

# **Christiansen Volume, Chapter 3 - James P. "Jim" Christiansen and Rasmine "Minnie" Rasmussen**

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## The Lives of James P. "Jim" Christiansen and Rasmine "Minnie" Rasmussen

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- **James P. "Jim" Christiansen**, my paternal grandfather and the older child of Christian Christiansen and Anna Jensen, was born in 1868 in Smerup Sogn, Præstø Amt, Denmark as Jens, came to the United States at the age of one and was a lifelong farmer in Boomer Township north of Council Bluffs in Pottawattamie County, Iowa.

Jim Christiansen married my paternal grandmother, Rasmine "Minnie" Rasmussen, in 1893. Minnie Rasmussen's younger sister, Mary, married Jim Christiansen's younger brother, Nels.

**Rasmine "Minnie" Rasmussen** was the daughter of Lars Christian Rasmussen and Karen Marie Andersen who immigrated from Voer Sogn in northern Jutland to Pottawattamie County in 1882 and settled in Boomer Township just west of St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

After their marriage, Jim and Minnie Christiansen took up residence on a farm in Boomer Township, Section 21, about a mile west of Jim's childhood home. Jim and Minnie's farm had been the residence of Christian Christiansen's brother-in-law, Ole Jensen, until 1886 when Ole sold his farm to Christian and moved to Council Bluffs. Jim and Minnie lived on this farm throughout their 48 years of marriage.

Jim and Minnie Christiansen developed a well-maintained farmstead, which they called "Hillside Lawn". When my father, Alvin, married in 1933, he added to the farmstead by having a small house built across the creek from the existing buildings.

In 1941 my beloved grandfather, Jim Christiansen, died unexpectedly in his sleep at the age of 73. Minnie continued to live by herself in their farm home, caring for her house, her garden, and her chickens. Minnie's eyesight gradually deteriorated and in 1945 she had a painful attack of shingles. In 1947 Minnie went to live near her daughter in Eagle Grove, Iowa, where she died a few years later.

Around the end of 1946 my parents had bought a farm west of Avoca, Iowa. At that time plans were made to move my grandmother, Minnie, to Eagle Grove, where her daughter, Vesta, lived so my family could move to the Avoca farm. In the early fall of 1947 Minnie had a stroke, and sometime in October my father took Minnie to Eagle Grove. During the first winter, Minnie lived with Vesta and her husband, Tolford, and in the Spring of 1949 she moved next door to a small house, which Tolford had prepared for her. Minnie died peacefully in bed in her little house in Eagle Grove in 1950 at the age of 77.

The two children of Jim and Minnie Christiansen are listed below.

James P. "Jim" Christiansen  
b. 28 Mar 1868, Smerup Sogn, Præstø Amt, Denmark  
d. 11 Nov 1941, Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA  
bur. 14 Nov 1941, St. Paul's Luth. Cem., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA  
& Rasmie "Minnie" Rasmussen  
b. 28 Apr 1873, Voer Sogn, Hjørring Amt, Denmark  
d. 20 Oct 1950, Eagle Grove, Wright Co., IA  
bur. 23 Oct 1950, St. Paul's Luth. Cem., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA  
m. 26 Apr 1893, bride's home, Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Vesta Christiansen  
b. 15 Jan 1899, Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA  
d. 14 May 1980, in hospital, Webster Co., IA  
bur. 17 May 1980, Rose Hill Cem., Eagle Grove, Wright Co., IA  
& Tolford Gerhard Thompson  
b. 30 Jan 1901, Wright Co., IA  
d. 9 Apr 1976, in hospital, Webster Co., IA  
bur. 12 Apr 1976, Rose Hill Cem., Eagle Grove, Wright Co., IA  
m. 1 Sep 1926, St. Paul's Luth. Ch., Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA

Alvin McKinley Christiansen  
b. 14 Oct 1901, at home, Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA  
d. 18 Sep 1973, Eppley Care Ctr., Omaha, Douglas Co., NE  
bur. 21 Sep 1973, Graceland Cem., Avoca, Pott. Co., IA  
& Leona Margaret Larson  
b. 28 Jan 1909, Hazel Dell T., Pott. Co., IA  
d. 15 Apr 1969, Avoca, Pott. Co., IA  
brp. Graceland, Avoca, Pott. Co., IA  
m. 30 Aug 1933, Evangelical Church, Walnut, Pott. Co., IA

Alvin McKinley Christiansen  
b. 14 Oct 1901, at home, Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA  
d. 18 Sep 1973, Eppley Care Ctr., Omaha, Douglas Co., NE  
bur. 21 Sep 1973, Graceland Cem., Avoca, Pott. Co., IA  
& Lila Ferne Spencer  
b. 10 Jul 1916, Boomer T., Pott. Co., IA  
d. 14 Aug 1974, Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA  
bur. 17 Aug 1974, Ridgewood Cem., Council Bluffs, Pott. Co., IA  
m. 1 Jun 1970, Little Brown Ch., Nashua, Chickasaw Co., IA

Jim and Minnie Christiansen are interred with their parents and most of their siblings in the St. Paul's Lutheran Church Cemetery in Boomer Township. Vesta is interred in Rose Hill Cemetery in Eagle Grove, Iowa, and Alvin in Graceland Cemetery in Avoca, Iowa.

**Of interest:** Like my maternal grandfather, Andrew A. Larson, my paternal grandfather, James P. Christiansen, never had a middle name. Like Andrew Larson, James Christiansen was motivated to assume a middle initial because of a neighbor with a similar name. In this case, the neighbor, Jens C. Christensen, lived a mile to

the west.

**Of interest:** While my maternal grandfather, Andrew A. Larson had reddish hair and was sometimes called “Red Andrew” Larson, James P. Christiansen had dark brown hair and a dark complexion, and thus some called him “Black Jim” Christiansen.

**Of interest:** Like most Iowa farmhouses in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, my grandparents Christiansens’ home lacked running water. A windmill pumped water from a well in a field north of the farmstead into a cistern. From the cistern, gravity carried water through underground pipes to several hydrants located near the farm buildings. A second, much-smaller, cistern collected rainwater from the house roof. Within the house was a bathroom containing a bathtub, a sink, and a pump for the rainwater cistern. The wood-burning kitchen stove contained a reservoir for hot water, but there was no kitchen sink. Most water for household purposes was carried in by hand from a hydrant near the house. Drainpipes carried away water from the bathtub and bathroom sink. (Most Iowa farmhouses did not have a bathroom at the time.)

**The lives of Jim and Minnie Christiansen's children follow.**

End of the *Lives of James P. “Jim” Christiansen and Rasmine “Minnie” Rasmussen* section of the *Christiansen* chapter of *Robert Christiansen’s Family History*.

## **Tolford and Vesta (Christiansen) Thompson Family**

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Reviewed by Kathryn (Thompson) Hanson Sep 2012.

- **Vesta Christiansen** (15 Jan 1899 – 14 May 1980) was born at home in Boomer Township, Pottawattamie County, Iowa. She was the older of two children born to Jim and Minnie Christiansen.

Vesta attended the one-room Boomer #5 school and after graduating from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade attended high school at the Lutheran Ladies Seminary in Red Wing, Minnesota from 1914 to 1918. After graduating from the Lutheran Ladies Seminary, Vesta returned to the Christiansen farm where she lived for three years until she entered St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota in 1921.

After graduating from St. Olaf in 1925, Vesta taught at Wanamingo High School in southeastern Minnesota for one year.

Vesta met **Tolford Gerhardt Thompson** when they were both students at St. Olaf College. Tolford was the son of Ceivert Thompson and Ella Wicks of Wright County in north central Iowa.

### **About Tolford Thompson's family:**

Tolford Thompson's father, Ceivert Johann "C. J." Thompson, was born in Olesjoen, Norway to Torkel Torkelsen and Sissela Jonsdotter and immigrated to the Fox River area of northern Illinois as a boy.

Tolford Thompson's mother, Udna "Ella" Toresdotter Wicks, was born in the Fox River area to Tores Knudson Vikedahl Wicks and Guri "Julia" Larsdotter.

Ceivert Thompson and Ella Wicks married in 1889 in the Fox River area.

Ceivert and Ella Thompson farmed near Kanawha in northern Wright County and retired to Eagle Grove around 1912.

The 240-acre Ceivert Thompson farm was south of Kanawha in Section 33, Norway Township. As the only surviving child, Tolford inherited the Thompson farm when his mother died. By 1962 Tolford had sold the north part of the farm, which contained the farmstead, to Duane and Edith Amosson. Later Tolford also sold the remainder of the farm to the Amosson family.

Tolford Thompson's parents, Ceivert Johann "C. J." (16 Jun 1863 – 17 Mar 1917) and Udna "Ella" (22 May 1865 – 8 Apr 1944), are interred in the Rose Hill Cemetery in Eagle Grove.

### **The two children of Ceivert and Ella Thompson are listed below.**

- **Matilda Selesia "Tillie" Thompson** (2 May 1890 – 27 Nov 1914) lived at home and never married.
- **Tolford Gerhardt Thompson** (30 Jan 1901 – 9 Apr 1976) attended the Norway #8 one-room country school about 1/4 of a mile from his parents' farm and graduated from Eagle Grove High School in 1919. Tolford

enrolled at St. Olaf College, left college for a while, and returned to graduate with the class of 1925.

Tolford Thompson and Vesta Christiansen married at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Boomer Township on September 1, 1926.

After marrying, Tolford and Vesta lived at 600 South Park St., later renamed as 600 South Waddell, until their deaths.

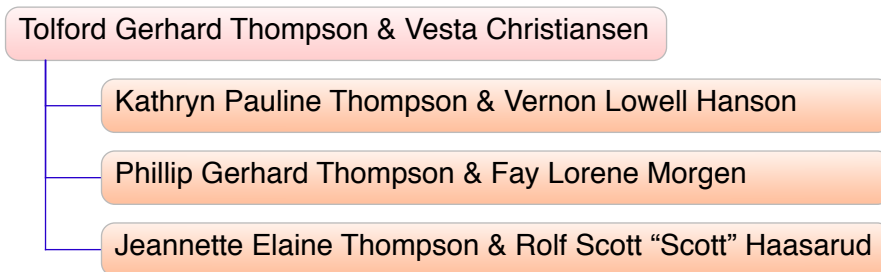
Tolford worked for the Security Savings Bank in downtown Eagle Grove where he served in various departments, retiring as a bank officer in July 1971 after 45 years of service.

**Of interest:** The Security Savings Bank was the only bank in Eagle Grove to survive both the farm crisis of the early 1920s and the Great Depression and is still in operation in 2011.

Tolford Thompson was also a long-term active member of Eagle Grove Evangelical Lutheran Church, which he had joined as a child in 1912. He was a member of the church council, Sunday School superintendent, and teacher.

Tolford Thompson died in Trinity Hospital in Fort Dodge, Iowa in 1976 at the age of 75. Vesta (Christiansen) Thompson died in Trinity Hospital after a brief illness in 1980 at the age of 81.

The three children of Tolford and Vesta Thompson are shown below:



The following children and spouses shown on the above chart are deceased:

- Vernon Lowell Hanson (21 Jun 1925 - 20 Nov 2007).
- Philip Gerhard Thompson (28 Jan 1930 – 10 Nov 2014) and his wife, Fay Loren Morgen (13 Dec 1935 - 19 Jun 2001).
- Rolf Scott Haasarud (28 Mar 1940 – 13 Apr 2016).

End of the *Tolford and Vesta (Christiansen) Thompson Family* public section.  
The following five-page private section, written for Tolford and Vesta's descendants, sketches the lives of Tolford and Vesta's children.

**Private Section of the Tolford and Vesta (Christiansen) Thompson Family Sketch**

**The End - Private Section of the Tolford and Vesta (Christiansen) Thompson Family**

**The End - *Tolford and Vesta (Christiansen) Thompson Family* section  
of the James P. *Christiansen* chapter of *Robert Christiansen's Family History*.**

## **Alvin and Leona (Larson) Christiansen Family**

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Reviewed by Carolyn Christiansen Sep 2012.

- **Alvin McKinley Christiansen** (14 Oct 1901 – 18 Sep 1973), my father, was born at home in Boomer Township, Pottawattamie County, Iowa. He was the younger of two children born to Jim and Minnie Christiansen. His older sister, Vesta, married Tolford Thompson and lived in Eagle Grove, Iowa for all her married life.

**Of interest:** Elizabeth Driver, the Christiansen's neighbor to the west, was the midwife when Alvin was born. Mrs. Driver had some experience, having given birth to 17 children herself.

Alvin attended the one-room Boomer #5 school and after graduating from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade remained at home, farming with his father, until his marriage to my mother.

Alvin took the 1920 Boomer Township census early in 1920 just a few months after he turned 18 and remained active in civic life until his death.

Alvin met Leona Larson of Hazel Dell Township at a Luther League meeting at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Boomer Township.

### **About Leona Larson's family:**

Leona Margaret Larson (28 Jan 1909 – 15 Apr 1969), my mother, was the fifth of nine children born to Andrew A. Larson and Karen Margrethe "Maggie" Hansen, who lived on a rented farm about four miles south of St. Paul's.

After graduating from Abraham Lincoln High School in Council Bluffs in 1926 and working for a year in Council Bluffs until she turned 18, Leona taught in rural one-room schools in Hazel Dell and Lewis townships for six years until she married.

**The nine children of Andrew and Maggie Larson are listed below.**

- **Albert Henry Larson** (30 May 1900 – 19 Oct 1987) never married. Albert farmed his parents' place and remained at home until near the end of his life.
- **Edna Marie Larson** (4 Jul 1902 – 22 Feb 1946) married Louis William Petersen (23 May 1899 – 4 Mar 1988). Louis was the son of Hans Petersen and Christine Christoffersen of Neola Township. In 1939 Edna was diagnosed with tuberculosis and sent to the Iowa Tuberculosis Sanitarium in Oakdale near Iowa City where she died at the age of 43.  
  
Louis and Edna Petersen had three children, Alvin, Donald and Phyllis.
- **Lillian Dorothy Larson** (14 Nov 1904 – 16 May 1990) married Hilding Ferdinand Gidlund (10 Jul 1902 – 10 Apr 1961). Hilding was born in Sweden to Johan Gidlund and Hilda Molin and brought to Columbus,



Ohio as a baby.

Hilding and Lillian lived in Denver and had two daughters, Sylvia and Rosalie.

- **Florence Edith Larson** (4 Dec 1906 – 24 Feb 1945) married Carl Bernard “Bernard” Larsen (26 Jun 1908 – 2 May 1972). Bernard Larsen was the son of Lauritz Larsen and Mary Pedersen of rural Kenmare, North Dakota. Florence died of a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 38.

Bernard and Florence Larsen lived in North Dakota and had two children, Virginia and Lawrence “Larry”.

- **Leona Margaret Larson** (28 Jan 1909 – 15 Apr 1969), who married Alvin Christiansen (14 Oct 1901 – 18 Sep 1973), was my mother. Alvin and Leona had three children, Robert, Carolyn and Donald.
- **Ethel Irene Larson** (16 Jun 1912 – 12 Jan 2015) married Oscar Adolph Torneten (14 Dec 1906 – 19 Jul 1976). Oscar was the son of William Torneten and Lizzie Oltmanns of Hardin Township.

Oscar and Ethel Torneten lived on the Torneten home place and had three children, Richard, Marilyn and Jeanette.

- **Helen Ruth Larson** (19 Jul 1915 – 20 Aug 2013) married Victor Thybo Petersen (26 Mar 1912 – 17 Aug 2006). Victor was the son of Peter T. Petersen and Karen Jensen of southwestern Boomer Township.

Victor and Helen Petersen lived in various locations in Pottawattamie County and in Guthrie County, Iowa and Mesa, Arizona. Victor and Helen had two daughters, LaVonne and Carol.

- **Vernon Edwin Larson** (18 Oct 1919 – 13 Jan 2003) married Thelma Mae Schroder (10 Dec 1920 – 20 Jan 2002). Thelma was the daughter of Henry Schroder and Jessie Shadden of rural northwestern Pottawattamie County.

Vernon and Thelma Schroder lived in Hazel Dell and Boomer Townships. Vernon and Thelma had four children, Barbara, Ronald, Gary and Patti, and adopted a neighborhood teenager, Donald Thompson.

- **Alice Elaine Larson** (1 Sep 1923 – 24 Jun 1954) married Norvin Clarence Oamek (25 Nov 1922 – 28 Oct 2007). Norvin was the son of Clarence Oamek and Theda Hatton who farmed in western Hazel Dell Township.

Norvin and Alice Oamek lived in Council Bluffs, where Alice died of leukemia at the age of 30.

Norvin and Alice Oamek had two daughters, Joanne and Jeri.

➔ The remaining content of the Alvin Christiansen family sketch is identical to that found in the *Larsen/Larson* chapter of *Older Relatives of Robert Christiansen*. It was last updated on 11 Sep 2012.

My parents, Alvin Christiansen and Leona Larson, married at the Evangelical Church in Walnut, Iowa, on August 30, 1933. At the time, Alvin was 31 and Leona 24. Leona's sister, Ethel, and Ethel's beau, Oscar Torneten, were their attendants.

After marrying, Alvin and Leona Christiansen lived with my grandparents Christiansen for three months. During this time, Pete Juergens built a small two-bedroom house across the creek from the Jim Christiansen farmstead. Our parent's little house cost \$1200 in 1933. The Alvin Christiansen family lived in this house from Thanksgiving 1933 until February 1948.

In 1941 my grandfather and father were jointly farming 240 acres, consisting of the following parcels:

- The 80-acre Jim Christiansen home place, which Jim and Minnie purchased from his parents. These 80 acres contained both my grandparent's house and my parent's house.
- 40 acres to the southwest, which Jim and his brother, Nels, purchased in 1898 from the widow Elizabeth Driver.
- 40 acres of the Jacob Jensen farm, which my father purchased in 1924.
- The remaining 80 acres of the Jacob Jensen home place, which my father purchased from the Federal Land Bank of Omaha in the early 1940s, and which contained a set of buildings, including an old two-story house and a nearly new barn.

In November 1941 my grandfather, Jim Christiansen, died suddenly, leaving my father with an incredibly heavy work burden during World War II.

In February 1948 the Alvin Christiansen family moved to a 120-acre farm two miles west and 3/4 miles north of Avoca, Iowa. We moved to a smaller farm having a larger house.

My dear mother, Leona (Larson) Christiansen, died in a nursing home in Avoca at age 60, after suffering for six years from breast cancer, which metastasized into her bones. Years later I realized that I had never heard her speak ill of anyone.

My parents, Alvin and Leona Christiansen, are interred in Graceland Cemetery in Avoca. From their stone, one can see the Christiansen farmstead on the western horizon across the Nishnabotna River valley.

After Leona (Larson) Christiansen's death, Alvin Christiansen married **Ferne (Spencer) Bertelsen**. Ferne was the younger sister of Alvin's close friend, Russell Spencer.

### **About Ferne Spencer's family:**

Lila Ferne "Ferne" Spencer was the daughter of Ralph Edward Spencer (1 Jan 1886 – 3 Feb 1958) and Johannah "Hannah" Madison (15 Feb 1887 – 6 May 1954). Ralph and Hannah Spencer farmed in Boomer Township a mile east of St. Paul's Lutheran Church and are interred in the Grange Cemetery in

Boomer Township.

Ferne Spencer was the fourth of six children:

- Mildred Iona Spencer (22 Mar 1911 – 22 Sep 1996) married Fremodt Bondo Hansen (22 Apr 1909 – 30 May 1991).
- Russell Madison Spencer (10 Jul 1912 – 28 Oct 1997) married Martha Katherine Norgaard (12 Jun 1915 – 24 Oct 1968).
- Leona Celia Spencer (13 Nov 1913 – 8 May 1997) married Donald Miles Hansen (28 Aug 1911 – 28 Dec 1989).
- Lila Ferne Spencer (10 Jul 1916 – 14 Aug 1974) married John Vern "Vern" Bertelsen (6 Nov 1915 – 19 Mar 1965) and after Vern's death married Alvin Christiansen.
- Ralph Edward Spencer Jr. (24 May 1920 – 5 Jun 2001) married Donna Lou O'Neill (10 Sep 1925- 2 Jun 2003).
- Calvin Alexander Spencer (6 Sep 1925 – 28 Jul 1998) married Rogene Ann Kahl (15 Mar 1929 -).

Ferne taught at the rural one-room Neola #9 school until she married Vern Bertelsen in 1940. Vern Bertelsen was the son of Alfred Bertelsen and Martha Wohlers of Boomer Township.

Vern and Ferne Bertelsen lived in Underwood, where Vern was a trucker. Vern Bertelsen died of cancer at age 49, leaving Ferne with two children in their early 20s:

- ▲ **Arlon Glen Bertelsen** married Evelyn Jane Hough, the daughter of Charles Maxwell "Max" Hough and Lavon Opal Warford of Hazel Dell Township. Arlon farmed south of Underwood. Arlon and Evelyn had two children and then divorced. Arlon subsequently married Carol.
- ▲ **Brenda Beth Bertelsen** married Howard Earl Reelfs, the son of Earl LaVern Reelfs and June Oliver. Brenda was the elementary school principal at Iowa School for the Deaf in the early 1970s. Howard and Brenda Reelfs had two children.

Ferne was a special education teacher at Iowa School for the Deaf in Council Bluffs.

Alvin Christiansen and Ferne (Spencer) Bertelsen married at the Little Brown Church in Nashua, Iowa, on June 1, 1970. Several months after marrying, Alvin had a farm sale and he and Ferne moved to the Greenbriar apartments on the eastern edge of Council Bluffs. Alvin began working in the county assessor's office at the courthouse in Council Bluffs.

In July 1973 both Alvin and Ferne were diagnosed with cancer.

Alvin Christiansen died in Omaha of lung cancer, which metastasized into his brain after a two-month illness. He survived my mother by three and a half years.

Ferne (Spencer) Bertelsen Christiansen died in 1974, less than a year after my father, from recurrent breast cancer, which had spread into her bones. Ferne is interred with her first husband, Vern Bertelsen, in the Ridgewood Cemetery in Council Bluffs.

As of 2017, Alvin and Leona Christiansen's older son, Robert, was living in Scottsdale, Arizona. Their daughter, Carolyn, was living in Johnston, Iowa, and their son, Donald, lived in Carlsbad, California.

**The end - *Alvin and Leona (Larson) Christiansen Family* - public section.**  
The following six-page private section covers Alvin and Leona's children.

### **Alvin and Leona (Larson) Christiansen Family – Private Section**

**The end - Alvin and Leona (Larson) Christiansen Family Private Section.**

**The end - *Alvin and Leona (Larson) Christiansen Family* section**  
of the **James P. Christiansen** chapter of *Robert Christiansen's Family History*.

**The end - *James P. "Jim" Christiansen and Rasmie "Minnie" Rasmussen***  
**chapter** of the *Christiansen* volume of *Robert Christiansen's Family History*.