

JENS LAUE PEDERSEN + VILHELM KLAUSEN LEMBERG

(1874-1954)

(1872-1951)

from notes by IAN PEDERSEN

It seems fitting to tell the story of these two men together. Not only were they lifelong friends who emigrated together from their native village of Horsens in Denmark, but also, a generation later, their lives were linked again by the marriage of Jens Pedersen's son Leonard to Vilhelm Lemberg's daughter Margaret. The two young men left Denmark in 1889, having it seems, made up their minds to go to America. However, the captain of the ship they boarded was in a hurry to fill his berths and sail, and omitted to tell them till the voyage was well under way, that their destination was not America but New Zealand. They arrived at Napier at Christmas time 1889 aged seventeen and not quite sixteen, practically penniless and unable to speak any English. Ian Pedersen, a grandson writes: "Grandfather Lemberg, after three months of eating salted meat and dry biscuits, saw a shop with the reddest apples he had ever seen. He bought one with some of his precious money only to find it was not an apple at all but a tomato. Till his dying day he didn't eat another tomato."

The two friends naturally gravitated to a Danish speaking community, in this case Mauriceville, where they spent the first year working in the bush. After this their lives took different paths.

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Vilhelm Klausen Lemberg stayed on in the Mauriceville area. A careful business man all his life, he saved money in those early days until he had enough at the end of his first winter to buy a cow. Unfortunately it died soon afterwards, whereupon its owner was prompted to say in jest that he might as well have smoked, drunk and gambled the money away. In 1897 he married Johanna Katrina Kjestrup of Mauriceville. She was the daughter of Enevold Jensen Kjestrup and Katrina Marie his wife (née Swertberg) who had come out from Denmark in 1874 in the Sloman ship 'Reichstag', the largest three-masted ship of the North German Federation. Three children accompanied them on the voyage; Jens, aged nine; Inge, aged eight and Bodil aged two. Johanna herself was born in the Kopuaranga Scandinavian Camp in 1877. Vilhelm Lemberg was a farmer all his working life, buying first a small block of land at Hukanui, and later, with Johanna, taking over the block the Kjestrups had drawn at Mauriceville. A carpenter by trade he built the first Mauriceville West dairy factory and was chairman of the Mauriceville Dairy Company for over twenty-five years. He died in Masterton in 1951. Johanna too, worked very hard all her life, hand milking cows, making hay and doing any other farm work as needed. She died in 1969, aged ninety-one, after living for some years with her daughter Margaret. There were three children: Henry Lemberg (1900-1912); Annie Margaret (Mrs Pedersen) and Alice Ivy (Mrs McWhirter).

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Two years after he arrived in New Zealand Jens Pedersen was joined by his brother Kristian from Denmark; together they bought a farm at Blackburn from their uncle Martin Severinsen. In 1900 the brothers were successful in balloting for adjoining farms at Te Uri (Ngapaeruru No 2 Block). Here Jens Pedersen lived and worked for the remainder of his life.

In the early years when there was little income from the farm this slightly built and scholarly man worked up to sixteen hours a day. Eight hours were spent working on the road, starting at 4 am, picking metal out of the quarry, shovelling it on to an old Scandi wagon drawn by two horses and taking it, often many miles, to spread on the road. The rest of the daylight hours were taken up with the task of clearing the bush and establishing farmland. During the slump Jens and his son Len again took small roading contracts to provide an income.

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The Pedersen and Lemberg families were linked by the marriage of Leonard Allan Pedersen and Annie Margaret Lemberg on the 24 March 1926 at Mauriceville West Church. Their four children were Valma (Mrs Gray), Ian, Brian and Anne (Mrs Christensen).

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More is written about Jens Laue Pedersen in the article on Matilda Kjerstine Pedersen.



Jens Pedersen
in later life



Vilhelm Klausen Lemberg with his wife
Johanna and son Henry.