

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



**Long-term Lovers:** Immanuel Nielsen was born into a Danish Methodist family in Poulsker parish on Bornholm in 1903. After studying theology in Copenhagen he was encouraged to come to the US in 1923 to complete his theological training. After a period in Boston, where he worked as a painter to earn a living while attending the local Latin high school, Immanuel came to Chicago to attend Northwestern University and what was then the Garrett Biblical Institute. Here he met Viola Lillian Johnson, a 2<sup>nd</sup>-generation Danish American on both sides of her family from Racine, Wisconsin. Viola had nourished dreams of attending the local Normal College after her graduation from Racine High School. But when her father unexpectedly died she had to work to help her mother support her three younger siblings. Finding employment that paid in Racine proved to be difficult, so the family moved to Evanston, Illinois, where young women were in demand as housekeepers, nannies and cooks in the households of the wealthy suburb. Immanuel and Viola met at Sunday evening services of the Norwegian Danish Church in Chicago and began to date, but their dates were infrequent since money was scarce. When the building he was living in was to be closed, the two decided to marry. Viola's employer offered them the use of the chauffeur's apartment over the garage in return for Immanuel doing some painting and occasional driving. -- Viola made her wedding dress, using the pattern shown above. They were married at Bethany Methodist Church in Racine on September 5, 1934, as part of a triple celebration, that date also being the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of Viola's grandparents, and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of an aunt and uncle. The couple then settled into housekeeping in the chauffeur's apartment until Immanuel graduated from seminary the following spring. Over the following decades the couple served numerous parishes in Minnesota until Immanuel's retirement from the ministry. They were married for nearly 60 years. Viola's wedding dress is still in the possession of her daughter.

**The Danish Immigrant Museum**

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2212 Washington St., Elk Horn, Iowa 51531  
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