



San Francisco to Menifee – On Foot? Hans Christensen Did.

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In 1877, Hans Christensen had finally saved enough money working at a brickyard in his hometown of Copenhagen, Denmark to pay for steerage to America. The ship full of eager emigrants sailed across the Atlantic and landed on the East Coast. He set out westward across the country working as a farmhand along the way until he reached San Francisco. He heard that prime farmland that was available in Los Angeles. The price of train fare though was equal to a year's salary in his homeland, so he opted to make the journey from San Francisco to Los Angeles on foot.

Later in life he told his grandsons that he didn't settle in Los Angeles or the San Fernando Valley in the early 1880's because the land was too expensive there, being about \$50 an acre. Eventually Christensen found suitable farmland that he could afford. Land in Menifee Valley could be purchased for around \$1 an acre.



Christensen acquired property bounded by today's Antelope, Garbani, Menifee and Holland roads. He immediately began making improvements, constructing a home and barn, and installing windmills for pumping ground water and making electricity. He purchased teams of horses and a plow to bust the sod in order to plant wheat and barley.

There were only a few other farmers in Menifee when Christensen arrived. Neighbors Robert Kirkpatrick a mile north, and Andrew Kittilson a mile south had just arrived to claim homestead property and make improvements on their land.

In 1892 Hans Christensen married Rosetta Holland, whose father was farming land east of his. The couple raised four children. They had one son, Hans Jr., and three daughters, Ellen, Canzada and Aleen.

Hans Sr. and his son Hans Jr. worked hard to remain profitable throughout the years, especially during hard times. They had to rebuild the farmhouse after it burned in 1919. They managed to acquire more land as others struggled during the Great Depression years. The family eventually held 5,000 acres of land.

To memorialize Hans Christensen Sr.'s valuable role in Menifee's history, a middle school was named in his honor. Students there can be proud of their connection to a pioneer who helped shape the course of Menifee's true farming heritage.

We appreciate the input and narrative provided by the Christensen family. For more information about Hans Christensen Sr. and other pioneer settlers, please visit the Menifee History Museum, which is open Sundays from 1 to 4pm. Admission is free. Also visit menifeehistory.com

