



America Letter



The Danish Immigrant Museum

AN INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL CENTER

Spring 2011 • Vol. XXIV, No. 1

2212 WASHINGTON STREET • ELK HORN, IOWA 51531 • 712-764-7001 • www.danishmuseum.org



Across Oceans, Across Time, Across Generations: The Dierssens



Director's Corner

On a wintry January night, I met our new Scan|Design interns at Eppley Airfield in Omaha. Jule Andersen, Maria Bjørg Rasmussen and Sara Sjölin arrived directly from Copenhagen to a blizzard on the Great Plains. Blowing and drifting snow made roads impassable and led many schools and companies, including The Danish Immigrant Museum, to close for several days.

For two days, they stayed with Dawn and me at our home in Blair before we could drive to Elk Horn. On the afternoon of the second day, we were able to drive to Omaha and visit the Durham Western Heritage Museum. Here, I oriented them to the rich history of Danes in Omaha – where *Den Danske Pioneer* and the Danish Brotherhood in America were founded. According to the 2000 U.S. census there are more Americans claiming Danish ancestry in Omaha than in any other American city.

By the time their stay ended, they had discovered that (as one of them said to my colleagues at the museum) “John Mark knows a lot about Danish immigration and he can really talk!” It’s easy to do when one has an intellectually curious audience.

The Scan|Design Intern Exchange Program at The Danish Immigrant Museum, funded by the Scan|Design Foundation by Inger and Jens Bruun of Seattle, Washington, has been invaluable to our museum. So, too, are the interns that we have from American museum studies programs who are supported through your contributions and museum membership. To date we have hosted sixteen Danish and six American graduate student interns. The excitement these young people bring, their experiences prior to arriving, and their willingness to learn and innovate regularly inspires the staff. And they help us get a lot of work done too!

Many immigrant and ethnic organizations and institutions are concerned about declining membership. I often hear individuals lament that young people, specifically, are not interested in their heritage. The challenge for all of us is to engage young people; The Danish Immigrant Museum’s internship program is one way we are doing this.

We’ve been fortunate to host interns and have been successful, I believe, because we embrace them as colleagues and are genuinely grateful for their contributions. We know too that we are creating a network of individuals who value the story of relations between Denmark and the United States. These interns are an investment in our future.

I am grateful for the investment you make through your membership in The Danish Immigrant Museum. Please know that your support is contributing to the development of these young people who are our future.

John Mark Nielsen
Executive Director

COVER PHOTO: Tove Dierssen pictured with the “Danish Delights,” including her four daughters, in 1973. First row from left: Heidi Dierssen, Tina Poulsen, Christina Dierssen, unidentified, Mette Pedersen; Second row from left: Rikke Dierssen Morice, Ann Kinneberg, Annette Dierssen Jagger, John Bruun-Andersen, Kirsten Pedersen, Lisa Jensen. “Across Oceans, Across Time, Across Generations: The Dierssens” begins on page 4.

America Letter

Published three times annually by
The Danish Immigrant Museum
2212 Washington Street
Elk Horn, Iowa 51531
712-764-7001 800-759-9192
FAX 712-764-7002
Eva Nielsen, editor
www.danishmuseum.org
email: info@danishmuseum.org

Board of Directors

President – Harriet Albertsen Spanel, Bellingham, WA
Vice President – Mark Nussle, Palos Park, IL
Secretary – Dennis Andersen, Atlanta, GA
Treasurer – Clark Mathisen, Omaha, NE
Jon Borgman, Harlan, IA
Lone Christensen, Brown Deer, WI
Ane-Grethe Delaney, Wayzata, MN / University Park, FL
Mark Frederiksen, Falcon, CO
Kurt Hansen, Rosemount, MN
Kristi Johnson, Bethesda, MD
Kenneth Larsen, Calistoga, CA / Harlan, IA
Steven Lund, Yuma, AZ
Cynthia McKeen, St. Paul, MN
Carol Jensen Mills, Dubuque, IA
Kay Esbeck North, Ames, IA
Benedikte Ehlers Olesen, Eugene, OR / Bryup, Denmark
Marian “Mittie” Ostergaard, Mission Viejo, CA
Henrik Fogh Rasmussen, Springfield, IL
Consul Lynette Skow Rasmussen, Johnston, IA
Flemming “Eric” Smitsdorff, Racine, WI
Mark Strandskov, Mt. Pleasant, MI
Janet M. Thuesen, Sausalito, CA
Ex-Officio
Marc Petersen, Omaha, NE
Kai Nyby, LaPorte, IN
Vern Hunter, Fargo, ND
Nils Jensen, Portland, OR
Dennis Larson, Decorah, IA

Staff

Executive Director:
Dr. John Mark Nielsen,
director@danishmuseum.org
General Information, Group Tours, Volunteering Opportunities:
Terri Johnson,
info@danishmuseum.org
Development Director: Bruce Bro,
dkdevdir@metc.net
Wall of Honor, Donations, Memorial Gifts & Memberships:
Debra Christensen Larsen,
development@danishmuseum.org
Bookkeeping & Financial Inquiries: Jennifer Winters,
acctng@danishmuseum.org
Exhibit Questions: Tova Brandt,
dkcur@metc.net
Artifact Donations & Museum Loans:
Angela Stanford,
registrar@danishmuseum.org
Museum Shop: Joni Soe-Butts,
giftshop@danishmuseum.org
Donation of Books & Library Questions: Michele McNabb,
librarian@danishmuseum.org
Genealogical & Translation Inquiries:
genealogy@danishmuseum.org
FHGC Data Entry: Wanda Sornson,
dkgen2@metc.net
Custodian: Tim Fredericksen
Weekend Staff: Beth Rasmussen
Rodger Rasmussen

Welcome Scan|Design Interns

Julie Andersen

In the middle of a blizzard I started my internship at The Danish Immigrant Museum. Working at the museum is a good opportunity for me to experience an American museum from the inside, learn more about the Danes who immigrated to the U.S. and finally to experience American culture and history.

While I am an intern in Elk Horn, Iowa, I am taking a break from my studies in Copenhagen. Since 2008 I have studied history at the university, and have written my final on the political situation in Denmark in the beginning of the (Danish) Middle Ages. At the same time I took museology classes. I have always thought that history and, in particular, Danish history was interesting. Thus it was not difficult to decide what I should study or to know where I would like to work one day: in a museum!

For the last two years I have been working as an educator and guide at the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde. There I had the opportunity to learn the practical aspects of communicating history to children as well as to adults from all over the world.

During my internship at The Danish Immigrant Museum I will sort artifacts from the Lauritz Melchior collection and create a detailed inventory of the materials. Furthermore, I will work two days a week at the Family History and Genealogy Center where I will be translating Danish and German letters and documents in Gothic script for patrons and staff, writing a section about the Danish Baptists in the U.S. for the webpage and helping to search for pictures of immigrants wearing bonnets, hats, and caps for a photo exhibition for this summer's Tivoli Fest.



Julie Andersen at work at the museum's Family History and Genealogy Center

Bjoerg Rasmussen

I joined The Danish Immigrant Museum on February 1, 2011 as one of the new Danish interns. Or not exactly; I arrived with the other two interns from Denmark in

the middle of an Midwest snowstorm, so we started our internship with a little mini vacation at John Mark and Dawn Nielsen's home in Blair, Nebraska and arrived in Elk Horn on the following Thursday.

About me: I have a BA in art history with social and political science as subsidiary subjects from Aarhus University and I am now about to finish my MA in art history at the University of Copenhagen. It is my plan to write my thesis when I get back to Copenhagen in August.

Since 2006, I have worked as a docent at ARKEN Museum of Modern Art outside Copenhagen and at The National Gallery of Art in Denmark. I also had a job as a student assistant in The Danish

Ministry of Culture where I was affiliated with the international affairs in culture. It was interesting getting an inside view to policy making about cultural affairs in Denmark. But, I must say, I love working at museums and hope to make it my future living.

At The Danish Immigrant Museum I will mostly work with Tova Brandt in curatorial planning and changing exhibitions. I am already engaged in working on the next exhibition, *Church Basements and Children's Homes*.

As an intern at The Danish Immigrant Museum I hope to learn about the operations of American museums while gaining hands-on experience in exhibition and collection work. I am already learning a lot, so I really do look forward to the rest of my time as an intern at The Danish Immigrant Museum. I am quite certain my internship here in Elk Horn will make a great addition to my MA and my professional as well as private experience in general.



Bjoerg with one of her favorite museum pieces, a Danish landscape painting from the 19th century.

Across Oceans, Across Time, Across Generations: The Dierssens

by Eva Nielsen

Tove and Gunther Dierssen moved to White Bear Lake, Minnesota as young Danish immigrants in 1963. Seeking connection with other Danes, they and their daughters would make the drive into Minneapolis to attend the Danish Christmas service at St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Church, an institution founded by an earlier generation of Danish immigrants.

Today, the Dierssens still drive to Minneapolis to connect with Danes. Now, however, they have another place to gather: the Danish American Center.

Tucked in the trees beside the parkway that runs along the west side of the Mississippi River, the Danish American Center is an amalgamation of new and old. Or, put differently, it represents a new chapter in the evolving history of the Danish-American community in the Twin Cities. And, certainly, the Dierssen family is one Danish-American family that has played a role in this organization's past and present.

Tove Agerbeck and Gunther Dierssen came to the United States separately in the fifties – each with their own agenda.

When Gunther sailed for the U.S. in 1956, it was not the first time he had been outside Denmark. Gunther, in fact, was born in Hamburg, Germany. His family moved to Denmark when he was 4-years-old and lived in Charlottenlund, in northern Copenhagen. When he turned eighteen, Gunther was drafted into the German air force to fight in World War II. A German-born young man, living in German-occupied Denmark, Gunther had no choice but to go.

This was August of 1944. After training, Gunther says he went into combat as a "parachuter on foot" (the Germans were too short on gasoline at this point in the war to put many planes in the air). Gunther saw action in the Battle of the Bulge in December of 1944. He was wounded (shrapnel in the leg) and spent the remainder of the war in hospital; fighting in the European theater ended in May of 1945.



Tove Agerbeck, pictured here at age 21 in Denmark, came to the United States in 1959 for a year of travel. Tove's mother encouraged her to visit the United States, saying, "It's big and you can spread your wings there."

Yet, after the war Gunther was not free to return home to his family in Denmark because he was, technically speaking, a German, and now a veteran of the German air force. Gunther filed an application to return to his family in Denmark. While he waited, he kept himself busy in Flensburg, a town in northern Germany, teaching Danish classes, doing odd jobs, working at the Danish Health Organization and playing sports. Four years passed before he finally received permission to return home in 1949.

Back in Denmark, Gunther obtained his Danish citizenship. He also attended the Technical University of Denmark, earning a degree in chemical engineering. He was working in the laboratory at the Danish

Fermentation Industries, working on fermentation and also testing Danish aquavit. When General Electric representatives visited, looking to recruit fifty engineers to come to the United States, Gunther was selected. He chose to go, he said, because at his job then "it was very difficult to start something new. There was a tradition of doing the same things."

Gunther sailed on the Norwegian America Line, on the *Oslo Fjord*, from Copenhagen to New York in 1956 at a time when young men wore a tuxedo with a white carnation tucked in the buttonhole to special dinners on the ship. Through the program with General Electric, Gunther would spend several months in different locations



Gunther Dierssen pictured in Denmark before leaving for the United States. Gunther was working in the laboratory at the Danish Fermentation Industries when General Electric representatives arrived to recruit fifty engineers to work in the United States.

– Louisville, Kentucky; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Schenectady, New York; and, eventually, Cleveland, Ohio. This is where, in 1959, he met Tove Agerbeck.

“The first breath I took in the U.S.,” says Tove, “I met Gunther.”

Tove had set out for the United States for a year of travel. She, too, had left Denmark before, visiting among other places, England, Germany, France and Norway. “But since I was sixteen, I had really wanted to see the U.S.,” says Tove.

Tove’s mother encouraged her to go, saying, “It’s big and you

can spread your wings there.”

Tove sailed from Rotterdam to the St. Lawrence Seaway on Wasserman – a ship for young people with more reasonably priced fares (\$177.50 one-way). “There were big dining areas and singing for the 9-day voyage and it was a fun spirit because everyone was off to explore,” says Tove.

Tove traveled down through Montreal and Toronto and then to Cleveland, where some Danes had a house. There, she met Gunther just briefly before continuing on with her plans to travel to Washington, D.C., New York City, Baltimore and other cities to the east.

Tove came back through Cleveland on her way west and she and Gunther had a decision. “There was no time to waste. I had to either leave to go to Canada to live in Vancouver with a cousin, and Gunther and I would plan to meet somewhere in between, like Colorado. Or we could just get married.”

They got married. And, says Tove, “We have had a beautiful life.”

This was October of 1959. The couple had a big wedding in a Lutheran church in Cleveland Heights, surrounded by coworkers from General Electric and Danish friends, but, says Tove, “not too much family.”

When Christmas rolled around that year, says Tove, something became clear: “We were immigrants. We needed some children so we could walk around the tree at Christmas.” In 1961 the couple’s first daughter, Annette, was born and in 1962, their second daughter, Rikke, arrived. And Tove and Gunther decided to speak Danish at the dinner table so their children could learn their language.

Then an opportunity arose in the Twin Cities. In 1963 Gunther traveled up to Minnesota to interview for a position at 3M. When he returned, Tove asked, “What’s it like up there?”

Gunther replied, “It’s farms and towns and farms.”

“Goodness,” said Tove, “I’m from Copenhagen!”

But they did it. In 1963 they set off for another unknown place: White Bear Lake, Minnesota, a town that they were told had good schools. “And I loved it here,” says Tove. Tove and Gunther’s third and fourth daughters, Christina and Heidi, were born in Minnesota.

Rikke Dierssen-Morice,

Tove and Gunther’s second daughter, lives today with her husband and three sons in nearby Stillwater, Minnesota and practices law in Minneapolis. She says that growing up in White Bear Lake, she and her sisters were “absolutely different.”

“We didn’t speak English. We were Danish kids – living in White Bear Lake, Minnesota. My sister Annette and I, we did not have Wrangler jeans until we were 12-years-old. I ran races in clogs.”

Though White Bear Lake had good schools, it did not have Danes. And that’s what motivated the Dierssens to drive into Minneapolis, where they quickly became involved in the Danish-American community there.

At the time there were still many small Danish organizations around the Twin Cities – Danish Brotherhood and Sisterhood lodges, for example – that Gunther says, “weren’t necessarily doing much, so all of these banded together to form the Danish American Fellowship.”

The Danish American Fellowship was an organization that celebrated and furthered all things Danish. In 1966 the group acquired a house which had been a young people’s home for people coming from Denmark, but was no longer in use. Gunther says, “We needed to do something with the property. It was a real headache. So we sold it and then in 1970 bought a property on Cedar and 42nd Street in Minneapolis, which became the Danish American Fellowship Institute.”

Gunther served as president of the Danish American Fellowship for nine years and on the board for a total of twenty years. That was

– Continued on page 6

Dierssens

continued from page 5

a place, then, where the Dierssen girls spent a lot of time growing up, surrounded by Danes and Danish traditions. Tove taught Danish folk dancing there for over twenty years. There were Christmas celebrations, Danish lessons (which Gunther taught), Fastelavn activities, and the annual Danish Day celebration with Danish open-faced sandwiches.

"And who made the 3,000 sandwiches?" Tove asked.

"Someone called Tove and her Danish girlfriends," said Gunther.

(By the way, in addition to making numerous sandwiches and teaching folk dancing, Tove has also been part of other Danish endeavors: she has served on the board of the Rebild Uppermidwest Chapter and was an editor for *Den Danske Pioneer* in Chicago for fourteen years.)

Rikke says that going to the Danish American Fellowship was just a natural part of growing up. "It was a place where you'd go to be with your folks. You go and visit and it felt like home....In the United States, our extended family became our friends in the Danish community."



Rikke Dierssen-Morice speaking at the opening of the new addition to the Danish American Center in January of 2011. Rikke and her sisters grew up deeply connected to people in the Danish-American community in the Twin Cities. Rikke, now a lawyer, has fundraised and done legal work for the Danish American Center.



Gunther and Tove met in Cleveland, Ohio and married just months later in 1959. "The first breath I took in the U.S.," says Tove, "I met Gunther."

For her part, Rikke visited the Danish American Fellowship less often in the eighties and nineties. She lived in France during stretches of the eighties (where she met her husband-to-be, who was playing on the same professional soccer team, F.C. Nantes, as Rikke's cousin, Henrik Agerbeck), traveling often to visit friends and family in Denmark. And in the nineties there was law school at the University of Minnesota, a new career, parenting. She continued to visit the Danish American Fellowship from time to time – usually with her parents.

In 2002, though, events were unfolding in the Twin Cities Danish-American community that reconnected Rikke in a different capacity.

Danebo, another Minneapolis Danish-American organization that had been established by Danes in 1924 as a not-for-profit facility for the elderly, was in financial straits. Danebo simply couldn't offer the physical space, activities or services that would attract

elderly residents and keep the organization financially viable.

So the question before the Danebo board was what to do with the facility – with this Danish-American institution. The board of Danebo was split: one group wanted to turn the place over to an existing local health care organization that could provide elderly care. Another group wanted to hold on to the building for use by the Danes.

The Dierssens asked Rikke to come along to a meeting where the issue was to be discussed (she is a lawyer, after all). And Rikke was stunned by what she saw there. "A group on the board was operating in a very dictatorial style to control the direction of the proceedings and to take away this asset. I was shocked."

Ultimately litigation became necessary to resolve the dispute. When Rikke dug into the issue further she realized that the group who wanted the senior mission to continue – even if it meant letting the facility go – was represented



The building housing the Danish American Center was erected in 1924 as Danebo, a residential facility for elderly Danes. Today, as the Danish American Center, it is a home for Danish cultural activities.

by a sophisticated legal team experienced in representing clients in takeovers of financially vulnerable not-for-profits.

Rikke worked *pro bono* for the other group who wanted to preserve the Danish asset for a changed, cultural purpose. “We wanted to preserve the organization for the Danes,” says Rikke.

Here’s how they did it. The group met and planned and, says Rikke “the Danes came out, full force, with a well-planned response to vote out those board members [who wanted to give up the facility] and to turn the organization in a new direction.”

In 2005, then, Rikke worked successfully with the Minnesota Attorney General’s office to shift the mission of the organization – of Danebo – from a non-profit elderly home to a cultural center.

What was Danebo and what was the Danish American Fellowship, then, merged to form this new/old hybrid with a new name called the Danish American Center. Though it is no longer a residential facility for the elderly, it is very much

a home for Danes and Danish Americans.

They also have a new gathering space. The Danish American community raised money to make some modifications to the existing Danebo building to suit its new purpose. One of the additions is a light-filled new entryway/social space with tall glass windows called the atrium. (Rikke and Honorary Danish Consul Anelise Sawkins co-chaired a fundraising effort.)

So in an age when many ethnic and immigrant institutions are experiencing declining membership, lots of people are coming to this new/old center.

“I was there yesterday,” Gunther says.

“There are a lot of old people there,” says Tove and then she laughs, saying, “We are actually old people!” She pauses before muttering, “There are a few older.”

Whatever your age, there appears to be plenty to do at the Danish American Center. There are sangaftens, æbleskive breakfasts, papegøjeklubben (a group

for families and children).

There’s bridge club, Danish embroidery, watercolor classes, Rødspætte Klubben. The center also hosts reunions and groups; The National Danish Performance Team, for example, stayed there during the Twin Cities leg of their U.S. tour.

There is also a new influx of Danish immigrants coming into the Danish American Center. Many are young professionals who have come over to work in the Twin Cities community. They are scattered throughout the area and come in, seeking what Tove and Gunther were seeking years ago: some Danish company.

All these generations of Danes and Danish Americans have a chance to interact at the Danish American Center. Gunther points out that not all Danish immigrants are the same – each generation takes the Denmark he or she left and brings that Denmark to America. “We carry what was Danish when we left. Our backgrounds were different. The times were different. Each generation brought its own culture.”

Even the language has evolved. Tove says she and Gunther speak a Danish of fifty years ago – a more formal Danish. “Everything was more formal in those days,” says Gunther, “we shook hands and shook hands and shook hands.”

Tove says she even learned a new Danish word at the center the other day, “But,” she laughs, “I can’t remember it now!”

It has been forty-seven years since Gunther and Tove moved to White Bear Lake and began driving into south Minneapolis. Their daughters are grown. (We’ve heard about Rikke; Annette lives and teaches in White Bear Lake and is active at the center too; Christina is a journalist in Washington, D.C.; Heidi is a professor at the University of Connecticut.) And there are enough children, spouses and grandchildren now that they not only make one ring around the tree at Christmas, they make two.

Tove says, “We have had a wonderful life and are very humble and happy about that.”



ELIM ORPHANAGE, ELK HORN, Ia.

The exhibition will feature the Elim Children's Home in Elk Horn, which operated from 1890 to 1961, supported in large part by Danish Lutheran churches throughout the Midwest.

Coming Soon: ***Church Basements and Children's Homes: Danish-American Missions Here and Abroad***

A new exhibition, *Church Basements and Children's Homes*, will be open to museum visitors from April 16 to October 31, 2011. It will explore the variety of examples of church-based efforts within Danish-American communities to support children's homes, mission schools, health care, and other social services for vulnerable people within the United States and around the world.

A **traveling version** of the exhibition will be available to museums, libraries, churches, and other cultural institutions and groups. This traveling exhibition will take the form of five retractable banners that are freestanding on the floor. Each banner will be nearly three feet wide and seven feet tall and combine texts and images that communicate the core content of *Church Basements and Children's Homes*. In addition, the video component of the exhibition will be sent on a DVD that each venue can play for their audience.

The traveling exhibition will be available beginning April 2011 through 2013. For more information on renting this exhibition or other available displays, please contact Tova Brandt, curator of exhibitions, at 712-764-7001 or dkcur@metc.net.

Both the museum exhibition and traveling display are supported by a grant from Humanities Iowa and the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Danish-American Artist Series presents Grete Schioler

The Danish Immigrant Museum is pleased to exhibit the work of Grete Schioler, a textile artist in Dayton, Ohio. Her weavings, fabric collages and dyed silk are on view now through July 10, 2011.

Grete Schioler was born and raised in Denmark. She and her husband, an architect, immigrated to Ohio in the 1950s. Schioler studied textiles and fashion design in Denmark, but after settling in the United States began to study the craft of weaving. She has won several national awards and her work has been pictured in local, regional and national publications.

Grete Schioler also works as a textile conservator and does restoration work for museums and private collectors. Her expertise lies in the restoration of historic fabrics, with special attention in the field of tapestries, quilts, coverlets and vintage clothing.

She writes:

With growing up in Demark, in my early childhood I experienced fantastic sights such as the northern lights and I think that has influenced my sense of design and color.

Colors and their use in textiles have always been a part of me ever since I graduated with a degree in fine arts and textiles in Copenhagen, Denmark. For a long time, I experimented with natural dyes, but in the last many years I have become fascinated by the multitude of color variations possible with modern dyes on silk. Through weavings, textile constructions and dyeing silk, my goal is to bring to others the joy and fulfillment I experience when creating the work.

Besides numerous private and corporate commissions, Schioler's work has been accepted and shown at many exhibits and art galleries throughout America. She has taught weaving and fabric dyeing at universities, schools and to many individuals.

ABOVE: Tulips, tapestry weaving, 63 inches wide, 37 inches tall.



Viking "Runer" (Viking runes), weaving with natural wool, 35 inches wide, 37 inches tall.

Inspired by the runic alphabet of the Vikings, the first Europeans in North America, Grete Schioler wove her own history into this piece. The runic lettering along the top and bottom translates as "Ole and Grete Schioler came to the United States in 1951. Thank you America!"

The Collection Connection

By Angela Stanford, curator of collections

Since June of 2010, the museum's curatorial department has been cataloging and inventorying the textile collection – a collection that numbers around 2,000 pieces. Throughout this project, we have rediscovered some wonderful pieces, such as the tablecloth pictured here.

Sometimes, we find that artifacts have little or no provenance, information that makes it important to and useful for our collections. In other cases, we have a full history and are able to tell its story completely. The textile featured in this article is somewhere in between.

This tablecloth belonged to Maria Bertha Kiebel Amundsen of Racine, Wisconsin. Later, the tablecloth was passed down to Maria Bertha's daughter-in-law, Marion Jane Amundsen (née Thogersen). It later came into the possession of the donor who, in turn, gave it to the museum in 2006.

With its embroidered signatures and dates,

this tablecloth is similar to a signature quilt, a tradition that began in the 1840s. Signature quilts were often created by church groups and aid societies to be used as fundraisers for such things as missionary work or troop support. Others were created by families or friends as a sort of memorial. Typically, people signed the fabric and then someone stitched all of the names and organized the fabric pieces into a quilt. This tablecloth reflects that tradition.

Unfortunately, the purpose of this tablecloth is unknown. Specifically, we do not know the meaning behind the embroidered names, dates, and locations. The family of Marion Jane Amundsen believed the names to be relatives from Marion Jane's

paternal side (her father, Fred Thogersen, was a Danish immigrant), as well as Danish friends and sponsors in America.

The embroidered dates range from 1907 to 1938, with the exception of one name, written in pencil or faded pen, dated 1962. It seems most likely that the dates recorded on the tablecloth coincide with the individuals' signatures. For example, at least six signatures are dated June 12, 1907, though the locations associated with them are scattered across the country.

Also mysterious are the embroidered illustrations in each corner. There is a baby lying on the floor with a cup and bowl in front of him, a child riding a tricycle, a young boy sitting at a school desk, and an older boy hammering what appears to be a small wagon. At center is a profile of an older man. There are also two sets of flags – from the United States and from Denmark.

Of particular interest is the phrase "Received payment in full" which is stitched along one edge. This might indicate that this was from a pattern and more were made as a fundraiser.

Perhaps the mystery of the origin of this tablecloth will never be fully known, but it is a quality example of needlework and of the signature quilt tradition. If readers of this article have information that may help to fill in the gaps of the history of this tablecloth, please contact Curator of Collections/Registrar Angela Stanford at the museum (registrar@danishmuseum.org).



This tablecloth is similar to a signature quilt, a tradition that dates from the 1840s, where people sign the fabric and then the signatures are stitched.

The National Danish Performance Team Completes Successful American Tour

by *Tim Pallesen*

Nearly 70,000 spectators got a breathtaking look at Danish culture during the National Danish Performance Team's 2010 tour across America.

Denmark's best gymnasts – fourteen men and fourteen women ages eighteen to twenty-four – displayed extreme coordination, strength and balance in the show, "Connections," a combination of gymnastics, dance and acrobatics.

"It's like Cirque du Soleil," was how Margaret (Peg) Naylor, coordinator of athletics and physical education for Omaha Public Schools, described it.

The Danish Immigrant Museum helped to make the tour a reality. Museum board member Mia Hansen coordinated the team's tour in America. Museum staff managed tour finances and

media relations. Museum Scan|Design intern, Lisa Hansen, assisted with logistics. The museum also created a traveling exhibit about Danish gymnastics that was displayed at each tour venue.

Denmark's Queen Margrethe II is the team's protector, so it was only fitting that twenty-five Danish American organizations across America played a critical role in supporting the tour. Danish-American groups were among those who welcomed the twenty-eight gymnasts into their homes and sold tickets for their performances.

"It was a great joy for team members because they have met a lot of fantastic people," team general manager Johannes Bjerre said.

The National Danish Performance Team's tour was full of memorable moments in large cities and

small Danish-American communities.

The group kicked off their tour in Washington, D.C. on October 9, 2010 with a performance at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and a dinner hosted by the Danish ambassador at the Danish Embassy.

A flight from New York City to Omaha on October 17 brought the tour to the Midwest, where the staff of the Danish Immigrant Museum had prepared for performances, host families and school workshops in Elk Horn, Iowa and Omaha, Nebraska.

The Danish American Center in Minnesota organized host families for the gymnasts during their Minneapolis visit. Then families at the Danebod Folk School welcomed the team to Tyler, Minnesota. The gymnasts will always remember the Green Bay Packers tailgate party

hosted in their honor by the Danish Brotherhood Lodge in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Memorable experiences and support from Danish American groups continued out West. The Scandinavian Heritage Foundation sponsored the team for Thanksgiving week in Portland, Oregon. In Junction City, Oregon, organizers delayed the start of the show so the large crowd lined up in the rain to purchase tickets would be sure to see the entire performance. (A special thanks to Benedikte Ehlers Olesen, Danish Immigrant Museum board member, for her efforts in Oregon.) And in Arizona, the Danish Club of Tucson served up a delicious Christmas dinner.

Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles and Honolulu were also on the tour of twenty-seven cities in fifteen states.

The gymnasts also performed for children in schools across America as ambassadors for Denmark and advocates for healthy living. School workshops gave American children—from students in New York City schools to Native American children on an Arizona reservation—contact with the Danish athletes in a memorable cultural exchange.

The Danish Immigrant Museum's Board of Directors has expressed interest in coordinating another tour in two years. Talks with the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association (DGI) are already underway.



Gymnasts led workshops in schools across the U.S.

From the Development Director

During the past two years as The Danish Immigrant Museum's development director, I have been privileged to connect with countless Danish clubs and organizations coast-to-coast that gather regularly to celebrate Danish culture. We at the museum value our association with them.

The Danish Immigrant Museum also strives to enhance the activities of these groups by providing speakers, traveling exhibits and workshops that help explore our Danish heritage. We are not simply a facility in the Midwest that houses Danish artifacts: We preserve and promote Danish culture around the United States so that our children and grandchildren will learn and appreciate the roots from which they came.

For example, this February, at the request of the Danish Club of Phoenix, the museum arranged for Janet Crowle, daughter of Victor Borge, to speak to the Scandinavian Club of Sun City and to the Danish Club of Phoenix. It was a pleasure to work with John Larsen, Danish Consul of Arizona and New Mexico, to arrange these opportunities. Both events drew large crowds. The audiences thoroughly enjoyed Crowle's wonderful presentation about the life of her famous father. And we were also able to spread the word about the museum's mission.

Also in February, coinciding with The Danish Immigrant Museum's board meeting in Chandler, Arizona, we provided a genealogy workshop conducted by Michele McNabb of the museum's Family History and Genealogy Center. The local attendees raved about these workshops,

as others have in the past at other locations around the country.

At the February board meeting, the board of directors began finalizing a strategic plan, which has been developed over the past year. A significant part of the plan outlines further emphasis on outreach projects around the country. The plan also calls for building the endowment to provide sustaining support for the museum's long-term existence. It has become clear that there is great demand around the country for us to continue these outreach activities as part of our mission and purpose. But for us to continue this work, we greatly need your financial support.

Could you help us with this effort? Here are some possibilities:

- If you haven't already, please review your will to include the museum in your estate.
- If you have appreciation in portfolio values in recent months or have real estate holdings that are subject to capital gains, which you could donate as a tax-deductible contribution, please remember the museum.
- If you would like to investigate other gift vehicles, such as tax-free annuities, please contact us so that we may provide you the information.
- If your children or other relatives are not currently members of the museum, please give them a gift membership so that they may be exposed to the work that we are doing.
- I would also love the opportunity to tell you about the many opportunities we have for you to name features of the museum, the Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park, and our exhibits. You can create a loving Danish American legacy for yourself and your family in this way.

In the coming months we will continue providing traveling exhibits, speakers, and genealogy workshops around the country. Our work to promote our Danish culture and history will continue. We hope that you share our passion for this rich heritage and will continue to support your museum.

Mange Tak!
Bruce Bro, Development Director



New Additions to the Wall of Honor

October 5, 2010 – February 15, 2011

The Danish Immigrant Museum's Wall of Honor provides families and friends with a means of preserving the memory of or honoring those who emigrated from Denmark to America.

Over 4,500 immigrants are currently recognized

on the Wall. Their stories and the stories of their families contribute to the growing repository of family histories at the museum's Family History and Genealogy Center.

BERTEL PETER MORTENSEN (1919) - Cedar Falls, IA, Dale & Linda Chimenti, Ames, IA

THORA LUND FREDERIKSEN MORTENSEN (1919) - Cedar Falls, IA, Dale & Linda Chimenti, Ames, IA

EVELYN WALKER (1957) - Warren, MI, Charles & Carol Kevnick, Oxford, MI

Thank You Businesses and Organizations

These businesses and organizations have contributed annual memberships of at least \$100. We recognize their generosity and support in each newsletter during their membership.

A & A Framing (Annette Andersen), Kimballton, IA
Andersen Windows (Sarah Andersen), Bayport, MN
Answers (Rick Tighe), Atlantic, IA
Atlantic Friends of The Danish Immigrant Museum, Atlantic, IA
Audubon Family Chiropractic (Douglas & Nichole Olsen), Audubon, IA
Carroll Control Systems, Inc., Carroll, IA
Cedar Valley Danes, Cedar Falls, IA
Danish American Athletic Club, Roselle, IL
Danish American Club in Orange County, Huntington Beach, CA
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #1, Omaha, NE
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #14, Kenosha, WI
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #15, Des Moines, IA
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #35, Homewood, IL
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #56, Overland Park, KS
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #75, Albert Lea, MN
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #84, Lincoln, NE
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #126, West Toluca Lake, CA
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #144, Dike, IA
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #211, St. Paul, NE
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #219, Webster City, IA
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #268, Junction City, OR
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #283, Dagmar, MT
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #341, Elk Horn, IA
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #348, Eugene, OR
Danish Club of Tucson, Tucson, AZ
Danish Mutual Insurance Association, Elk Horn, IA
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #176, Aplington, IA
Danish Vennelyst Park, Omaha, NE
Den Danske Klub, Washington, MO
Den Danske Pioneer, Hoffman Estates, IL
Des Moines-Winterset-Atlantic Memorials, Des Moines, IA

Elk Horn Pharmacy (Tim & Mary Waymire), Elk Horn, IA
Elk Horn-Kimballton Community School District, Elk Horn, IA
Elk Horn-Kimballton Optimist Club, Elk Horn, IA
Faith, Family, Freedom Foundation (Kenneth & Marlene Larsen), Calistoga, CA
Hall Hudson, P.C., Attorneys at Law (Robert Hall), Harlan, IA
Harboe Architects, PC (Thomas "Gunny" Harboe), Chicago, IL
Harlan Newspapers (Steve Mores & Alan Mores), Harlan, IA
Heartland District of the DBIA, Ventura, IA
Henningsen Construction, Inc., Atlantic, IA
House of Denmark, San Diego, CA
Jensen World Travel, Ltd. (Tor & Jeanette Jensen), Wilmette, IL
King of Kings Fishing Guide Service & Lodge (Richard & Bonnie Andersen), Anchor Point, AK
Knudsen Old Timers of The Danish Lutheran Church, Yorba Linda, CA
Leman USA, Sturtevant, WI
Liberty Labs, Inc., Kimballton, IA
Los Angeles Naver Club, Monrovia, CA
Marge's Hair Hut (Kent & Marge Ingerslev), Elk Horn, IA
Marne & Elk Horn Telephone Co., Elk Horn, IA
NE Gen Comm Danish Brotherhood, Omaha, NE
Nelsen & Nelsen, Attorneys at Law, Cozad NE
O & H Danish Bakery (Eric Olesen), Racine, WI
Olsen, Muhlbauer & Co., L.L.P., Carroll, IA
Outlook Study Club, Elk Horn, IA
Pacific NW District Lodges D.B., Eugene, OR
Proongily (Cynthia McKeen), St. Paul, MN
Rebild National Park Society, Southern California Chapter, Glendale, CA
Red River Danes, Fargo, ND
Ringsted Danish American Fellowship, Ringsted, IA
Shelby County State Bank, Elk Horn, IA
Symra Literary Society, Decorah, IA
The Danish American Archive and Library, Blair, NE
The Danish Inn, Elk Horn, IA
The Rasmussen Group, Inc., Des Moines, IA

In Honor October 6, 2010 – February 15, 2011

Through various funds, gifts have been received in honor of people or special events.

Virgil & Joyce Christensen's 60th anniversary

Class of 1958, Elk Horn, Iowa

Doris Duff's 80th birthday

Shirley Esbeck

Jan & Larry Fajen

Alvina Hjortsvang - her generous spirit, her wealth of knowledge, her love of learning, her joy of living, and her enrichment of many lives.

The Edward Jensen Family, Jens Jensen's great grandson's family

Rev. Sara Jensen

Delores Jespersen

Dody Johnson - our mother and favorite Dane!

Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Layton

Rudolph & Florence Madsen

John Mark Nielsen's 60th Birthday

Dr. John W. and Elizabeth Nielsen

Folmer & Vera Nyby

Astrid Hope Roge, our new granddaughter born December 1, 2010

Harriet Spanel, retired Washington State Senator

Hal Strandskov

Memorials October 6, 2010 – February 15, 2011

Memorials have been received in loving memory of the following individuals:

A. M. Andersen
 Louisa M. Andersen (Bloomdall)
 Thomas C. Anderson
 Flemming Andresen
 Eli Bager
 Nels Block, Jr.
 Arnold N. Bodtker
 Thomas & Ellen Brown
 Herluf Christensen
 Gertrude Christiansen
 Chris & Dagmar Clausen
 Ray Esbeck
 Hans & Mathilde Farstrup
 Esther Freund
 Alan Carsten Fugl
 my Great Grandparents
 Solveig Gregory
 Westi Hansen
 Kate Rasmussen Hafke
 Allan Hansen
 Charles R. Hansen
 Clifford K. & A. Veola Hansen
 Ida Petersen Hansen
 Jane Hansen
 Otto & Meta Hansen
 Leon Hoegh
 Anna E. Holland
 Helene Ronholt Hoiriis
 Professor Niels Ingwersen
 Jay Eric Jaeger
 Evelyn Jensen
 Henry M. Jensen

Jagn Jensen
 Johanne "Irene" Jensen
 Peter C. and Clara M. Jensen
 'Dad'-Julius J.
 Jespersen-1896-1974;
 immigrated 1914
 Oscar Johnson
 Niels W. & Ingrid H. Jorgensen
 Donald L. Knudsen
 Eugene Koch
 Jim Lange
 Olga Petersen Lange
 Clara Petersen Larsen, my
 mother
 Lars & Marie Larsen
 Carl Laursen
 Dorothea Laursen
 Esther R. Laursen, my wife of 68
 years
 Bent Lernø
 Richard L. Mandery
 Darrell Mardesen
 Ernest & Bertha Mathisen
 Milton Miller
 Karen Hoiriis Mower
 Thorvald & Mette Muller
 Karen Lynn Jensen Nelson
 Carol Mannering Nielsen
 Jens J. and Ellen L. Nielsen
 Niels Nielsen
 Ras C. Nielsen & Esta N.
 (Feltner) Nielsen
 Tom Nielsen
 Eric & Joan Norgaard
 George Norman
 William H. Paulsen

Selma Faaborg Payne
 Dr. & Mrs. A.M. Pedersen
 David Pedersen
 Henry J. Pedersen
 LeRoy Pedersen
 Niels M. Pedersen
 Peder K. & Olga Pedersen
 Herbert & Mabel Petersen
 James F. & Joanie Petersen
 Richard Peterson
 Delbert Rasmussen
 Ruth Rasmussen
 Andrew & Rosa Rosenkild
 Jens & Olga Sahl
 Ray Schoening
 Karen Marie Agneta Andersen
 Silver
 Corrine Smith
 Poul V. Steffensen
 Ray & Joyce Petersen Strong
 Erik Struckman, Jr.
 Neva Thede
 Arthur Thompson, my husband
 Lorne Bjorn Thordahl
 Jack J. Unkenholz, our grandson
 Manuella Werner Wendel
 Chris Werner
 Godfrey Werner
 Niels Werner
 Nina Werner
 Knud Westergaard, my father
 Lucia Elizabeth Bjornsen
 Westergaard, my mother
 Paul A. Wickland
 Gene & Doris Lindstrom Wolfe

New Members October 6, 2010 – February 15, 2011

The Danish Immigrant Museum is pleased to identify the following individuals as its newest members. Museum membership is achieved in various ways—through gifts, complimentary or annual gifting. We do appreciate your support.

Ernie & Marilyn Abariotes, Blair, NE
 Keith Andersen, Gaylord, MN
 Sam Andersen, Liberty, MO
 Paul & Lynne Anderson, Omaha, NE
 Virgil & LaVaille Anderson, Wallingford, IA
 Thomas & Maria Annis, Clive, IA
 Dennis Barten, Saint Louis, MO
 Arthur & Betty Beckman, Omaha, NE
 David & Cheryl Blair, Bellingham, WA
 Phyllis Boe, Omaha, NE
 Ole Bondesen, Jyllinge, Denmark
 Judith Brehm, Blair, NE
 Ryan & Susan Brown, Gastonia, NC
 Rikke Christensen, Studio City, CA
 Eugene & Shirley Christiansen, Apache Junction, AZ
 Barbara Bro Colbert, Oakton, VA
 Anita Cooper, Houston, TX

Garry & Carol Cupples, New Portland, ME
 Karen DeGraaff, Brownsburg, IN
 Phyllis Dina, Niles, IL
 Lois Eagleton, Umpqua, OR
 Sara Gaarde, Mount Vernon, IA
 Jerry & Joyce Gilbert, Eugene, OR
 Steve & Ann Godwin, Medford, OR
 Robert Hall, Harlan, IA
 Judy Hecker, Dublin, OH
 Judith Hestoft, Milwaukee, WI
 Sue Heyne, Atlantic, IA
 Lynda Jeppesen & Ruth Jeppesen, Oak Park, IL
 Ardell Johnson, Watertown, SD
 Darlene Johnson, Monument, CO
 Charles & Carol Kevnick, Oxford, MI
 Leroy & Joan Kiertzner, El Monte, CA
 Patrick & Sherry Kilgore, Lebanon, PA
 Sonja Kromann, Everett, WA
 Dana Larsen, Tucson, AZ
 Darrell & Victoria Madsen, Shenandoah, IA
 Mary Jane Mardesen, Rushmore, MN
 Margot McDonnell, Phoenix, AZ
 Eugene & Susie Meyer, Blair, NE
 Robin Mower, Durham, NH
 Neal & Lois Nelson, Albuquerque, NM

Andrew & Kathryn Nielsen, Greeley, CO
 Eric & Lisa Olesen, Racine, WI
 Timothy Pallesen, Blair, NE
 Connie Papineau, Pleasanton, NE
 Mark & Dana Paulsen, Exira, IA
 Derek & Maren Peck, Ankeny, IA
 Richard & Janet Pedersen, Eagle Grove, IA
 Robert Petersen, Hollister, CA
 Joanne Peterson, Lauderdale, MN
 Dick Vos & Linda Riddle, Duluth, MN
 John Riddle, Colfax, IA
 Joyce Ford & Jim Riddle, Winona, MN
 Tom & Barbara Jensen Roberts, Eugene, OR
 Anders Sand, Kansas City, MO
 Dennis & Jeanne Schwab, Audubon, IA
 Martinus Sorensen, Lombard, IL
 David & Cathy Sorenson, Truman, MN
 Kenneth & Cathleen Stofen, Racine, WI
 Larry Syndergaard, Kalamazoo, MI
 Karin Thomsen Valliere, Kirkland, WA
 Carolyn Thomson, Lawrence, KS
 Karen Tinkham, Litchfield Park, AZ
 Carol Weckmuller, Blair, NE
 Eugene Wright, Stillwater, MN

Museum Wish List

If you would like to donate or contribute toward the purchase of one or more of the following needed items, please contact Terri Johnson at info@danishmuseum.org or at 712-764-7001.

FAMILY HISTORY & GENEALOGY CENTER

English-language:

- *Hitler's Savage Canary: A History of the Danish Resistance in World War II*, by David Lampe. (\$17 on amazon.com)
- *78 RPM: The Record of a Family*, by Flemming Behrend (\$15.50)
- *Historical Dictionary of Denmark*, by Alastair H. Thomas (Scarecrow Press, 2009; \$90 on amazon.com)
- *Alice Nielsen and the Gayety of Nations*, by Dall Wilson. (2006; \$49.95 from the author). Biography of a noted 19th-century Danish-American opera singer.
- *Dressed for the Photographer: Ordinary Americans and Fashion, 1840-1900* (\$48 on amazon.com)
- *Mastering the Mission: A Brief History of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Frederiksted, St. Croix, U. S. Virgin Islands*, by Elizabeth Rezende (CRIC Productions, 1990). Out of print.
- *St. Croix (Historic Photos, Historiske Fotos)*, by Elizabeth Rezende (Danish West Indian Society; \$15 on amazon.com; DKK 200 from DWIS)
- Dana College yearbooks: anything before 1927, 1928-1930, 1932-1944, 1946-1954, 1957-1963, 1968 to 2010
- Grand View College yearbooks: anything before 1920, 1928-1929, 1933, 1935, 1940, 1944, 1947, 1950, 1953, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1972, 1977 to the present

Danish-language:

- *Jorden rundt efter guld; mine rejser og oplevelser some guldgraver*, by Robert Andersen (København, Gyldendal, 1938) – out of print.
- *I centrum ved grænsen - portræt af Sønderborg Kommune* (In the Middle at the Border – A Portrait of Sønderborg Municipality), by Peter Dragsbo. (2006; available from Historisk Samfund for Als og Sundeved).
- *Danske børnehjem i billeder og tekst* (Danish Orphanages in Picture and Text, by various authors, 1900).
- *Find din slægt -- og gør den levende*, by Jytte Skaaning og Bente Klercke Rasmussen.
- *Ordbog for slægtsforskere*, by Heini Madsen. 2nd ed.
- *Dansk adelsleksikon* (Encyclopedia of Danish Nobility). There are numerous editions of this title and accompanying volumes available from online antiquarian book dealers for a wide range of prices. We would like to obtain at least one set.

COLLECTIONS

HOBO U10-003 Temperature-Relative Humidity Data Logger

Data loggers will allow the Museum to efficiently and accurately monitor the temperature and humidity levels in our exhibition and artifact storage spaces at both the Museum and at the Family History and Genealogy Center. To best cover all spaces, we request 20 data loggers and two shuttles and two cables (one of each for both buildings).

HOBO Data Logger: \$75 each for orders of 10+
Total: \$1500
Required Accessories:.. \$35 for software
\$260 each for shuttle to download data
\$15 for extra batteries
\$10 each for cables to connect
data logger to shuttle
Total: \$580
Total Cost for Full Set: .. \$2080

Filing Cabinet

As our collections expand, so do our needs for additional filing cabinets to house all artifact records. We request one in the "putty" color to match existing cabinets.

HON H320 Series 4-Drawer Filing Cabinet: \$259.99, plus shipping

EXHIBITIONS

Good quality hand tools, including:

- Cordless drill with batteries and charger, \$250
- Drill bits and accessories, \$50
- Laser level, \$100
- Vice-grips, Needle-nose pliers, Wire cutters, Utility blades, \$100
- Paint brushes, rollers, drop cloths, \$100
- Self-healing cutting mat at least 18"x24", \$30

FACILITIES AND GROUNDS

Good-quality picnic benches, \$500 each

ADMINISTRATION

LCD Projector, \$500
6-6' long banquet tables, \$75/each



Stamtræ – *Danish Roots, American Branches* News from the Museum's Family History & Genealogy Center

By Michele McNabb, librarian

genealogy@danishmuseum.org; librarian@danishmuseum.org

Activities and News

- Thanks to Fritz Hansen, whose generous donation funded the purchase of a reference work on land records and documents west of the Mississippi River.
- Thanks also to Bob Olsen of Houston, Texas who did some additional research on Chicago's "Danevirke" Hotel mentioned in the last *America Letter*. He found that Hotel Dannevirke was located at 15 Milwaukee Avenue in Chicago; Christian Hansen was still proprietor in 1876, so the hotel survived the Great Fire of 1871. E. Hansen was the hotel owner in 1892, and the building was mentioned in the early twentieth century as one of the oldest in Chicago. Milwaukee Avenue runs as a diagonal from the intersection of Lake Street and N. Canal Street just west of Wacker Drive near the Chicago River.
- Do you like our "Danish Roots, American Branches" logo? If so, canvas bags and t-shirts with the design are available either through the Museum Shop, the FHGC or the website.
- Upcoming workshops on Danish Genealogy will be held in conjunction with the museum board of directors meeting in Denver, Colorado, in June 2011 and in Yorba Linda, California, in late September. Workshop information and registration forms may be found on the Workshops & Talks drop-down menu of the Library & Genealogy section of the museum webpage.



Of Genealogical Interest

www.arkivalieronline.dk has now dropped its user name/password requirement. On this website may be found digital images of Danish church registers and most extant censuses through 1925. Note: censuses from the duchy of Slesvig are not included.

<http://mydanishroots.com> is a basic website with information, explanations of common topics and links to various articles and webpages dealing with Danish genealogical research.

A number of changes and refinements have been made to the Danish census transcriptions found at <http://ddd.dda.dk>. Please read instructions carefully to ensure a productive search.

DIS-Forum, the Danish query page, has moved to a new address. A guide for registering on the site and

placing English-language queries may be found at <http://www.slaegtogdata.dk/andet/forum-help-english>.

The Iowa Heritage Digital Collections at <http://iowaheritage.org> contains interesting photographic collections submitted by various museums and historical societies around the state.

Pre-1935 Iowa state-level death records (those not found at the county level) are being uploaded by the State Historical Society of Iowa as part of a new state project. Check www.iowahistory.org/archives/holdings/index.html for holdings.

If you need maps and statistics to illustrate your family history or a presentation, two good sources are the American Fact Finder and the Map Gallery of Ethnic Groups, both accessible through the Census Bureau website (www.census.gov).

www.familysearch.org has incorporated its Beta test site into its basic search page, allowing access to many digital images from its collection.

A German-English-German dictionary may be found at www.germandictionary.org.

For Michigan research, try <http://seekingmichigan.org> or www.obitmichigan.com.



Some Truly Heady Stuff!

This year's TivoliFest and summer photo exhibit at the FHGC will take a look at what our Danish immigrant ancestors wore on their heads. We are looking for photographs of immigrants wearing bonnets, hats, caps, wreaths, babushkas, fanciful feathered creations, and everything in between. Prizes will be awarded in several categories, based on voting during TivoliFest. To enter your ancestor's headwear in the exhibit, contact the FHGC at genealogy@danishmuseum.org for an entry form. The deadline for submissions is May 1.



Volunteer Spotlight: Andy Kissel

If you were to visit the Family History & Genealogy Center on any Tuesday morning over the past dozen years, chances are you would find one computer station occupied by a quiet white-haired gentleman—sometimes bearded, sometimes not—and his (lidded) coffee cup.

A volunteer since the creation of the FHGC back in the days when it was housed in the front part of the mezzanine in the main museum building, Andy Kissel has steadily tapped his way through tens of thousands of names of deceased Danish immigrants and Danish-Americans. And to think that he doesn't have a Danish bone in his body!

Born in Minneapolis to a Czech immigrant and a purely Irish mother, Andy moved in early childhood to Omaha, Nebraska, where he attended high school

and occasionally babysat a little girl down the street named Fern Paulsen (whom, he swears, he first saw when her mother pulled out a dresser drawer to show her off). After spending a couple of years on a dairy farm in upstate New York, Andy joined the Navy in 1955 and spent four years as an aviation machinist. This was followed by a similar stint in the Army, marriage, four children, and an additional fourteen years in the Navy.

After retiring from the service in 1977 Andy found himself in Alabama and attracted to law enforcement work. After attending the police academy he spent most of the next eighteen years as a corrections officer.

Somewhere along the line he re-established his connection with Fern Paulsen and convinced her that she needed a full-time sitter. They were married in 1985 and moved to the Elk Horn



Andy Kissel and his trusty coffee mug may be found at the FHGC on Tuesday mornings.

area following his second retirement. Fern started working at the museum as registrar and Andy began doing odd jobs around the museum. Then he ran into Margaret Christensen and Mae Petersen, two of the volunteers who had taken on the task of creating a genealogy department at the museum. He attended an orientation session for prospective FHGC volunteers, and once it was discovered that he knew how to turn on a computer, he was encouraged to become a volunteer.

Over the years, Andy has created useful in-house databases, including every-name listings of the 1885 and 1895 state censuses for Audubon and Shelby counties. Currently he is our main obituary indexer, which ensures him job security. Andy says that he has worked for and with interesting people and that he likes the FHGC because of all the "girls" there. We think it's because, hidden in his Irish lineage, there probably lurks a Danish Viking or two!



Stamtræ

North Jutlander in the USA with 100 direct descendants

One of the materials shared with Michele McNabb by participants in the Danish workshops held last autumn was the following clipping from the *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, dated September 12, 1949.

A north Jutlander who has resided in the state of Iowa in the U.S. for the past sixty-eight years recently turned ninety-two and, that same day, had the experience of becoming a great-great grandfather to descendant number 100. The north Jutlander is farmer C. M. Nielsen, who was born at Lillefælden in Ørsø in Dronninglund municipality and is the brother of 81-year-old Mathilde Pedersen, Thistedvej 24,

Nørresundby.

C. M. Nielsen, who presumably is the oldest living Dane in the U.S., had the news of his descendant number 100 broadcast over six American radio stations. Nielsen now has twelve children, forty-five grandchildren, thirty-eight great-grandchildren and five great-great grandchildren.

As a youth Nielsen learned tailoring from his father in Ørsø, but got the itch to emigrate and left for America

at the age of 24. He has not been back to Denmark in sixty-eight years, but his letters home, which he still writes in Danish, bear witness to his longing for his fatherland.

[**Christen Martinus Nielsen**, born on February 19, 1857, was married on April 24, 1881 in Iowa to **Ane Cathrine Andersen**, born on March 7, 1859. Both were natives of Dronninglund parish in Aalborg County. The FHGC would like more information on this couple and their family.]



Are You a Danish Immigrant or Long-term Resident?

Many Danes have immigrated to the U.S. since WWII, have been exchange students, or resided in this country for several decades. We would like to have some information in our library on more recent immigrants or long-term residents from Denmark. If this is you or someone you know, please fill out an Immigrant Information Form or copy and distribute it

at meetings of your local Danish-American organization. Forms may be downloaded from the "Library & Genealogy" section of our webpage or contact Michele at librarian@danishmuseum.org for copies.



The Scandinavian Typographical Union was formed in Chicago on April 25, 1883, with thirty-six members. A number of them appear to have been Danish, notably vice-president J. A. Nyberg and recording secretary Olaf A. Rasmussen. Other Danish members may have been A. Johansen, C. J. Christiansen, J. Hansen, and A. A. Andersen. By 1885 membership stood at forty-nine.

source: A. T. Andreas, *A History of Chicago*, vol. 3 (1886). Thanks to Bob Olsen for this information!

Have a Danish Civil War veteran in your family tree?

Danish immigrants served on both sides of the American Civil War. We would like to try to compile as complete a listing as possible of those who served. If you have a CW vet among your ancestors, please share his story with us. Copies of photographs and other documents desired as well. Two websites devoted to Danes who served in the Civil War:

www.factasy.com/civil_war/2008/03/06/index_danes_soldiers_csa

www.kalmus.dk/civilwar/westzealanders1.htm

When Ringsted Got Its Name

Ringsted, Iowa, is just one of numerous small Midwestern towns that were settled by Danish immigrants. Several accounts have been related of how the town got its name. This one appeared in Pastor E. M. Favrholt's En vagabonds dagbog: fortællinger og genfortællinger (A Vagabond's Diary: Stories New and Old), published in Copenhagen in 1934 and recently translated for Eva Wernegreen Miller, who has graciously permitted this chapter to be published in the America Letter.

It was not a big group of Danes that had found their way to Forsythe, Iowa, when the settlement was formed in 1896, but there must have been about three-dozen people. Forsythe is located in Emmet County near the Minnesota border. And although the chimneys were far apart the landscape seemed like home to the Scandinavians. There were Danes, Norwegians and Swedes around.

Forsythe was a very small colony; it was almost what one could call a small dip in the landscape and that was exactly what it was. And that was the good part. There was a hollow in the earth, a moor-like, particularly fertile stretch in the middle of the vast wild prairie. A few trees and some meadow grass were growing there so it was not difficult for the pioneers to get started. Even if they could not afford to buy a horse and plow to break the soil the first year there was always something to eat and drink for the livestock.

There was also going to be a railroad. The wealthy Bertel Knudsen had heard the news in Chicago, so there was no doubt about it. Chicago-Northwestern Railroad, which was already going to Burd, Iowa, was in 1897 going to extend to Fox Lake, Minnesota. The railroad company had purchased fifteen acres of land every seven miles along the line for the construction of train

stations and towns with space for people to build homes.

At each location the railroad company was going to subdivide these fifteen acres into building lots fifty feet long and one hundred feet wide, and the first ten building lots that were claimed would be given away free, *gratis*, for nothing! The lot owners were required to be settled before the expiration of a certain period of time and at least before the first train came down the track; otherwise, they would not be considered to be the owners of the lots.

Furthermore, the first man or woman or family who settled in such a settlement would be permitted to name the station and the town!

This announcement passed from the dairy and the general store to all the settlers in Forsythe. In such a small settlement everyone knows what is happening or ought to be happening at their neighbors', and in those days everyone in the settlement was sharing good fortune and bad. There were a dozen sod houses in Forsythe, but only four wooden houses. One of those was owned by Bertel Knudsen, another one was owned by the dairyman, the third by the blacksmith, and the fourth by the shoemaker, Kresten Madsen from Salten in Jutland.

But pay attention to the shoemaker!

Yes, he was actually just an ordinary shoemaker. He earned his living as he had done at home in Salten through steady work, partly with hammer and peg, and partly with any odd jobs that would provide food for the eight mouths in the family. He repaired harnesses, and did some tailoring, and dabbled a little in veterinary work and was well liked for his indefatigable good humor.

"I brought that from home," he said. "And I and Maren have the most beautiful home in all of Forsythe."

Maren came from Ringsted on Zealand. With the exception of the blacksmith, who came from Sneglebjerg in Odsherred, she was the only one in the settlement who came from Zealand. She was a good and happy woman; one who knew how to adjust to new conditions as well as any Jutlander. And that means much to an emigrant.

It was very noisy in the small shoemaker's house since they had six children. But in spite of poverty and strange surroundings there were no complaints heard from the parents. The reason was that Kresten and Maren were grateful.

The shoemaker was out of breath when he came home.

"Listen to this, Maren! When the new railroad comes, we will be able to get a free lot on which we can build a house

near the station! And if I am the first to move there then I can name the town. Do you know what it is going to be called? What do you think it is going to be called, Maren?"

"It is going to be called Ringsted," said Maren.

"Oh, Maren!" said Kresten. "I would like for it to be called Salten – you know that it is my hometown, and I thought that in that way I would kind of be helping to build America in a way."

"Yes, but then how about me?" said Karen. "I came from Ringsted. And Ringsted is a town better known in Denmark than Salten. It was in the vicinity of Ringsted that Knud Lavard killed a man! And if I had not come over from Ringsted where would you be now? Then you would have been a bachelor and walking around begging for your food in town during these difficult times just like the other hoboos. Do you remember what we saw in Chicago last year? But now we are independent and have six children.... They also originate from Ringsted in a way, don't they? But let us not argue any more about that! Take off your coat – we are having *medisterpølse* (pork sausage) tonight – how do you like that?"

Medisterpølse was his favorite food. And Maren was right in what she had said.

– Continued on page 20

Ringsted

continued from page 19

She was a very wise woman and quick at repartee and handy. But Kresten thought she was wrong about Knud Lavard for that had happened long ago. . . The sausage smelled good! Why were they going to have *medisterpølse* tonight? Oh yes, it was Martinmas-eve – he had forgotten all about that! Maren had remembered. She told him that she had promised to sew two sets of curtains for the Lars Povlsen's for the sausage. She had heard that they had butchered and had quickly and discreetly made a trade – yes, Maren was wonderful.

But Kresten did not like to give in without a fight; it should be handled in a manner which was consistent with his honor as man of the house. He would be kind. Maren deserved that.

There was a festive mood in the little home. The children reveled in the sausage, and for some time they carried on the conversation. Then Kresten cleared his throat:

"Ahem! Hm!"

"Quiet, children! Your father wants to say something!" said Maren.

Kresten wiped the grease from the corner of his mouth with the back of his hand.

"I have thought some more about the name for the town," said Kresten. "How would you like it if we called it 'Salten Ringsted,' Maren?"

"No, Kresten, that does not sound very good," said Maren. She had a smile ready, but did not wish to show it. She knew she had won the battle.

"Oh well," said Kresten. "How would be if we let the children vote? We are living in a democratic country, after all! Look here little ones, you know that your father came from Salten and your mother from Ringsted. . . . If they were to build a new Danish town nearby what should it be named, Salten or Ringsted?"

"Do you want some more sausage, children?" said Maren and looked around the table.

"Yes! Hurrah! Thanks, Mother! The town shall be named Ringsted; that is where Mother came from!" the little ones shouted.

"Well, then I must give up," said Kresten.

The timing and circumstances had been in Maren's favor.

No more was said about it the rest of the evening, not until Kresten and Maren were about to go to sleep. Then Kresten said:

"How do you know that we will be the first to settle near the station? It could happen that there were others here in Forsythe who want to move there! And we only have one Helmut (an old skinny horse) to move us!"

"No matter," said Maren. "I will think of something."

The winter passed and spring came. Meanwhile, there had naturally been additional reports about the railroad and at various get-togethers in the settlement they had repeatedly discussed the significance it would have for the inhabitants of Forsythe. It turned out that there would be two stations nearby to choose from. One would be located five or six miles straight north of Forsythe (the later Fenton), the other one seven miles northeast of Forsythe. In Dannevirke, Nebraska, they had heard, there had been agreement about the name, because the first pioneers there had been veterans from the War of 1848, and in Halfa, Iowa, where only Irish people had settled, they had made the peaceful agreement that the one who was able to whip everyone else – one at a time! – would be permitted to name the town. But how about here?

It soon became known that only the blacksmith and the shoemaker were planning on moving to the station town right away. On a certain day the building lots would be made available for settlement.

The first one who had put up a house on his lot and reported to the station-master that he was "completely settled" could then at once name the town. To be "completely settled" meant having put up a house and eaten a meal there, so that he was legally settled there.

In Denmark one would not consider moving a residence several miles; but in America this is not unusual. But then they are not brick houses. Both the blacksmith and the shoemaker had lived long enough in the States to consider this a natural move. It just depended on the preparations; everyone knows that the preparations are the worst part.

Lars Jensen made big preparations. He had a very roomy house with several rooms. He borrowed or rented sixteen horses and eight wagons. The wagons were arranged in two groups with four in each, and in between the inner rows of wagons were fastened heavy iron chains and the wagons were connected with big wooden poles, bridge lumber from Minnesota. Both the chains and the poles were obtained from the railroad company, which also provided jacks to elevate the house.

The day before all the people in Forsythe were up to help getting the blacksmith's house arranged on the wagons. Shoemaker Madsen was also there. He used all of his strength and was in a good mood. The blacksmith told him that the new town was to be named Sneglebjerg. That was the parish from which he had come; but the shoemaker answered boldly that that was not going to be, for he had decided on a different name.

"But you only have one horse! You cannot move a four-room house with one horse!" said the blacksmith. "You are bluffing, Chris."

"That is what you say," answered the shoemaker.

The big day arrived. There was sun over the prairie. About 10 o'clock in the morning Lars Jensen was ready to start. The shoemaker wished him good luck on the trip.

"Take care of yourself!" he said.

It was really quite a job for the blacksmith. He almost felt like a king sitting in the house, which swayed quite a bit in spite of the chains and the poles, drinking coffee with his wife. The drivers had to move the horses at a good trot the first piece of the way until they got out of the wet lowland, otherwise, the wagon would sink in. After that they crossed the wild prairie. There were no roads anywhere.

But after driving for a couple of hours they got to Jens Andersen's farm, which was situated almost halfway to the station.

"Stop here!" said the blacksmith. "The horses are all in a lather! And the rest of us need a drink of beer. We will visit Jens Andersen. We have plenty of time."

Jens Andersen had both beer and snaps, and he was glad to have visitors. So the blacksmith and his party took their time. They sat on the veranda out of the hot sun.

While they sat and toasted they talked about the hard times and the hopes connected to the expansion of the railroad to Minnesota. All

in all they were in agreement, but they contradicted each other now and then in order that the conversation should not get stalled. But the talk was starting to ebb out. One gets drowsy on the prairie just sitting around about noon when it is hot.

But all of a sudden Jens Andersen sat up with a jerk.

"What in the world kind of a load is coming there?"

Down in the valley, quite a distance away, came a one-horse carriage. It was the shoemaker Kresten Madsen and his wife. The conveyance was a buckboard - a four-wheel vehicle with a long, springy board in the middle. In the front sat Kresten and Maren on a small box. In the back lay a small house with its door upward. There was a heart carved in the door.

Was the shoemaker moving after all? Why had he started so far behind? It was not worth wasting his time on such a small house!

"Hey, shoemaker! Take some time off and come and have a drink!" cried Jens Andersen.

"I really do not have time for that," answered the shoemaker. But then he added, "I will stop by on my way back."

He cracked the whip and old Helmut changed from a walk to a trot.

Jens Andersen shook his head. "I wonder what he will do with that house. That is one of those in which one does what he has to and not what one wants to do. Has he sold it to the station master?"

But the blacksmith and his people just laughed. "That

shoemaker has many funny ideas," they said.

A little over an hour later Kresten Madsen arrived in the "station town." He looked about, and got a happy and thankful feeling in his breast. There were no trees, buildings or people to be seen - nothing but the station building, a shed not much bigger than the one he had on the wagon.

"If you hurry up, Maren, then we had better eat the pancakes now as soon as they are ready, so we can truly say that we have had a meal!"

They helped each other unloading the house and set it up. Inside it they placed a couple of boards across the two holes and covered them with a newspaper -- and also a tablecloth! Kresten then lit the kerosene stove, and from the small box on which they had been sitting during the trip, Maren removed a pail with pancake batter.

"I will go and get the station master! Maybe he will have a bite too!" said Kresten and walked off.

Fifteen minutes later the dinner was ready. The kerosene stove was moved outside, and the pancakes were served inside.

The railroad man was a German-American. He laughed when he saw the little house and noticed the little heart in the open door. But as he got closer and smelled the pancakes, he licked his chops.

"*Donnerwetter!*" he exclaimed. "That smells good!"

Another half hour passed. Then the blacksmith arrived, snorting and groaning, with his seven-room house, eight wagons and sixteen horses.

"You are too late," said the shoemaker. "I have given the town a name. I am all settled in and I have registered with the station master!"

"You are lying," said the blacksmith. "You only have that dung-house. You cannot eat there!"

"But we did eat our dinner there," said the shoemaker. "And now we are going to have a sip of coffee. Maren! You did bring the cups! The blacksmith should also have a cup! Just come here, little papa, and see!"

He pulled Lars Jensen up to the little house.

"That is a miserable place to eat dinner," said the blacksmith. "But what is the name of the town going to be?"

"It is going to be what it is already called, because it has already been named!"

"What is its name then?"

"*Ringsted*," was the answer.

This time it was Maren who answered.

And the name of the town is Ringsted to this very day!



The museum's board members met this February in Chandler, Arizona. In the front row, pictured left to right, are Kay North, Kurt Hansen, Mittie Ostergaard, Harriet Spanel, Carol Mills and Janet Thuesen.

In the back row, from left to right, are Benedikte Ehlers Olesen, John Mark Nielsen (executive director), Lynette Rasmussen, Mark Nussle, Kenneth Larsen, Dennis Andersen, Jon Borgman, Mark Strandskov, Mark Frederiksen, Steven Lund.

Museum Board of Directors Meet in Arizona

The Danish Immigrant Museum's Board of Directors held its 87th regular meeting at the historic Crowne Plaza San Marcos Hotel in Chandler, Arizona February 9 through February 12. Fifteen of the board's twenty-two members were in attendance.

Several key issues on the agenda were discussion of a new curatorial center, strategic planning, the Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park and the museum's budget.

Former board member Mia Hansen was on hand to give a power point presentation on the National Danish Performance Team's successful 2010 tour across the country. Hansen coordinated the U.S. tour with The Danish Immigrant Museum acting as fiscal agent and providing staff support.

Board members and staff were honored to be invited to a Smørrebrøds Fest hosted

by the Danish Club of Phoenix Saturday evening where many home-made traditional Danish dishes were served by members of the club. Guest speaker was Janet Borge Crowle, daughter of performer Victor Borge, who also spoke that day at a luncheon hosted by the Scandinavian Club at Sun City West.

The next board of directors meeting will be in Denver, Colorado from June 9 through 11.

ADMISSION & HOURS

ADMISSION

(Includes Bedstemor's House)

Current Museum Members:

FREE with

Membership Card

Non-Members: Adults, \$5

Children (ages 8-17), \$2

MUSEUM HOURS:

Monday-Friday 9:00 am-5:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 am-5:00 pm

Sunday 12:00 noon-5:00 pm

BUSINESS HOURS

Monday-Friday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

FAMILY HISTORY & GENEALOGY CENTER HOURS

May-Oct.: Tuesday-Friday, 9:00 am-5:00 pm

Saturday: 10:00 am-5:00 pm

November-April:

Tuesday-Friday, 10:00 am-4:00 pm

**All facilities are closed on New Year's Day;
Easter Sunday;
Thanksgiving; Christmas**

(Local weather conditions may cause occasional closures.)



Vacation in Denmark and Support The Danish Immigrant Museum

Benedikte Ehlers Olesen, a member of The Danish Immigrant Museum's Board of Directors, and her husband Poul Olesen are offering their Danish summer home for rental at a reduced price—and all proceeds will be donated to The Danish Immigrant Museum.

- Located in the middle of Jutland, a 10-minute drive from Viborg, two hours to Skagen to the north, two hours to the German border to the south, one hour to the North Sea on the west, and one hour to the Kattegat on the east.
- 45-minute drive to Århus, and 40-minutes to Aalborg.
- Views of the Limfjord from most rooms in the house.
- Three bedrooms—two with queen-sized beds and one with two bunk beds. It sleeps six adults comfortably, but can sleep a total of eight.

- Two bathrooms with showers and one has a hot tub.
- Kitchen with refrigerator, oven, and microwave.
- Flat screen television and DVD player.
- Five minute drive to shopping: bakery, butcher shop, bank, post office.
- The house is available for rental in 2010 for a minimum of \$1,250 a week. (Usually, it costs around \$3,000.)

*Interested individuals should contact the
museum
at 1-800-759-9192.*



Celebrate Danish Culture This Summer in Oregon or Minnesota

Save the Date: The Danish Cultural Conference

The Danish Cultural Conference (DCC) is one of the Northwest Danish Association's leading programs. This year the DCC runs from Friday, June 24 through Sunday, June 26, 2011 and will again be held at the Menucha Retreat and Conference Center in Corbett, Oregon, thirty minutes east of Portland.

The conference offers attendees a varied program covering a wide range of topics relating to Denmark and Danish culture. Attendees also have an opportunity to experience the beauty and amenities of the Menucha Retreat and Conference Center, which offers stunning views of the Columbia River Gorge, Crown Point, and the Cascade Mountains in a cozy and relaxed atmosphere (www.menucha.org).

The Danish Cultural Conference has been held continuously for over thirty years and many people attend annually to renew old friendships, make new friends, and revisit their Danish heritage.

The Danish Cultural Conference opens with a traditional flag-raising ceremony followed by several days of activities, including Danish language lessons, guided nature walks,

lectures, and evening entertainment. This year's conference program highlights include speakers from the Danish Embassy and The Danish Immigrant Museum as well as an evening performance by Danish folk musician and author Flemming Behrend (www.samarkandfolk.com).

Registration for the 2011 Danish Cultural Conference includes meals and there are several levels of accommodations to choose from. Additional information on the DCC is available on the Northwest Danish Association web page (www.northwestdanishfoundation.org).

Save the Date: 2011 Danebod Folk Meeting

The 65th annual Danebod Folk Meeting will be held August 17 through 21, 2011 at the Danebod Folk School Campus in Tyler, Minnesota. Program and brochures will be mailed in April. To add your name to the mailing list contact the Danebod Church office at 507-247-3000 or email Ricke Bly at r.bly@mchsi.com.

The Danebod Folk School is the only folk school still in existence in the United States. The fall folk meeting includes fellowship, worship, language study, lectures, singing, and dancing in the Danish-American tradition.

Welcome To Spring



EKELUND
 Bamboo/Cotton
 Towels, 18"x26"
 Dishcloths, 12"x10"
 Chef's Side
 Towels, 12"x29"
 Runners, 35"x140"



Silicone Trivets, Salt & Pepper Shaker, Strainers

Joyful, innovative gifts for the kitchen
 and the set table.
 Indoor and outdoors.



Many more styles to choose from . . .
 Necklaces, Bracelets & Earrings



For information on these and all of our unique gifts visit the Museum Gift Shop
 or online at www.danishmuseum.org