

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION RECORD

RG4013.AM: Jansen, Peter, 1852-1923
Diaries, etc.: 1895-1910
Jansen, Jefferson County, Neb.: Leader of Mennonite Colony; Politician
Sheep Rancher
Size: 0.5 cu.ft.; 1 box

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The ancestors of Peter Jansen were among the first to embrace the Mennonite faith in Prussia in the 16th century. To avoid religious persecution and forced military service, the Jansens and 189 other families moved to Russia in the 1870's. Descendants of these settlers, including Cornelius Jansen, father of Peter, moved back to Germany in late 1852 as the Crimean War approached, but returned to Russia in 1856.

Peter Jansen was born in Berdjansk, southern Russia on March 21, 1852. As rumors of the introduction of general military service grew around 1870, many Mennonites decided to leave Russia and settle where conscription would not be an issue. As Cornelius Jansen supported and organized emigration efforts, he was expelled by the Russian government in 1873.

After a brief stay in Berlin, Ontario, Canada, the Jansens moved to America in 1874, first settling in Iowa. A short time later, Peter Jansen purchased land in Jefferson County, Nebraska. This is where the town of Jansen now stands. Cornelius Jansen, called by many "the Moses of a great migration" successfully encouraged other Mennonite families to purchase a vast acreage from the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad.

Peter Jansen went into the sheep ranching business, feeding from 8,000 to 10,000 sheep a season and marketing as much as 200,000 pounds of wool. At one time, his herd ran as high as 25,000 head. Jansen was elected justice of the peace in 1880. A staunch Republican and supporter of the gold standard, he was an alternate to the Republican National Convention in 1884 and a delegate-at-large in 1896. He served in Nebraska Senate in 1911.

Peter Jansen died in Beatrice, Nebraska, on June 6, 1923. He was survived by three daughters. His wife, Gertrude (Penner) Jansen, and son, John Jansen, preceded him in death.

NOTE: See also RG2500.AM, Jantzen Family, for additional genealogical information.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of one box containing seven volumes diaries dating from March 19, 1895-September 17, 1910. Because all of the entries are in German, we can make only a reasonable guess as to the content of the entries. We assume that the material relates primarily to Peter Jansen's sheep ranching business, political interests, and local events in the Jansen, Jefferson County, Nebraska area. These diaries cover the period in which Jansen served in the Nebraska House of Representatives (1899),

as well as the time that he represented the state as a Commissioner of the Paris Exposition and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. We assume that his involvement with these events and his other travels are also described.

Also included are two folders of loose items removed from the diaries. They include letters, receipts, notes, clippings and ephemera.

DESCRIPTION

Box 1
Folder

1. Diary 1, 1895, Mar. 19-1896, Sept. 14
Diary 2, 1896, Sept. 15-1898, July 20
2. Diary 3, 1898, Aug.-1899, Nov.
Diary 4, 1899, Dec. 1-1901, Mar. 17
3. Diary 5, 1901, Mar. 18-1902, Dec. 3
4. Diary 6, 1902, Dec. 4-1907, Mar.
Diary 7, 1907, Apr. 1-1910, Sept. 17
5. Miscellaneous
6. Clippings

Subject headings:

Agriculture -- Jefferson County (Neb.)
Jansen (Neb.) -- History
Jansen, Peter, 1852-1923
Jefferson County (Neb.) -- History
Livestock -- Nebraska
Mennonites in Nebraska

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