

Johannes (John) Friedrich and Catharina (Catrina, Catherine) Maria Laetari Jonsson (Joensson): Highland welcomed converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from many countries, including Germany. John was born in Mildstedt, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany on Aug. 24, 1884, to Jons and Anna Petersen Jonsson. Catherine was born May 23, 1886, in Horstedt, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany to Lorenz Ingiver and Justine Catherine Claussen Laetari. They were married November 24, 1907, in Hattstedt, Germany.

John served in the German military for two years, leaving his wife and children to go and fight on the French line during WWI.

They were living in the City of Mildstedt where he was a blacksmith and a grain merchant when they first heard the LDS missionaries. They were baptized May 30, 1920, in the North Sea. Very soon he was made branch president and continued in that position until they left Germany in 1927. His duties took him to clusters of Latter-day Saints distant from his home and he traveled by motor bike continually to visit the 170 members of his Branch. John becoming a Latter-day Saint created problems for his business - he lost a lot of customers, but eventually some came back, enough so that he could raise money for his passage to America, although they did have to sell their home and most of their belongings.

They arrived in Salt Lake City in March, 1927, with their three children, Almae, Lorenz and Jens, having emigrated from Hamburg, Germany aboard the steamer "Hamburg". They lived in Salt Lake City for about six months then went to Idaho for a while where he worked on a dairy farm but he was searching for a permanent home, and in 1929 he heard of a man named Adam(s) (which meant Saviour) selling his farm in Highland and thought "this must be Heaven" so he bought it and moved here later the same year (#13) (After living here a while he said, "This sure hasn't been Heaven"). Their fourth child, Paul Fred, was born in October and was blessed in the Highland Ward. Another child, Mary Ann, was born to them in 1930. On September 26, 1927, John signed a Declaration of Intention to become a U.S. citizen and to "renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to... the German Reich."

He was not familiar with irrigation, having come from luxuriant Germany, but he was determined to succeed, and with faith in God they did so. He raised pigs, sugar beets, chickens, cows, hay and grain. He became a very successful and prosperous farmer. On the wall inside their back door was a sign that read, "Vee get too soon oldt, und too late schmardt." John and Catrina never had a great grasp on the English language and were difficult to understand, even after 35 years in the U.S.

John's experiences - in the military, understanding a new religion, living in a totally new environment and culture - gave him a great ability to understand youth and capture their attention, and in 1934 he was called to advise the Priests Quorum of sixteen to nineteen year old boys. He continued in that position for more than thirty years. Before his conversion to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints he was a pipe smoker and when he quit he saved the very expensive Meerschaum porcelain pipe he had used for a long time. One of his lessons to his boys on a regular basis was to bring out that pipe and let the boys smell it - so they would know how long the effects of tobacco would last in their systems. He always referred to the scores of boys he taught as "my boys" (I was one of them).

In November, 1957, John and Catrina celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary, and less than a year later, on October 25, 1958, Catrina passed away.

After her passing John visited his homeland and thereby was connected to Olga Ottile Rosenstreter, a widow who was a member of the Church and who wanted to immigrate to America. She was born January 29, 1898, in Gorodetskaya, Russia to Julius and Anna Marie Luening. She married Wilhelm J Wiest in 1919 and he died in 1957. John wrote her a letter asking her thirteen questions about her activity in church, family relationships, ability to cook, level of debt, etc., and her answers made an impression, so he returned to Germany in 1960, married her on August 13, and brought her to Highland. She spoke no English and life was lonely for her, but the Relief Society sisters befriended her and became her family. She worked side by side with John on the farm and in his blacksmith work.

John passed away at the age of 91, on August 4, 1976. Olga continued to live in Highland until January 30, 1987, when she joined him. They are buried in the American Fork City Cemetery.