

Torleif S. Knaphus Leaves Norway for America

In 2005 it has been 100 years since Torleif arrived in America. To celebrate this major event in his life, we have put together this time line that identifies significant activities once he left his family home in 1902 and culminates in 1906 – the year he arrives in Salt Lake City. Unless noted, the dates, events and quotes come from the "*Personal Journal of Torleif S. Knaphus – Entries made up until 1908*". **Quotes from his journal are in quotation marks.**

This article was compiled and edited by Allen Gerritsen

1902 – Torleif was 20 years old; he lived at home in Vats, Norway

These are photographs of Torleif Knaphus circa 1902.



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"Before I traveled out in the world, I asked for my parents' blessing and, in truth, I felt the Lord blessed me. We knelt down together as I received their blessing. When I now look back at this event, I know it was a great and glorious occasion, and that God's Spirit was given us in abundant measure."

"I also believe that the Lord decided that I soon would have the opportunity to hear and to understand His saving gospel that He has restored to the earth in our time, because I felt impressed to tell my parents with conviction in my mind that I would live far away from them in a wonderful and blessed place. But I didn't know where myself."

End of June, 1902 – Left Vats and arrived in Kristiania (now Oslo)

—Torleif worked in the summer as a journeyman painter.

Note: A "journeyman" painter means that one can work on their own as a painter and has gone beyond the level of an "apprentice". Besides having the talents and skills of an artist, at that time a journeyman painter had to know the science of mixing the paints with colors and

tints.

—In the fall, he enrolled in the King's Royal Art and Handicraft School.

—Torleif also applied for and was given permission to draw and paint in the Norwegian National Gallery and Museum of Sculpture copying the masters.

Torleif said that famed Norwegian "...artist Harriet Backer was instructing some artists who were working there (*in the museum*) at the same time I happened to be there. She was kind enough to show me the same attention as she gave them. Later I had the great opportunity to be admitted to her private art school. She apparently took an interest in me, because I attended her school free of charge. She also expressed that she was happy I had become her student."

- The family with whom Torleif lived were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They invited him to a concert that was held by some LDS singers.
- He started investigating the teachings and attended the meetings of the Church.

1903 – Torleif was 21 years old; lived in Kristiania (Oslo)

"I could see that art was noble and great, but was it the greatest? This question came up in my heart, 'Is it really enough to live for? Can it bring you perfect joy and satisfaction?' I remembered Christ's words when He said, 'Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all else shall be given you.' My longing to become God's child became stronger and stronger, and to know the way which would lead back to Him."

17 February, 1903 – Baptized a member of the LDS Church (*Source: LDS Church Records; LDS Film Area 123202 Item 11 page 21*) and joined the Young Men's Improvement Association and the Scripture Society

Note: this "Scripture Society" was not an official program of the general Church. This may have been a scripture study group that was established by the local Church leadership.

"When I was baptized, I had to cross the frozen ice to the water in which I was to be baptized. I remember well how cold it was when I was emerged." (*Source: Personal History by Torleif S. Knaphus as dictated to Linda Knaphus Spatz Duncan in about 1957*)

7 July, 1903 – Received the Aaronic Priesthood, office of a Teacher (*Source: LDS Church Records; LDS Film Area 123202 Item 11 page 21*)

—Torleif wrote that being a Teacher in the Priesthood "...was a labor that brought me inexpressibly great joy."

—Torleif continued the study of sculpture in the Royal Art and Handicraft School.

—He continued being taught in Harriet Backer's private art school where he was developing his skills in oil painting.

Here is an example of the famed-Norwegian artist Harriet Backer's work. [Click on the picture to see additional examples of her work.](#)



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1904 – Torleif was 22 years old

12 January, 1904 – Left Kristiania (Oslo) to visit his parents in Vats

"I did not neglect to explain to them the principles of the gospel, nor to my friends there at home."

- Torleif stayed home for about a 2-month visit.
- He gathered names for genealogical work while there.
- He also painted a portrait of his father (*see below*)

Lars Larsen Knaphus (age 61) by his son Torleif Knaphus, 1904



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First part of April, 1904 – Returned to Kristiania (Oslo)

"I was occupied painting and also studying the art of sculpting."

—A couple of months later he began working again as a journeyman painter.

June 1904 – Ordained a Priest in the Aaronic Priesthood

—Torleif was called to fill a position as a District Teacher and to be a counselor in the Scripture Society.

—In August he was called to be the 2nd Counselor in the Young Men's Improvement Association of their Branch.

—Torleif took these Church positions seriously and served with honor.

"Besides this, I have attended almost all of the different assemblies which have been held since I became a member of the Church in this part of the Lord's vineyard... Besides the various positions I still hold, I have attempted to the best of my ability to spend my time spreading the Lord's restored truths by tracting and conversing with my fellow men. I have had the opportunity to distribute about 1,112 tracts, 410 books, had 670 conversations and visited about 2,350 families. About 55 of these I have revisited."

"And now, when I look back on my labors and my activities, I can't help but to feel joy in my heart. And when I see how I have been guided forward on the right path, I can only thank my Creator who has held His protecting hand over me and blessed me with everything I have been in need of."

1905 – **Torleif was 23 years old; lived in Kristiania (Oslo); visits Vats**

—He was occupied with a couple of paintings that he started earlier.

—Torleif helped sculptors Lars Utne and Svar with some work.

"It has been dear to me to have the opportunity to have deep conversations with these men in the areas of art and science."

—Torleif wrote he had a "mean pain" in his throat caused by a lump or a gland and underwent a small operation to remove the growth.

6 June, 1905 – Ordained an Elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood (*LDS Church Records; LDS Film Area 123202 page 59*)

9 July, 1905 – Left Kristiania (Oslo) for a visit to his parents' home in Vats

—He wrote that he traveled on the tourist steamer *S.S. Mina* to Stavanger

—Torleif visited with "the brethren" in Stavanger for a couple of days.

—He arrived at his family home in western Norway on July 12th for a 3-month visit.

"To my great joy, I found my parents and brothers and sister in good health; yes, even my sickly mother."

F.Y.I. - Knaphus Family Status in the year 1905:

Father, **Lars Larsen Knaphus** –62 years old; never leaves Norway

Mother, **Liva** –58 years old; never leaves Norway

Sister, **Jorgina** –29 years old– she gets married this year– remains in Norway

Sister, **Sirina** – Died at age 6 of a tapeworm – 20 years previously

Brother, **Lars** –26 years old– immigrated to Iowa in 1902 – 3 years previously

Torleif – almost 24 years old (Knows he's going to immigrate to Utah soon)

Brother, **Sakarias** – 21 years old – lived away from home (Immigrates to Iowa in 1906)

Brother, **Martin** – 19 years old – lived away from home (Moves to Minnesota in 1906)

only to stay briefly - returned to Norway where he married and lived the rest of his life.)

Brother, **Andreas (Andrew)** – 17 years old; lived at home (Immigrates to Utah in 1910)

- Torleif became "...occupied with the regular chores of country life; cut hay and stacked it, carried peat, cut wood, and helped my father with some painting."
- Over the next few months Torleif spent much time visiting people and telling them about the Church.
- He also spent much time in gathering names of his ancestors from relatives and various local parish church records.
- Torleif writes about often fasting and praying during this time while at home. He even writes about climbing Krakkanuten to pray. This is the mountain by his home where he tended his mother's sheep and goats in his youth.

Photo of Krakkanuten today with the Knaphus memorial and Allen Gerritsen in the foreground.



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15 August, 1905 - Traveled with his youngest brother, Andreas (age 17), to Haugesund

NOTE: Andreas later changed his name to Andrew when he immigrated to America.

"After walking by foot, we arrived at our destination. Our first activity was to look up the sports field to observe their training. They were quite surprised to see me again as you can imagine, for I was one of the most able of them 3 years ago. Later in the evening I had the opportunity to greet and talk to several of my old acquaintances."

— On their way home, Torleif and Andrew had a long conversation about the gospel.

NOTE: Andrew was the only other family member who later joined the Church in Utah in 1910. He had come to America to try to convince Torleif to leave the Church and return to Norway. Andrew ended up marrying Myrtle, the sister of Torleif's wife Millie.

—For the next while Torleif "kept busy painting and partly doing other small tasks."

18 September, 1905 – Still visiting his family at the family farm in Vats, Norway

"I explained the gospel to my parents and begged them, with tears in my eyes, to seriously think about such a great and glorious message which they now had the opportunity to investigate."

—Torleif's journal details his success in gaining access to old church parish records for the benefit of finding his ancestry.

Monday, 23 October, 1905 – "And then came the day of my departure!" (*from Vats*)

"I drew a sketch of my mother in the morning, then I went out and said goodbye to my friends after, which I had to put out my hand in farewell to my parents and brothers and sister. Later I still had good feelings. The weather was especially beautiful and they all walked with me part way."

"I spent the night with a relative who is a master shoemaker in Omsasen."

Tuesday, 24 October, 1905 – Leaves Haugesund, Norway for Stavanger

"Everything was calm early the next morning when I glided away from the wharf on board the small fjord steamer. I arrived quietly and I left quietly. Few understood in their hearts that I was one of the Lord's authorized servants, and few understood the greatness of the message I brought them."

"I threw another quick glance at the familiar hills and mountains and over the calm fjord in which the star-filled sky was reflected. When it was still dark, I went down to second class. When I had visited and written for a while, I again went up on deck. 3 o'clock in the afternoon we arrived in Stavanger."

Wednesday, 25 October, 1905 – Left Stavanger for Kristiania (Oslo)

"It was nice and pleasant on board the Steamship *Kristiania*— We passed the time by walking on deck and looking at the fish who seemed to enjoy the good weather. Also the weathered cliffs could, in all their majesty, be seen far away to the west."

Thursday, 26 October, 1905 – Arrived back in Kristiania (Oslo)

"In the evening, when we came gliding in through the Kristiania Fjord, it started to rain. We arrived at the Fortress Warf about 10:30, and I went straight to Osterhaus gaten 27 (*apparently the address*

for the local Church building at that time) where some of the brethren and sisters were still gathered."

"I then went out to find a place to spend the night, but the ones I was to stay with had moved. I then tried to find a place to buy some food, but that was also in vain. I went back to the steamship but was not allowed to sleep on board. Later I arrived tired and wet at a hotel where I had to pay Kr.1½, in advance for the few hours left of the night."

The next morning "...I went up to the National Archives to search for some family names. Since then I have been busy fixing up my room and obtaining some needed furniture."

—Torleif had a hard time finding employment for a few days.

—He then found work doing some sculpting.

—Torleif turned down a scholarship to the Roman Art School in Rome due to his desire to immigrate to America. (*Source: Personal History by Torleif S. Knaphus as dictated to Linda Knaphus Spotz Duncan in about 1957*)

—His journal relates accounts of many visits to fellow Church members in the area and sharing the gospel with many others.

1906 – Torleif was 24 years old; he leaves for America

Saturday, 6 January, 1906 – Learns that he will be emigrating on the 26th of January

"I am very busy. During the week, I have, among other things, been occupied painting some pictures which I intend to give away to members. Likewise, I have started two larger paintings. One I intend to give to the Young Women's Association, the other one I hope to sell."

Monday-Wednesday, 22-24 January, 1906 – Torleif leaves on Friday

"...I was occupied with my work at the National Archives" gathering family names.

Note that Torleif was so dedicated to family history efforts, that he spent most of his final week in Norway researching his ancestors.

Thursday, 25 January, 1906 – Torleif emigrates tomorrow

"I was very busy packing and doing various other things."

"In the evening, I went to the Royal School and bid farewell to my friends, Sculptor Utne's students, and also handed them some tracts and books of our literature. As could be expected I was invited to bare my testimony. The Holy Ghost stood by me, and I bore my testimony with much power and feeling, and also presented the principles of the gospel in a favorable light."

"In the evening, I went to Priesthood meeting. A great portion of the Lord's spirit was present and our feelings were excellent...After the assembly, I had expected weeping and tears, but there was only joy."

Note that he made time to attend one final Thursday-night Priesthood meeting before emigrating

from Norway the next morning.

Friday, 26 January, 1906 – Left Kristiania (Oslo), Norway on the *S.S. Montebello*

Here are some pictures of the *S.S. Montebello* that Torleif was on.

Click on one of the images to see it larger in a separate window.



[\(Click HERE for a description and more pictures of the *S.S. Montebello*\)](#)

"Friday morning I was off. A great number of my brethren and sisters came to the wharf...My breast swelled with joy when, we, in the beautiful weather, went steaming out the Kristiania Fjord. We arrived in Kristiansand about 11 pm and stayed there till about 7 in the morning.

Saturday, 27 January, 1906 – Left Kristiansand, Norway (southern tip of Norway)

"We then went steaming out in the North Sea. The wind started blowing, causing seasickness and fear. I remained on deck, however, in shelter of the engine room and looked at the great seas, the rough ocean. But further out, the storm increased. About 4, a breaker flooded the deck and we were soaked through, which became annoying as we could not get to our clothes to change."

Sunday, 28 January, 1906 – North Sea

"Sunday passed gloomily. After eating breakfast I went up into the engine cabin to dry my clothes. But just as I was getting almost dry, a breaker hit the door and threw it open, then hit me and went on

down into the engine room causing a big commotion there."

Monday, 29 January, 1906 – Hull, England

"Monday, about 7 (a.m.), we arrived in Hull, and left there about 12 noon (*by train*) for Liverpool. We arrived there after 3-4 hours travel through the mild and beautiful scenery. There we met Elders Rasmusen, Pedersen and other returning missionaries from Alborg, Denmark, and the various European countries."

Tuesday, 30 January, 1906 – Liverpool, England – leaves for America in 2 days

"...we naturally went to the city to go sightseeing. After going through and looking at the botanical gardens, we headed for the arts museum. And it was pure pleasure to me to go through the same and look at the various works in both the arts of painting and sculpting."

Wednesday, 31 January, 1906 – Liverpool, England – leaves for America tomorrow

"...we went out and saw the many splendid items which were kept in the museum. In the afternoon we went to the wharf to see the world's largest ship which was leaving for America."

NOTE: this ship must have been the "Mauretania" that was launched 11 days earlier. Both this ship and the "Lusitania" that was launched later in 1906 were the largest passenger ships prior to the "Titanic", which was launched and left from Liverpool on its fateful voyage in 1912 – six years later.

"In the evening we gathered with the Saints."

Thursday, 1 February, 1906 – Left Liverpool, England on the ship *Cymric*

Here is a drawing of steamship *Cymric* that Torleif was on.

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[Click HERE for a description and more pictures of the *Cymric*](#)

"...we again headed out to sea. Land soon disappeared from view. Toward evening, we approached the Isle of Man and this lovely evening will remain as a special memory in my mind. My heart felt released from the land of Babel and I was extremely happy that I was going to have the opportunity to gather with God's people in the valleys of the mountains. Our surroundings were also beautiful. About 25 of the returning missionaries and several members who were emigrating, also enjoyed it as the large steamer quickly went gliding through the great water; which, in exquisite moonlit evening,

was like a sea of silver."

Friday, 2 February, 1906 – Atlantic Ocean

"...we passed the southern coast of England, and today we have reached the big ocean. The storm has increased throughout the day so it has been somewhat unpleasant with regards to seasickness and such."

The next week he wrote:

"I have, this week, changed residence from the eastern to the western hemisphere. The weather, crossing the Atlantic Ocean, has been very nice; the sea calm, and the air mild as if it were springtime. We have passed the time with reading and enjoyed ourselves, to the best of our abilities, with various things. Yes, how favored we are to be able to go to Zion under such favorable circumstances with such a light as we have been given."

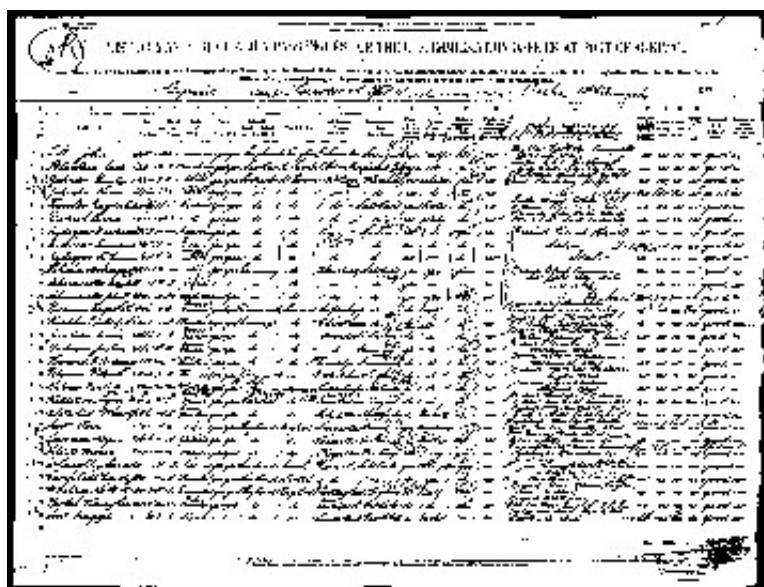
Friday, 9 February, 1906 – Atlantic Ocean

"Friday it blew up to a cold storm. But as it blew in our direction, it became a means to bring us to our destination."

Saturday, 10 February, 1906 – Arrives in Boston, Massachusetts and leaves for Utah

"About 2 this morning we arrived in Boston's Harbor. After we had undergone our physical examinations and such, we stepped onto American soil about 11 this morning. After spending some time going through customs, we left Boston by train."

This is the steamship *Cymric's* manifest that lists all the passenger's names and even some personal information. Torleif is listed on line 14.



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Wednesday, 14 February, 1906 – Arrives in Salt Lake City

"Our travel by railroad has fortunately come to an end. I arrived in Salt Lake City Wednesday the 14th of February. All I owned was 2 Norwegian Øre. I find no wisdom in writing more about my travel. At the station, I met Karl Lind who directed me to Kristian Johanesen where I was well received. I stayed there till the following day. Later I again visited Karl Lind. I had my baggage brought there and took temporary lodging with him."

NOTE: Karl Lind and his wife attended Torleif's baptism in Norway three years earlier. We're not certain yet how Torleif knew Kristian Johanesen.

"I have not been disappointed with regards to my surroundings. I have found the city, on the whole, to be very beautiful and very well arranged."

—Torleif stayed the first month or so with Karl Lind. He then found an apartment on his own in the lower Avenues of Salt Lake City and later had a roommate.

—During the first week, Torleif went to the Scandinavian meetings in the "Simbli Hall" (*Assembly Hall*) and visited several old friends from Norway who had moved to Salt Lake City.

—On Friday, 23 February Torleif "...made a trip south to Myrey (*Murray*) and inquired about employment at the metal mill." He started work immediately.

—On Tuesday, 27 February "...just as I was leaving (*the metal mill*), an acquaintance of mine came who knew a master painter who had need of a journeyman. We then drove there, and I got the position. He wanted me to start the next day."

F.Y.I. Torleif became a U.S. Citizen six years later in 1912 at the age of 30. A year later he was sent on a mission by the LDS Church to Paris, France to study art for a year and a half. Then before returning to Utah he studied in New York City at the Arts Student League for four months.

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