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4-H Achievement Days  
welcome

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## Signature book chronicles Homestead's 4 generations

By COLE SHORT  
Sarah Christianson crept across the plywood plank above the Norwegian barn's crumbling floor, inching closer to her target and her past. Christianson had flown halfway around the world to a small farm on the outskirts of Flisa, Norway looking for the roots to her family tree. Using a ladder and flashlight to navigate her way, she spotted the signature of Hans Olai Christianson, her great-great-grandfather, scribbled on the 150-year-old barn's interior wall.



Sarah Christianson today travels with her camera, reflecting the stark contrast to how her ancestors once traveled.

"That was really powerful – to see his signature in a place across the world and to have that tangible trace of him still there," the San Francisco woman said Sunday. A native of Cummings and a Hillsboro graduate, Christianson is compiling a collection of photographs of her own work and her

family's farming history in an upcoming book. Titled "Homeplace," the 160-page book from Daylight publishers will be released in fall 2013, the culmination of a six-year project to chronicle her family's ties to farming spanning four generations, two continents and more than 128

years. "I hope when people see the book they get a connection to the place," Christianson said in a phone interview from the Bay City. "Old photographs and snapshots make a connection that takes people to another place and time."



### Focal point

Christianson, 30, grew up on the family farm about four miles east of Cummings. After graduating from Hillsboro in 2000, Christianson earned a bachelor's degree from Minnesota State in Moorhead in 2005 and enrolled at the University of Minnesota

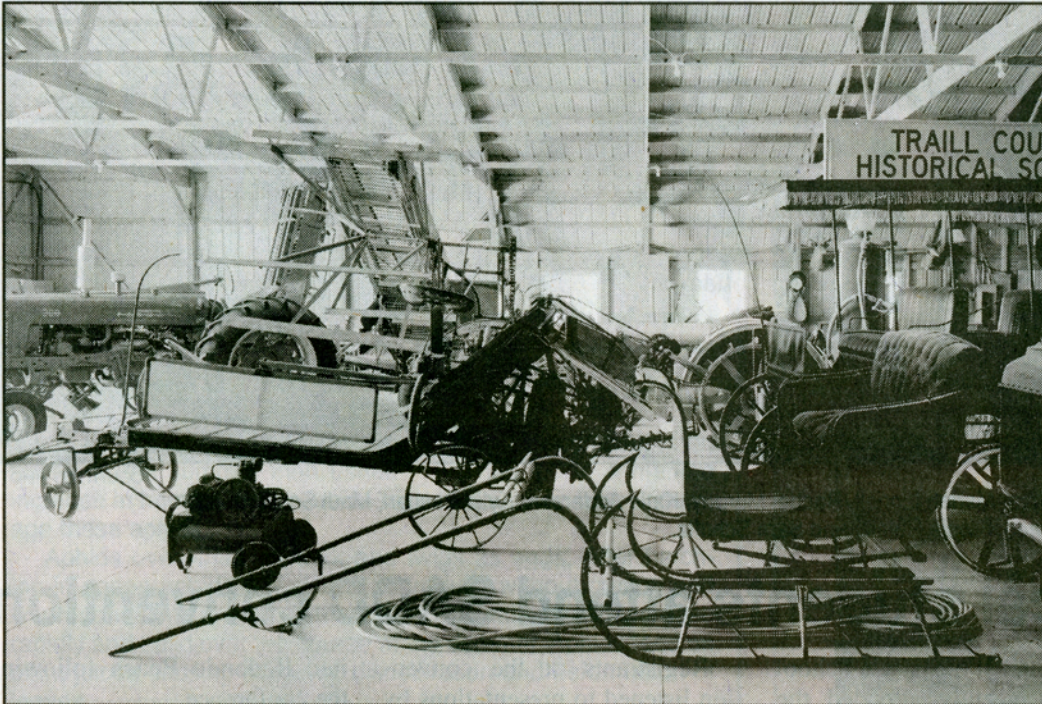
to pursue a master's degree in photography. In 2006, she began documenting the family farm and how it had changed since Hans Christianson settled in Traill County in 1884 after leaving Norway. With no siblings left at home and no career planned in

farming, Christianson realized her family's ties to the soil-rich Red River Valley were coming to an end. "My grandmother, Margaret, had just moved out of the farm near Cummings

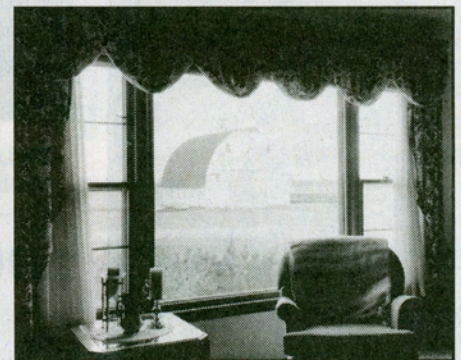
HOMEPLACE  
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## Sarah Christianson's "Homeplace"



Scrapbook's black and white photos add to collection.



# Close look reveals meaning of family farm

## HOMEPLACE

Continued from page 1

and I realized there were other things happening with the farm that were diminishing," she said. "I was moving away and I really wanted to look at the history of the farm and get a closer look at what the place means."

Armed with an old-school Pentax film camera, Christianson began taking pictures of her grandmother's empty farm house and poring over old black-and-white photos in family scrapbooks.

She photographed Hans Christianson's original homestead west of Hillsboro in Bloomfield Township as well as two farms owned by her grandparents – including the one where her parents, Dale and Rose, live and raise wheat, soybeans and navy beans.

She received a fellowship at the University of Minnesota

in 2008 to travel to Norway to document her family's roots there.

Christianson toured the farm where her ancestors worked near Flisa, a town of 1,622 in southeastern Norway near the Swedish border.

Surrounded by farms founded in the 1860s, Christianson spotted her great-great-grandfather's handwriting on a wall in a time-battered barn.

"It's still a working, operational farm, but the barn was in a bad state of deterioration," Christianson said. "I felt quite lucky to get there when I did, but it was a place really important for me to see."

### A novel idea

Christianson has created several hand-made books of her own photographs, but "Homeplace" will be her first

commercially published work.

Since it's her first venture, Daylight has asked Christianson to help finance the book's publication.

Contributors will receive signed and numbered copies of the book from Christianson's private stock.

Those purchasing the book after publication should be able to buy directly from Daylight, sites like Amazon or in stores in Hillsboro.

Through Tuesday, she had raised \$4,460 of her \$15,000 goal toward publication costs.

Once completed, the 8-by-10-inch clothbound, hardcover book will include about 40 color and 70 black-and-white photos.

She's still editing and sequencing the images and seeking writers to help write essays to appear beside the photos.

Christianson said she hopes

the documentary book allows readers to feel a connection to her family's land and its history or invoke memories from their own.

"I hope it makes people think about their own family and history," she said. "In San Francisco, there aren't a lot of people who grew up here.

"So to have a connection to family and history is important. People miss having that connection."

Christianson returns to the area at least twice a year. Her next visit will be Aug. 4 to get married to her fiancé, Jesse Mullan, on the family farm, adding another chapter to its legacy.

For more information on Christianson's work, visit [sarahchristianson.com](http://sarahchristianson.com). To donate to the project, go to [indiegogo.com/homeplace](http://indiegogo.com/homeplace).