

A Seed and a Swede

The Ivar Sandberg Story

Fred E. Woods

For most people, the name Gettysburg evokes the epic battle widely considered the turning point of the American Civil War. Veterans of the Union Army trekked west to the vast farmlands of the Great Plains and made up the earliest settlers of a town there, which they named in honor of that hallowed battleground. Later, because a Swede planted a seed, the town of Gettysburg became noteworthy in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) in South Dakota.

In the midst of the Great Depression, a distinctive Swedish immigrant named Karl Ivar Sandberg converted to the LDS faith and through total dedication and perseverance was largely responsible for the genesis and early development of the LDS Church in this Great Plains farming region.¹ Sandberg's story is unique in many ways. He did not follow the general motives of Scandinavians who immigrated to America in search of economic opportunity and religious and political freedom; rather, he was suddenly forced to depart his native homeland due to a tragic accident. He also upended the missionary norms of the LDS church; rather than an American traveling to Europe in search of new converts, this native Swede lit the flame of conversion among fellow Americans.²

As a youth in Skruv, Sweden, Sandberg spent much of his time hunting and fishing with his best friend, Georg Johnsson. On a Sun-

1. A forthcoming book, *Dakota Saints* by Sean Brotherson and Fred E. Woods, will tell the complete story of the LDS Church in South Dakota. Woods has also produced a documentary on Ivar Sandberg that can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.byutv.org/2cbefc46-58bb-45a9-a25b-f01d29c8c597/a-swede-and-a-seed:-the-ivar-sandberg-story?player-open=true&content-id=2cbefc46-58bb-45a9-a25b-f01d29c8c597>.

2. From the 1840s to the 1930s, around 1.3 million Swedes immigrated to America, with 92,000 Swedes departing for the United States in the 1920s before mass migration from Sweden ended; see Sture Lindmark, *Swedish America, 1914–1932: Studies in ethnicity with emphasis on Illinois and Minnesota* (Stockholm: Läromedelsförlagen, 1971), p. 1. Like other poor Europeans, the Swedes were lured by the promising American soil and economic factors, but they also sought to escape religious suppression by the Lutheran State Church and the overbearing Swedish monarchy.

day morning, 3 August 1919, when Sandberg was sixteen and Johnsson was twenty, they went duck hunting together. Sandberg's sister Ella described what happened: "Georg and Ivar had gone to shoot ducks . . . when Ivar shot at a duck, the bullet hit Georg who died from the shot. . . . Mother cried and Ivar was not to be comforted. We watched over Ivar, as Mother and Father feared he would take his own life. Then there was a lawsuit. . . . I remember that Georg's father asked for the stiffest sentence there was. He accused Ivar of murder, but the court judged the event as purely accidental." Still, the court found that "through unintentional negligence [Sandberg] was instrumental in Johnsson's death and is hereby sentenced to pay a fine of kr. [kroner] 500 to the crown."³

Two weeks after the accident, young Sandberg penned his anguished feelings in a simple poem titled, "A Sunday Morning":

It's a Sunday morning and the beautiful sun shines, so sings the little bird beautifully from the apple tree, but what is it worth to morn [sic] for a friend that I held so dear, from a much better year. If you believe that I can forget my friend that I hold so dear, then you don't understand what friendship is. I felt bad that night in my soul when you were taken from me. It was at summer's light, though for me, the sorrow hurt in my breast.⁴

Many years later Sandberg's oldest daughter recalled that Johnsson's parents "were so angry that they would stand on the street and yell 'murder' at him as he tried to go to school. He didn't go to school any after that." Sandberg's parents were at a loss. "He couldn't sleep. He was groaning and moaning all night. . . . He lost weight. He didn't eat." The Sandbergs' neighbor, Gus Franson, had immigrated to America and

3. Gilbert Sandberg, compiler, *Pioneer on the Prairie: The Life Story of Ivar Sandberg* 2nd edition, (Lehi, Utah: np, 2009), p. 32, hereafter cited as *POTP*. This work was the foundation of this study, and the author thanks Sandberg for his help. Sandberg, who was just shy of his eightieth birthday, felt "called" to compile the history of his father after he retired. He believed his father's conversion story was "key" to understanding the LDS Church in the region of Gettysburg, South Dakota (Gilbert Sandberg interview, 19 May 2022, by Fred E. Woods, Sandberg home, Lehi, Utah). Court documents in Sandberg's trial (*POTP*, pp. 259-264) suggested the weapon malfunctioned. Witnesses also testified "the sunshine had indeed been glaring, that Ivar, due to the location when the shot went off, must have had the sun shine right in his face."

4. Brief journal entry in Swedish dated 17 Aug. 1919, mentioned in one of Ivar Sandberg's memo books in possession of Philip Sandberg.

was visiting Sweden to fetch his sister to be his housekeeper. Gus volunteered to bring Sandberg along and let him live with them until the young man could get established in the new country.⁵

Due to Sandberg's deteriorating emotional condition, coupled with the relentless hostility from Johnsson's parents, it was decided that he should leave home and country and start anew in America. Early the following year, he traveled with the Fransons across the Atlantic Ocean. The trio left the port of Gothenburg on 12 February 1920. They boarded the *S.S. Cedric* at Liverpool five days later and disembarked in New York on 28 February. The ship manifest describes Sandberg as seventeen years old, single, five feet eight inches tall, fair hair, blue eyes, and a farmer/laborer from Skruv, Sweden.⁶

They made their way from New York to South Dakota by rail. By this time the Chicago & Northwestern Railway had extended its tracks to Gettysburg with a train stop in Gorman, an inconspicuous town in Potter County, between Gettysburg and the small town of Agar.⁷ In Gorman, Sandberg worked for various farmers as a hired hand and for Franson, who lived in the bordering county of Sully. Franson and Sandberg, like many other Swedes who had immigrated to South Dakota by the dawn of the twentieth century, did not form or join distinct Swedish conclaves.⁸ Most Swedes in South Dakota had gathered in Clay County, however, which lay nearly three hundred miles away in the state's southeastern corner.⁹

5. Charlotte Sandberg Bloomlein interview, 31 Mar. 2022, interviewed by Fred E. Woods, Provo, Utah, transcript in possession of author.

6. Sandberg, *POTP*, pp. 37–38; Gilbert Sandberg interview, 19 May 2021, interviewed by Fred E. Woods, noted that after he arrived in America, Ivar's left eye was injured and left blind in an accident while hammering a nail. Sandberg further noted that he lost "a couple of his fingers" due to a farming accident involving a grain auger when he reached in to pull some wheat out; concerning the voyage, LeGrand Christensen in a letter to Philip Sandberg dated 29 Feb. 1996, noted, "I know that the men on the ship were older & gave your father a hard time. They were older & a rough and tough bunch." (A copy of this letter is in the possession of the author).

7. Sandberg, *POTP*, p. 38. These were small farming communities in a state which contained a populace of 636,547, according to the 1920 South Dakota census. (See <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/state-compendium/06229686v38-43ch3.pdf>).

8. E.G. Trotzig, "Early Swedish Settlements in Dakota Territory," *Swedish Pioneer Historical Society* 28, no. 2 (Apr. 1977): 106.

9. Harry F. Thompson, ed., *A New South Dakota History*, 2nd ed. (Sioux Falls, S.Dak.: Au-



Karl Ivar Sandberg sat for this portrait at age seventeen, around the time of his immigration to the United States.

Sandberg squirreled away the money he earned and eventually purchased 320 acres of land. Although thousands of other Scandinavians had immigrated to the Great Plains in search of better lands and a better economic life in America, that was not the case with Ivar. His migration was forced, yet he embraced the change. It is evident that he enjoyed the landscape and natural beauty of America in those early years. In one of his memo books, he wrote what appears to be his own additional lyrics to “My Country ’Tis of Thee,” dated March 1922, which suggests he had settled into American soil:

I love my countrys vineclad hill, Her thousand bright and gushing rills,
Her sunshine and her storms. Her Rough and rugged rocks that rear.
Their hoary heads light in the are [air]. In wild fantastic forms.

I love her rivers deepe [sic] and wide. Those might[y] storms that
seaward
glide to eek the oceans breast Her smiling fields, her flowery dales
Her shady dells her pleasant vales Abodes of peace rest.

Her forest and her valley fair. Her flowers that scent the morning air.
All
have charm for me But more I love my country name Those words that
echo deathless fame, The land of Liberty.¹⁰

Despite his appreciation for his new country and its beauty, Sandberg spent much of his leisure time in the 1920s with other single men, recklessly drinking and gambling, often losing large sums of money in a single weekend. It seems likely that he was attempting to escape the

gustana College, 2009), pp. 129, 332; Concerning the Swedes who settled in Clay County, see August Peterson, *History of the Swedes Who Settled in Clay County, South Dakota and Their Biographies* (S.I. Peterson, 1947). Ann M. Laegrid notes that Swedes immigrated to the Dakotas primarily as individuals and generally did not establish extensive ethnic colonies such as those in Kansas and Nebraska. Swedes in South Dakota largely settled in the state’s eastern districts around Sioux Falls and Vermillion. See <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.ea.036#:~:text=Swedish%20migration%20into%20the%20Dakotas,among%20the%20more%20numerous%20Norwegians>.

10. Memo book in the possession of Philip Sandberg. This book contains a variety of musings written in both English and Swedish.

emotional pain rooted in the accidental death of his dear friend.¹¹ But during the work weeks on the farm, nature inspired contemplation and spiritual stirrings as Sandberg observed the growth of his grain and, more importantly, the wonder of birth among his farm animals.¹² His heart slowly opened to God and religion, with which he had been raised in Sweden but never had much interest.

The bleak years of the Great Depression, coupled with the harsh South Dakota winters, likely helped prime the pump for Sandberg's course change. On 9 January 1929, in the midst of a blizzard, Sandberg recorded in imperfect English, "I feel lonsome and wish that I never had seen south Dakota, am making all kinds of plans to leave thise state. I bet my bottom dollar that I will be tousands of mils away from here before an other year."¹³

11. *POTP*, p. 43. Ivar's daughter reasoned that his reckless lifestyle at this time "was trying to escape his broken heart" (Bloomlein, interview).

12. Gerald E. Jones, "A South Dakota Swede and the Book of Mormon," *Ensign* (Sept. 1976): 19.

13. This entry is taken from a memo book in the possession of Philip Sandberg.



Many early settlers of the town of Gettysburg, South Dakota, seen here in 1880, were Civil War veterans of the Union Army.

In the earliest account of his conversion, Sandberg remembered first coming across a reference to “Mormons” in a book in 1923. He asked a friend he was staying with to tell him more, but soon forgot the conversation. During the miserable winter of 1929–1930, Sandberg once again read about Latter-day Saints in Mark Twain’s *Roughing It*. Now, his interest was piqued; as he later recalled, “up to this I had been very little interested in religion. Although I had been brought up in a home where I had been taught to pray and believe in God.”¹⁴

Sandberg began searching the Bible for answers and visited five different Protestant churches in the Gettysburg region.¹⁵ He wrote, “it seemed the more I studied the Bible and the more I listened to the different ministers the more confused I would get. I could not accept the teachings of any church, for they seemed not to teach according to the Bible.”¹⁶ In one instance, Sandberg discussed religion with a local Lutheran minister for almost twelve hours straight. He noted, “I especially tackled him on the subject of Baptism, as it seemed to me the Bible taught Baptism by emersion [sic], plain enough for anyone to understand. He offered at len[g]th to take me out and dip me in the water tank, but by now, I had lost all confidence in him.”¹⁷

By early spring 1932, Ivar decided to reach out beyond the Christian denominations surrounding him and explore what he referred to as the “heathen religions.”¹⁸ He visited the Potter County Free Library

14. Ivar Sandberg, “My conversion to the Mormon Church,” 25 Feb. 1941, p. 1, typescript, copy in possession of author. Thanks to Joyce Westphal who shared this precious primary source with me and noted that her mother, Barbara Westphal, had typed a copy of this manuscript for Sandberg.

15. Jones, “A South Dakota Swede and the Book of Mormon,” p. 19. Many Scandinavians and European immigrants to this region brought their Protestant beliefs. Though Latter-day Saints were also Christians, they brought a message of restoration to the early primitive Church which ran contrary to Protestant traditions; During the 1920s, there was a strong movement to embrace the English language, but most foreigners still clung to their ethnic heritage (see Thompson, *A New South Dakota History*, p. 341); The Great Depression led to a resurgence in church attendance as many turned to religion for support. The 1936 U.S. census on religion reveals that 42 percent of the state population belonged to ecclesiastical congregations, led by Lutherans, followed closely by the Roman Catholics. (See <https://history.sd.gov/preservation/docs/SDChurches.pdf>)

16. Sandberg, “My conversion to the Mormon Church,” p. 1.

17. Ibid.

18. Sandberg, “My conversion to the Mormon Church,” p. 1; LeGrand Christensen’s letter to Philip Sandberg (29 Feb. 1996) noted, “[Ivar’s] knowledge of the bible told him the min-

and asked for a copy of the Koran.¹⁹ A Koran could not be found but the librarian suggested the Book of Mormon instead. Sandberg reasoned that he should read it because he considered Mormonism to be another heathen religion. The librarian recommended he also read a book about Brigham Young so as to better understand the Book of Mormon. Sandberg took both books but found the former unbalanced and full of anti-Mormon musings, and therefore felt he could not trust the author. When he commenced reading the Book of Mormon, however, Sandberg discovered, "I had found a most remarkable book and the tears started to run down my cheeks and the most sweet spirit seemed to be present. . . . I had my cap on as I started to read the 'Book of Mormon,' but before long I felt a man ought to read such a book with [a] bare head." He finished the 500-page book in just three days.²⁰

Sandberg was so impressed and inspired that he told his neighbor about it, but the neighbor scoffed that the content of the book was borrowed from the Bible. Disillusioned by this response from a trusted individual, Sandberg returned the book. That fall, Sandberg asked his brother Sven, who had come to America and was now working for him, to return to the Gettysburg Library and pick up the Book of Mormon. Sandberg read it again, cover to cover, over the next two weeks and noted, "by than [sic] I knew that it was true."²¹

When he returned the Book of Mormon, he asked the librarian to request from the state library in Pierre all the literature they could find on "Mormonism." They had none but supplied the address of the Church-owned Deseret Book Store in Salt Lake City, Utah. Sandberg

isters didn't know the answers to his questions. He was a lot like Joseph Smith. He was searching for something & wasn't finding it. . . . I think it was his in dis[g]ust he decided to search the heathen religions. Hence, his first trip to the library in Gettysburg."

19. From 1924 to 1970, the county library was located in the Potter County Courthouse. See *Gettysburg South Dakota 75th Anniversary, July 11-12, 1958*, (Gettysburg, S.Dak.: np, 1958), pp. 21, 127; "Potter Co. Courthouse Nomination form," p. 7, notes "The county library was moved into the courthouse in 1924 and remained there until 1970." The author thanks South Dakota state archivist Matthew T. Reitzel for his assistance in locating the Potter County Free Library during this period. For more information on the history of free libraries in South Dakota, see Lisa R. Lindell, "A 'Splendid Service,': The South Dakota Free Library Commission in the 1930s," 35, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 249-271.

20. Sandberg, "My conversion to the Mormon Church," pp. 1-2.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 2.



Unlike other nationalities, Swedish immigrants to South Dakota did not create distinct ethnic enclaves, though many did settle in Clay County. Here congregants pose in front of the Swedish Baptist Church in Bloomingdale, Clay County.

subsequently ordered many books about the Church and devoured them all.²²

By the following year, 1933, Sandberg converted to the Book of Mormon and wanted to become a member of the LDS Church. He wrote, "I had a . . . burning testimony of the restored gospel and I taught it to my

22. Sandberg, "My conversion to the Mormon Church," p. 2. Sandberg's daughter Charlotte recalled, "He loved learning. We had a set of encyclopedias inside our home before anybody [we] knew even had one. . . . We had two big bookcases in the living room on the farm and they were full of books. . . . a couple of times a year we'd have a program and the parents would all come, well my dad always sat in the back . . . and he was always looking through the big Webster's dictionary." (Bloomlein, interview). Philip Sandberg kindly showed the author Ivar's dictionary, *Swedish-English and English-Swedish* (New York: Nielsen & Lundbeck, 1915), which he may have picked up upon entering the United States in 1920. Philip also has Ivar's grammar book, titled, *English Grammar for Swedish Schools* by Karen Ählstrom, np:nd.

friends.” The next year he requested baptism from Arthur Welling,²³ the new LDS mission president assigned to Sioux Falls, but the letter never reached him.

Undeterred, even with a crop failure to deal with, in September 1934 Sandberg hired a man to care for his livestock and headed to Utah, determined to be baptized.²⁴ He met his first “Mormon” in Coalville, Utah, a gas station attendant smoking a cigarette. Sandberg was a bit disappointed with his first encounter with a Latter-day Saint who knew little about the faith’s theology and held even less regard for the Church’s health codes, which discouraged the use of harmful substances such as tobacco and alcohol.

Sandberg arrived in Salt Lake City and immediately recognized Temple Square from the books he had read. His emotions were tender. He parked his car and walked to the Latter-day Saint Tabernacle. He eager-

23. Welling served as president of the North Central States Mission (1929–1934). See <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/chd/organization/mission/north-central-states-1925?lang=eng>

24. George Cavanaugh explained the crop failures: “During the drought of the thirties we had plagues of grasshoppers and other types of beetles. The grasshoppers would sometimes get so thick that you could walk along a mile of fence and the shady side of every post would be covered solid with grasshoppers” (Letter of George Cavanaugh to Philip Sandberg, 19 May 1996).



Ivar Sandberg and his brother Sven pose outside Ivar’s “cookshack” home, ca. 1931.

ly tried to enter the building but was told that due to the weekly Saturday baptisms then in progress, he could not enter. Sandberg explained that he wanted to be baptized into the Church. The door watchman directed him to a tour guide, who in turn took Sandberg to see Brother Joseph F. Perry, the mission president of Temple Square. President Perry began peppering Sandberg with questions: "What do you know about us and our doctrine?" Sandberg responded resolutely, "I know it is the true Church." Perry asked, "How do you know?" Sandberg explained, "Through the books I have read," and described about twenty-five books. The president and the guide marveled.²⁵ At last Perry granted permission for baptism but asked if Sandberg could wait until Monday. They helped Sandberg secure lodging and the next day he attended church at the Salt Lake City 20th Ward.²⁶

With a group of tourists looking on, Sandberg was baptized Monday, 1 October 1934.²⁷ The following day he was confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and spent the next several months in Salt Lake City.²⁸ Before leaving the city of the Saints in February 1935, he was ordained an elder.²⁹ Perry commissioned Sandberg

25. Elder Glenn Goodwin, an early missionary to South Dakota, noted, "President Sandberg was one of the most well-read individuals I have been privileged to know" (POTP, p. 99).

26. A ward is an ecclesiastical unit usually comprising several hundred members.

27. According to K. LeRoi Nelson, Sandberg was baptized by Elder Christensen, who was from Westwood, California. (Phone interview with K. LeRoi Nelson by Fred E. Woods, 26 Oct. 2022).

28. Confirmation means that Sandberg had hands laid upon his head to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost as performed in the primitive Christian church (See Acts 8:14-17); LeGrand Christensen noted that Ivar Sandberg had enrolled in school for a short period of time in Salt Lake City (Letter of LeGrand Christensen to Philip Sandberg, 29 Feb. 1996). In addition, Christensen related to Philip Sandberg that while his father was staying at a hotel on south State Street, he had "a very restless night. Early in the morning he was still feeling badly and was walking along the south side of temple square. As he was walking another man approached from the opposite direction. The closer together they came the better Ivar felt. . . . Ivar . . . caught up with the man and told him what was happening. This other man was Elder [Apostle Melvin J.] Ballard and he invited Ivar to breakfast with him. During breakfast Brother Ballard told Ivar that the evil one was bothering him and wanted him to leave Salt Lake City" (Notes from phone conversation with LeGrand Christensen, 18 Feb. 1996, by Philip Sandberg).

29. In the LDS Church, an elder is an ecclesiastical office in what is known as the Melchizedek Priesthood, named after a priest who was the king of Salem (see *Hebrews* 7:1). This title is also used for male LDS missionaries.

to return to South Dakota and share the Gospel. If he did so, he was promised he would serve as the president of a new branch to be established there.³⁰

Ivar Sandberg thus returned to South Dakota a baptized and devoted member of the Church, with the fire of testimony burning within him. The Church boasted fewer than 200 members in the entire state, but he soon found the one LDS family living in his area.³¹ LeRoi Nelson from Logan, Utah, had taken a job with the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs and moved his family to the Cheyenne Indian Agency in Potter County, about twenty miles south of Gettysburg. Nelson remembered:

In the Spring of 1935, one Sunday afternoon a knock come at our front door, a young man with a Swedish accent, introduced himself and asked if I were a Mormon, I said yes and invited him in. His convictions and

30. A branch is the smallest unit of the LDS Church, normally consisting of less than 100 members; "My Missionary Encounters with Karl Ivar Sandberg" dated 17 May 1949, in "The Notebook of Arthur C. Wiscombe, vol. 2, Accn.# 2937, Box 12, fd. 3, Arthur C. Wiscombe Papers, J. Willard Marriott Library Special Collections, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. The man who gave the blessing was most likely President Joseph S. Perry, president of the Temple Square Salt Lake City mission, which was called "The Bureau of Information." The author expresses gratitude to Ryan Coombs, Church History Library archivist, who searched out and sent this information to the author via an email, 4 Apr. 2022. President Perry is also noted in connection with Sandberg in an article titled, "Seek and Ye Shall Find," *Liahona* 41, no. 6 (24 Aug. 1943): 143.

31. As early as the 1840s, Church leaders had contemplated the Dakota Territory as a possible place of refuge. One group led by James Emmett founded a settlement at Vermillion in 1845. However, the following year, they were summoned by the main body of the Church emigrating west and most heeded the call (Karen Reed, "South Dakota," in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, eds. Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, Richard O. Cowan, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000), p. 1166). The Northern States Mission notes for 13 May 1883, state that two Latter-day Saints (Elders Charles N. Nielson and N. L. Lund) were sent to open up missionary work in the Dakota Territory, "but owing to the scattered condition of the population, the indifference of the people, and later, the cold winter weather, only a little effective work could be done" (Northern States Mission, LR_6227_2_00001_00002_item_1-Part_2_1831-1832_1875-1889, 13 May 1883, Church History Library, Salt Lake City); By 1930, there were only 193 LDS members in all of South Dakota, 129 of whom lived in the eastern half of the state (See Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Co., 1941), p. 841. This represents a miniscule total of the state's 1930 population of 693,000. (See <https://dlsr.sd.gov/lmic/lb/2014/august2014laborbulletin.pdf>). As of 2022, there are thirty congregations throughout South Dakota, with a total Church membership of over 11,000. (See <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics/state/south-dakota>).



Sandberg's knowledge of LDS texts impressed church officials at Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, and he was soon baptized into the church. William Henry Jackson snapped this photograph of Temple Square in 1899.

testimony of the gospel was so strong he told us he was going to try to convert all his neighbors. He asked us if we would help him, we said we would. . . . He later started making arrangements to hold Sunday school in a small one room country schoolhouse. He was the teacher and taught L.D.S. Sunday School lessons. Then at night he would call on his neighbors and explain more of the principles of the gospel to them.³²

32. Story of Karl Ivar Sandberg's conversion by LeRoi Nelson, written 16 Aug. 1988 (sent to me by David Sandberg via email, 16 Mar. 2022). According to Nelson's son, LDS missionaries made annual trips to the Cheyenne Indian Reservation to meet with his family but there were no American Indian members of the LDS Church on the Reservation at the time (Phone interview of K. LeRoi Nelson by Fred E. Woods, 26 Oct. 2022).

Nelson's daughter Narene recalled her parents were delighted to meet Sandberg. "When my parents moved to South Dakota," she remembered, "they wanted of course to be active in the church," but they lived far from any active branches. She added, "Because they cared about the Church, they wanted to raise their children with testimonies . . . I grew up having home Sunday school all my life."³³

In time, as more people joined Sandberg and the Nelsons, meetings were held both at the Cheyenne Indian Agency and in Gettysburg. Everywhere Sandberg traveled he shared the gospel with farming neighbors and acquaintances. During the mid to late 1930s, members in Potter County and Gettysburg were considered part of the Sioux Falls Branch of the South Dakota District, nearly three hundred miles away. In June 1945, Hans Alder, the South Dakota Church District President, visited the Gettysburg region and attended Sunday School, where he found 61 people in attendance. By December, the local Saints were also holding sacrament meetings and participating in missionary work.

Indeed, full-time missionaries began visiting Sandberg in 1935. The first set of missionaries were Elders LeGrand Christensen and Arlow C. Gilbert.³⁴ Church mission minutes mention that these elders toured South Dakota from 3 June to 11 July, beginning at Sioux Falls. Highlights included "a hall meeting in a school house at Gorman, Potter County, South Dakota," where Ivar Sandberg was present. Their visit to Gorman officially documented Sandberg's conversion story.³⁵

Christensen remembered how happy he and Gilbert were to meet such a willing soul. "They found Ivar . . . living with his brother Sven. They were living in an old train car, or cookshack, with a sliding door. He said the wind would blow so hard that it would slide the door open and the dust and etc. would blow in." Ivar, tough living conditions notwithstanding, was delighted to meet the elders and wanted to preach

33. Narene Nelson Ireland interview, 20 Apr. 2022, interviewed by Fred E. Woods in Spanish Fork, Utah, transcription in possession of the author.

34. A "La Grand" Christensen is mentioned on the official Church of Jesus Christ website as serving a mission in the North Central States Mission between 1934 and 1937. See <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/chd/individual/la-grand-christensen-1915?timeLineTabs=all-events>, accessed 3 June 2022; In 1935, Arlow C. Gilbert was a missionary and the president of the South Dakota District (See "Aberdeen South Dakota District South Dakota Rapid City Mission Minutes - General 1935-1975," LR 8490 11, 1, CHL).

35. Aberdeen South Dakota District South Dakota Rapid City Mission Minutes, 5, CHL.

the gospel with them and assist them however he could. He took the missionaries “around to meet all the neighbors and invited the neighbors to a meeting at the Agar [Baptist] church . . . and a large group of friends and neighbors attended.”³⁶ At the time, Christensen recorded in his diary that he and Gilbert had left the Cheyenne Indian Agency by means of the railroad and hitch hiking in order to meet Sandberg in Gorman and that he had helped arrange for this meeting in the local schoolhouse where 61 people attended. He adds, Ivar was “certainly a fine fellow.”³⁷

About two months later, Sandberg sent Christensen a letter expressing gratitude for the visit: “As long as I live will I remember your visit here. You were the first elders to come. . . . How often had I not longed for just a couple of fellers like you to come along during the years I studied the gospel.” Ivar also wrote, “I am looking for a good Mormon girl and I will sooner go to the grave single than to marry outside the church. Hope to have the place covered with little Mormons some day.”³⁸ His wish was granted soon after he converted and married a local Scandinavian school teacher named Mildred Nelson, whom he converted and baptized in 1936. They wed on 13 September 1937 and raised six children together: Charlotte (born in 1939), Kathleen (1941), David (1942), Gilbert (1944), Philip (1945), and Wanda (1950).

Ivar’s passion was not reserved only for the spread of the gospel. He was simultaneously committed to the establishment and wellbeing of his family. Though he was often on the go, he conscientiously made

36. Philip Sandberg phone conversation with LeGrand Christensen, 18 Feb. 1996. In a letter to Philip Sandberg dated 22 Feb. 1996, Christensen wrote that Ivar “was Proud to let people know who we were like we were celebratees [sic] or something. I was touched by the respect that everyone had for your father though these were no[t] members of the church.”

37. Excerpt copy of LeGrand Christensen Diary, 2–3 July 1935, courtesy of Philip Sandberg, copy in possession of author. The following day the trio celebrated the Fourth of July and Christensen noted that Ivar had shown the missionaries “some gambling tricks, cards, checkers” (Christensen Diary, 4 July 1935). Correspondence between Christensen and the Sandbergs reveals he continued to stay in touch with Ivar until his death and wrote to Mildred after his passing. Letters also continued between Christensen’s wife Blanche and Ivar and Mildred’s son Philip through the years. (Letters in possession of Philip Sandberg from both LeGrand and Blanche Christensen).

38. Ivar Sandberg letter to LeGrand Christensen, 5 Sept. 1935, courtesy of Philip Sandberg, copy in possession of the author.



Ivar with his wife, Mildred, and children Charlotte, Kathleen, David, Gilbert, and Philip, ca. 1947. Wanda, the youngest child, was born in 1950.

time for his loved ones. Charlotte remembered her father was fun to be with, and that he enjoyed telling jokes and riddles. The family often went out on impromptu Sunday afternoon picnics. Ivar would let the children decide which way to turn. The children also enjoyed music played by their parents. Ivar played the accordion, harmonica, and violin, and Mildred, an accomplished musician, accompanied him on the piano. In addition, the Sandbergs often opened their home to visitors to share their abundance of love. Ivar used to say, “Mildred, if there’s room in the heart, there’s room in the home.”³⁹

39. Bloomlein, interview; Ivar Sandberg Bible in possession of his daughter Kathleen Sandberg.

On 25 March 1937, Sandberg returned to Sweden to visit his family. He kept a handwritten journal during his three months' visit from March to June. Landing in his hometown of Skruv on 8 April, Sandberg recorded, "None of my relatives met me." He walked down the street where his sister Nelly lived. Sandberg described: "She saw me coming and ran out to meet me just outside on the streets. Wept as if my heart had burst wide open." An hour later his sisters Ingeborg and Ella arrived, and he again became very emotional and noted, "Could not control my feelings."⁴⁰

Sandberg visited the local sawmill where he had worked in his youth, and also worshipped at the local church where he had first been confirmed as a Lutheran.⁴¹ About a week after his arrival, he visited Ljuder Lake, where his diary mentions he "saw all the dead fish."⁴² Such a morbid scene may have caused him to reflect on his friend Georg Johnson, who had died in a swamp nearby.⁴³ Sandberg gave copies of the Book of Mormon to his family members and discussed the LDS religion with them but, to his great disappointment, none of them were interested in learning more.⁴⁴

Sandberg returned to Gettysburg where, on 16 May 1938, he baptized his oldest daughter Charlotte. A few weeks later, on 6 June, the Gettysburg Branch (of the Aberdeen South Dakota District) was organized. Sandberg was sustained as president, Otis Jones as first counselor, and Kenneth ("Bud") Darland as second counselor.⁴⁵ The Gettysburg Latter-day Saints were dedicated to building the Kingdom of God in any way they could; in 1948 they donated \$700 toward the building of

40. *POTP*, pp. 175–176. The original journal is in the possession of Kathleen Sandberg and the date for these events noted above is 8 Apr. 1947. The *POTP* secondary source is used for convenience to readers.

41. Whereas "confirmation" in the LDS Church means receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost through the laying on of hands, in the Lutheran tradition this same term means a public declaration of one's faith following a period of instruction. In the Lutheran Church in Sweden, this instruction usually commences at age fourteen and lasts six months. See <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/Sve/Bin%C3%A4rfiler/Filer/DF010030-BFDB-45F4-8102-3E783E77C4DD.pdf>

42. *POTP*, pp. 175–176, cited from original journal for the dates of 10 Apr. and 17 Apr. 1947.

43. *Ibid.* p. 33.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 180, cited in original journal for the dates of 31 May and 2–3 June 1947.

45. *POTP*, p. 78.

the Chapel in Sioux Falls, with a promise of more to come, even though they would not be using the chapel for their local worship.⁴⁶

Converts and non-Latter-day Saints alike respected and were inspired by Sandberg. John Evans, the postmaster of neighboring Agar, stated, "Ivar was one of the finest Swedish gentlemen in the state," and insisted that "following his example as a farmer and family man would produce successful results."⁴⁷ One of Ivar's sons describes how his father was able to get needed fence posts from a neighbor at a time when money was scarce. The neighbor had said, "As long as I had a handshake from Ivar, it was as good as having the money." His youngest son noted that Ivar was respected for his values and because he tried to help everyone and encouraged others to be better.⁴⁸

Curtis Dean Eliason Sr. remembered, "I owe a lot of where I am today to the efforts of Ivar Sandberg. . . . The marvel of his efforts is not only the change it brought into the lives of the people, but that whole families came into the church, — father, mother, and children."⁴⁹ Curtis and his parents, Joe and Agnes Eliason, were among a number of other families converted through Sandberg's efforts.⁵⁰

Doyle Thompson Jr., a member of one such family, noted, "I always looked up to Ivar as a model farmer in our part of the country." Thompson explained that while others would have buckled, Sandberg took the loss of his fifty steers due to poisoned flax quite well. Doyle's father was so impressed that he told the story many times to praise Sandberg's character. Doyle also recalled, "My first memory of Bro. Sandberg preaching a sermon was quite an experience. . . . He knew his scriptures better than the preacher. . . . Ivar had a fairly high-pitched voice and Swedish accent, which held me riveted to the edge of my

46. "Aberdeen South Dakota District South Dakota Rapid City Mission Minutes – General 1935–1975," LR 8490 11, 16 May 1948, p. 181, Church History Library, hereafter cited as CHL.

47. "Memories of Ivar Sandberg," by Harvey Thompson in Rebecca A. Mayfield email to Gilbert Sandberg, 11 Apr. 2003.

48. Philip Sandberg interview, wherein Sandberg is recounting information he received while searching to know more about his father and his own perceptions based on the material culled.

49. Curtis Dean Eliason, Sr., autobiographical sketch, typescript, courtesy of Dan Eliason, in possession of author.

50. *POTP*, pp. 81–91.



The members of the Gettysburg LDS church posed for this group photo on the Eliason farm in 1944.

seat.” Thompson further noted, “Bro. Sandberg loved the Lord and . . . the gospel radiated from him. . . . He loved many a convert into the Church.”⁵¹ Dan Eliason agreed, remembering Sandberg’s persuasive instruction and how interesting his Church lessons were: “Once, while teaching about tithing . . . [he used] a shoe box of receipts . . . and said they were evidence of paying a full tithe was not deterrent to economic success. He further explained that he was not bragging about wealth, just making a point that one should not short the Lord in hopes of advancing their own prosperity.” Sandberg’s witness to the truthfulness of the Church carved a deep impression on Eliason. “I will also recall for the eternities his very strong testimony. The words, ‘I know beyond a shadow of a doubt . . .’ were always a very powerful statement.”⁵²

The first missionary sent out from the Gettysburg Branch, George E.

51. Doyle Thompson Jr. remembrance of Ivar Sandberg in email to Gilbert Sandberg, 13 Aug. 2001.

52. Dan Eliason email to Gilbert Sandberg, 5 Sept. 2001.

Jones Sr., wrote, “During my mission I frequently told of the story of Ivar’s conversion and the power of one Book of Mormon and one convert’s efforts to share the gospel. He was a legend in the North Central States Mission.” Jones also reflected, “I have often thought, and spoke about, the difference one person made by making a copy of the Book of Mormon available in the Potter County Library at Gettysburg. And then what one person did because of reading it and sharing it with his neighbors.”⁵³

George Cavanaugh, co-founder of Mrs. Cavanaugh’s Chocolates and one of the early local converts, expressed his gratitude in a letter to Ivar and Mildred’s son Philip: “I am so grateful for what your father did to get the Church introduced to Potter County and that I am one of the many who attended the little Gettysburg Branch and was eventually asked if I would like to be baptized.”⁵⁴

During the winter of 1950–1951, Sandberg paid the local Gettysburg newspaper, *Potter County News*, \$700 to print sixteen articles he wrote on a variety of Latter-day Saints doctrinal topics. Each article ended with a summary, testimony, and invitation to local neighbors to write to him directly to learn more.⁵⁵ His missionary zeal is clear in the final article:

The writer knows beyond the slightest shadow of a doubt . . . that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. . . . I know there are many good, honest and God-fearing people in these churches who are doing much

53. Gerald E. Jones email to Gilbert Sandberg, 28 July 2001.

54. Letter of George and Marie Cavanaugh to Philip Sandberg, 4 June 2010, in possession of author. Philip was just shy of his seventh birthday when his father Ivar passed away. When asked why he went to so much effort to gather information about Ivar, he responded, “I didn’t know my dad . . . that was my motivation” (Philip Sandberg interview, 19 May 2022, interviewed by Fred E. Woods. The author thanks Philip for going the extra mile to share materials he collected); Marie was the co-founder of Mrs. Cavanaugh’s chocolates and remembered, “George, he really respected Ivar and he just would study and learn from Ivar and when Ivar died, it was a real sad thing for George” (Marie Cavanaugh interview, 5 April 2022, interviewed by Fred E. Woods, transcript in possession of author); George wrote, “I was baptized by Ivar and confirmed a member of the Church by Donald F. Ellickson.” (Letter of George Cavanaugh to Philip Sandberg, 19 May 1996).

55. The first article was titled “Evidences of the Existence of God,” 14 Dec. 1950, and the last article titled “A Summary,” 15 Mar. 1951, *Potter County News*, Gettysburg, South Dakota; LeGrand Christensen noted that Ivar paid \$700 for the articles to be published and received permission from the mission president to do so (Notes from phone conversation of LeGrand Christensen to Philip Sandberg, Feb. 1996).

good. . . . But it always was very plain to me that these churches did not have the same officers as the church Jesus established. . . . I dare not 'put my candle under a bushel,' for I know that God knows I know the true church of Jesus Christ has again been restored to the earth through the prophet Joseph Smith. Knowing I shall meet all my acquaintances at the judgment bar someday, I have written these articles to tell you of the restoration."⁵⁶

In addition to these articles, Sandberg once mailed church materials to all South Dakota farmers whose addresses were listed in the classifieds section of a statewide farming magazine.⁵⁷ He wanted to ensure that everyone within his sphere had a chance to learn about the teachings of the Latter-day Saints. Though most addressees lacked interest, Sandberg was nevertheless held in high esteem by those who knew him best.

Ivar was a man of integrity, and his large spiral notebooks provide evidence of his meticulous record keeping of farm labor expenditures and income. He also maintained small handwritten spiral notebooks intended for self-improvement and inspiration. He frequently jotted down favorite quotes he came across when listening and reading; these included various scriptural quotes and inspirational passages shared by wise Latter-day Saints church leaders. But his treasured notebooks reveal that Sandberg, an extremely well-read man, collected wisdom, truth, and inspiration from a variety of sources. Quotes appear from William Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, Herbert Spencer, Horace Greeley, Abraham Lincoln, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. While listening to a Catholic priest on the radio, Sandberg jotted, "Without belief in a God there is no active restrictions in our lives." He took note of a statement made by an Episcopal bishop named Henry George Tucker, "Prayer was never intended to be a substitute for our own efforts." Even the Hollywood actress Mae West made it into his esteemed notebook when she said, "Anytime you think religion is a joke, the laugh is on you." An intriguing entry even backs his belief in the afterlife: "Thomas Edison went to a coma before he died . . . then said . . . 'it is very beautiful over there.'"

56. "A Summary," *Potter County News*, 15 Mar. 1951.

57. *POTP*, p. 76.

Also sprinkled throughout the notebooks are personal notations revealing Ivar's ever-expanding mind, carefully crafted and signed with his initials, I.S.: "There is no knowledge as essential and beneficial to man as the knowledge of his own origen [sic] and destiny. All other knowledge is second. . . . Your emotions must be governed by logic [sic]. . . . The spirit of God will enlighten no one contrary to that persons will." Underscoring his priority for missionary work, various notes on missionary self-improvement appear which most certainly were shared with the many full-time missionaries visiting Potter County and Ivar's farm.⁵⁸

Sandberg's commitment to the gospel and his missionary zeal spread across the North Central States Mission. His conversion story was published in the Church-owned periodical, *Liahona*, *The Elders' Journal*. By

58. Thanks to Philip Sandberg who trusted the author to carefully go through these miscellaneous notebooks kept by his father Ivar Sandberg. Two of the notebooks are dated 1941 and 1947, full of farming expenditures. There are also seven other hand-sized memo books with notations not dated as well as two small books, one written in Swedish with a few dates and the other written partially in Swedish and English. Both were written mostly during the 1920s. All are in Philip's possession.



The Sandbergs lived on their family farm outside Gettysburg, seen here around 1950.

June 1943, when the missionary elders made another visit to Gorman, they learned “there was a congregation of over 50 people who had come from as far as 30 miles away to attend Church. Of these there were six members, Brother Sandberg’s wife, whom he had converted, and another family.”⁵⁹

As the years rolled on, Ivar continued to influence missionaries who passed through the area. One was Elder Arthur Wiscombe, who met Sandberg in the spring of 1949, and was so impressed with him that he kept a separate journal record of each of their encounters. Among other things, he noted Sandberg’s welcoming nature and generosity. Now president of the Gettysburg Branch, he bought the elders a car, hosted missionaries in his home, and offered to buy Wiscombe a new suit—he had already bought the missionary a \$10 pair of shoes—to replace the worn-out suit he was wearing.⁶⁰

The following year, another missionary, Leaun Otten, came through the area and was impressed by Ivar. This young elder was assigned by the mission president to be the district president in the region of South Dakota, to whom Sandberg reported in his assignment as branch president. Seventy years after their meeting, Otten fondly remembered how Sandberg would prepare sermons as he rode through his farmlands on a tractor and noted, “Ivar [also] bought us [missionaries] all a car to drive around in and he bought Book of Mormons so we could give them out. . . . The neighbors were a mile or two apart, so we used that car an awful lot to do a lot of tracting.”⁶¹ In summarizing Ivar Sandberg, Otten stated, “There’s a difference between a testimony and conversion and he was totally converted. . . . He gave everything he had; he gave his life. . . . Ivar Sandberg was totally 100% converted to the Savior. . . . ‘To do’ is an action and that’s Ivar Sandberg.”⁶²

Without a chapel of their own, the Gettysburg LDS branch rotated hosting Sunday school, priesthood, and sacrament meetings in differ-

59. “Seek and Ye Shall Find,” p. 143.

60. “My Missionary Encounters with Karl Ivar Sandberg” in “The Notebook of Arthur C. Wiscombe, vol. 2, Accn.# 2937, Box 12, fd. 3, Arthur C. Wiscombe Papers, J. Willard Marriott Library Special Collections, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

61. Leaun Otten interview, 23 Feb. 2022, interviewed by Fred E. Woods in Salem, Utah, transcript in possession of author.

62. Ibid.

ent homes of the member families.⁶³ When discussion first arose concerning the building of a chapel, Sandberg volunteered to pay for all of it. But President John B. Hawkes, who presided over the mission, said, “No Ivar, the other members need blessings too.” All the branch members contributed.⁶⁴ The Gettysburg Chapel’s groundbreaking occurred on 26 August 1951.⁶⁵ The South Dakota District minutes recorded: “The ground was broken by Pres. Sandburg [sic] Brother [Otis] Jones, Bro. [Kenneth “Bud”] Darland. Pres. Sandburg [sic] dedicated the ground for the building of the chapel.”⁶⁶ Elder Otten explained the details of the building’s construction: “The church had hired contractors to come out and the people could get the house chapel and it looked just like a house only it had a steeple on it. . . . It had a basement in it. Provided that we did X amount of man hours on that chapel and then the church would match the other part. That’s how that worked.” Otten further specified, “The man [Joseph Earl] that they sent out from Salt Lake City to build it, he said, ‘Now I’ve got to have so many man hours and I’ve got to have so many men here every day,’ so . . . we tried our best to do what we could as missionaries, but the members were real good. Pounded nails and did everything they thought they could . . . the faith that they put in . . . it was nice.”⁶⁷

When the Gettysburg home chapel was completed and ready to be dedicated, Otten and another elder made the rounds, inviting every household in Gettysburg to attend.⁶⁸ A *Potter County News* article on the dedication service noted the chapel was a “white frame structure . . . located on Highway 83, about ten miles southwest of Gettysburg [on] . . . an acre of land from the Hall farm.” It stated the cost of the chapel was \$23,000, it could seat up to one hundred people, and it had

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. “LDS Dedication Service Planned,” *Potter County News* (ca. May 1952), newspaper clipping in Leاون Otten Scrapbook, courtesy of Leاون Otten, clipping in possession of author.

66. “Aberdeen South Dakota District South Dakota Rapid City Mission Minutes – General 1935–1975,” 26 Aug. 1951, CHL.

67. Otten, interview, 23 Feb. 2022; *POTP*, p. 111, notes the groundbreaking ceremony was held under the watchful eye of Joseph Earl, who was a church contractor, and who is probably the person Otten is referring to. He is also named in the “LDS Dedication Service Planned” but only by his first name.

68. Otten, interview, 23 Feb. 2022.



The LDS chapel in Gettysburg was constructed with the funds and labor of its members. Here it is seen in 1954, two years after its completion.

three classrooms as well as a recreation room and baptismal font in the basement. The article called the dedication service “a milestone in the growth of ‘Mormonism’ in Potter County since it began nearly eighteen years ago.”⁶⁹

The dedication was held Sunday morning, 11 May 1952, with Church general authority Antoine Ivins presiding. Sandberg conducted the meeting while his wife Mildred served as the pianist. Vilate Ivins, wife of Antoine Ivins, as well as John B. Hawkes, president of the North Central States Mission, made remarks. Sandberg gave a lengthy talk on the history of the Saints in Potter County, making sure to include his conversion story, on the recommendation of Apostle Spencer W. Kimball.⁷⁰

69. “LDS Dedication Service Planned.” The date of the Latter-day Saint faith commencing, is probably based on the fact that it was about the time of Ivar Sandberg’s baptism in Salt Lake City and his return to South Dakota.

70. A sampling of President Sandberg’s talk may be found at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KWCK-R4B> accessed 8 May 2022. The entire address has been preserved on a CD attached inside the front cover of *POTP*; Otten, interview, 23 Feb. 2022. In an earlier interview (Sept. 1994), Otten said that Elder Kimball had told

Then the dedicatory prayer was offered by President Ivins and the public was invited to tour the building throughout a two-hour open house. One hundred and twenty people attended the dedication, with 43 investigators and 77 Church members, including eight district missionaries and a party of five traveling with President Hawkes.⁷¹

Sadly, Ivar Sandberg did not live long after the new chapel's dedication. His daughter Charlotte recalled the tragic accident: on 19 June 1952, Ivar gave a ride home to a hired hand he had been forced to fire due to the man's drinking problem. On the way home he hit some loose gravel and his truck rolled. Ivar walked several miles to the closest farmhouse with broken ribs and a punctured lung. An ambulance rushed him to the hospital in Pierre, where he passed away a few days later at the age of 49. Before he drew his last breath, he charged his wife to "raise the children in the gospel."⁷²

The sad news of Sandberg's death raced across the region like a prairie fire. The *Potter County News* obituary read, "His ardent love for the gospel was the driving force of his life. Having heard, he believed in warning his neighbor. Largely through his missionary efforts, the number of converts in this vicinity has grown from one person in 1936 to a present membership of 68. A branch of the church which was organized with Ivar Sandberg as the first Branch President."⁷³

Karl Ivar Sandberg's funeral was held 27 June 1952, in the new Gettysburg chapel. The branch president who succeeded Sandberg, Otis Jones, presided. At the commencement of the service, Jones described Sandberg as "A man who was always ready to lend you a hand; and I

Sandberg when Ivar finished bearing his testimony, "You get that down and get it on tape and get it done now. You must do it." (POTP, p. 98). Other general authorities who visited Church members in the Gettysburg, South Dakota region were Elder Milton R. Hunter (23 Aug. 1945); Joseph Fielding Smith (6 Sept. 1947); Oscar A. Kirkham (1949); and Levi Edgar Young (1950). Elder Spencer W. Kimball visited with the Gettysburg Branch (13 May 1951) and noted in his journal they were "devout members." The following year, Antoine R. Ivins dedicated the Gettysburg chapel. (Copy of typed manuscript titled, "General Authorities visiting the Gettysburg Branch," research by Gerald E. Jones), in possession of author.

71. "Aberdeen South Dakota District South Dakota Rapid City Mission Minutes – General 1935–1975," CHL, 11 May 1952, 38 (which apparently is the page number of the second record book kept).

72. Bloomlein, interview.

73. "Karl Ivar Sandberg," *Potter County News*, June 1952, cited in POTP, p. 273.

have talked with him a great many times, and I have never heard him speak a word of criticism of anyone except in a spirit of helpfulness. Truly I believe he . . . did follow faithfully the last of the Articles of Faith, Number 13.”⁷⁴

Jones was followed by Elder Gilbert Phillips, a missionary in the area. Phillips told the congregation that Sandberg “has completed a mission in which he was sent to the utmost capacity. . . . His great love for the gospel brought him closer to his neighbors.”⁷⁵ John B. Hawkes, president of the North Central States Mission, spoke last, saying, “I sincerely love President Sandberg. In all my experience in life I have never met a man who lived a more Christian life and had a greater desire to do for his fellow men than President Sandberg.”⁷⁶

George Cavanaugh wrote this touching poem, “Tribute to Ivar Sandberg:”

Aged 17 he left his native land, And over waters came, A mere lad of tender years, And yet a man the same. . . . And he became a leader great, Who walked the narrow way, Humbly sure of God’s great work, And ready to obey. And then one day God called him home, To higher work above. He left the world a better place Because of work and love. And when I cross the borderline Into that other land, I hope to see his face again And shake his friendly hand.⁷⁷

After Ivar’s death, Mildred moved to town and raised their children in Gettysburg. Their son Philip recalled, “I’ve often thought about how my mother did that after my father passed with six kids, the youngest was only two years old. I know she relied heavily on the Lord. . . .

74. The 13th Article of Faith states, “We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul. We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.” “Funeral services for Karl Ivar Sandberg, held in the Gettysburg Branch Chapel, June 20 [sic, 27] 1952,” 1, courtesy of Leann Otten who received this typescript manuscript as well as others from Ivar’s wife Mildred.

75. Elder Gilbert Phillips remarks, “Funeral services for Karl Ivar Sandberg,” p. 2.

76. President John B. Hawkes, remarks, “Funeral services for Karl Ivar Sandberg,” p. 4.

77. “In Memory of Ivar Sandberg,” Poem by George L. Cavanaugh written shortly after the death of Ivar Sandberg, in *POTP*, p. 93. (George and his wife Marie started Mrs. Cavanaugh’s Candies in this region of South Dakota).

she had a farm to manage and six kids. When we were a little older and thought we knew more than she did about the farm she would say, 'Well, I'll pray about it, and I'll know tomorrow what the Lord wants me to do with the farm.'"⁷⁸

Wanda, the youngest of the children, recalled that her mother stepped up and not only took care of the family, but also kept alight the missionary spark that Ivar ignited within her: "Mother was very supportive of father when he was doing missionary work with our neighbors and when we moved to town then she felt like the responsibility for her role was on her shoulders. She did do that by serving two mis-

78. Philip Sandberg, interview.



After Ivar's passing, Mildred moved the family to town and continued her husband's mission to spread the LDS Gospel.

sions herself . . . to Louisiana and North Carolina.” Wanda added, “Then of course she prepared her children to go on missions and five of the six children served full time missions. And we felt that we had this heritage that we could do hard things, and that we could talk to people as our dad talked to people and preach the gospel. We wanted to do that, and we wanted our children and grandchildren now to do the same thing. . . . Our mother Mildred Sandberg was all-in. . . . She was firmly converted.”⁷⁹

The Sandberg posterity is a tribute to the legacy Ivar left. He nourished the seed of truth in his heart and generously shared the blossoming fruits with family and friends. Neighbors were grafted in and as a result the Latter-day Saint Gettysburg Branch was created. This hard-working Swede planted physical crops which sustained his household and many others, but he also planted spiritual seeds throughout his community of Potter County, South Dakota. Although he met an untimely and early demise, this remarkable Swede left his small part of the world a better place indeed.

79. Wanda Sandberg McCombs interview, 15 Apr. 2022, interviewed by Fred E. Woods, Provo, Utah, transcript in possession of author.

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On the cover: In 1919, citizens of Deadwood, South Dakota, paraded this effigy of Kaiser Wilhelm II, hanged it in front of the First National Bank on Main Street, and later shot it to pieces with shotguns.

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