

Oldest Twins in Nebraska History

by E.A. Kral

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At present, the oldest twin in Nebraska history is Leona Adams Gleed, who lived to 109 years and 316 days of age. She also ranks as the sixth oldest twin in world history, according to Gerontology Research Group based at Los Angeles. And she is the oldest twin in Nebraska history. More information about her is provided later in this article.

The first *native* Nebraska twins who both reached at least age 100 are **Ella Stirba Vacek** and **Sylvia Stirba Pospisil** of Wilber and Crete, respectively. Their parents were Adam and Emma Sasek Stirba. Born June 15, 1905 six miles west and one-half mile south of Wilber, in Section 21, Brush Creek Township, Saline County, the twins attended Rural School District 79, then Ella married William Vacek, lived on a farm near the town of Western, and raised two children. Sylvia married Joseph Pospisil, and lived on a farm near Hallam in nearby Lancaster County for 75 years, and raised two children. One of Sylvia's sixteen great-grandchildren includes a set of twin girls.

A reception for Ella and Sylvia, organized by Ella's granddaughter Betty Nickel and Sylvia's daughter Goldie Coffey, was held on June 19, 2005 at the Wilber Care Center. Over 160 relatives and friends attended, and the twins were presented an Admiralship in the Great Navy of the State of Nebraska.

Articles were published in the June 21, 2000 *Wilber Republican* and June 13, 2004 *Lincoln Journal Star*, and features appeared in the June 14 *Beatrice Daily Sun* and June 15 *Crete News* and *Omaha World Herald* and *Wilber Republican*, all in 2005. There was also television coverage by Lincoln stations KLKN and KOLN.

Ella Stirba Vacek died January 5, 2006, at the age of 100 years, 6 months, and 21 days. For an obituary, see January 11, 2006, *Crete News*. Sylvia Stirba Pospisil died December 6, 2010, at the age of 105 years, 5 months, and 21 days. For an obituary, see December 8, 2010 *Crete News*.

Other native Nebraska twins of unusual longevity were **Clara Kilpatrick Larsen**, age 99, and **Cloyd E. Kilpatrick Sr.**, age 104, both of the Brunswick area. Their parents were James and Mary Snodgrass Kilpatrick. Born January 24, 1897 at Loomis, Phelps County, the twins relocated when six years of age to a farm near Brunswick, Antelope County, and attended Rural School District 58 in Ellsworth Township. Clara, who graduated in 1918 from Brunswick High School, married Harvey Larsen, lived on a nearby farm, and adopted two children. Cloyd married Hope Waddington, lived on the family farm near Brunswick, and raised two children.

Clara Larsen died September 2, 1996 at the age of 99 years, 7 months, and 9 days, while Cloyd, who had a hobby of clockmaking and constructed about 500 of them, died March 30, 2001 at the age of 104 years, 2 months, and 6 days. Articles appeared in the *Norfolk Daily News*, February 10, 1993 and the *Omaha World Herald*, January 28, 2001. The twins never lived more than six miles apart all of their lives.

Another set of native Nebraska twins of unusual longevity were **Amanda Holscher Miesbach**, age 96, and **Martha Holscher Maake Hesson**, age 107, of the Syracuse area. Their parents were Henry and Minnie Grotrian Holscher. Born February 22, 1894, near Burr, Otoe County, the twins lived in Otoe County all their lives. Amanda married Walter H. Miesbach, lived on a farm south of Unadilla, and raised two daughters

and three sons. Martha married Henry Maake, lived on a farm near Burr and later near Douglas, and raised three daughters and two sons. After her first husband died in 1938, Martha remarried Wellington Hesson, and lived in Douglas.

Amanda Miesbach died April 22, 1990, at the age of 96 years, 2 months, and 4 days. Martha Hesson died November 7, 2001, at the age of 107 years, 8 months, and 16 days. Obituaries were published, respectively, in the April 26, 1990, and November 15, 2001, *Syracuse Journal-Democrat*. A biographical entry on Martha Hesson is in the 44-page supplement “Nebraska’s Centenarians Age 107 or Above—1867 to 2001” published with the April 24, 2002, *Crete News*.

Another set of native Nebraska twins of unusual longevity were **Irma Jean Croft**, age 77, and **Miriam Croft Moeller**, age 107. Their parents were John F. and Malvina Ganun Croft, whose three daughters survived out of four children; their mother died in 1967 at age 102. Born September 18, 1900 near Tecumseh, Johnson County, they eventually resided in Tecumseh, where both graduated from high school and later graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Irma remained unmarried, served as a librarian, and lived in Lincoln with her mother after 1939. Miriam married Fred Moeller in 1932, lived in Lincoln, and raised two daughters.

Irma Croft died September 10, 1978, at the age of 77 years, 11 months, and 22 days. Miriam Moeller died November 26, 2007, at the age of 107 years, 2 months, and 8 days. A death notice on Irma was published in the September 11, 1978 *Lincoln Star*, and on Miriam in the November 29, 2007 *Lincoln Journal Star*. An article on Miriam’s marriage to Fred Moeller was in the June 9, 1932 *Tecumseh Chieftain*, and an obituary on their mother appeared in the August 17, 1967 *Tecumseh Chieftain*.

Still another set of native twins of unusual longevity were **Leo Adams**, age 89, and **Leona Adams Gleed**, age 109. Their parents were Edward and Sarah McMillin Adams, who raised 11 children; their mother died in 1964 at age 90. Born March 28, 1900, near Page, Holt County, the twins grew up in Chambers, about 20 miles south of O’Neill. Leo married Thelma F. Dyke in 1924, worked in banks in Chambers, St. Paul, and Atkinson, and the couple raised four daughters. Leona married Lloyd Gleed in 1926, lived on a ranch west of Chambers, and raised three daughters. Her husband Lloyd died in 1963.

Leo Adams died on March 16, 1990, at the age of 89 years, 11 months, and 15 days, while Leona Gleed died at 109 years and 316 days in Norfolk. An obituary on Leo was published in the March 22, 1990, *Holt County Independent*, and an obituary on Leona was published in the February 9, 2010 *Norfolk Daily News*. Features on Leona were published in the March 7, 2007 and March 27, 2009 *Norfolk Daily News* and the March 27, 2009 and February 12, 2010 *Omaha World Herald*.

The oldest native Nebraska male twins were **Otto** and **Hugo Zimmerman**, ages 96 and 99, respectively, of the Falls City area. Their parents were Phillip and Minnie Haeffele Zimmerman. Born October 19, 1887 near Falls City, Richardson County, the twins lived within a few miles from each other all their lives. Otto married Emma Hartman, lived on a farm northeast of town, and had no children, while Hugo married Louise Ernst, lived on a nearby farm, and raised two daughters.

Otto died June 30, 1984 at the age of 96 years, 8 months, and 11 days. Hugo died December 25, 1986 at the age of 99 years, 2 months, and 6 days. An article appeared in the October 20, 1982 *Falls City Journal*.

To date, the set of twins who both resided in Nebraska the longest were **Dr. Marie Hansen Morse** and **Hannah Hansen**, who reached age 102. Their parents were

Frans and Maren Jensen Hansen. Born January 11, 1878 in the country of Denmark, they immigrated to the United States at the age of three months, settling in the town of Craig, Burt County, Nebraska. Marie graduated from the Creighton University Medical School in 1902, and Hannah graduated from its Pharmacy School in 1907.

Marie married Dr. Russell Morse, both had a medical practice in Wisner, Cuming County, and raised five children. After her husband's death in 1924, Marie was a physician in Fremont. Hannah owned and operated a pharmacy in Uehling, Dodge County until 1940, then lived in Fremont.

Marie Morse died February 21, 1980 at the age of 102 years, 1 month, and 10 days. Hannah Hansen died November 18, 1980 at the age of 102 years, 10 months, and 7 days. An article appeared in the January 28, 1977 *Omaha World Herald* and obituaries in the February 22 and November 19, 1980 *Fremont Tribune*.

A twin of unusual longevity who resided in Nebraska for almost 30 years was **Gertie M. Coverdale Bates**, who reached age 103. Born August 6, 1901 at Vermillion, South Dakota, she and her twin sister May lived there until their schooling was completed. Their parents were Joseph and Gertie Washburn Coverdale. Gertie married Lester Bates, then they lived at Sioux City, Iowa and raised four children. Twin sister May married Harvey Hubert, lived at Vermillion and Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and had no children.

Gertie Bates lived in Omaha after 1976, then relocated to David City, Butler County, Nebraska in May 1998. May Hubert died November 6, 2003 in Sioux Falls at the age of 102 years and 3 months. Gertie Bates died January 23, 2005 in David City at the age of 103 years, 5 months, and 17 days. An article was published in the July 31, 2003 *David City Banner-Press*.

More than 26 sets of twin centenarians have been recorded worldwide since the year 2000, and as of March 2007 there were only 6-7 sets of twins (though 3 pairs are unconfirmed) in which each was living at age 100 or more, according to the website of Craig Sanders at www.twinstuff.com/twinfact1.htm. Interested persons may reach Craig Sanders of Twinstuff Outreach, 9119 Highway 6 South, Missouri City, Texas 77459, by telephone (832) 212-4793 or email twinstuff@twinstuff.com.

For a roster of the oldest twins in world history, consult the website of Gerontology Research Group of Los Angeles at www.grg.org and click onto document titled "Oldest Twins in History Worldwide."

An organization interested in twins of all ages with Nebraska connections is the Nebraska State Twins Association. Their contact information may be found on an internet search engine.

The author obtained assistance from county historical societies and state repositories of newspaper articles during preparation of this article. For information about oldest Nebraskans, including centenarian twins, consult website of Nebraska Health Care Association at www.nehca.org.