

# PETER HANSEN BOISEN (1856 – 1929)

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## **PART 1 - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Danish Frisians**

The modern Frisians are believed to be part of the 'Ingaevone Federation' (which was made up of Jutes, Angles, Saxons and Frisians). A good number of these peoples settled in Briton. Some historians believe the name 'England' was actually a derivative of 'Inga-land'.

The Frisian Islands dot the coast from mid Holland, on past Germany and north to Esbjerg in Denmark. History shows these islands going underwater at different periods of time and during the worst inundation events the Frisians moved to various parts of the mainland including Holland, Germany and Denmark, many were said to have gone to Briton. Boisen appears to be a Danish-Frisian family name.

### **Maugstrup Village Denmark**

Magstrup is a very small village west of Haderslev in South Denmark (Jutland) in what was once the northern part of the duchy of Slesvig (later renamed Schleswig by the Prussians). It sits above the old Duchy of Holsten, what is now German Schleswig-Holstein. Northern Slesvig was considered to be more aligned with Denmark while South Slesvig and Holsten were more aligned with the then powerful 'German Confederation'. Holsten had become a mostly Germanic speaking region.

### **Danish Prussian Wars 1848 and 1864**

These wars are included because they were the cause of why Peter Hansen Boisen, along with many North Slesvig Danes, emigrated to New Zealand and other countries at that time.

In the 1848 (Danish *Trearskrigen*) war that erupted between the Danes and locals in Holsten. Many people in Holsten wanted to join the growing German Confederation. The Danes were able to put down this first insurrection that had been supported by Prussian troops. But in 1864 (*Slesvigske Krig 2*) there was some mishandling of the relationship with both duchies when Denmark's Frederick VII died in 1863. Then both the Austrian and Prussian armies invaded in 1864.

The deciding battle between Prussia and Denmark took place at Sonderborg on the Island of Als approximately 50 kms from Maugstrup. A major battle was fought at a hill called Dybbol Banke. Nearby is the famous windmill 'Dybbol Molle' which was used by the Danes as a lookout post. It was destroyed then later rebuilt. It is now maintained as a part of a national shrine to the war. When Dybol Banke had fallen there was a truce but it only lasted a few months then at 2am on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1864 the Germans swarmed across the Alsund and the battle for Soenderborg was over by 5:00am.

In this 1864 war the Prussian army stopped at the North Slesvig border near Kolding. This is about 35km North of Maugstrup. From 1864 to 1920 the Germans controlled both Slesvig and Holsten. In 1920 after WW1 a local referendum was held and Slesvig was divided in two, with the northern part being returned to Denmark. The remaining part stayed with Germany. The present Danish/German border is just above Flensburg, about 60km south of Maugstrup, and just a few kilometers south of Sonderborg.

Peter Hansen Boisen was 7 years old when the 1864 war began and turned 8 just before the loss at Als. Peter's youth was spent mostly under Prussian/German occupation.

## **Part 2 - THE BOISEN Family:**

### **Origin of the family name**

The name Boisen (or Boysen) has been traced back to **Boye Hansen** who married **Kiesten Lauesdatter** in 1728 in Magstrup, Denmark. Their daughters **Kiesten** ( born 1729) and **Anna** (born 1744) had the surname Boyesdatter, and their son **Laue** (born 1733) had the surname Boysen. Boye is a Danish boys name, originally Frisian (from Netherlands), meaning living or 'boende' in Danish, the original form could have been Boye, Boyesson or Boysen. Also in Frisian 'Boi/Boy' was a generic way of addressing a young male and could end up becoming the boy's first name. The English word 'Boy' comes from this Frisian word.

### **Peter Hansen Boisen's Danish Family**

**Peter Hansen Boisen** was born in Magstrup, Denmark on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1856. He was the youngest of all the children and was from his father's second marriage. His father **Jorgen Boisen**, was born in Magstrup on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1807 to **Niels Lauesen Boisen** (born 1773) and **Inger Kruse Jorgenstatter Sorensen** (born 1780). The Boisen family line has been traced back to **Boye Hansen** who married **Kiesten Lauesdatter** in 1728 at Magstrup.

**Jorgen Boisen** (Peter Hansen's father) was a shoemaker and leather worker in Magstrup when he married his first wife **Elste Marie Guerner** (born 1804) on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1829. He was 22 yrs old and she was 25. They had two children, **Conrad Holm** (born 1830) and **Niels** (born 1831). Elste died in 1831 while giving birth to Niels.

Jorgen then married **Mette Kjerstine Skytt** (Schjots) on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1834 at Magstrup. They had eight children, the youngest being Peter Hansen Boisen. Their children were **Elisabeth Marie** (born 1834, died 1838), **Elisabeth Marie** (born 1838), **Marie Elisabeth** (born 1841), **Hans Jensen** (born 1844), **Jorgen** (born 1847) **Anne Marie** (born 1850), **Jensen Eduard** (born 1852), and **Peter Hansen** (born 1856). Mette died on October 11<sup>th</sup> 1859 when Peter Hansen was 3 years old. Peter's older sisters, Elisabeth and Marie appear to have remained at home for many years, based on census data. It seems he may have had a lot of fussing and attention from his sisters acting as surrogate mothers to him. He seems to have enjoyed the company of adoring women most of his life.

Jorgen then married **Anna Lena Hansen** on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1865. Anna was born on November 25<sup>th</sup> 1825 in Osby, Denmark. They had no children. Jorgen died November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1877 at Magstrup.

In 1875 when Magstrup was then under German control, Peter Hansen and his brother, Jensen Eduard, were encouraged by their father to emigrate, most likely to avoid conscription to the army. Note this quote from the Danish book 'The Second Schleswig War'

"In 1867, Schleswig became part of Prussia. The introduction of Prussian three year military service was extremely unpopular in north Schleswig, which was predominately Danish minded, and many men chose to emigrate in order to avoid being called up."

It is believed Jensen Eduard went to USA but this has not been verified. Family tales say the Boysenberry fruit that originated at Knotts Berry Farm in Los Angeles was grafted by a descendant of this Boisen line, named Rudolph Boysen, but this has yet to be verified.

## **PART 3 - NEW ZEALAND ADVENTURE:**

### **Peter Boisen arrives in NZ**

There is a small Danish community in New Zealand, descended from a group of early settlers who came to clear thick North Island bush, in the middle years of the 20th century, and stayed to found settlements including Dannevirke and Norsewood. A former Prime Minister and high-ranking churchman from Denmark, Danish Prime Minister, Bishop Ditlev Gothard Monrad, settled in Karere near Palmerston North in the 1860s, and set up the first dairy plant in the region. Monrad returned to Denmark after a stay of three years, but other members of his family stayed in New Zealand. He left behind his collection of art now housed at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Other Danes came to the Seventy Mile Bush area in 1872 and founded the town which retains the Danish name of Dannevirke, commemorating the Danevirke in Slesvig. The other town created by the Danes was Norsewood.

Records show **Peter Hansen Boisen** sailed from Hamburg, Germany to Napier, New Zealand on the *Friedeburg*, leaving on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1875, and arriving in Napier on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1875. Peter was just 19 yrs old.

The Friedeburg passengers comprised mainly Danish and Germans who had paid 5 pounds each towards their fare. On arrival in Napier, they were housed in Immigration barracks before being transported to Dannevirke, Makaretu and Seventy Mile Bush, a settlement for Europeans to develop after the New Zealand Government had purchased 250,000 acres from the local Maori people in 1871 for 16,532 pounds. They had a difficult journey by bullock dray and eventually arrived at Takapau where they were housed in railway huts. Peter Hansen then made his own way to the Palmerston North area which had a strong Danish expatriate community. Dannevirke, (meaning Danish work) a nearby town, was founded and populated by other Danish immigrants and named after the defensive line built by the Danes in Slesvig (now Schleswig-Holstein Germany), but which had to be abandoned when the Prussians and Austrians invaded in 1864.

### **Peter Boisen in Palmerston North**

Between 1875 and 1884 it is unsure what he earned a living doing, although it is known that in 1879 he bought a blacksmith business. It is probable he did leatherwork as well as working with and managing horses. There is some good evidence that women were attracted to him as he seems to have been a good looking young man. In 1881 when Peter would have been about 25yrs old, there in a report in the Manawatu Times:

*“A SMASHER: A man called William Lee was arrested by Constable Gillespie on Monday evening charged with breaking the windows of Peter Boisen. The cause was jealousy on account of some female who had deserted him. Up to midday yesterday he was nursing his woes in solitude, awaiting the advent of one of the Great Unpaid. However, later on Mr Dalrymple J.P. came to his relief, and liberated him upon payment of five shillings.”*

*(see NOTES at the end section for some of the meaning of this news article)*

## Peter Boisen marries Sarah Johnson and has 5 children

**Peter Hansen's** first marriage was to **Sarah Johnston** on April 14<sup>th</sup> 1884 at Palmerston North. He was 28 yrs old and she was 19 yrs old. Sarah was the daughter of **William** and **Rachael Johnston**, born in York, Western Australia on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1865. Sarah died in Palmerston North on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1941. Peter and Sarah had five children, all born in Palmerston North - **Edward William** (born Jan 29 1885, died 1970), **Ethel May** (born 1886, died 1952), **Ernest Albert** (born 1888 ), **Harold** (born 1889), and **Myrtle Vera** (born 1891, died 1930). They lived in Tainui Street, Palmerston North.

Peter Hansen was naturalised in August 1887 when a livery/stable keeper in Palmerston North, and again in September 1905 when a farmer at Tokirima, near Ohura, 'King Country'. The reason for being naturalised twice is unknown. At one stage he was nominated to become a local councillor in Palmerston North. It is also believed he had a half share in the Cobb & Co transport company that operated between Bunnythorpe and Palmerston North. Newspaper adverts from the Wanganui Herald on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1891 state:

*"To Stand This Season – the thoroughbred Stallion Forester*

*Winner of over 30 races, under all weights and over all distances. Forester is a chestnut horse standing over 16 hands 2 inches, and was bred by Mr. P.E.Tancred in 1883, by Puriri from Gossip by Traducer-Gitana by Sir Hercules-Gipsy Queen by Il Barbieri-Gipsy (the late C. Smith's of New South Wales, celebrated racing mare) by Rous Emigrant (imp) dam by Cameron (imp), her dam by Steeltrap. For further references see card.*

He is also believed to have trained a horse, possibly Forester, to win the NZ Gallops Cup, and apparently lost all his money betting on horses. This has not been fully verified.

An estimate of the number of decendants from Peter's marriage to Sarah Johnson puts the number at around 250.

## Peter Boisen meets Madge Hayes. A girl 'Violet May' is born.

Peter Hansen left Sarah in 1892 and became a hotel proprietor of the Colyton Hotel, just out of Palmerston North. While here, he met an employee named **Madge Hayes**. They had a child named **Violet May**, born in 1893. Peter's wife, Sarah divorced him over this affair, in 1895. A report in the Wanganui Herald on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1895 said:

*"Sarah Boisen, who on being sworn said she was the wife of Peter Hansen Boisen and was married to him in April of 1884, living with him in Tainui St, Palmerston North. Had five children. Her husband was a livery stable keeper, and about three years ago he took a hotel at Coylton. In December 1892 he deserted her, when she heard that he was living with a barmaid Madge Hayes in Rangitikei St, Palmerston North. Went to the house and saw the woman, asked for her husband, and she replied he was not at home. Madge Hayes said she would not leave Boisen on any account. Had since seen her husband and asked him for maintenance for her children, but he said he would not give her a penny. Respondent told her he preferred living with Madge Hayes in preference to witness. Had reason to believe that he was still living with co-respondent. Was supporting the children herself by sewing, washing, or any employment she could obtain. In reply to his honor, Sarah's lawyer stated that respondent had been sued for maintenance, but had stated he had no money. There was little use in imprisoning him. His Honor said twelve months imprisonment would do him good. Mary Faulkner, residing at Bunnythorpe, gave evidence as to nursing Madge Hayes at witness's house two years ago at Mr Boisen's request, where a child was born. Mr Boisen paid witness, and co-respondent afterwards went to live with Boisen. His Honor granted a rule nisi and gave an order for costs of thirty five pounds."*

It is unclear what happened then, but in 1896 Madge Hayes married John Chrichton in Palmerston North. Peter Hansen at this time had moved on from being proprietor of the Colyton Hotel and was then listed as being a gold miner at Waihi, Waikato area in the 1896 census. He probably then travelled to Auckland where he met **Ethel Mary Taylor**.

## Violet May Chrichton marries Edward 'Ted' Boisen

Violet May grew up in Palmerston North as Violet May Crichton. She knew nothing about her birth father and always believed John Crichton was her father. Then as a young woman around 20 she went to work in Wellington NZ where she met a widower named Edward 'Ted' Boisen. In 1913 Ted's 1<sup>st</sup> wife died shortly after their 1<sup>st</sup> son Alfred, was born. Ted and Violet fell in love and Violet became pregnant so they planned to marry. Violet cabled the news home but was told to return there immediately. Only then was she was told the shock news that Ted Boisen was her older half-brother. Violet faced with the pregnancy simply went ahead and married Ted. Their 1<sup>st</sup> child suffered because of in-breeding and ended up in a home all his life. In approximately 1919 the marriage was annulled. In 1920 Violet married Edward Raymod Marker and they had 3 boys. Douglas Marker (one of the authors of this document), is the 2<sup>nd</sup> son of Violet and Edward Raymond's oldest son Royston.

In 1928 Violet and Edward Raymond divorced and Violet later married again. She had three more children. Four of Violet's children survived into adulthood and have about 100+ descendants between them all.

## Peter Boisen Marries Ethel Mary Taylor and has 3 children

They married in Auckland on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1900. Peter was 44 yrs old and Ethel was 29 yrs old. He was working as a driver at the time. According to family sources, Peter and Ethel never seemed to have much money. Ethel told him she would live anywhere but the country, but that is where they ended up.

Their first child, **Leslie Hansen**, was born in Auckland on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1901. They then moved to Houhoro, a gumdigging area in the Far North of New Zealand, where they lived in a tent on the gumfields. Their second child was born here, **Marjorie**, in October 1904. Ethel suffered a lot from anaemia, and they seemed to subsist on a lot of rolled oats porridge. In 1908 Peter Hansen was granted a lease on farm land in Tokirima, in the 'King Country', by the Taranaki Land Board. He was granted land described as section 10, block 14, Ohura. Their third child, **Eric Benjamin**, was born in Tokirima on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

In the 'Tokirima History' article from the magazine "Roll Back the Years", the area was described as

*"land covered with high fern, scrub and a few pockets of bush. The river was clean and no willows grew along its banks. Roadmen were constructing unmetalled cart tracks to service the new area. Isolation encouraged the community to become close knit and depend on each other. Wagons pulled by six or eight bullocks, with bullock drivers Jack Dean, Austin Frawley or Ted Pawson would bring supplies from Ongarue twice a year via Ohura. The drover could be heard cracking his whip and yelling at his team miles away. The coming of the wagon was always an exciting time for the families as there were invariably gifts for all, and a change of diet."*

The wagons could not travel the road between May and October because of the wet muddy conditions. Supplies sometimes came from Smeatons in Auckland and included 3 or 4 one hundred weight sacks of flour, 3 seventy pound bags of sugar, 6 seven pound tins of golden syrup and 15 pounds of tea.

Les wrote that he, his sister Marjorie, and his mother Ethel travelled down from Auckland to Ongarue on their way to Tokirima. Les was 4yrs old and Marjorie was one year old. They travelled on Tom Moore's coach to Ohura, staying at Hope's Boarding House that night. He remembers the road was dusty. Tom Moore gave them his dog, a black and tan collie called Speed, which had galloped in front of the coach for the entire journey. He gave them much pleasure for years. Les then remembers riding in front of the saddle on his father's horse through bush tracks on ridges but does not remember how his mother and sister got to Tokirima as his mother never rode a horse.

Marjorie told her daughter that in Tokirima they lived in a double tent for a start, then in a hut with a dirt floor. Ethel said it was swept and clean as the dirt was hard packed and easy to sweep. The walls were papered with pages from the Weekly News which was a big magazine about 15 x12 inches, and was full of news, comics, articles and adverts. Marjorie and Les could quote adverts from the pages papered on their walls. Of course, it was also the toilet paper of the times. Marjorie's first long dance dress was pink, dyed from the pink cover pages of the Weekly News.

Family members say Peter was a strict and stern father, but a loving one. He was the one to explain menstruation to Marjorie and told her to keep her feet warm to avoid stomach cramps. When she started menstruating she was given an old pair of boots that Les had

outgrown, and she always felt embarrassed wearing boys boots, even though, up to then she had always gone barefoot. Ethel was from the Victorian era when women didn't discuss bodily functions, so Peter, being a more liberal European, was more realistic and had already raised daughters from his first marriage.

Ethel was champion croquet player and her mallet used to be kept at Baxters Bush, in Henderson. Her son, Eric had made a plaque in her honour and attached it to a seat in the main street of Ohura.

An estimate of the number of descendants from this marriage suggests around 190 people.

## **Peter Boisen dies on his Farm**

Peter Hansen farmed the property until his death in on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1929 at Tokirima, aged 73 yrs. An undated newspaper article reported the results of a Coroners Inquest into his death

### *FARMERS LONELY DEATH – Found dead in bed – verdict of Heart Failure*

*Doctor R B Turnbull said: "I examined the body today at its late residence, and found it to be well nourished and showing no marks of violence. It was the body of an elderly man, probably 70 years of age. From the position of the body and the history given I am of the opinion that death was due to cardiac failure. I am quite satisfied that death was due to natural causes, and that over exertion was the probable cause of the heart failing. I do not know if deceased made a will. Deceased, though a married man, lived by himself. He held his farm on a 99 year lease. There are about 218 acres in the farm, and there is stock on the farm to the value of 700 to 800 pounds. I believe he owned the lot."*

*Leslie Hansen Boisen said: "I am the eldest son of the deceased, Peter Hansen Boisen, and I live at Waitaanga, 28 miles from Tokirima. It is about a month since I saw my father when he then appeared to be in good health. I have never known my father to complain of being ill. My mother is still alive and resides at Waitaanga and my sister, Marjorie, lives at Newmarket, Auckland. She is single. My father made a will about 16 years ago in Auckland, but I do not know if he altered it. None of us was independent on my father. I think my father was 73 years of age. He was a native of Denmark and came to New Zealand about 57 years ago. My father banked with the Bank of New South Wales, Taumarunui."*

*The Coroner returned the following verdict: "That Peter Hansen Boisen died from natural causes, the cause of death being cardiac failure."*

Peter Hansen is buried in an unmarked grave at Ohura Cemetary, section 6, plot 9. Ethel Mary Taylor continued to live with her children at Ohura, Waitaanga and Auckland until her death at 5 Sarawia St, Newmarket in Auckland on 11th December, 1937, aged 66 yrs. The death certificate states the cause of death as 'suffering from cerebral haemorrhage 2 weeks.' Her ashes are buried at Waikumete Cemetary, Auckland, in the Columbarium Niche Wall Old, Row Old, plot 89.

## Notes:

For Louise Toft. This press release is written in old English of the 1800s. I will offer an interpretations to help in translation.

*"A SMASHER: A man called William Lee was arrested by Constable Gillespie on Monday evening charged with breaking the windows of Peter Boisen. The cause was jealousy on account of some female who had deserted him. Up to midday yesterday he was nursing his woes in solitude, awaiting the advent of one of the Great Unpaid. However, later on Mr Dalrymple J.P. came to his relief, and liberated him upon payment of five shillings."*

*'A Smasher:' This is the title and implies a man who has 'smashed' something. In this instance the widows of the house where Peter Boisen lived.*

*'The cause was jealousy on account of some female who had deserted him' - This tells us that the man (the smasher) was jelous because he had lost his girlfriend who 'deserted' him in favour of Peter.*

*'nursing his woes in solitude' - this means feeling sorry for himself in a jail cell.*

*'awaiting the advent of one of the Great Unpaid.' - waiting the arrival of a magistrate/judge/JP.*

*'Mr Dalrymple J.P. came to his relief, and liberated him upon payment of five shillings.' - Mr Dalrymple a J.P. (Justice of the Peace - unpaid magistrate), freed 'the smasher' upon him paying a fine of five shillings (today that is 50 cents).*

*The style of writing is somewhat poetic. The term 'Great Unpaid' appears to come from Shakespere*