

Across Oceans, Across Time® ...

Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...



Valdemar and Thora – The man in the smart-looking overcoat above is Valdemar Marius Theobald Jensen, a Fynbo from Øre, where he was born in 1877. Following military and naval service he worked for the Danish railroad system, and the coat was part of his uniform. At one point his quick thinking prevented a potentially serious train wreck from occurring, for which he was awarded the silver wings pinned to his cap. While still a sailor, Valdemar met a baker's daughter, Thora Nielsen, at a dance hall and was smitten at first sight. At the time Thora was working as a dairymaid, rising at 4am each morning to milk 25 cows and make cheese from the milk, and then repeating the process each afternoon. Since both were quite young they waited a year to marry until Valdemar turned 21. After a decade of marriage Valdemar, Thora, and their four children, the youngest only 3 months old, embarked in August of 1909 as 3rd-class passengers on the *S.S. United States* bound for New York City. Valdemar told of cabbage soup being a frequent item on the dinner table, a not particularly appetizing dish when one was seasick. Ten-year-old Carla tried repeatedly to see the ocean from the upper deck, but each time she tried to sneak upstairs she was caught and escorted back below decks. Nevertheless, she somehow contrived to be on the upper deck just as the ship passed the Statue of Liberty, something she recalled with a thrill all her life. Valdemar arrived with \$5 in his pocket; three days later the family was in Audubon, Iowa, where they would spend the rest of their lives. He and Thora soon found positions with a bachelor farmer in the area. Valdemar wore his railroad overcoat for Sunday best, but when people saw the silver buttons embossed with engines they would salute him, so he replaced the buttons, later giving two of them to his granddaughter Beverly. Valdemar and Thora lived long lives. They had ten children in all and celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in May, 1948. Valdemar was a long-time subscriber to *Den danske Pioneer*, and in 1937 it was via this newspaper that he received word of his parents' deaths back in Skårup, when small death notices were published. A beautifully illustrated history of Valdemar and Thora's family has recently been compiled by their granddaughter, Beverly A. Lauritzen, and donated to the library.