

Across Oceans, Across Time® ...

Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...



"Her i Vestens Sol og Vind / Dagmar Du skal vies ind / til en Dronnings Minde."

On October 6, 1906, Emil Ferdinand Madsen, Poul Mouritsen, Johannes Christensen, Niels Mølgaard, Skov Nielsen, Edvig Rasmussen and A. P. Andersen set out from eastern Iowa with the intention of founding a Danish colony in the northeastern corner of Montana. Each man staked a 160-acre claim before five of them returned south for the winter. A. P. Andersen and his wife Magna remained behind, enduring the winter of 1906-07 out on the barren prairie - one of the most severe in man's memory - in the first home in the future community of Dagmar. The following spring the original companions returned with their families and began breaking up the prairie. Over the winter Congress had changed the Homestead Act to allow any man or single woman to take up 320 acres, so most expanded their holdings. Already that year a school was started. It was taught in both Danish and English, with Marie Hansen, formerly of Cedar Falls, as teacher, and held in a 'soddy' that also functioned as the community's first church until 1916. In its first twenty-five years, the colony suffered through good harvests and years of drought, dust and hail-storms, but with support from Danish organizations it grew and continued to thrive, according to an article in the 1932 issue of the annual *Julegranen* written by early settler Aage T. Larsen (seen above in his first home in Dagmar). Larsen calculated that in two summers of breaking up his 320 acres with six steers and a double plow, trips to the nearest town of Culbertson and into North Dakota for fall threshing work he drove over 10,000 miles, or three times the distance between New York and California. -- In 2006 Dagmar, Montana, will celebrate its centennial. The Museum and FHGC welcome stories of its founding families and early years.