Across Oceans, Across Time ® ...
Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...

Most preserved accounts of emigration from Denmark have been written from an adult viewpoint. In September 1958 14-year-old Bente Pedersen noted down impressions of her journey, made when her father, tailor Stenvald Pedersen, mother Ida, and younger sister Jonna left the small town of Hørby in northern Jutland for Fremont, Nebraska. Having studied English for three years in *realskole*, Bente was the only English speaker in her family at the time.

The family had traveled from Aalborg to Copenhagen, where they boarded the *Stavangerfjord*. Assigned a 4-person cabin with bunk beds on one of the lowest decks, Bente and her sister immediately claimed the upper bunks and set out exploring. The steamship's smokestack, nearly as big as a house, impressed them, as did a small dog which accompanied one of the passengers.

The weather varied from quite stormy to calm and sunny. Despite several bouts of seasickness, most of the food – especially hot dogs, potato salad, pop and ice cream – met with Bente's approval, but her first taste of root beer did not. She met and talked with the many young people on board. One novelty was visiting with boys her own age, which was something she had not experienced much at home. She noted that the American children seemed older since they were much bigger than their Scandinavian counterparts. One daily pastime was ping-pong, which was quite frequently made more challenging when the balls were blown overboard. Each night movies such Walt Disney and Danish comic films were shown, and a special children's party with music and games was held one day. Bente made special friends with two girls of Norwegian descent from New Mexico, and so could practice her English. This stood her in good stead when she started school in Fremont after the family settled in on a rented farm.

Bente and her family now live in Lincoln, Nebraska. Her account and later comments are on file at the Family History & Genealogy Center.