronde staked many of the settlers those first years.

Sometimes the Christensens had but a single .05 cent piece for a whole year at a time. In spite of hard times the settlers had good times together. They would hitch the 2 oxen to a sled filled with fern, tuck in the children, and join the neighbors at one of their homes dancing until morning.

Another son, Fred Warren joined the family on February 20, 1878, and then another son, Walter Merle on May 8, 1880.

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Now that the claim had been proven up Christoffer took his family to Willamina for a short while to earn money hauling logs with the oxen to the mills. This enabled him to pay off the kind-hearted storekeeper and stock the homestead.

Another son Claude Charles, was born while in Willamina on August 13, 1882. Also in 1882 a wagon road completed brought campers from the Willamette Valley to the Nestucca Valley for fish and clams.

A larger house for the growing family was built on the hill overlooking Nestucca Bay. This is where Lana Resamine was born August 20, 1865. Another daughter born in 1892 did not live. John Laring was born December 18, 1898.

In 1886 when the cannery was being built Eunice Anne provided board for cannery workers, boat crews and fishermen. She was well-known for her bountiful and delicious meals.

The 4 older boys started fishing at young ages adding to the family resources. And the oldest son, Will, married Stella Vivienne Commons on November 1898.

Christoffer and Eunice Anne with their 2 youngest children moved to Portland in 1906. Christoffer patented a machine to extract gold from black beach sand but it didn't pay off. Also in the 1900s he invented a concentrator for mining which was used in several large mines, but he didn't live to see it perfected.

Christoffer passed away on May 22, 1939, leaving 5 sons, 1 daughter and 19 grandchildren. Christoffer and Eunice Anne are laying at rest in the Oretown Cemetery with their baby daughter and Eunice Anne's father William Henry Hardman.