Rasmussen Volume, Chapter 2 - Lars Christian Rasmussen and Karen Marie Andersen

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Lars & Karen Rasmussen and their six children c. 189? Back: Minnie, Mary, Stena; Front Marion, Winnie Bendine (from collection of Robert Christiansen)

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The Lives of Lars Christian Rasmussen and Karen Marie Andersen

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Lars Rasmussen and Karen Andersen in Denmark

Both of my great-grandparents, Lars Christian Rasmussen and Karen Marie Andersen, were born and raised in northern Denmark in Voer Sogn, a rural parish about 25 miles northeast of Aalborg.

Lars was born to Rasmus Laursen and Mette Marie Larsdatter on their farm named Hald north of the settlement of Idskov. Karen was born to Anders Christian Jensen and Anne Kirstine Christensdatter in Vesterskov southwest of the Voer church.

Lars Rasmussen's parents both died young. Rasmus Laursen died in 1861 at 37 when Lars, the oldest of four children, was only nine. Lars' mother soon remarried but remained on the Laursen farm. Six more children followed from the second marriage. Of the total of ten children, four died in early childhood. Lars' mother, Mette Marie Larsdatter, was only 46 at her death in 1874.

Karen Andersen's parents lived to be older. Anne Kirstine Christensdatter was 60 when she died in 1865, and Anders Christian Jensen was 74 at his death in 1878. Karen had four siblings who reached adulthood, and perhaps four others who died at birth or as children.

Karen was over six years older than Lars. Thus by 1860 Karen was already working outside her parents' home. In the 1860 census for Dorf in neighboring Dronninglund Sogn, Karen Marie Andersen is enumerated as a servant in the home of Christen Mikkelsen, a farmer who was born in Voer Sogn. In 1860 Lars was living on the Hald farm in the Idskov school district with his parents, three younger siblings, two servants and a carpenter.

In the 1870 census for Voer Sogn, Karen Marie Andersen and her younger sister, Ane Kathrine, are both working for Henning Nielsen, a single farmer, at Idskov in Voer Sogn. Lars, listed with an age of 18, is working for a farm couple, Niels Christian Christensen and Katrine Jensen, in the Vestengaardens area of Voer Sogn.

It is said that Lars and Karen met when they both were working at the Voergaard estate. However, Karen was working in Idskov in 1870 so she may have known Lars at that time, since the Lars' family farm was near Idskov. I have heard that Lars was a laborer in the Voergaard stables and Karen a cook in the manor house. The stables burned in the 1930s, and the docents I talked with in 2007 did not know the kitchen location.

Lars and Karen may have been working at Voergaard in 1872 when Peder Bronnum "P. B." Scavenius bought the Voer estate. Voergaard remained in the Scavenius family until 1946 when P. B. Scavenius' nephew, Erik Scavenius, sold it. The manor house is now a museum.

Of Interest: Erik Scavenius was the last prime minister of Denmark under the German occupation of 1940-1945. He is interred in the Voer Kirk cemetery.

When Lars and Karen met, rural Denmark had a very stratified class structure. Lars'

father was a farmer (Danish *gaardmand*) and Karen's father was a smallholder or cottager (Danish *husmand*). According to family stories, objections from Lars' family delayed the marriage of Lars and Karen until after their first two children were born. (RAC: Perhaps the age difference contributed to family objections. Karen was nearly eight years older than Lars, and Lars was only 19 when their first child was born.)

The year 1874 contained four milestones in the lives of Lars Christian Rasmussen and Karen Marie Andersen:

- Lars's stepfather, Jacob Justesen, died on March 7.
- Lars's mother, Mette Marie Larsdatter, died several months later on July 29.
- Shortly thereafter, on August 18, Lars and Karen married in the Voer church.
- Finally, on September 19, Lars' maternal grandfather, Lars Christian Pedersen, died at the age of 79 in Skæve Sogn just to the northwest of Voer Sogn.

It appears that Lars took over his parents' farm at Hal north of Idskov after his stepfather and mother died. In the 1880 census, his Rasmussen siblings and Justesen half-siblings were scattered, and Lars, Karen, their four daughters, and two servants, Anders Larsen and Louise Christine Johansen, were living in Idskov, with Lars' occupation listed as Gaardeier (farm owner). Family stories suggest that Karen may have continued working at the Voer manor (perhaps part-time) even after Lars and Karen married.

Lars and Karen's first five children, all daughters, were born in Voer Sogn, Hjørring Amt, Denmark before the Rasmussens emigrated in 1882.

The Lars Rasmussen Family Comes to America

We'll never know all the reasons why Lars and Karen Rasmussen left Voer Sogn with their five daughters and immigrated to the United States in 1882. We do know that their last parent, Karen's father, had died in 1878, Lars' only sister, Bendine, had died in May 1881, and Karen's older sister, Maren, had died in October 1881. Karen's older brother, Jens, had planned to emigrate with Lars and Karen, and Karen's other living siblings, her two younger sisters, had already emigrated.

I believe that having five daughters was a factor in Lars and Karen's decision to emigrate. The United States had many single males of Danish birth, and the United States did not follow the practice of dowries. (A dowry being a payment that a bride's family makes to the groom at marriage.)

The sale of the farm at Hald near Idskov helped finance the journey to the United States and the subsequent purchase of the Rasmussen farm in Iowa.

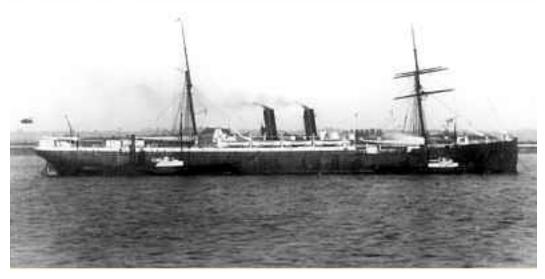
Karen's two younger sisters, with their families, had previously come to Council Bluffs, Iowa. This presumably influenced Lars and Karen's decision to choose Council Bluffs as their destination.

On April 22, 1882, Lars completed a Copenhagen police emigration form. A few days later, Lars, Karen, and their five daughters left on their passage to America.

The Rasmussens first took a ship from Denmark across the North Sea to Scotland. My

grandmother, Rasmine, told me that she celebrated her ninth birthday, April 28, 1882, on the North Sea. In Glasgow, Scotland, the Rasmussens boarded the steamship **SS** *Furnessia*, bound for New York by way of Moville, Ireland. (Moville is on the north coast of Ireland, just north of Londonderry.)

The *Furnessia* carried 1723 passengers, 97 from Denmark. Most of the passengers traveled in steerage. The last passengers on the manifest were 21 cattle handlers returning to the United States. The Rasmussens probably occupied space in steerage that was earlier used by the cattle the *Furnessia* had carried from the United States to Scotland or Norway.



S. S. Furnessia (courtesy of NorwayHeritage.com)

Of interest: When the *Furnessia* was launched in 1880, it was the second largest ship built up to that time in the British Isles. The largest was the *Great Eastern*, launched in 1858 and used to lay the Atlantic submarine cable in 1866.

Upon arriving in New York on May 17, 1882, the Rasmussens would have been processed by immigration authorities at Castle Garden, on the extreme south end of Manhattan Island, since Ellis Island did not open until 1892.

From New York to Council Bluffs, the Rasmussens traveled by train. They likely changed trains in Chicago, since all the railroad lines leading to Council Bluffs from the east, except for the Wabash line from St. Louis, began at Chicago.

The Lars Rasmussen Family in Iowa

After arriving in Council Bluffs in the spring of 1882, a brother-in-law helped Lars Rasmussen find work as a section hand on the railroad. Lars worked on the railroad for some months before buying a farm just west of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Boomer Township, Section 35.

The Rasmussens in Boomer Township, 1883-1920.

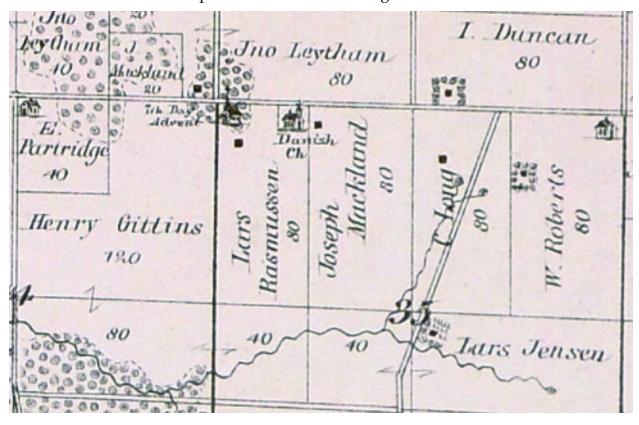
In November 1882, the Rasmussens bought 80 acres from Rasmus and Marie Hansen for \$1,800, or \$22.50 per acre. Marie Hansen was a niece of Mrs. Jorgen Christoffersen, an

earlier settler in the St. Paul's community. The Rasmussen land was improved, which means that the sod had been broken on at least part of the farm. There were some buildings, including the nucleus of the house that still stands today.

The Rasmussens were early members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, which was organized in 1881. In 1883, the Rasmussens sold St. Paul's two acres of their farm. This land was used for the church cemetery and for the first church building, which was erected in the middle of the cemetery in 1883. Several times later the Rasmussens sold the church additional land for expansion.

After moving to Boomer Township in 1883, two more children were born: Marion in 1885, and a boy in 1887 who died after six days.

The Rasmussen farm was located in Section 35 of Boomer Township about fifteen miles north of Council Bluffs. A plat of the Rasmussen neighborhood in 1885 follows.



The Lars Rasmussen Farm in 1885

(from the 1885 C. R. Allen illustrated atlas of Pottawattamie County, Iowa)

From a community sense, the Rasmussen farm in Boomer Township was exceptionally well situated. In addition to living next door to their church, the Rasmussens were near other centers of social activity.

Latter Day Saints) built a chapel before 1900. This chapel was moved about four miles east and south to Hazel Dell Township in the late 1920s, where it later became the Hazel Dell Township Hall. As of 2015 Rick Larson, my cousin Gary Larson's son, owns the old RLDS chapel.

- In 1896, the Smith family opened the Boomer store and blacksmith shop a half-mile west of the Rasmussen farm. The Boomer store building still survives, having been maintained over the years first by Rudolph Jensen and then by the Generaux family.
- Lars and Karen's children attended Boomer #7, a one-room country school about one mile east of the Rasmussen farm. (The Boomer #8 school, also shown on the left side of this map, was soon rebuilt a half mile further west than its 1885 location.)

Upon reaching adulthood, the three older Rasmussen daughters worked in Council Bluffs before marrying. The fourth daughter, Winnie, remained at home until age 18, when she married Peter Bondo of Hazel Dell Township. Bendine, the fifth daughter, experienced poor health, never left home and died as a young woman.

By 1898, all four of the older Rasmussen daughters were married. The oldest daughter, Stena, left the neighborhood and became a city dweller but remained in touch with the family. The other three daughters, Minnie, Mary and Winnie, all lived nearby.



Lars and Karen Rasmussen with Children and Sons-in-Law (c. 1910)

From left: David & Stena Martison; Nels & Mary Christiansen; Marion Rasmussen & his mother; Bendine Rasmussen & her father; Jim & Minnie Christiansen; Peter & Winnie Bondo

Lars and Karen continued to live on the Rasmussen farm with their two youngest children, Bendine and Marion. By 1913, Lars and Karen owned 120 acres, while their son Marion, who farmed with his father, owned an additional 40 acres.

By 1913 the Rasmussens also owned an automobile. On September 29th of that year, the Rasmussen's automobile frightened the horses of a neighbor, Swen Nelson, and Swen died in the resulting accident.

The World War I period brought increased prosperity to Iowa farmers, but two premature deaths to the Rasmussen family in Boomer Township:

Lars and Karen Rasmussen's daughter, Mary, who lived two miles away, died at age
 41 in November 1917, leaving her widowed husband, Nels Christiansen, and four

children aged eleven to three, namely Anneta, Agnes, Raymond and Clarence.

A year later, in November 1918, Lars and Karen's daughter, Bendine, died at age 37. Bendine had remained at home and never married. She had been in poor health for some time, and died during the influenza pandemic of 1918-1919.

Lars and Karen's grandson, Junior Rasmussen, understands that Karen Rasmussen also was seriously ill with influenza around the time Bendine died, and was never well afterwards. However, as Junior's stories attest, Lars Rasmussen enjoyed good health until near the end of his life.

By 1920, Lars and Karen Rasmussen had lived on their Boomer Township farm for 37 years. The 1920 farm consisted of 200 acres with Lars having title to 120 acres and Marion the remaining 80 acres.

In 1920 the Rasmussens sold their land in Boomer Township on contract to the Tom C. Peterson family. Around March 1 Lars and Karen and their bachelor son, Marion, moved to Council Bluffs. I believe Tom C. Peterson's oldest son, Viggo Bondo Peterson, moved onto the Rasmussen farm with his bride, Christena Petersen. Viggo and Christena married on March 24, 1920, and seem to be living on the Rasmussen farm in the 1925 census.

The Rasmussens in Council Bluffs, 1920-1927.

In Council Bluffs the Rasmussens bought a nearly new house at 625 West Washington Avenue in what is now the Mynster/Washington district just northwest of downtown. Their son, Marion, bought a four-unit apartment house next door to the east. As of 2013 both buildings still stand and appear to be well maintained.

Lars and Karen Rasmussen lived in retirement in Council Bluffs with Marion for seven years, from 1920 to 1927.

While in Council Bluffs, Marion met a young woman from Illinois, Katrine Steffensen. Marion and Katrine married in 1921 at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, which then was located about three blocks west of the Rasmussen's home. Their only child, Junior Marion Rasmussen, was born in 1924.

Maren Katrine (Steffensen) Rasmussen, sometimes known as "Kathrine", died nine days after Junior's birth. Junior was baptized at home near the casket of his mother.

Marion found a young woman, Marie Eleanora Jensen, to live in and care for his infant son, Junior. In 1925, on Marie's 24th birthday, Marion and Marie married.

The Rasmussens in Boomer Township, 1927-1952.

A few years after World War I ended in November 1918, commodity prices received by Iowa farmers dropped drastically. One source has corn prices dropping from \$1.85 in June 1920 to \$0.59 in December 1921. In the resulting farm crisis of the early and middle 1920s, many farmers defaulted on their mortgages, and many rural banks failed. The Tom C. Peterson family eventually defaulted on their Rasmussen farm contract, and in 1927, Lars and Karen, along with Marion, Marion's wife Marie, and Marion's son Junior, returned to the farm they had left seven years previously.

Lars and Karen Rasmussen spent the remainder of their lives in their old house in

Boomer Township, living with their son, Marion, his wife, Marie, and Marion and Marie's growing family.

Both of my great-grandparents, Lars and Karen Rasmussen, died at home in Boomer Township, Karen at age 85 in 1928, and Lars at age 82 in 1934.

After Lars and Karen Rasmussen died, their son, Marion, continued to farm the Rasmussen home place.

In 1952 Marion sold the Rasmussen farm to Coleman Fisher Jr. and moved to Council Bluffs where he and Marie owned and operated the Iowana Motel on McPherson Avenue for many years.

As of 2015 the old Rasmussen farm is still owned by the Fisher family, and the original farmhouse is still in use. Gary and Sandy Larson farm the land, Sandy being the niece of Coleman Fisher Jr. and Gary being my paternal cousin.

Lars Christian and Karen Marie Rasmussen, all of their children, and most of their grandchildren are interred in the St. Paul's Lutheran Church Cemetery on the east edge of the Rasmussen farm.

As of March 2016 only three grandchildren, all children of Marion Rasmussen, namely Ethan, Roland, and RoseHannah, were still living.

Lars Christian Rasmussen and Karen Marie Andersen had seven children and 23 grandchildren, all listed on the chart on the following pages. Lars and Karen's 47 great-grandchildren are listed in later chapters in this volume.

As of July 2015, all but sixteen of the 47 Rasmussen great-grandchildren are living. The deceased are:

- ₱ Alan Weismann (died 1936, age 5)
- ↑ Marvin Larsen (died 1982, age 47, four children)
- ₱ Eldon Christensen (died 1992, age 64, one child)
- 1 Lee Weismann (died 1994, age 59, three children)
- ₱ Donald Magnussen (died 2001, age 76, three children)
- ₱ Dorothy Larsen (died 2005, age 74, never married)
- Arlene (Magnussen) Christensen (died 2006, age 78, five children)
- † David Wiggins (died 2006, age 85, five children)
- * Kenneth Christensen (died 2008, age 75, three children)
- † Elvera (Magnussen) Peterson Beam (died 2008, age 85, two children)
- * Frances (Magnussen) Bracker (died 2009, age 87, no children)
- † Delores Diane Martison (died 2009, age 81, two children)
- † Arthur Larsen (died 2013, age 76, three children)
- Marti Jo (Martison) McCorkindale (died c. 2013, age c. 77, one child)
- Phillip Thompson (died 2014, two children)
- Paul Bondo (died 2015, age 69, three children)

Two children of Lars Rasmussen and Karen Andersen did not have families:

■ Bendine Rasmussen, the fifth child of my great-grandparents Lars Rasmussen and Karen Andersen, was born on August 1, 1881, in Voer parish in northern Jutland.

Bendine emigrated in 1882 as an infant with her parents and four sisters on the *S.S. Furnessia*.

As an adult, Bendine suffered from poor health, stayed at home, and never married. She may have had Bright's disease. Bendine used crutches at times and her niece, Emma (Bondo) Christensen, remembered Bendine hobbling on crutches from the Rasmussen home to St. Paul's to teach Sunday School.

Bendine died in the influenza epidemic of 1918, and is interred in the St. Paul's Lutheran Church Cemetery.

■ An unnamed infant boy Rasmussen, the seventh child of my great-grandparents Lars Rasmussen and Karen Andersen, was born in Boomer Township in 1887 when my great-grandmother was 44 years old, died six days later, and is interred in the St. Paul's Lutheran Church Cemetery.

Older Descendants of Lars Christian Rasmussen and Karen Marie Andersen (chart)

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Lars Christian Rasmussen (27 Oct 1851 - 8 Jan 1934) & Karen Marie Andersen (6 Jan 1843 - 29 Jan 1928) m. 18 Aug 1874, Voer Sogn, Hjørring Amt, Denmark

> Anna Christina "Stena" Rasmussen (24 Oct 1871 - 28 Jan 1929) & David Marion Martison (5 Dec 1867 - 26 Mar 1931) m. 1 Oct 1890, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

> > Harvey Lawrence Martison (23 Jul 1891 - 7 Nov 1970) & Helen Augusta Rosen (15 Apr 1894 - 27 Apr 1973) m. 3 Feb 1917, Omaha, Douglas Co., NE

Emma Mildred Martison (18 Oct 1893 - 19 Dec 1983) & Frederick Carl Wiggins (30 Jul 1890 - 3 Apr 1972) m. 16 Apr 1919, Omaha, Douglas Co., NE

Minnie Anita Martison (14 Apr 1896 - 10 Mar 1962) & Lothar F. R. Egen (10 Mar 1891 - 1 Feb 1961) m. Nov 1917, Omaha, Douglas Co., NE

Roger Vernon Martison (22 Aug 1907 - 3 Nov 1991) & Alice Janak (1907 - abt 3 Oct 1948) m. abt 1932, Omaha, Douglas Co., NE?

Roger Vernon Martison (22 Aug 1907 - 3 Nov 1991) & Edna Antonette Wells (abt 1 Jun 1908 - 17 Feb 1984) m. 9 Jan 1934, Sarpy Co., NE

Rasmine "Minnie" Rasmussen (28 Apr 1873 - 20 Oct 1950) & James P. "Jim" Christiansen (28 Mar 1868 - 11 Nov 1941) m. 26 Apr 1893, bride's home, Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Vesta Christiansen (15 Jan 1899 - 14 May 1980) & Tolford Gerhard Thompson (30 Jan 1901 - 9 Apr 1976) m. 1 Sep 1926, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Alvin McKinley Christiansen (14 Oct 1901 - 18 Sep 1973) & Leona Margaret Larson (28 Jan 1909 - 15 Apr 1969) m. 30 Aug 1933, Evangelical Church, Walnut, Pott. Co., IA

Alvin McKinley Christiansen (14 Oct 1901 - 18 Sep 1973) & Lila Ferne Spencer (10 Jul 1916 - 14 Aug 1974) m. 1 Jun 1970, Little Brown Ch., Nashua, Chickasaw Co., IA Mette Marie "Mary" Rasmussen (26 Feb 1876 - 26 Nov 1917) & Nels Christiansen (26 May 1871 - 20 Dec 1958) m. 26 Oct 1898, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Anneta Viola Christiansen (19 Jul 1906 - 11 Jul 1942)

Agnes Clarette Christiansen (24 Jun 1908 - 15 Mar 1973)

Raymond Roosevelt Christiansen (14 Nov 1910 - 17 Aug 1986) & Esther Elizabeth Ericksen (28 Dec 1913 - 29 Jun 2000) m. 20 Feb 1934, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Clarence Rudolph Christiansen (29 Aug 1914 - 28 Apr 1997) & Loretta Eleanor Olsen (20 Jan 1917 - 8 Dec 2009) m. 20 Jun 1939, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Alvina "Winnie" Rasmussen (23 Aug 1878 - 19 Dec 1975) & Oluf Peter "Peter" Bondo (24 Apr 1869 - 19 Oct 1939) m. 17 Feb 1897, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

> Esther Henrietta Bondo (12 Dec 1897 - 19 Apr 1988) & Carl Emil Magnussen (29 Jan 1893 - 13 May 1948) m. 17 Feb 1920, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

> Lillie Martha Bondo (8 Dec 1899 - 27 Nov 1978) & Oluf Larsen (21 Mar 1896 - 8 Feb 1991) m. 23 Feb 1926, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

> Emma Frances Bondo (30 May 1902 - 28 Sep 1997) & Leon Emanuel Christensen (14 Aug 1899 - 14 Feb 1960) m. 20 Feb 1924, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Elmer Laurits Peter Bondo (18 Dec 1904 - 24 May 1985) & Ingrid Johanne Beck (1 Sep 1904 - 5 Dec 1998) m. 25 Mar 1930, at bride's home, Trufant, Montcalm Co., MI

Alvina Elizabeth Bondo (6 Jul 1908 - 1 Oct 1993) & Boas Ambrose Jacobi Weismann (31 Aug 1904 - 20 Dec 1967) m. 23 or 28 Jul 1928, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

infant girl Bondo (30 May 1911 - 30 May 1911)

Edward Bondo (20 Jun 1913 - 21 Jun 1913)

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Bendine Rasmussen (1 Aug 1881 - 28 Nov 1918)
Marion Rasmussen (28 Jun 1885 - 3 Aug 1969)
& Maren Katrine "Kathrine" Steffensen (10 Aug 1892 - 31 May 1924)
m. 5 Jan 1921, Our Savior's Luth. Ch., Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA
       Junior Marion Rasmussen (22 May 1924 - 17 May 2015)
       & Donna Lee Larson (25 Jan 1929 - 18 Dec 2015)
       m. 28 Feb 1949, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA
       Junior Marion Rasmussen (22 May 1924 - 17 May 2015)
       & Mary Elizabeth Hedegaard (14 Nov 1927 - )
       m. 19 May 1956, Our Savior's Luth. Ch., Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA
Marion Rasmussen (28 Jun 1885 - 3 Aug 1969)
& Marie Eleonora Jensen (10 Sep 1901 - 25 Aug 1988)
m. 10 Sep 1925, Our Savior's Luth. Ch., Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA
       Ethan Hald Rasmussen (18 Aug 1928 - )
       & Maxine Lois Fisher (17 Aug 1928 - )
       m. 11 Feb 1948, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA
       Bennett Grant Rasmussen (3 May 1930 - 13 May 1964)
       & Kathryn Alice Brookhouser (5 Sep 1934 - )
       m. 24 Jun 1951, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA
       Roland Randal Rasmussen (16 Oct 1932 - )
       & Helen Louise Jensen (16 Apr 1942 - )
m. 2 Jul 1960, Our Savior's Luth. Ch., Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA
       Quentin Jenning Rasmussen (22 Jul 1935 - 30 Mar 2013)
       & Joyce Louise Bell (14 Dec 1935 - 25 Mar 2001)
       m. 19 Jun 1954, First Christian Ch., Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA
       Quentin Jenning Rasmussen (22 Jul 1935 - 30 Mar 2013)
       & Sally Dell Watson (2 Mar 1952 - )
       m. 1 May 1983, Garden of the Gods, Colorado Springs, El Paso Co., CO
       Rosehannah Marie Rasmussen (17 Apr 1937 - )
       & Ronny Frederick Russell (11 Jul 1932 - 17 Jan 2012)
       m. 17 Sep 1955, Our Savior's Luth. Ch., Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA
infant Rasmussen (6 Sep 1887 - 12 Sep 1887)
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End of the Lars Christian Rasmussen and Karen Marie Andersen chapter of the Christiansen volume of Robert Christiansen's Older Relatives.