

Across Oceans, Across Time[®] ...

Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...



Clara Madsen and **Hilda Petersen**, obviously taking pleasure in each other's company and their identical dresses when they had their picture taken in the mid-1910s, were lifelong friends who shared a common heritage as American-born daughters of Danish immigrants. Clara, born in 1891, was one of 14 children born to Thor and Anne Sophie Bonnicksen Madsen; Hilda, two years younger nearly to the day, was the 2nd child of five in the Hans and Marie Hansen Petersen family. Both were born in Elk Horn, Iowa, where they lived most of their lives. For a number of years they worked as operators for the young Marne & Elk Horn Telephone Company. In 1917 Clara married Orlie Paulsen, raised a family of three children, and spent her life farming south of Elk Horn. She played the piano by ear, told funny stories, was a die-hard Cardinals fan who carried the latest team statistics in her head, and took care of a large garden in addition to her farm tasks. Hilda answered telephones professionally for 57 years, first for the telephone company, then as a clerk in the family grocery store, and finally as co-owner with her brother Richard of the Hans Petersen Grocery. Her distinctive "Helllooo" was recognized by all in the area. She taught Sunday School and sang in the Elk Horn Lutheran Church choir and was active in many church activities. Her beautifully gift-wrapped presents were received by many a lucky bride. Clara died in Atlantic, Iowa, in 1971; after retiring Hilda moved to the Salem Nursing Home, where she passed away in 1983.