

Who Was Who In Washburn—Ministers And Missionaries—2

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This is the second part of the story about the two families of ministers and missionaries who lived in Washburn. Christian Christiansen was born on October 8 1859, in Sandnes, Norway on Gandafjord, near Stavanger. His life as a poor boy was hard, working as servant for a local government official, shrimp fishing in the fjord and mending sails to earn money to help with the family expenses, while enduring the petty tyranny of school teachers. After graduation from high school he followed in the footsteps of his father, who was a sailor and fisherman, going to sea as a cabin boy. He had many adventures during his numerous voyages, at times narrowly escaping with his life. After a particularly dangerous voyage under a tyrannical captain he decided to immigrate to the United States. In March 1881, when he was 21 years old, he departed from Stavanger and after ten days arrived at Castle Garden, the immigrant receiving station in New York. From there he took a train to Chicago, penniless and friendless like so many of his fellow countrymen. He was unsuccessful in finding steady work as a sailor on the Great Lakes, so was employed in several different manual labor jobs. Later in 1881 he attended a meeting at which a noted evangelist preached, and a dream about his grandfather led him to a conversion experience. He became deeply involved in church work, and because of his dedication he was assisted financially by a Scandinavian businessman to attend Chicago Theological Seminary from 1886 to 1887. Meanwhile, on March 10 1883 he married Lina Larson in Chicago. His first call after his ordination on May 22 1888 was at Danway, Illinois, which he described as "the most God-forsaken part of the United States. No church. No services and no Sunday school." He labored there for nine years, establishing a church and even serving as a lay physician among the desperately poor people—mostly Norwegians—who were his parishioners. His next call was to Gardner, Illinois, where he remained for ten years, building up the church and establishing a temperance society. In early 1907 he received a call from the Norwegian Lutheran Church in Washburn, arriving in the city at the end of March. For the next 23 years he was a faithful steward of the spiritual life of the Norwegian community in Washburn, beloved by his parishioners and respected throughout the area. In the fall of 1930 he resigned as pastor and returned to Gardner, Illinois. He maintained contact with Washburn over the years, writing occasional letters to the Times and attending the Victory Homecoming in 1946. In 1947 the Times published his memoirs, a measure of the esteem in which he was held by the people of Washburn even 15 years after he had left the city. He died on November 23 1947 and was buried in Gardner; his wife preceded him in death of April 11 1931. During World War II he provided valuable information about Norway to the Allies, for which he received posthumous recognition from the King of Norway.

Agnes Deborah Christiansen was born on October 13 1890, in Chicago, the daughter of Reverend Christian and Lena Larson Christiansen. She attended school in Gardner, Illinois, moving to Washburn in April 1907, when her father accepted a call from the Norwegian Lutheran Church. On May 28 1918 she married Knut Monson. He was born in Gardner, Illinois, on July 14 1890, the son of Mons and Sarah Mathisen Monson. He graduated from St. Olaf College in 1916 and from Luther Theological Seminary in 1919. He was then appointed a missionary to Madagascar by the American Lutheran Church. In October 1919 the couple departed for Paris to study French, continuing to Madagascar the following year. They served at various locations on the island, he in positions of increasing responsibility and she as a chaplain and teacher. They occasionally returned to the United States on furlough, visiting her parents in Washburn. In letters to her parents, she described life in Madagascar and the hardships they endured during World War II, when the island was largely cut off from the outside world. Sadly, two of their young children died while they were serving there. When their missionary service ended in 1953, they returned to the United States. From 1954 to 1958 he served as

associate pastor of the Harmony Parish, Harmony, Minnesota and from 1959 to 1960 as visitation pastor at the First Lutheran Church in Duluth, Minnesota. Agnes died in Duluth on May 10 1960, and Knut moved to Ottawa, Illinois, as chaplain of the Pleasant View Lutheran Home. He died in Ottawa on January 12 1968.