

Across Oceans, Across Time[®] ...

Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...



Garnet Ireva Larson was the youngest child of first-generation Americans Lewis C. and Mary Ann (Nielsen) Larson of Franklin County, Nebraska. All three children in this farm family received university degrees, but Garnet, born on All Saints' Day in 1904, became a life-long learner and teacher. Graduating from high school in 1923, she followed the path of many young women of her era by teaching both elementary and high school. At the same time she took university classes, which led to a Bachelor of Science degree in Education in 1929, followed by a Master of Arts in English in 1930. During the Depression she was fortunate to find a position as English instructor at the University of Kansas-Lawrence. This was followed by a Ph. D. in English in 1935, and a Master's in Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh in 1944. In the immediate post-War years Garnet Larsen worked for the North Dakota State Welfare Board before beginning a 25-year career with the School of Social Work at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Actively opposed to the death penalty, and a vocal advocate for the poor, Larson spent much of her time and expertise trying to better the lot of the less fortunate residents of her native state. She was an active member of the Nebraska Civil Liberties Union, the Nebraska Youth Committee, and the Nebraska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Committee on Civil Rights. She worked with Native Americans, tutored inmates on death row, and served as adviser to prisoners' rights organizations. She received a number of awards for her efforts, including being named Social Worker of the Year in 1971. Through the years Larson's philosophies and personality left lasting marks on those who studied under or worked with her, many of whom felt that she truly was a saint. Larson continued to give of herself even after her death in 1998 at the age of 93. The bulk of her estate was left to the Garnet Larson Charitable Trust to aid students and in support of her favorite charities.