

BACKGROUND AND CHILDHOOD Born Clara Beck on February 24, 1892 in Romdrup, Denmark. Her parents were Laurits Beck and Kathrine Petersen Beck. They lived on a 'not very big' farm and raised wheat and some animals. She was the fifth or sixth child in a family of eight. Only her brother Kristian and she immigrated to America.

CHILDHOOD Her first job at 16 was caring for two little boys. This lasted about a year. Then she got another domestic job that included cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes. She does not remember what she was paid.

SCHOOL She liked sewing really well and went to school for two months in Aalborg to learn dressmaking. Then she got the idea of immigrating to America.

HOW SHE CAME TO EMIGRATE While working as a domestic, she desired to attend a dance one evening. The family gave her permission and loaned her a horse and buggy, which she didn't know how to drive. But, she made it to the dance and met a young man who was emigrating to Viborg, South Dakota, the following week. After he was in America, they corresponded. Clara was invited to emigrate to Viborg, and she did - traveling with this man's sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Sorensen. The Sorensens traveled first class; Clara's father had to sell a cow to afford Clara's first class ticket.

She traveled to Viborg, South Dakota, where the young man, Anke Busgard (?), lived, only to find she wasn't expected. But she - 'the Danish girl' - was quickly offered a job. She stayed in South Dakota two years.

EMIGRATION They arrived in New York on March 28, 1912, having sailed directly from Copenhagen. Tried to leave on the 'Titanic', but it was all booked. So, took a Danish boat, Oscar II. (This was the fateful trip when the Titanic was lost.)

FEELINGS ABOUT EMIGRATION Her parents said neither yes nor no; felt the decision was Clara's. Her expectations of America were positive: big, wonderful land full of opportunities. Preparations for the trip were quick and minimal. She doesn't remember how much money she took only that she had \$3 when she reached New York. She expected to stay in America.

ELLIS ISLAND The Sorensens took care of that.

SETTLING IN Viborg, South Dakota was a Danish community. She worked as a domestic for the Larsen family with six children; three were in school and helped Clara with her English. Her duties included housework and childcare.

ARCATA, CALIFORNIA After two years, in 1914, Clara went to Arcata where the Sorensen's lived. She traveled by train accompanied by Mrs. Sorensen's brother. She received employment as a nanny, attended the Danish Lodge in Arcata, and saved her money. From Arcata she moved to Spokane. **SPOKANE, WASHINGTON:** On the boat

over from Denmark, she had met Mr. and Mrs. Jensen from Copenhagen with whom she corresponded. Mrs. Jensen invited her to Spokane. Clara took a train from Arcata to Eureka, a boat from Eureka to Portland, and a train from there to Spokane in January 1916.

SCANDINAVIAN COMMUNITY IN SPOKANE She joined the Danish Lodge, Princess Louise, in 1916 to become acquainted. Meetings were held in Odin Hall once a month: card parties, dinners, and socials. She met her husband in the lodge.

MEETING SPOUSE He was the brother of a friend of the Jensen's and worked as a butcher in Wallace, Idaho. They met in March or April 1917, and he called her on the telephone and sent flowers and candy. When America entered the war, he returned to Spokane June 1 to register. They were married July 30, 1917 - after a four month courtship. His name was originally Sven Larsen, but it was changed to Swan when he received his citizenship paper. He was from Copenhagen and 30 years old in 1917. In later years in Spokane, he became a painting contractor.

MARRIED LIFE Swan went into the service in November. Clara moved to Tacoma to be with her husband who was stationed there. During this time she worked at the Olympic Hotel. After the war, they returned to Spokane where Swan was a butcher.

CHILDREN Donald was born August 26, 1920, while they lived in Spokane. **WORK:** While living with the Jensen family prior to marriage, Clara worked as a domestic for a family-cooking, cleaning, and washing. She cooked Danish food because the people thought it was wonderful.

EMIGRATION OF BROTHER She was still in South Dakota. Clara and her employer, Mr. Goodrup (?), bought and sent Kristian a \$75 ticket. He worked for a while before being drafted into the Army; he was wounded during the war. He made the army his career, dying in an Army Hospital in South Dakota in 1974.

FAMILY LIFE When Donald was a few weeks old, Swan returned to Wallace to work as a butcher. Clara and Donald joined him soon after. But when Donald became six, they returned to Spokane for a better school system.

DANISH LANGUAGE Not spoken very much and children weren't taught it. Leona was born in Wallace, Idaho, in 1922.

WORK Clara stayed at home until the children were married. When she was 50, she started sewing again - this time in the alteration departments at various stores. She worked 20 years and really enjoyed it. In about 1940, she was paid \$20 a week at 'Charles'. The second store, Zokurs ?, paid \$35 a week. Her third job began at the Bon Marche in 1950, the same year she went to Los Angeles for the birth of her first grandchild (Leona's child).

She was in a train wreck on her way back and had amnesia for a while. She returned to work quickly though. The alterations department had 5-6 people, but she was laid off when the Palace store took over the Bon. She went back

to Charles to work. She never had trouble finding jobs and was still working as a seamstress at 81

She had a busy life - liked sewing. Kept on at home until her eyesight was too bad.

CITIZENSHIP Shortly after marriage, she and Swan went to night school, studied, and received their citizenship papers in 1917.

DANISH LODGE She's been a member for 68 years, having joined before her marriage. Tells about activities in Danish lodge. Membership now is mostly second generation Danes born in America.

CHILDREN Both graduated from high school. Don worked after school, then married and joined the navy. Leona worked at a telephone company before marriage.

RETURN TRIPS TO DENMARK Clara has made six trips: 1937, 1948, 1962, 1969, 1971, and 1973. She went alone in 1937 to see her parents.

ON BEING DANISH She's thoroughly American after so many years; Denmark reminds her only of family members still there. She and her husband returned in 1948 and 1962.

WORKING OUTSIDE THE HOME Neither her husband nor her daughter liked it.

DANISH LODGE This has meant a lot to her.

SPEAKING DANISH Om jul: et stort juletr' - recites verse about Christmas.

RECOLLECTION ABOUT WORK When she first came to Dakota, she was paid \$3 a week, and when she was 81, she received \$2 an hour. 'How times change.'