

Across Oceans, Across Time[®] ...

Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...



Mathias Andreassen Friis, shown here with his wife, **Maren Møller**, was born into a farm-owning family in Havdrup, Vamdrup parish, Ribe County, on August 7, 1844. He and his family were among the many parish residents who left for homesteading opportunities and more fertile land in America in the latter decades of the 19th century. In this case, Mathias followed the emigration path of two younger family members, Søren Jepsen Friis and Ane Kathrine Friis, who had come to Gordon, in northwestern Nebraska, in the fall of 1893. With their three children, Carl Jensen, Jens, and Inge Marie, Mathias and Maren made a wintry voyage, arriving in New York City on February 23, 1894. They made their way to Nebraska, where a second daughter, Caroline, was born in the summer of 1895. Shortly thereafter Mathias once again followed Søren's footsteps, this time to western Iowa, where he settled in Clay Township, in Shelby County. Mathias died in Elk Horn in February 1909; Maren in July 1914. Over the following decades knowledge of Mathias' whereabouts in the US was lost to the descendants of relatives in Denmark until October, 2007, when Anne-Grete Mortensen of Lindum visited Elk Horn as part of a tour group. Imagine her surprise to discover that she was in the very town where he had lived! Although direct descendants no longer live in the area, she was able to see the house where the Friis family had lived and find church and other records pertaining to them. That weekend, Mathias' and Maren's tombstone, which has been photographed and may be seen at <http://iowagravestones.org>, was also decorated with a bouquet of flowers from a distant Danish relative.