

Across Oceans, Across Time® ...

Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...

Mandag den 23. April, Kl. 11 Form., lader Smed **Peter Steffensen i Haarbølle** paa Grund af Bortreise ved **Auction** bortfælge: Indbo, bestaaende af et Mahogni-
skatol, en Chiffoniere, Stole, Borde, Sengeklæder, en Seng, Linned, Rjoffenredstaber, en
stor Deel Smedeværktøi; heilet Hamp; Mandfolk- og Fruentimmergangklæder; en stor
Kaffelovn m. m.

Møens Herredskontoir d. 13. April 1866.

F. Siønsen, const.

From Møn to the Midwest – Peter Stephensen or Steffensen, born in Damsholte parish on the small southeastern island of Møn in 1829, apprenticed as a blacksmith and then practiced his trade in the village of Hårbølle, near the southern tip of the island. By 1860 he had married, owned his own smithy and other property, had four sons – and was seemingly facing a secure, if not prosperous, life in rural Denmark. But by the mid-1860s hard times had hit and Peter was obliged to sell some of his land and even borrow money to make ends meet. By late 1865, he had decided to emigrate to America. In December of that year he disposed of his house and remaining property. April issues of *Møens Avis*, the local newspaper, carried the above advertisement for the auction of his remaining property, which included a mahogany bureau, tallboy, tables and chairs, a bed and bed-linens, wearing apparel, some hackled hemp, kitchen equipment, blacksmith's tools, and a 'big stove.' On April 29, 1866 Peter became one in the steady stream of island residents who received passports to emigrate to North America, and he and his wife, Ane Cathrine Madsen, sons Niels Jacob, Mads Christian, Lars, and Frederik, and an unnamed servant set out on the long journey.

By 1870 Peter, now known as Peter Stevens, was working as a blacksmith in the small town of Brazil, in Clay County, Indiana. Some time in the next decade he moved to Indianapolis, where there was a large community of Danish immigrants, and it is here that he spent the rest of his life. His sons, who had been called by the patronymic surname Petersen in Denmark, Americanized their given names, adopted variants of the Stephensen name, and scattered throughout the Midwest. Niels Jacob, originally a blacksmith like his father, became Nelson Steffensen, settling in Iowa before becoming a farmer in Nebraska. As John Stevens, Mads Christian operated a grocery store in Indianapolis for many decades. Lars became Louis Stevens, and later, Steffensen, and moved to Michigan. The youngest Danish-born son, Frederik, trained as a physician in Indiana, and was Fred Stephensen, M.D. in Elk Horn, Iowa, until his early death. Peter and Ane Cathrine Stevens also had one American-born son, Harry, who died as a young man.

More information about emigration from Møn and the ancestry of the Stephensen family can be found, courtesy of Mogens S. Hansen, in Peter Stevens' file in the Museum Library.