

HARRIET CORNELIA (NEALIE) DeJEAN



I am Harriet Cornelia DeJean, the daughter of Charles and Charlotte Ann DeJean.

My great-grandfather, Stephen DeJean was born in Paris in 1785. He was 16 at the time of a rebellion in Paris. He made his way out of the Paris at that time and sailed for America.

My grandfather, Joseph DeJean, married Almira Lee in 1836, and in 1837 they left New York for Wisconsin arriving in Waukesha County with but \$4. Selling his horse and other goods, he raised enough money to make the journey to Rutland, Dane County. He originally obtained 40 acres and built a log shanty for his family. He later added another 120 acres. His wife, Almira, died in 1877. He later married Hannah, the widow of the late William Lockwood.

My father, Charles, married Charlotte Ellis in 1876. I was born on March 25, 1877 followed by brothers, Harry, Hiley, and Urban and sisters, Fern and Lucy. Another sibling, Burnice, died in infancy. My sister, Lucy, died in a tragic drowning accident in the Mississippi River while traveling to the Pacific coast to visit relatives. She was joined on the trip by a friend, Aletha Ernst, who also drowned.

Now then, about ME !! Yes, my given name is Harriet Cornelia DeJean. For whatever reason, it seems that people liked to go by their middle names instead of their birth name. (My brother Urban's first name is actually Joseph). But besides that, at a young age I acquired a nick-name of Nealie – and that seemed to stick with me throughout the years of my life.

I attended School District #3, in the Rutland Township. For one year, my family lived in Chicago and I attended J. R. Doolittle School in Cook County, Illinois. I attended High School in Stoughton, WI. After which, I taught school in Dayton and in Rutland in 1896.



In the days before women could go to large department store or boutiques to purchase their finery, the Village of Oregon had a number of millinery shops. Over the years, beginning in the 1870s there were at least nineteen millinery businesses.

The making of hats was a popular item and many married ladies, as well as single

ones, joined the work force to fill orders. Since hats were worn on all occasions, it was necessary to have a few on hand to fit the appropriate dress or coat.

As I was never to marry, I found the idea of a career in the millinery business to be very compatible to my interests and talents. I started in 1901 as a trimmer in a shop in Chicago and then in LaPorte County, Indiana in 1902.

Later in 1902, I purchased Miss Nellie Miller's interest in a shop in Oregon; operating as Welch & DeJean's Millinery Shop.

In February 1903, I spent a couple weeks in Chicago, searching the newest millinery styles. I continued to make trips to Chicago once or twice a year to study the latest styles and trends in hats.

In May of 1903, we ran an ad in the Oregon Observer stating that " the firm of Welch & DeJean's have in stock the largest line of millinery goods ever brought to this market. Flowers true to nature. Styles and shapes of hats in the vey latest. Trimmings and novelties perfect in design and workmanship. Every lady in the country is invited to call and see this mammoth stock of millinery"

Over the next few years, ownership in the business changed and partner names changed to include:

DeJean's and Bell's Millinery in 1904

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But in 1908, I acquired full ownership of the business and continued it until 1945 making hats and along the way making dresses as well. I became a well known milliner in the Oregon area and enjoyed a thriving business.

I died in 1945 at the home of my sister, Fern Neath.