

Across Oceans, Across Time[®] ...

Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...



With the institution of the quota system in the mid-1920s increasing numbers of Danes came to America with specialized skills or academic degrees. One of these was **Niels Christian Klendshøj**, from Vandsted Mark near Copenhagen in 1902. After graduating from Vestre Borgerdydskole, he received a degree in 1926 in chemical engineering from the University of Copenhagen. In 1927 he was offered a position in the research department of the Arner Company, a pharmaceutical firm in Buffalo, New York, where he was later joined by his wife, Else Cecilie (née Rasmussen), sons Ole and Jørgen, and his mother and sister, both named Ane Marie. From 1933-37 the young scientist bicycled between his workplace and evening classes at the University of Buffalo Medical Center, where he received his M.D. degree in 1937. For the next 35 years he held increasingly responsible positions at Arner and its successor company, Strong Cobb Arner Inc., which under his leadership grew to be one of the major pharmaceutical firms in the U.S. He also worked as a consultant in industrial medicine and was director of the Department of Biochemistry of Buffalo General Hospital from 1942 to 1967. It was here that he and Dr. Ernest Witebsky isolated the B-blood complex, helping to create a truly universal blood for transfusions. For this work both physicians were nominated for the 1941 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine; however, due to World War II no prizes were awarded in that and the following year. In his later career Dr. Klendshøj founded the toxicology lab and the Department of Legal Medicine at his alma mater.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Niels Christian Klendshøj had diverse interests and talents. He traveled widely, and was a linguist, musician and artist, designed his own home, and became a jet pilot. Personal documents and family history have been donated to the Family History & Genealogy Center by members of his family.