

Across Oceans, Across Time[®] ...

Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...



New Beginnings -- Thomas Christian Jensen (1841-1923) was born in Brovst parish, west of Aalborg, the son of a small farmer. His mother died when he was only seven years old, and he was raised by a stepmother who had been a servant in his parents' household. Like his peers, Thomas was registered for military service as an infant, and was called into service in the Danish Infantry during the 1864 Dano-Prussian War. Although Denmark lost the war and its duchies of Slesvig and Holsten, the war was not all bad for Thomas, for he met Kirsten Marie Pedersen (1847-1929) in Vejle during his military service. They were married on May 5, 1867. Their first child, Jens, arrived the next year and a girl, Johanna was born in late 1869. By that time the family had moved to Saltum, not far from Thomas' boyhood home. But life in Saltum apparently did not suit the Jensen family, for they remained there only two years more before emigrating to the United States. They boarded the *S. S. Humboldt* in Copenhagen in July 1871 and arrived in New York on September 21. But the journey was not a happy one. Little Johanna died en route and was buried at sea. After the arduous railroad journey to their new home near Jewell Junction in northern Iowa, Jens, their remaining child, died on the first night in their new home.

Thomas became a farmer and eventually owned his own farm and other acreage in the vicinity. By 1900 he had moved into the town of Jewell and had become a livestock dealer.

Five children were born to the Jensen family in America. The oldest, daughter Catherine, married a farmer and moved to El Reno, Oklahoma. John married and became an automobile dealer in nearby Clarion, Iowa. Peter married and also went to Oklahoma, but returned to Iowa in 1909 and pursued various occupations. Clarence died young and is buried near Jewell. Marie married a farmer and lived near Clarion.

Thomas and Kirsten Jensen (pictured on the right above) both died in Jewell. They are survived by great grandchildren scattered across the United States. Their lives bear witness to the struggles and hardships which were the lot of so many Danish immigrants in the nineteenth century. Like so many, they persevered, and left a legacy of which their descendants can be proud.