

**Across Oceans, Across Time® ...**  
**Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...**



**A Love Story.** This Victorian house in Elk Horn, Iowa, is one of the buildings belonging to The Danish Immigrant Museum. It was built in 1908 by a local carpenter, Jens Otto Christiansen, who was born into a smallholder family in Avlum parish in Ringkøbing County just before Christmas in 1863. In 1889 Jens Otto and a friend, the later pastor Thomas N. Jersild, boarded the ill-fated *S.S. Danmark*, en route to Alden, Minnesota. After their unexpected detour to the Azores, Jens reached America and spent two years in Minnesota before striking out on his own. He worked several places in Nebraska as a blacksmith, carpenter, railroad hand and coachman, before ending up in Elk Horn in 1898, where he was to spend the next half-century. He studied at Elk Horn College and worked steadily, gradually making himself a nest egg and acquiring property. The story has been handed down that Jens Otto built the house for himself and a wife. The only problem: before doing so he neglected to ask the young woman in question to become Mrs. Christiansen, and when he eventually did, she turned him down. So Jens Otto remained a bachelor, renting his dream house out to various Danish families while he lived behind the variety store he operated. Due to his upright posture and meticulous dress, he was known in the surrounding farming community as "Prince Otto." In 1933 the house was sold to the Salem Old People's Home to help pay for Jens Otto living there in his old age. He was a resident of Salem for 15 years, where he died in 1949. He was buried in an unmarked grave in Elk Horn Cemetery. The name of his mysterious beloved, if ever known, has not been preserved, but the house constructed by a love-struck young immigrant still remains for future generations to visit and enjoy.