



# Danskernes Historie Online

Danske Slægtsforskeres Bibliotek

## Dette værk er downloadet fra Danskernes Historie Online

**Danskernes Historie Online** er Danmarks største digitaliseringsprojekt af litteratur inden for emner som personalhistorie, lokalhistorie og slægtsforskning. Biblioteket hører under den almennyttige forening Danske Slægtsforskere. Vi bevarer vores fælles kulturarv, digitaliserer den og stiller den til rådighed for alle interesserede.

### Støt vores arbejde – Bliv sponsor

Som sponsor i biblioteket opnår du en række fordele. Læs mere om fordele og sponsorat her: <https://slaegtsbibliotek.dk/sponsorat>

### Ophavsret

Biblioteket indeholder værker både med og uden ophavsret. For værker, som er omfattet af ophavsret, må PDF-filen kun benyttes til personligt brug.

### Links

Slægtsforskeres Bibliotek: <https://slaegtsbibliotek.dk>

Danske Slægtsforskere: <https://slaegt.dk>

# **Pete Frandsen**

## **1877 - 1955**



### **Læsø - Monett**

#### **An Immigrant Story**

**Collected, Written, and Edited by**

**Arnt J. Wiis**

**Kenneth R. Watson**

# Forward

What follows is a labor of love for family across two countries. In this world of electronic accessibility, it was possible for Arnt Jerup Wiis to contact Kenneth Watson in search of genealogical information for a project Arnt was researching about the emigration of Jens Peter Frandsen from Denmark in 1910. The relationship was distant (fourth cousin, twice removed) but the friendship between them grew rapidly as they shared information about this special man and his family. While the project was Arnt's in both conception and direction, Ken was able to provide some essential information about Peter's family after they came to the United States. What was once just typical information gathering became a project that both were passionate about. Much midnight oil was burned over fact gathering and checking. As the project developed, Arnt continued toward his goal of providing an article for Danish genealogical uses. He turned the development of an English version of his original Danish article, translated to English by him, over to Ken for editing and for sharing with family in the United States. The reader may be curious about who we are, so we provide some biographical information about each of us.



## **Arnt Jerup Wiis, Farstrup, 9240 Nibe**

I was born in 1950 in Vesterø on Læsø and moved from Læsø in 1967 to attend high school in Viborg. From 1970 to 1972 I was in the army, then studied at the University of Aalborg, where I obtained a master's degree as cand. merc. in 1977. The next many years then followed a series of jobs in the private business world until the end of 2017, when I retired.

When retiring, it was my plan to do genealogy research in the wintertime and be a beekeeper in the summertime. I have stuck to this plan through all the years that have passed since. However, the genealogical research has not become so much, because again and again I have come across fascinating people and interesting incidents, which I have thought absolutely deserved a closer examination and description. A number of articles, reports and also a few books have come out of this - all with Læsø as the focal point.

In the autumn of 2022, I again had time to look at the genealogical research, and here I found out that my great-grandfather's (Christian Jerup's) older sister Ane Marie Christendatter (Frandsen) had emigrated to the USA at the age of 73. This was very unusual and therefore required a closer examination. This again led me to her youngest son Jens Peter Nielsen (Pete Frandsen) and his grandson, Ken Watson, who contributed a great deal of valuable information, helped with the translation into proper English, and not least edited the report. Solveig Hansen from Læsø Museum's archive was kind enough to make me aware of Ken, whom she had met during Ken's visit to Læsø. Solveig believed that Ken would definitely be interested in helping and contributing. And fortunately, she was completely right.

The beekeeping, on the other hand, has proceeded quite according to plan, following the wind and weather and the whims of nature, which determine the work effort of the bees. But here, too, the problem has been to limit myself, so that beekeeping – like genealogy research - also remains only a hobby.

AJW June 2023

## **Kenneth R. Watson, Wake Forest, North Carolina, USA**



I am an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a mainline denomination in the United States and Canada. I have served both local and statewide ministries since 1964, retiring in 2007. During that time, I developed an increasing interest in the history of my family, especially my mother, Martha Frandsen Watson who was born on Læsø and came to the United States when she was 17 months old. Her stories of family history always delighted me and often left me wondering whether she had all the facts right or not. Well, not all of them but most have roots in real events and people. Arnt helped fill in those sources and stories in a way that makes it possible for me to present this to my family as a proud part of our heritage.

I'm a native son of the state of Missouri, born in 1946. I was raised, nurtured, and educated in Missouri, but my wife and I (married 56 years) have followed our two children and grandchild to the beautiful state of North Carolina. They look after us and we provide whatever help we can. It has been great!

Along the way, I have had the privilege of having access to wonderful educational opportunities. After graduating from college in my hometown, I was able to continue my education in ministry, earning the degree Doctor of Ministry from Lexington Theological Seminary in Lexington, Kentucky. Soon, I found myself pursuing and receiving a Ph.D. from the University of Missouri in Educational Psychology. I am the family computer nerd, an amateur model railroader, and a historian of early United States religious movements. Along the way, I have indulged my nerd-ness by being a fan of science fiction (including all things Star Trek) and of the science of cosmology and particle physics. I have learned to hide what I am reading behind a neutral cover so that I don't have to explain why I read such stuff (I have no idea!). Fitting in the cracks between all of that, I squeeze in as much genealogical research as possible.

I have cherished the opportunity to know and work with Arnt on this special project and hope that our American side of the family will as well. Thanks, Arnt, for finding me and letting me in on all the fun.

KRW June 2023

So, here we present to you the story of one family, like so many others throughout history who have been drawn or driven to leave their home and culture and settle in a strange land. We admire their courage and their faith in the future. To them we say, you have left your stories in our hands, and we sincerely hope that we have done justice to them.

# Pete Frandsen (1877 – 1955)

## An Emigrant Story from Læsø, Denmark

Jens Peter Nielsen (Peter / Pete) was born at Gammelgaard in Vesterø on Læsø. He was the youngest of eight siblings. There was also a younger foster child, Christian Nielsen, who was the son of one of Jens Peters older sisters. Christian was five years younger than Jens Peter, but they grew up together for some years.



Kattegat is the sea between Denmark and Sweden. Læsø, in the northern part of Kattegat, is approximately 45 square miles in size. It has been populated since the beginning of the Middle Ages, or for about a thousand years. The island is quite flat, and the soil indeed sandy and not very fertile. In different ways through the ages, the sea always determined the living conditions for the inhabitants of the island, for better or for worse. The men went to sea to get some cash for the home, while the women had to try to cultivate the barren soil at home. This led to a division of labor, where the women shouldered all the responsibilities at home, while the men's domain was everything that had to do with the sea. Most Læsø sailors were at home 3-4 months in the wintertime. They always looked forward to ships getting stranded on the shores. The strandings would give them something to do and normally some extra income. But still it was the women who took care of the horses and drove the horse carts if a ship standing on the shore needed to be emptied.

Map: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/Denmark>

It could not have been long before Jens Peter found his way to Læsø harbor. In the 1890s, the activity at the small harbor increased very significantly. The fishing for black



Vesterø is the biggest parish on Læsø and covers the whole western part. Until 1872 life on Læsø was extra difficult, due to the fact, that there was no harbor. Because of the shallow water it was dangerous for bigger ships to approach the island. In 1872 a small harbor was built in the northern part of the west coast. In the following decades a small settlement grew up around the harbor. So eventually the church and the school were quite some distance away from where most people lived. But not for the family at Gammelgaard, as indicated by the three small pictograms on the map with the church to the west, Gammelgaard in the middle, and the school to the east. There was about two miles to the harbor from all three places.

Map: AJW

lobsters and plaice was developing quite rapidly and there were several smaller cargo ships native to the harbor. There was active boat building, and immediately north of the harbor a brickworks was established. At the harbor he could meet his uncles and

his cousins of the same age, the Jerups and the Vistrups. So, there were people he knew, lots of activity and things to do. This was, of course, absolutely decisive for the direction his life took in the first active years. Jens Peter seems to have been an active



The oldest part of the red painted Vesterø church dates back the year 1250. Throughout the centuries, the church has been the center of highlights in the lives of the people of Vesterø: Here they held their baptisms, here they were confirmed, and later they were married here, and most of them also ended up being buried here. Jens Peter was baptized here November 13, 1877. His confirmation was here on September 8, 1891, and here he was married to Caroline Kirstine Christiansen November 30, 1902.

Arial photo 1961.  
[www.kb.dk/danmarksetfraluften](http://www.kb.dk/danmarksetfraluften)



Gammelgaard from an arial photo from about 1950. It is not clear when the long stable and barn was built. The middle part of the roof over the main living area was thatched with seaweed. - It is kind of irony of fate that Jens Peter's great grandfather, Peder Jerup, owned and lived in Gammelgaard from 1817 to 1824. Times indeed were difficult then, and Peder Jerup went broke, and the whole family had to move to a small, rented house in the northern part of the parish.

Photo 1948-1952. [www.kb.dk/danmarksetfraluften](http://www.kb.dk/danmarksetfraluften)



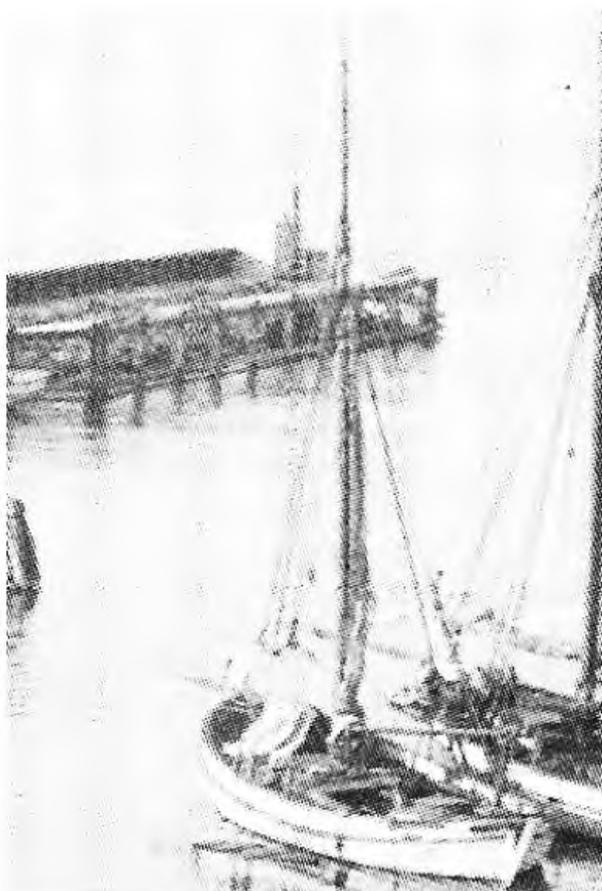
Vesterø school existed at this place since the middle of the 17th century and until it was finally closed at the end of the 1960s. It was the only school in the parish until another school was built nearer to the harbor in 1900. Many children had a long way to the school. Especially in the winter and spring time the walk to school was difficult because the paths to school were often flooded. But for Jens Peter and his sisters and brothers it was only half a mile. This was not so bad.

Photo, 1958. [www.kb.dk/danmarksetfraluften](http://www.kb.dk/danmarksetfraluften)

type of a person, and had several jobs as a fisherman, sailor, and skipper. In 1905 he changed his surname to Frandsen, after his father, Niels Kristian Frandsen. He did so, but his brother, Valdemar, didn't. That did not prevent their colleagues on the harbor from calling the brother Valdemar Frandsen. Unfortunately, Jens Peter was hit by a series of accidents that may have made him give up the sea and leave Læsø.

## FN 118 "Petra"

In October 1897, when he was only 19 years old, Jens Peter together with Valdemar, who was five years older, bought a controlling part in the cutter FN 118 "Petra". For the purchase, the two brothers borrowed DKK 500 from the captain of the Læsø steam ferry, O. Riis Sørensen. Their father, Niels Kristian Frandsen, guaranteed Jens Peter's share of the loan.



It has not been possible to find a picture of cutter FN 118 "Petra", but very likely it looked similar to the cutter that is moored here in Læsø harbor. The dinghy that was used to set out the Danish seine is not seen. The crew naturally used it when they had to go to land in the harbor. It is probably located by the wharf that formed the eastern side of the harbor basin, but the water depth was so shallow that the cutters could not dock. There were four men on board "Petra": Jens Peter, who was skipper, his brother Valdemar, their father Niels Kristian Frandsen, and, at least in the year 1900, Harald Anton Christiansen, who was born in 1878, and thus was the youngest man on board. Harald Anton also ended up becoming part of the family, when Jens Peter married his sister, Caroline Kirstine, in 1902. At least for three years from October 1897 to October 1900 Niels Kristian Frandsen was employed by his two sons on board "Petra". Why Jens Peter was the skipper of "Petra" and not the older Valdemar is not mentioned anywhere. The picture is a section of a photo of Læsø harbor, probably from 1895.

*Photo: Læsø Museum.*

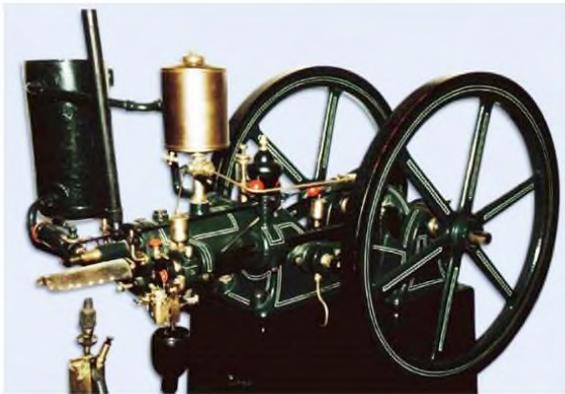
"Petra" was not a big cutter, just under 10 gross tons. But it was equipped with a steam winch that was quite modern at the time. The steam winch was used to haul the ropes and the seine home. A steam winch on a cutter was probably modern, but also cumbersome and uncomfortable. Later on, Jens Peter and Valdemar had the steam engine, as in many other cutters of the time, replaced by a petroleum engine to pull the winch. Petroleum engines were much easier to deal with on board a small cutter. It turned out that it was certainly not harmless either.

## The Fire

The accident occurred on Wednesday, the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, 1900, when a fire broke out on board "Petra". "Petra" sank after only one hour at a position slightly northeast

of what is today Østerby harbor. On the following Monday, a sea hearing was held. The interrogation gives a small insight into how the fishing was conducted and of course how the accident could have happened.

"Petra" sailed from the harbor in Vesterø on Monday, October 8. The questioning does not mention fishing on Monday or Tuesday, only that "Petra" had been at anchor east of Læsø, near Syrodde. On Wednesday morning it was fishing weather, and "Petra" sailed up to the north-west edge of Rusmandsbanken and set out. But the fishing must not have been good, because they agreed instead to try the eastern edge of the bank. They were ready to set out by the late afternoon. The engine had been running the entire time while they were fishing on the northwest edge but was stopped when they sailed to the new spot east of Rusmandsbanken.



**A petroleum engine like the one in "Petra"**

Burmeister and Wain produced only this one model of petroleum engines, but it was available in several sizes. It is reasonable to assume that it was one of the smallest models that sat in "Petra". Usually, the winch motors in the fishing cutters were 3-4 hp. At the bottom left the blow lamp that helped keep the engine warm can be seen. It resembles a primus, and you can see the button for the pump.

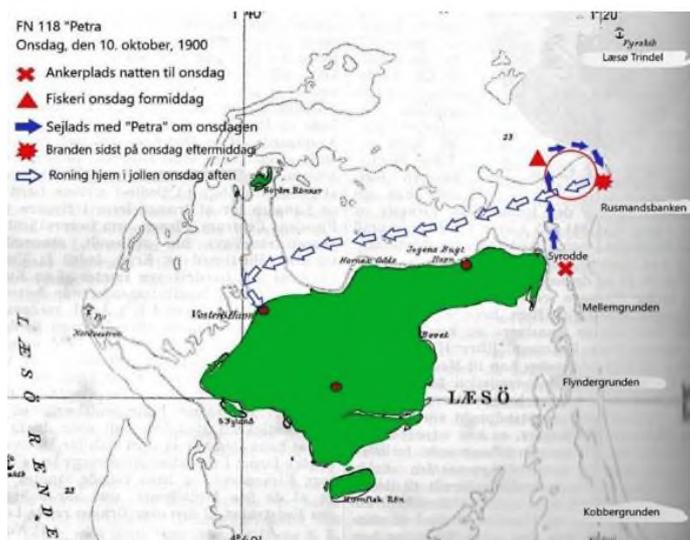
Photo: [www.motorsamlingen.dk](http://www.motorsamlingen.dk) / Dansk Motor- & Maskinsamling, 8500 Grenå

Here the seine was put out in the usual way, namely by Peter and Harald rowing it out in the dinghy, while "Petra" lay at anchor. While they were rowing out the ropes and the seine, Valdemar had started the engine again, so that they were ready to pull in the seine when the dinghy returned. According to the sea investigation, it only took about a quarter of an hour to row out the gear, which could indicate that it was relatively small equipment they had to deal with.

The engine to pull the winch used to haul the seine home was in a separate compartment aft below deck. There were two hatches leading down there. It was a Burmeister and Wain petroleum engine. It, like other engines of the time, had problems when running slowly, as it then struggled to generate enough heat to keep itself running. That problem was solved in "Petra" with a so-called "Swedish primus lamp with air pump", a kind of blow lamp that was supposed to keep the machine warm and thus prevent it from stalling.

The fire broke out in the engine room, and although the cause could not be determined with certainty, suspicion quickly turned to the "Swedish primus lamp with air pump". The primus lamp in "Petra" stood on an iron stand that was screwed to the machine. On the other hand, it stood loose on the stand. On top of that, the stand it stood on was only 2 inches wide, while the diameter of the lamp at the bottom was 4 inches. Nevertheless, it stood well on it, according to Jens Peter's testimony to the court. The lamp could burn approximately 3 quarters of an hour on a full tank but had to be pumped about every twenty minutes.

As mentioned, Valdemar had started the machine while the ropes and seine were being rowed out. Valdemar also told the court that he had always been careful with fire when he was in the engine room. For example, he always extinguished a match by pinching the glowing end between thumb and forefinger. Only then would the match be thrown on the floor. Incidentally, there was also another lamp in the engine



The map sketch illustrates the route as it may have looked on Wednesday, October 10, 1900. The red circle marks the Rusmandsbanken. The red cross shows the anchoring place the night between Tuesday and Wednesday. The red triangle marks the fishing place Wednesday morning. The full blue arrows show the sailing route on Wednesday. The red round star identifies the place of the burning of "Petra." The empty blue arrows indicate the rowing back home in the evening and night between Wednesday and Thursday.

A.J.W

room. This was a lantern lamp that was used for lighting the room. This lamp was also on but was unlikely to have caused the fire.

The fire was able to get as large and dangerous as it did because kerosene and oil were stored in the engine room. There were two cans of oil, each of which could hold about 1.5 gallons. The cans had been well over half full when they sailed from home on Monday. In addition, there was a petroleum tank that could hold approximately 30 gallons. There had probably been around 18 gallons left when the accident happened. Most of the woodwork in the engine room was pretty drenched in kerosene, as they couldn't avoid spilling a few drops every time the lamps had to be

filled and when kerosene had to be poured into the machine's kerosene tank. In those cases, they drained the kerosene from the large barrel into a small can, which they then used to fill the machine's kerosene tank. Valdemar explained to the sea hearing court that he believed he had been down in the engine room at least 3 times while they were on the east side of Rusmandsbanken, and he had not observed anything unusual. The last time he was down there was approximately a quarter of an hour before they discovered the fire. He had lit both lamps, the lantern lamp as well as the primus which was supposed to keep the engine warm. How the fire had started, it was difficult to have any idea about, but it must have come from one of the lamps, and the most likely thing would be that it was the engine blow lamp that had exploded. When the engine had first been put in, the blacksmith had said that they should be careful to clean the lamp, because such lamps could explode if they were not cleaned. This naturally gave the court reason to ask if he had kept the lamp clean. To that, Valdemar explained that he had cleaned the lamp every single day and had done it on the day the boat burned.

The fire broke out late in the afternoon on Wednesday when they had just lifted the first haul on board. Peter was still in the dinghy, and the others were on deck and in the process of cleaning the gear of mud and seaweed and otherwise cleaning up. Harald was the first to spot the fire, which broke out of both hatches. That made Peter immediately jump up on deck and haul a bucket of water down into the engine room. It did not help and instead seemed to spread the fire. Then Peter grabbed an ax to punch a hole in the deck so they could get water down the side of the decking. But he hit so hard with the ax that its shaft broke and had to be abandoned. After this, Peter and Valdemar continued to pour water down the front hatch. It was clear that the situation was dangerous, so Niels Kristian went down into the dinghy to get the dinghy ready. Harald went down into the cabin to get their clothes and the compass.

While Peter had poured a bucket of water down the forward hatch, he had the opportunity to look down into the engine room, and there he saw that the kerosene tank had overturned. The tank was made of zinc, which could have melted. As a result, kerosene went everywhere, and the flames rose high from the aft hatch. The situation was now quite critical, and they agreed to throw the seine and ropes overboard hoping that they would be able to find the gear again later and thereby at least save something. When they had done so, they could see that the fire had burned a hole in the hull right at the waterline, so the water was pouring in. Now they had no other

option but to get into the dinghy and take with them what they could salvage and had room for. There was now also a hole in the deck, so they had to push off.

Three or four minutes after they had set off, "Petra" sank. It went very fast and sank with the rear end first. It was almost like "Petra" had dropped down. Now there was nothing to do but row towards land. They chose to row the whole long way back to the harbor in Vesterø, where they arrived at half past one on Thursday night, after rowing for approximately six hours. Fortunately, the weather had been pretty good all day and evening.



Læsø cutter FN 85 "Karoline", on its way into the harbor in Vesterø. "Karoline" was a much larger cutter than "Petra". Note the dinghy which had now been fitted with an engine. This meant that one man would be sufficient for setting out the Danish seine. There was still no engine for propulsion in "Karoline", therefore it goes in at almost full sail through the harbor head. On the other hand, there was an engine to pull the winch. In 1907 "Karoline" burned while fishing between Læsø and Sæby. As on "Petra", the fire had started in the engine room. The crew saved themselves in the dinghy.

The court's conclusion was that the fire must have been caused by one of the two lit lamps in the engine room, and most likely by the blow lamp that was used to keep the engine warm. "Petra" was certainly not the only cutter that caught fire in the infancy of these engines. It wasn't uncommon at all. Part of the explanation for this must probably be either ignorance or not knowing the danger as well as lack of experience in dealing with and servicing the new technology of these machines.

How big a loss Peter and Valdemar suffered from "Petra's" fire and sinking is not clear, but the cutter was insured for DKK 2,900 and if they had succeeded in getting hold of the fishing tackle again, the loss may have been negligible.

## **Frederikshavn's Fishing Skipper School**

In the 1890s and for many years to come, Frederikshavn was the focal point for the development of sea fishing in Denmark. It was in Frederikshavn that things happened in fishing. In 1898, the town also had a fishing skipper school. There was not much demand for the school in the first years, but in the winter term in 1900/1901 there

were two Læsø residents attending it. It was the two brothers Jens Peter Nielsen and Peter Valdemar Nielsen who followed the winter course and had lodged with the innkeeper Lindholms in Lodsgade, so they could not have been completely ruined by "Petra's" shipwreck. Peter and Valdemar must have been some of the very first Læsø residents ever to have taken actual fishing skipper training.

## **FN 50 "Pernille"**

The incident with "Petra" had certainly not discouraged them. Back home on Læsø after the stay for the course in Frederikshavn, they must have wondered if they could find a suitable cutter that they would be able to take over.

The Læsø cutter FN 50 "Pernille" had been for sale for some time and had ended up at forced auction in the spring of 1901 when Valdemar and Peter were back on Læsø. "Pernille" was not big, only a little bigger than "Petra."

What then happened to "Pernille" is not entirely clear, but it is likely that it was their cousin, Stoffer Jerup (Niels Christoffer Pedersen), who bought "Pernille" at the forced auction. According to the Fishery Yearbook, Stoffer is listed as the owner of "Pernille" in 1902, which in practice means 1901, as the information in the Fishery Yearbook



Fishing cutters in Læsø harbor. The number FN 85 on cutter number five from the right is clearly to be seen. It is "Karoline", which burned in 1907. The picture must therefore be before 1907. Before the harbor expansion in 1907, there could be congestion in the harbor basin, which perhaps can be sensed from the picture. There is a black-painted cutter next to "Karoline". With a little good will and effort, it may look as if its number is FN 50. In that case, the black cutter must be "Pernille".

may well have been somewhat out of date. Valdemar and Jens Peter may have fished with "Pernille" for a few months before they took it over in November 1901. On the same day, they were issued a bond to Stoffer for DKK 700 which was supposed to

cover the remaining purchase price. This suggests that they had some money to invest. The bond had to be paid in full by December term 1905. There may have been other people involved as co-owners, as was the case with "Petra". In any case, it was Jens Peter who was the skipper on board. That was the same arrangement as earlier on "Petra." One might think that it would have been more natural if it had been the older Valdemar, who was the skipper. It must be assumed that the following years went fairly normally with seine fishing for plaice (a type of flatfish) and in the summer possibly with lobster traps for black lobsters. From time to time, they had been in Frederikshavn with fish, and "Pernille" is then referred to as a "well smack," and the skipper as "Nielsen". It may also be that they had occasionally sailed with live fish for their cousin, Stoffer, who was Læsø's first actual fish merchant to buy and sell live fish. In the Fishery Yearbook, Jens Peter is listed as skipper of "Pernille" for four years, until 1905. In 1906, it is Valdemar who is listed as skipper. The following year "Pernille" must have been disposed of. It has not been possible to find out what happened and why the collaboration on "Pernille" ended.

### **“Haabet” / “The Hope”**

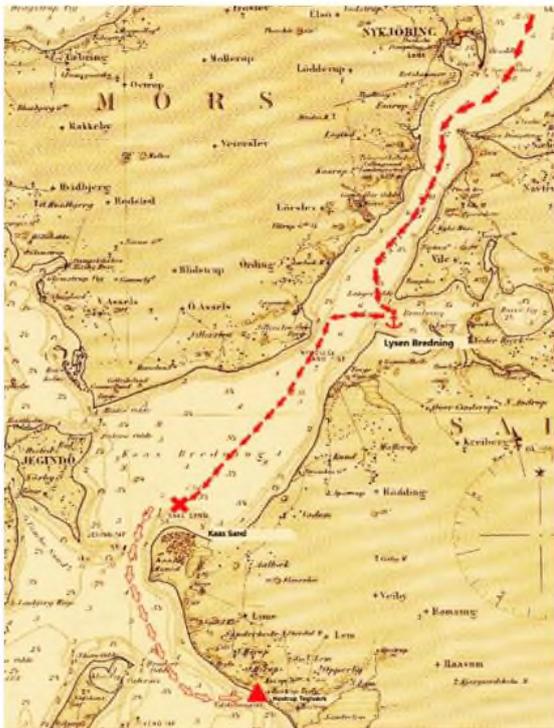
Perhaps the collaboration on "Pernille" in reality ended somewhat earlier than one gets the impression of from the Fishery Yearbooks. In any case, Peter bought a yacht, "Haabet", in January 1905. It was not a big ship, just 20 gross registered tons. Moreover, it was an old ship built on Thurø way back in 1825. On the other hand, it was cheap. Peter had paid DKK 600 for it. But then he also had to spend an additional DKK 1,200 to put it in a proper seaworthy condition<sup>1</sup>). "Completely seaworthy" and "worth the full amount it cost him." explained Peter at the later sea interrogation in Skive.

The modest size may have made "Haabet" suitable for the many small harbors and loading docks in Danish waters. A yacht like "Haabet" was the truck of the time. From the ship lists in the newspapers, it can be seen that "Haabet" with "Nielsen" as skipper called at various Danish and Swedish ports in 1905 and 1906. Sometimes with "general cargo", other times "unoccupied". A journey to Holland with bricks for building a school was one of the jobs for "Haabet". However, "Haabet" was hardly a gold mine for Jens Peter, even though he did not have the expenses of a large crew. In fact, there was only one other seaman besides himself to sail "Haabet". In the summer of 1906,

it was the 24-year-old August Julius Nielsen, who was also from Vesterø on Læsø. Although August Julius was named Nielsen, he was not related to Jens Peter.

It was Thursday morning, August 23, 1906, when things went wrong. "Haabet" ran aground in the Limfjord and was completely wrecked. How much experience Peter had with sailing in the Limfjord west of Aalborg is perhaps a legitimate question, but he had just bought a brand-new chart of the Limfjord in Aalborg. The chart was stamped by the Søkartarkivet as recently as July 3, 1906. That week, beginning on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, they had taken in a cargo of 300 barrels of small coal. The coal was destined for Hostrup Brickworks on the eastern side of the Venø bay. During the night between Wednesday and Thursday they anchored in Lysen Bredning.

From Lysen Bredning, they took off in the morning and steered west towards Sillerslev Øre, from where they headed southwest, steering toward Jegindø. Peter had been at the helm all the time, and by seven o'clock the wind had become



"Haabet's" approximate route past Nykøbing on the way down to Hostrup Teglværk with 300 barrels of small coal. On the night of Thursday, August 23, 1906, they had dropped anchor inside Lysen Bredning. In the morning they took off at six o'clock and headed west towards Sillerslev Øre, and from there Peter tried to steer for Jegindø, but the current set "Haabet" east. It was also very windy with showers. As the marker on Kaas Sand was also not placed as it should have been, they ran aground at eight o'clock on Thursday morning, 23 August 1906. The local fishermen, who had been helpful in the failed attempt to get "Haabet" off the ground, claimed that the marker had drifted with the ice a few years ago and that it had never been put back in its original place. It was the sixth ship to run aground on Kaas Sand that year. In contrast to the five previous strandings, it was not possible to get "Haabet" off the ground again. Hostrup Brickworks, where there was a landing bridge, is marked by the triangle at the bottom of the map.

Section of a map from: [www.historiskekort.dk/søkort](http://www.historiskekort.dk/søkort).  
The Limfjord west of Aalborg 1896-1946, Søkartarkivet 1896.

stronger and stronger with showers of rain in between. Although hazy, Peter thought he could see the marker on Kaas Sand from more than a mile away. He therefore kept well clear of the marker. But apparently not enough, because at 8 o'clock "Haabet" ran aground in 7 feet of water. It was then a few hundred yards to the marker in a south-southwest direction. There was no doubt that "Haabet" had

been pushed somewhat to the east by the strong current. In addition, as was apparent from the sea interrogation in Skive on Saturday, that the marker was very likely not in its correct position. It was also confirmed by the fact that "Haabet" was the sixth ship that had run aground on Kaas Sand in 1906. However, it had been possible to get the other five ships off the ground again.

When "Haabet" was grounded at eight o'clock there were a couple of local fishermen who had seen it, and they had immediately come to help. When the weather cleared for a moment and the wind slackened a little, they all agreed that it would be possible to get the ship off the ground again if they got the anchor out to the north and lightened the ship by throwing some of the deck cargo overboard. So, all four of them set about it. But while they were working hard on this, the storm picked up again. What was worse, it turned out that "Haabet" took in water. The ship was leaking and becoming more and more full of water. They therefore had to give up the attempt to get "Haabet" off the ground. Instead, they set out to save what could be saved of clothes, maps, compass, and other things that they could immediately bring ashore.

At the sea court hearing at Skive town hall, on Saturday 25 August, the judge also wanted to know if there had been alcohol involved. Here, Peter was able to state that both the other shipman and he were very moderate as far as alcohol was concerned. When they sailed from Aalborg, they had two bottles of brandy on board and several days later they still had one full bottle left, Peter explained. So, brandy was drunk on board "Haabet", but this was - before there really was something called liquor taxes - common in most ships. Neither Peter nor Julius was under the influence of alcohol when they ran aground.

Regarding the stranded "Haabet", Peter also explained that he did not think it would be worthwhile to try to save either the ship or the cargo. Instead, he wanted to try to get the ship sold as a lot where it stood.

The auction was held on Thursday, September 6, that is 14 days after the stranding had occurred. During that period Peter must have been out at "Haabet" several times, and brought ashore from it what had been possible and worthwhile to take with him. In a note in Skive Avis on September 9, 1906, it appears that Peter did not get much out of the auction: "Haabet" as it stood aground was sold for only DKK 42, and the load, or what was left of it, for DKK 40. The income from the auction could hardly

cover the costs of holding it, not to mention the stay in Salling during the period and the journey home. The cargo was not Peter's problem, and it was also insured. But

## Strandingsauktion.

**Torsdag d. 6. Septbr. d. A.**  
**Efterm. Kl. 2** bortfælges ved Auktion ved Strandingsstedet Jagten „Haabet“ af Læsø, strandet ud for Hovedgaarden Kaas's Skov i Salling, eventuelt med Ladning — Smaakul —, maalt til 19.80 Tons Brutto med Mast, staaende Rigging, Rhyverbom og Jagerbom med staaende Grejer, Storbom og Gæster, Ankerspil og Spil ved Masten, et udlagt Anker med Rætting, Rahyskruf og Luger, Reserveblokke og Løvværk m. v.

Skibet er bygget af dansk Eg og Bøg. Eventuelt sælges endvidere Skibsinventar, Sejl og løbende Gods.

By- og Herredskontoret i Skive d. 28. August 1906.

**F. Holm.**

### Stranding auction

On Thursday, September 6 this year, in the afternoon, at 2 o'clock, the yacht "Haabet" of Læsø, stranded off the main farm Kaas' forest in Salling, will be sold by auction at the stranding site, possibly with cargo - small coal - measured at 19.8 tons gross, with mast, standing rigging, splitter boom and fighter boom with standing tackle, main boom and forks, windlass and windlass at the mast, a laid-out anchor with chain, cabin ruff and hatches, spare blocks and ropes, etc. The ship is built of Danish oak and beech. If necessary, ship equipment, sails and running goods will also be sold. The city and town office in Skive, on August 28, 1906. F. Holm.

*Advertisement in Skive Avis, August 30, 1906*

the ship itself, "Haabet", was not insured. The ship's name "Haabet" – or "The Hope" – was never fulfilled, nor did it materialize. It was really a severe economical loss for him, and indeed a sad message to bring back to Læsø.

The whole affair was a hard blow for Jens Peter Frandsen and his family. With two sunken boats in the space of just six years, it could very likely have made him consider whether the sea could continue to be the right path for the rest of Jens Peter's life.

## Gammelgaard, the Family and the Future

In November 1902, Peter had married Anna Caroline Kirstine Christiansen, who was also from Vesterø. And a year later, children began to arrive more or less regularly with 2-year intervals, which was not entirely uncommon in those times. At the census in 1906, the small family had two boys. They lived in Jens Peter's parents' house at Gammelgaard in Vesterø. Jens Peter's siblings had eventually all moved away from home, which certainly helped to provide for space in the house. In addition to Jens Peter's parents, Ane Marie and Niels Kristian Frandsen, Anna Caroline's younger sister, Marie Christiansen, also lived in the house, making a total of seven people.

All in all, the beginning of the 20th century was dramatic for the small family:

- In August 1900, Jens Peter's brother, Niels Carl, had fallen overboard from the ship he was a sailor on and had drowned in the Atlantic Ocean not very far from New York. Niels Carl had been married in Antwerp the year before but had no children.
- In March 1906, Jens Peter's father, Niels Kristian Frandsen, died at the age of 69.
- In April 1906, Jens Peter's brother-in-law, who was also a sailor, died in the port of Liepaja in Latvia, after falling into the hold of the ship he was working on. Jens Peter's sister Kirstine Christiane was thus left alone with five small children.
- In July 1906, Jens Peter's youngest son, Rikard, died of pneumonia. He was just 8 months old.
- Also in July 1906, Jens Peter took over his childhood home from his mother. The house had been built by Jens Peter's father in 1872 with the help of a loan from the Læsø municipality of 70 rigsdaler<sup>2)</sup>. It was built on a small, leased plot of land that belonged to Gammelgaard. In 1886, Niels Kristian Frandsen then bought the land on which the house stood as well as approximately 2.5 acres of land immediately east of it. He obtained the money by borrowing 100 kroner from the manager of the Læsø poorhouse. In that place, Ane Marie and Niels Kristian's 8 children and the foster son, Thomas Christian Bertel, who was a grandson, grew up. The children had the advantage that the school was not far away, nor was the church. Gammelgaard was sort of in between the two places. Jens Peter took over the house from his mother by taking over the debt that was in the house and a little debt that Ane Marie had in addition, a total of DKK 370. In addition, Jens Peter, as was usual, had to make a contract of sale with his mother in such a way that he guaranteed his mother food, support, and shelter for the rest of her life. It was a simple and modest contract with just a few lines.

In August 1906, disaster struck when the "Haabet" sank, and thus Peter lost his entire savings, even the funds he had invested in being able to sustain his family. Literally, the hope sank.

## Amerika

It is natural if this series of accidents had given reason for thoughts about the future and whether it was really worthwhile to bet on a sailor's life. But there weren't that many other options when you lived on Læsø.

And yet, there was Amerika! – in the Danish spelling, and for most people in the old country “Amerika” was the same as the United States of America. Four of Peter's older siblings had emigrated to America several years ago. In April 1902, Peter's nephew, Thomas Christian Bertel Nielsen (Christian), had also left for America. Christian was 5 years younger than Peter, and they had grown up together at Gammelgaard, where Christian had been cared for by his grandparents all his life. The possibility of emigrating and traveling away from Læsø must have played a part in the whole family's considerations for the future. There had certainly been letters from America which supported these considerations and made them more relevant and realistic.

But for the time being, income and cash had to be generated for the family at Gammelgaard. For a period, Peter was skipper of the boat "John William". It was a cutter roughly the same size as "Petra", and also with four men on board. "John William" was owned by another of Peter's cousins, Carl Jerup. Fishing was carried out with standard Danish seine. And during the garfish season in the springtime, garfish were sailed from the fishing grounds south of Læsø to Frederikshavn. In 1908 and 1909, Peter was a sailor on the lighthouse boat "Læsø Trindel". A position on a lighthouse boat was coveted by many. This meant a steady income, orderly conditions, and the possibility – with the usual frugality – to support a family at home on the island. And “Læsø Trindel” was not far away. In clear weather, standing on the roof or in the masts, you may have been able to see the island from the boat. It was out here he received word that his little daughter had died in March 1909. It is not known whether he came home for the funeral, but it wasn't impossible. Perhaps life on the lighthouse boat was too monotonous for Jens Peter after all. In any case, it had given him plenty of time to ponder other possibilities. It may have been on the lighthouse boat "Læsø Trindel" that he made the decision to emigrate.

In 1906, Caroline Kirstine and Jens Peter had lost the boy Rikard. The following year, a new little boy was born, who was named Peter Rikard. In 1908, Martha Juline was then born. But Martha Juline died in March 1909, while Peter was on the lighthouse

boat. The cause of death was, as for Rikard in his time, listed as pneumonia. In 1909, the now 29-year-old Caroline Kirstine had given birth to four children, of whom two boys were alive: Niels Carl Georg (George) born in 1903 and Peter Rikard (Richard) born in 1907. Whether Martha Juline's death had any influence on the decision to emigrate is unknown. But other things happened which very likely played a role, and which bear witness to the atmosphere of separation from the island that must have existed in the family.

Peter's sister, Kirstine Christiane, had become a widow and alone with five small children in 1906. Another sister, Johanne Marie, had left for the United States many years earlier and had been married in Bakersfield in California. And Johanne Marie and her husband, Hans Madsen, had apparently managed well. Their oldest brother, Jens Christian, had even earlier settled on the outskirts of San Diego, also in California. Letters must have been going back and forth, especially between the two sisters. During 1908, the decision must have been made: Kirstine Christiane sold her property, which was on the edge of Svinehaven<sup>3)</sup> to her cousin Christian Marinus Vistrup, and in April 1909 traveled with her five children to America. Not only had she traveled alone with her five children, but she also brought her old mother, Ane Marie Frandsen, who was now 73 years old and headed for Bakersfield!

It was actually Peter - by virtue of the sales contract he had made with his mother, when he took over the house in 1906 – who had the duty to support and sustain Ane Marie. Of Peter's eight siblings, including Christian Nielsen, there was now only Valdemar left on Læsø. There was really nothing or anyone holding Peter back from emigrating to the United States.

Apparently, Caroline Kirstine and Peter had made an agreement that Peter would go off alone, find a job, establish himself, and then Caroline Kirstine could follow with the children when things were in place. There was just one small problem: Caroline Kirstine was pregnant again, so Peter had to promise not to leave until the child was born.

Martha Julia Frandsen (Martha) was born on March 18, 1910. She was baptized a month later, on April 17, in Vesterø church. But Peter was not at the christening. Ten



**Martha Julia Frandsen (1910 -1995), photographed in 1942**

The last of the Frandsen family, who was born on Læsø, was also the last and the youngest to emigrate. She was only 16 months old when, in 1911, her mother traveled with her and her two brothers over to Pete in Monett, Missouri. Around 1990, she talked about her parents and their emigration to America. She did this to her granddaughter, Heather Watson, who luckily recorded the story on tape, and later had it printed. The text and pictures of Christina, Pete and Martha are very kindly provided by Martha's son and Heather's father, Kenneth Watson, North Carolina, USA.

Photo: Ken Watson.

days after the birth he left. By then Caroline Kirstine had just got up from the maternity bed and therefore could follow him to the harbor in Vesterø to say goodbye. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, he sailed on the "Oscar II" from Copenhagen, and arrived in New York on the 13<sup>th</sup>. As acquaintances in the United States, Jens Peter had noted his brother-in-law, Bertel Thomsen, in Kansas City, Missouri. Bertel Thomsen was the father of Christian Nielsen, who had been a foster child with whom Peter had grown up on Gammelgaard. Naturally, Peter knew Christian far better than Bertel, whom he had possibly never met or maybe only once as a child. When he left for America in 1902, Christian had also given Bertel Thomsen as his contact in the USA. Christian, who was called Chris in America, had worked for some years in Kansas City, Missouri, but had later moved to Monett, about 150 miles southeast of Kansas City. Peter and Christian had a fairly close relationship when growing up at Gammelgaard on Læsø, and it was first and foremost Christian who had encouraged Peter to come over.

## **Monett<sup>4)</sup> and the Journey**

While the family held the christening of the newborn baby at home on Læsø, Peter (Pete) was on his way to Kansas City, Missouri. Pete's sister Amalie, who was married to Bertel Thomsen (Bert Thompson) lived there. It was the same place that Christian Nielsen (Chris Nelson) had traveled to in 1902. Chris was Bert's and Amalie's eldest son, but he had grown up at Gammelgaard in Vesterø together with Pete. Both Bert and Chris worked for The Saint Louis - San Francisco Railroad, called the Frisco Railroad. Bert cleaned railroad cars, and later became supervisor of the cleaning team in Kansas City.

Chris, on the other hand, worked as supervisor at the company's workshops in Monett, which is a smaller town approx. 150 miles southeast of Kansas City, but the town was an important railroad hub. There was work for Pete in the workshops in Monett. When Pete left Denmark on the ship "Oscar II" he had called himself a carpenter, and thus neither a sailor nor a farmer. It was common for sailors of Læsø also to be able to master a craft. And there was obviously a need for a carpenter in the railroad's workshops. Chris had promised that there would be work for him when he came. Then Pete could try it, learn the language, and see if it were for him at all.



S/S Oscar II of Copenhagen was built in Scotland in 1902 for the Scandinavia-America Line. It was a very modern ship for its time. There was a telegraph on board, electric light, proper and modern bathing and toilet facilities. There was room for 1170 passengers, of which 900 were in third class. There were third-class cabins, called state rooms, for 2, 4 or 6 people, so families had the option of staying together. The ship was large, 10,000 gross tonnage, and 158 meters long. Kirstine and Olga and the children must have felt impressed. The electric light alone must have been amazing. At home at Gammelgaard, electric light did not come until decades later.

Colored postcard. The Maritime Museum, Helsingør  
[www.billedarkiv.mfs.dk](http://www.billedarkiv.mfs.dk)

This was all new to Pete, but apparently it went really well. The sea, which throughout Pete's life, for better or for worse, had been part of his living conditions, was about 600 miles away. Monett was not a place where Danes settled. It seems neither the sea nor countrymen were something that Pete missed. But what was missing were Caroline Kirstine (Christina) and the children, so Pete was busy establishing himself and making all the arrangements for them to come over. This happened just a little more than a year after Pete had arrived in Monett. Pete even arranged for a travel companion for Christina. It was Olga Larsen, who was 23 years old. Olga was a good acquaintance of the family. She was the daughter of Pete's brother-in-law, Anton Larsen, who had died in April 1906 by falling into the hold of a ship. In 1895, Anton Larsen had married Peter's sister, Kirstine Christiane, who in 1909 traveled to California with her five children and her old mother, Ane Marie. However, Anton had been married before, but his first wife had died in 1892. So Olga had lost her mother in 1892 and her father in 1906. Olga grew up in the house by Svinehaven with her new family. Pete had even paid for Olga's ticket, and in her entry papers Pete Frandsen is listed as Olga's uncle. Christina must have appreciated having Olga to help look after the children along the way: George aged 7, Richard aged 4 and Martha aged 16 months. Olga traveled on to California,

where she married Christina's younger brother, Lars Peter Christiansen, who lived in Napa. It was no coincidence. Olga and Lars Peter had known each other back home on Læsø. It had been hard for Christina to wind it all up at home and say goodbye to everything she knew and to family and friends. But Pete had organized the trip and arranged as much as he could from Monett, so that the trip could go without problems, and Christina would have as little as possible to worry about. It all went well, the boys had been a bit seasick, but they had nice cabins, so it hadn't been too bad. The entry process at Ellis Island also went completely smoothly and the little group got through Ellis Island without any problems.



Cabin with two berths on third class on Oscar II. During the crossing, the small Læsø group had two cabins, which were called "state rooms" on the ships. There was everything they needed from bunks, bed linen, sink and towels, soap, and water. Quite likely there was a small bunk arrangement or a cradle for the 16-month-old Martha as well. A steward made sure there was fresh water, which must have been stored in a jug under the sink. Meals were included in the ticket price and were taken in the third-class dining room, but even here there were uniformed waiters to serve and ensure clean tablecloths and crockery and cutlery. The menu was Scandinavian and thus largely as it was known from home. According to the company's brochures, the menu should have been both varied and plentiful. Christina, Olga, and the children had a rather convenient crossing with Oscar II. Although they traveled on third class, they must have experienced the circumstances on board as close to being luxury, compared to what they came from. See for example the electric lamp in the ceiling. Space was limited, though, and there were an awful lot of people. But the fact that they had their own cabins made things bearable.

*Image from [www.norwayheritage.no](http://www.norwayheritage.no)*

## Monett Station

The whole trip had been well planned, and everything went fine. There was also plenty of time planned along the route for changing trains, which was necessary in Saint Louis. From there, Christina and the children could continue and arrive at the small railway station in Monett in the late afternoon. Then Pete would have taken time off from work, and everything was arranged for the reception of his wife and children. Christina and the children obviously did not know a word of English, but friendly people had helped them in Saint Louis to find an earlier train, so they came on board the train and arrived in Monett. But his family arrived much sooner than the arrival Pete had planned for them. When Christina and the children came to Monett and had been helped off at the station, there was no one to welcome them. They didn't understand anything of the language, and people didn't understand what Christina said. It was the middle of August, and it was burning hot in Monett that day as well. Christina and the children were dressed according to Læsø conditions and the journey across the Atlantic Ocean.



Old postcard showing the Monett Station. The station is the building to the left. This is where Christina and her children sat anxiously waiting for Pete to show up on a burning hot August day in 1911. The two-storey building next to station is Harvey's Hotel. Harvey's had restaurants and hotels on many places along the Frisco railines.

*Image from: [www.frisco.org](http://www.frisco.org) => Frisco Archives => Postcards*

It was an unpleasant situation, and Christina, who had to take care of her three children and look after their belongings, was very nervous about it. There the small group sat in the waiting room and looked timid. People came and went, some craftsmen stopped and thought, "Something is wrong here. We have someone with children from another country who don't know any English." Finally, a man arrived who was a good friend and acquaintance of Pete's, and who knew that Pete's wife and children were coming. He saw Christina and the children and thought "It must be Pete's family, but they weren't supposed to come until the end of the day". Christina and the boys were almost terrified. Little Martha screamed and they were all about to melt in the heat with all the woolen clothes they were wearing. Now it was fortunate that it was the railroad Pete worked at, so his workplace was not too far away. Pete's acquaintance caught hold of him and explained to him that his wife and children were over at the station. Pete didn't really believe it at first since they weren't due until the end of the afternoon. But then it dawned on him that it could be true, and he dropped what he had in his hands and ran over to the station house. Here the family was reunited again after 16 months of separation.

## The Clock

Pete had informed Christina that she had to get rid of everything they owned before she left. She should bring only what was necessary for herself and children for the journey itself. This was necessary, partly for not having too much to lug around, but especially for not being stopped or having problems at customs. This had indeed been hard for Christina. There were many things she had difficulties getting rid of. Some were given away to friends and family. Only the clothes and bare essentials were brought, along with a featherbed and four pillows. But then there was the clock! It had been given to Christina and Pete back in 1902 by their friends, who had joined together to buy it as a wedding present for them. Christina couldn't part with the clock! The clock had to come with them. It was packed inside the featherbed and the pillows and made the journey to Monett in fine shape. "How in the world...." exclaimed Pete when he saw it. And Christina had to explain that she could not part with the clock. Peter hung it on one of the walls of the house in Monett. It worked fine and was easily adjusted to American time. The clock was one of the family's very few physical memories from Læsø, and it was a really important piece of memory to Christina.



Christina and Pete's clock Pete had instructed Christina to bring only the most necessary things for the journey. But she couldn't part with the clock, which their friends had bought as a wedding present for her and Pete by joining together. So, she wrapped the clock in a featherbed and brought it all the way from Læsø to Monett without it being harmed. In Monett the clock ran with the same calm ticking, and the hourly chime of the bell sounded exactly as it had done on Læsø. The sound reminded Christina of the old days. Just by closing her eyes and listening to the clock she could bring herself back to the old living room, the house, and the island they had left. For Christina, the clock was a small piece of Læsø that she had brought with her to America. At one point a spring broke in the clock so she had it taken to a man who could repair it. But that put Christina in a dilemma, because the man told her that he had to put a new spring in. But the clock was the only piece of Læsø that Christina really had, so she wasn't happy about any changes. The repair man then suggested that he could shorten the spring, then no new parts would be necessary. That was the result, but it really also came with a price: The chimes of the hours came to sound completely different, and unfortunately not nearly as pleasant as before. The clock still exists and still runs well.

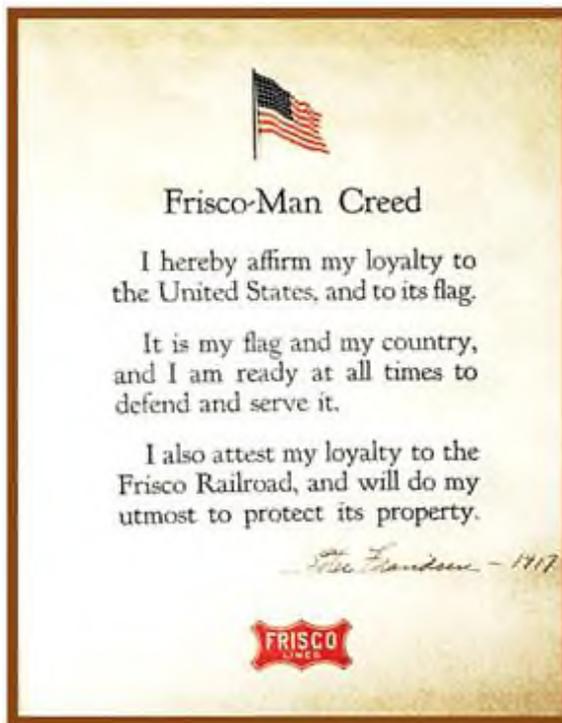
Photo: Ken Watson

## **Frisco Railways and the "Frisco-Man Creed".**

The actual name was St. Louis–San Francisco Railways, but the line was called "Frisco Railways" or just "Frisco". It was a major railroad company headquartered in Springfield, Missouri. Springfield is approx. 45 miles east of Monett. Despite the name, the company had no line to California. It had two main lines, both passing through Springfield: Southwest Line: St. Louis (Missouri) – Texas as well as the southeast line: Kansas City (Missouri) – Alabama. In addition, a large number of side lines and local lines. The line to Texas passed through Monett, and was crossed here by local lines, and thus made Monett a railroad hub.

The Kansas – Alabama line also passed through the city of Memphis in Tennessee, where the Danish poet and author, Johannes V. Jensen, in 1903 wrote his – in Denmark - famous poem "At Memphis Station". It was very likely the locomotives of the Frisco Railways that inspired Johannes V. Jensen, and which - after a long wait and many considerations - brought the poem's narrator further into the world, although he could also have stayed and settled as a Memphis citizen. In direct contrast to Pete Frandsen, who in 1911 settled down and established himself with his wife and children and a house in Monett and stayed there for the rest of his life. But what Pete Frandsen had in common with Johannes V. Jensen was the enthusiasm for the machines, modern technology and the advantages that technology could bring.

And Frisco was a large and modern enterprise before cars really conquered passenger transport and large parts of freight transport. Although it was not one of the largest railroad companies in the United States, it had at its peak more than 17,000 employees. The company had its own hospital for its employees in St. Louis and published several times a year an employee's magazine with information about the company, the local stations and depots, and the employees. It also urged the company's employees not to forget to write greetings to colleagues, who were ill at the hospital in St. Louis. It all helped to create what might be called "corps spirit", which created employee loyalty and made many of them proud to work for Frisco Railways. This was a new and very different world that Pete Frandsen had entered, and it had also given him greater security in life and the possibility of a higher standard of living than he and his family would ever have been able to achieve on Læsø. Pete was proud to have become a part of it. It may be this feeling that led Pete Frandsen to sign the slightly unusual declaration: The "Frisco-Man Creed."



**The St. Louis–San Francisco Railway**, commonly known as the "Frisco", was a railroad that operated in the Midwest and South-Central United States from 1876 to 1980. It was never a large line, but it provided significant passenger and freight transportation. At one point it operated almost 7,000 miles (11,265 km) of track. Despite its name, it never came close to San Francisco. The Frisco did have plans for expanding its reach which it unveiled in the late 1940s, but by then truth was hard to ignore: passenger railroads were losing ridership and expansion would never get beyond west Texas. With competition from giant railroads, Frisco was in and out of bankruptcy until it was finally taken over by the western giant Burlington Northern in 1981.

*Loyalty oaths like this one (which hung over Pete's home desk until his death) were not common in World War I despite President Woodrow Wilson's attempt to legislate one. But there was a fervent commitment among a large majority of people in favor of the war and companies like Frisco would develop their own. By World War II Loyalty Oaths had become mandatory for many workers.*

*Photo: Ken Watson*

But still, by settling in Monett, Pete's personality did not really change, but took maybe a different direction: Pete was one of the first in Monett to own a car, also a few years later he was one of the first to have a radio, and a bit further on one of the first to have a telephone.

Pete stayed ahead of all the technological changes of those times. Obviously, this ability to adapt to new technology was useful in his daily working life also. By 1917 the family had become American citizens and for about 35 years Pete worked at the Frisco Railroad in Monett.

According to the censuses, Pete worked as a carpenter and joiner at the railroad and with the train carriages. He did carpentry and upholstery for the Pullman passenger cars. It couldn't have been all that bad. In 1920 the family lived in their own house which ten years later was valued at \$3,000. That was probably without including the radio set, which according to the 1930 census, was also in the house. In 1942 Pete even had a telephone.

## The Monett Time

Christina and the children had arrived in August 1911. In Bakersfield in California Pete's mother, Ane Marie, had been living for more than two

years with Pete's sister, Johanne Marie, and her husband Hans Madsen. She was eager to learn news from Læsø, so Ane Marie came to Monett for Christmas 1911. It is not fully clear whether she was supposed to stay in Monett for the rest of her life, but so it happened. After just a couple of months in Monett, Ane Marie passed away. Life had not always been kind to her.

**DIED IN HER CHAIR**  
**Mrs. Marie Frandsen Dies Suddenly of Heart Failure**  
 Mrs. Marie Frandsen died suddenly at the home of her son Pete Frandsen, 801 Fourth street Thursday evening a little after 6 o'clock, aged 76 years.  
 Mrs. Frandsen had been in her usual health and death came suddenly as she sat in a chair sewing. A physician pronounced her death due to heart trouble.  
 Mrs. Frandsen came to Monett from California about two months ago. Her native home was in Denmark. She has two sons and two daughters in California. Chris Nelson, of Monett, is her grandson.  
 Funeral arrangements will not be made until word is received from relatives in California.

Pete's mother, Ane Marie, died on Thursday evening, February 29, 1912. She was 76 years old and died without prior illness - probably of a heart attack - while sitting in her chair with some sewing in Christina and Pete's home in Monett. It appears from the notice of her death that she had lived in Monett only for a couple of months. - Quite likely, Ane Marie, who had traveled to California with Kirstine Christiane and her five children back in 1909, wanted to visit her two youngest boys, Pete and Chris, in Monett for Christmas 1911, and not least to hear Christina tell news from Læsø. It is doubtful whether Ane Marie ever learned to speak or understand English. She should have been the one in the family who was missing Læsø the most. There was also the sale contract from 1906 with the obligation for Pete to take care of his mother. But it is doubtful that was the reason for her stay in Monett.

*The Obituary from the Monett Times,  
 Friday, March 1, 1912  
 Provided by Ken Watson*



The United States is a big country, and Kansas City is almost in the middle of it all. From Bakersfield, where two of Pete's sisters and his old mother, Ane Marie lived, there is approx. 1400 miles as the crow flies to Monett. From New York about 1200 miles. Pete, who in his childhood and youth had been used to seeing the sea every single day, now had to travel over 600 miles south if he wanted to see it again. However, there is now no indication that he did.

*Map reproduced from  
 Wiki Commons*

But life went on and more children were born. In 1912 Fred was born, in 1914 Walter and in 1917 Rosa. In the autumn of 1918, Carl was born, but he died in infancy. In 1918, the worldwide flu epidemic known as the Spanish Flu had reached the United States. Born a month premature and too weak to survive, Carl died from the Spanish Flu. Also, his mother, Christina, was stricken with the flu, from which she never really



Anna Caroline Kirstine Christiansen / Christina Frandsen (1881 – 1935). Photo from around 1930. In the 1920s, Christina and Pete planned a trip to Læsø. Christina still had her sister Marie (1885 – 1985) and her mother Ane Juline (1845 – 1927) living in Vesterø. But the journey was constantly postponed in anticipation and in the hope that Christina's health would improve. Unfortunately, it went the exact opposite way. Her health continued to deteriorate. And the trip never materialized. Christina did not get to see her native island again. But she wrote regularly with Marie to keep up with things "at home."

Photo: Ken Watson

recovered. Thus, Christina had given birth to 9 children, 3 of whom had died. And over the years her health got worse and worse. In 1935, in the month of May, Christina died, after 24 years in the United States and after almost 33 years of marriage to Peter. She lived to be 54 years old.

This was probably the hardest blow that Pete had experienced up to that point. He remained living in the house and by the census in 1940 he was still living there, but now alone. However, he now had a telephone that made it easier for him to contact his children, friends, and acquaintances and vice versa of course.



Jens Peter Nielsen / Frandsen / Pete Frandsen (1877 – 1955), photographed around 1930. In 1904 there was a new Danish name law which made it easy to change one's family name. Many people took advantage of this. Peter wanted to keep his father's surname for the future and therefore took the name Frandsen. When Christina died in 1935, he abandoned all plans to travel to Læsø, because he did not want to travel without her. But his children persuaded him anyway, and it was all arranged. Peter was ready to leave. But then everything had to be cancelled because the Germans had occupied Denmark, and it was no longer possible to travel freely. That the trip had to be cancelled in this way certainly did not suit Peter. But after the war, for various reasons, it did not come to fruition either. Pete didn't get to see his native island again.

Photo: Ken Watson

But still, fate couldn't leave Pete at rest. His second oldest son, Richard – who was born and baptized Peter Rikard on Læsø – was hit by Parkinson's disease before World War II. Eventually Richard came back to live with his father in the house in Monett. According to the census from 1950, Richard was living with Peter, but was "unable to work".

With the sources that have been available and as they have been used here, we can get a sense of how Pete's life unfolded. However, it is more difficult to imagine the person himself and what he was like. From the glimpses of memories that have fortunately been recorded, it appears that he was conscientious and well organized. But he could seem somewhat grumpy, and sometimes maybe even brusque, and once in a while showed a certain temper. On such occasions he would use certain less nice expressions from the sailor's language. But then, the language was Danish, and the family was so happy that, luckily, no one around could understand it. But he did have a sense of humor and found it easy to laugh with the family and with friends.

For about 35 years, Pete worked for the Frisco Railroad in Monett. It is as if he deliberately put the sailor's life in Denmark behind him or suppressed the first ten or twenty years of his working life. It can be said that he didn't want to look back. Still, it was deep in him, otherwise he would hardly swear in the language of a Danish sailor. In his later years, he became somewhat senile. When he saw a sheet flapping on a clothesline, he could be seen by the neighbors giving orders to get those sails trimmed!



The Frandsen house on 406 2nd Street, Monett, Missouri In her older days Martha took up painting as a hobby. She painted this picture of the Frandsen home in Monett about 1980. It was painted as she remembered it from her childhood. The house still exists and can be found on Google Maps. The Google Map picture is from 2013. Maybe it appeared in Martha's memory a little bit bigger than it really was. This place was home for Peter and his family until his death in 1955.

*Picture of painting provided by Ken Watson  
Photo from Google Maps*

## The Perfect Immigrant

In the last months before Christina left for the USA, she lived with her children by the harbor in Vesterø as the closest neighbor to her sister, Marie, who was married to Edvard Nielsen. Christina and Marie maintained contact throughout the years until Christina died in 1935. Christina wanted to hear news from home, about Marie and her children, and about their old mother, who lived until 1927.

When Christina died in 1935, the connection to Læsø also died. The reason for this is not known, but it was as if Pete did not have the same need for contact with the old country and the island in the Kattegat as many others did. Christina and Pete certainly spoke Danish together in the early years, but they made no effort to teach their children the language or to keep alive some of the old customs they must have known from home. When their children were old enough to wonder about it, they got the answer from Pete: "We came to America to become Americans". Pete had no desire for the old country to consume much of the family's consciousness or memory. In the USA, it was the future that mattered. Fate had dealt Jens Peter Frandsen many blows. Each time he had managed to rise again, find renewed footing and new energy to carry himself and his family forward without being a burden to anyone. When he came to the United States in 1910, he immediately got a job with the Frisco Railroads in Monett, Missouri. It was a job he kept until he was able to retire more than 35 years later. It provided a stable and secure framework for himself and his growing family. Here, at a distance of more than 100 years after his journey from Læsø to Monett, he would certainly have been regarded by many as the perfect immigrant.



The Swedish author, Vilhelm Moberg, wrote in the period 1949 – 59 his famous novel "The Emigrants", which has appeared in many languages and has been made into a film several times. In 1959, a statue of the novel's two main characters, Kristina and Carl-Oskar was made by the Swedish sculptor Axel Ollson. The sculpture stands on the seafront in Karlshamn in Sweden, not far from the place where the two are thought to have emigrated from.

Karl-Oskar's Kristina looks back over her shoulder. She cannot let go of what she is traveling from. Karl-Oskar does not look back. Now it's the future that matters.

It was the same with Pete Frandsen from Læsø: He didn't look back, and probably didn't want to either. For Pete's Christina it was different. her oldest daughter Martha said, "She never adjusted to leaving Læsø." When she fell ill, Martha had to drop out of school to look after her and the other children. "She died from a broken heart," Martha would say later.

Carl Oskar's Kristina had taken an apple with her when they left. It was soon eaten, but she hid the seeds, and when they reached their destination in America, she succeeded in making one of the seeds grow. The tree grew and became a small piece of Sweden that Kristina could look at and remind her of what she had left. It was the same way for Pete's Christina. She brought their clock to America with great difficulty. It was the sound from the living room at home on Læsø that she brought to America. Every hour when the bell struck, she was reminded of the island she had left.

*Image from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>*

## Notes :

- 1) "...put in proper seaworthy condition": When Peter emigrated in 1910, he called himself "carpenter" in all the paperwork. This could have been in anticipation of easier access to the new country and the work he expected to find and live off. But it may also reflect the kind of experience he had. It is certainly very likely that he himself was heavily involved in carpentry when restoring "Haabet". 1200 DKK in 1905 is worth approximately \$24,034.94 USD in 2023 making the total investment \$36,052.41 USD – Or to put the DKK currency in a different way: In 1907 the carpenters in the small shipbuilding yard of Læsø harbor had their salaries raised to 0,35 DKK per hour. With an average working day of ten hours in those days, the daily salary would become DKK 3,50. The 1200 DKK thus reflect a bit more than a full year worth of a skilled carpenter's working.
- 2) Rigsdaler: Danish currency until the introduction of the kroner in 1874. One rigsdaler then equaled two kroner.
- 3) "Svinehaven" may be translated "Heaven of the Swine" or "The Pigs' Garden" – a fenced area with lots of oak trees originally intended for raising pigs, apparently in the middle of Vesterø parish.
- 4) Monett, Missouri, approximately 150 miles southeast of Kansas City. When coming to America, most names were "Americanized", which means made shorter and easier. Jens Peter was called "Peter" or "Pete," Caroline Kirstine became "Christina," Christian Nielsen "Chris Nelson," Bertel Thomsen became "Bert Thompson." In the following, after settling in Monett the American names shall be used where appropriate.

## Sources :

Apart from the information kindly provided by Kenneth Watson and Fiskeriårbogen, only sources accessible from a computer with internet access have been used:

*Ancestry.com (especially US censuses and personal data)*

*Arkivalier-on-line.dk*

- Various church records (personal information)
- Various censuses (personal information)
- Læsø Birkedommer, deed and mortgage protocol (1768-1927)  
(loan cases, sales contract, surety)

- Læsø Birkedommer, Justice Protocol 1878-1901 (sea inquiry into "Petra's" fire and sinking)
- Sallingland's Sheriff's Record of Justice 1905-1907 (sea inquiry into the stranding and sinking of "Hope")

*FamilySearch.org Civil status register in Antwerp 1900:*

(About Niels Carl Nielsen falling overboard in the North Atlantic)

*Fiskeriårbogen (Yearbook for the Danish Fishing Fleet 1895 – 1910)*

*Lenescorner.dk The ship database (information about "John William")*

*MediaStream (statsbiblioteket.dk):*

- Newspapers of the time (especially in connection with the stranding and sinking of "Hope")

*North Jutland Avisarkiv.dk:*

- Newspapers of the time (especially "Petra's" brand, and various ship lists)

*Statueofliberty.org (passenger search)*

*Udvandererarkivet.dk (the emigrant protocols)*

*Watson, Kenneth:*

- "Transcription of tape made by Martha Julia (Frandsen) Watson about 1990 at 28 Hourigan Drive in Columbia, Mo., for her granddaughter, Heather Watson". (The writing takes up 10 pages and is Martha Frandsen's memories of her parents and their emigration to the USA. Martha was only 16 months old when she traveled with her mother, so much of her memories are based on what she was told.)
- Various emails with information about the family and Peter Frandsen, who is Ken's maternal grandfather. (Ken was 9 years old when Peter died, and therefore knew him).

**Many thanks to Kenneth Watson** for providing information on Pete and his family.

Translated from Danish with help from Google Translate: May 2023, Arnt Jerup Wiis

English editing: August 2023, Kenneth R. Watson

FROM LÆSØ  
DENMARK



To Monett  
Missouri USA