

americaletter



WINTER 2019 | A BENEFIT OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE MUSEUM OF DANISH AMERICA

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ON THE COVER

Guldborg Kirk, artist's wife (1881 – 1949)

Svend Kirk

Denmark, 1950

Gift of Rick Sorensen, 2010.012.004

America Letter

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WHY “AMERICA LETTER?”

Letters that were written by immigrants to family and friends back in Denmark are called “America letters” by historians. These letters are often given credit for influencing people to come to America because they were full of details of how good life was here. We call our magazine *America Letter* because we also want to tell the good news about the museum and encourage people to join us!

director's corner

This edition of the *America Letter* explores different aspects of how we present ourselves to others.

Most obviously, a formal portrait is a carefully planned visual representation of a person. In the new exhibition *Kings, Queens, and Commoners*, we see many examples of how a subject and artist collaborate on presenting the physical characteristics of the subject as well as their personality and experience. In the best portraits, we get a sense of who that person was and what was important to them. In other examples we see people at a milestone in their lives – think of a wedding portrait, which is an important document of that event, if not a representation of what the couple's daily lives were like.

For the artists working in Skagen, Denmark around the turn of the 20th century, representing daily life was a way to present the national Danish character. They aimed to illustrate fundamental values by interpreting the landscape and community with their brushes and canvases. By focusing on working-class subjects, they celebrated the Danish “folk” instead of the urban elites.

For an institution, a photograph of its building or its staff doesn't really represent what that

institution does. Instead, an institution like a museum presents itself to others through its mission statement. For many years the mission statement of this institution has been “The Museum of Danish America celebrates Danish roots and American dreams.”

This statement has been admirable for its poetry, for its balance of Denmark and the United States, and for its concise (easy to remember!) nature. But it didn't provide much detail about how, why, or for whom the museum would fulfill this mission.

The board of directors has just approved a new Mission Statement:

“The Museum of Danish America explores the Danish-American experience, the historic and modern influences of Denmark on the United States, and the continuing story of how a nation of immigrants shape American identity.”

Along with updated statements of vision and values, this mission better describes the scope of what we do. It emphasizes the present as well as the past and places Danish-American experience in the context of the diversity of America.

Defining and affirming our mission, vision, and values is especially important for the museum at this time. We are in the midst of developing a new Strategic Plan, a process started in 2018 and due for completion in 2020. With an updated mission in place, the board can use it as a tool to align all of the tangible goals of the next Strategic Plan.

We will continue to “celebrate Danish roots and American dreams.” In fact, if someone asks you what this museum is about, you can still quote that phrase! But as we look to a new year, we have renewed senses of shared purpose and pride in the work that we do for Danish America.



By Tova Brandt



board of directors meeting

**OCTOBER 3-5, 2019
ELK HORN, IA**

The Museum of Danish America's annual fall meeting was moved up a fortnight from its usual date to the first week of October to coincide with the National Convention of the Danish Sisterhood of America (DSS), held in Omaha this year.

We hosted 109 Sisters for behind-the-scenes tours of the artifact storage vaults and the special collection that was donated by the DSS in 2016. Later that same evening museum staff, board members, spouses, guests, and

convention attendees gathered for dinner together at the C.G. Therkildsen Center in Harlan. The evening's program was about the importance of the Sisterhood's archival donation, which will be catalogued into the museum's database by Archival Collections Manager Cheyenne Jansdatter. Cheyenne's two-year position is funded in part by a Historical Resource Development Program grant from the State of Iowa. This is a matching grant, and we are currently seeking donations to complete the funding.

We welcomed new board members: Dennis Gray (Winston-Salem, NC), Dan Jensen (Columbus, OH), Elly Jorgensen (Prairie Village, KS), Chris Kofoed (West Branch, IA), and Mike Nielsen (Altoona, IA). Merlyn Knudsen, a resident of Elk Horn, was elected to his first three-year term after filling an unexpired term.

We said thank you and farewell to Bente Ellis (San Jose, CA), Carolyn Larson (St. Paul, MN), and Craig Molgaard (Little Rock, AR) whose terms ended at this meeting.

New officers elected at the annual meeting were: Beth Bro Roof, President (Cedar Rapids, IA); Pete West, Vice President (Denver, CO); Karen Suchomel, Treasurer (West Branch, IA); and Toni McLeod, Secretary (Mesa, AZ).

01. På dansk

From left: Bente Ellis, Annette Andersen, Connie Hanson, Peder Hansen and Jenny Mackenzie sing the Danish National Anthem. *Photo: David Hendee*

By Terri Johnson



EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

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01. DSS

President's pin worn by Cindy Mikkelsen at a banquet as part of the organization's national convention.

02. Lunch

Elk Horn's new restaurant, The Danish Table, was the site of a meal between meetings.

03. Desserts

Provided by O&H Danish Bakery, Racine, WI. *Photos by David Hendee*

a story of sisterhood

THE DANISH SISTERHOOD OF AMERICA

Among the many Danes who immigrated to America in the mid-to-late 1800s were Christine Hemmingsen and her family. Christine was born January 30, 1840 in Orup, Denmark. In 1873 Christine, her husband Niels, and three of their children left for America. The family first arrived in New York before continuing to Negaunee, MI, a mining town near Lake Superior.

Adjusting to a new country and culture was difficult. Many different ethnic communities formed organizations or societies to aid members in navigating the challenges of immigration while keeping traditions alive. For Danes there was the Danish Brotherhood, or *Det Danske Brodersamfund*. It was a national fraternal insurance association formed in Omaha, NE for Danish immigrant males. The Negaunee lodge was one of the first six chartered on July 1, 1882. Many men, including Niels, were members.

Soon after the Brotherhood was formed, one of the Hemmingsens' family friends died, leaving behind a husband and two children. This tragic event inspired Christine to form a "funeral and sick benefit" organization to collectively and financially support Danish women

and their families in the case of death or illness.

The first meeting of the *Dansk Søstersamfund* – now known as the Danish Sisterhood of America – took place in the Hemmingsen home on December 15, 1883. As a member of the Brotherhood, Niels had the power to charter the organization and install members. Christine and ten other women became the first official members, and 20 men joined as "social" members. Niels would become the Sisterhood's first National Supreme President.

One year after its founding, Christine died in childbirth at age 44. Her husband was the first to receive a funeral benefit from the Danish Sisterhood, for a sum of \$9.25.

The Danish Sisterhood of America's Supreme Lodge was officially chartered under Illinois law on May 15, 1891. In their declaration, Sisterhood members wrote that the organization's objective was "to promote social intercourse among its members and mutual enjoyment also to comfort and nurse each other in sickness and disability and furnish deceased members a decent and respectable burial."

By Hannah Bernhard



In the years that followed, the organization grew dramatically. Twenty-five years after its 1883 founding, there were 149 lodges with 7,300 members. In 1933, during its semi-centennial, there were 162 lodges and 8,000 members. For its 100th anniversary, President Ronald Reagan wrote a letter congratulating the sisters, saying, “Your efforts to assist your fellow members when in need and to preserve the Danish culture reflect the best in the American spirit.”

Today the Sisterhood remains the largest national organization of Danish women, and Queen Margrethe II is an honorary member. There are more than 40 lodges active in 16 states and parts of Canada, as well as a virtual online lodge. Many visited the Danish Villages as part of their 2019 Omaha National Convention experience. Members of lodges from east to west coast checked into the “Find Your Lodge” book in

the Museum of Danish America’s Sisterhood exhibit. Some pointed out a block they helped make for the quilt celebrating the 25th National Convention in 2011, and others recognized familiar names and faces among the artifacts and pictures.

The Danish Sisterhood of America originally began as a way to support fellow Danes in a new country, both financially and socially. Today it has evolved into an organization based on common interests in learning about Denmark and Danish heritage through meetings, workshops, trips, and more. Its mission to support its members and their families also continues through a disaster relief fund, scholarships, and grants. Although the organization has transformed through the years, it still carries the character of Christine Hemmingsen and its first members – the spirit of Danish sisterhood.

Hannah is a Collections Assistant who worked on the present Sisterhood exhibit at the museum. Her internship was made possible by the Danish Club of Tucson.

Check-in with MoDA’s interns at
danishmuseuminterns.tumblr.com



National Convention
 Supreme Officers &
 Delegates attending
 1922’s convention in
 Chicago.

HOW HOLGER DRACHMANN, THE PAINTER,
HELPED TURN A SMALL FISHING VILLAGE INTO
AN EMBLEM OF DANISH NATIONAL IDENTITY.

crafting a danish identity at skagen

During the later half of the 19th century, Danish artists were developing a distinct national art that was separate from the stylistic traditions of western Europe. In doing so they were in search of subjects of an unmistakable national character, and by extension, a visual representation of “Danishness.” Born of this desire to identify and capture a collective national identity, a return-to-folk movement came into effect at the end of the 1870s as Danish artists left the cosmopolitan centers of Europe to return home and focus on the defining geographical and cultural characteristics of the North. Their artwork contributed to the formation of a core national identity by means of images relating to the Danish landscape and the rustic folk peasant.

The work from the Skagen artists’ colony demonstrates this new focus on uniquely Danish subjects. The small fishing village on the northern coast of Jutland was a haven for artists who sought a simplistic lifestyle. Skagen, at the time, was intensely isolated and attracted artists with the promise of fresh inspiration in an uncharted landscape. For the artists there, themes of rustic simplicity, the pastoral and unspoiled nature were charged with moralistic interpretations that were reflected in their work. This article will focus on the ways that the artistic endeavors of the Skagen painters contributed to the creation of a core sense of national identity through their use of folk-primitivist imagery and themes.

By **Olivia Woodruff**
Curation Intern,
Skagens Museum





RUSTIC HEROISM AT SKAGEN

Poet, author, and painter Holger Drachmann (1846 – 1908) was among the many artists who came to Skagen in search of a new and unique subject. Although Drachmann is best known in Denmark as a writer, the thematic content and subject of his paintings provide valuable insight into the goals of the artists' colony as a whole.

Drachmann was a marine painter who explored the sea motif as both an expression of his inner self (as he drew parallels between the turbulence and uncertainty of the sea and his life as an artist), and as a more generalized icon of Danish collective identity at the time. His sea motifs represent a compelling symbol of tradition, regionalism, and a nostalgic “old way” of travel and labor that may not be so overt. His interest in the rustic and primitive lifestyles of the locals and the seemingly untouched natural landscape were shared by the other artists and proved to be deeply embedded within the ethos of the colony as a whole.

Drachmann was at the forefront of making Skagen into the emblem of Danish national identity at the time. His painting *Skagen Beach with Old Shipwreck* (1878) depicts the vast beaches and glowing summer light that is characteristic of the region, captured in many iterations in the Skagen painters' works. Drachmann's painting demonstrates an idyllic image of nature at Skagen that is in contrast with a number of his other works; his seascapes often feature violent waters crashing together or waves washing up to shipwrecks on the shore such as in *The Reef of Skagen* (1902). In these paintings, Drachmann uses the image of the sea as a way to implicitly talk about the heroic lives of the men who make their living at sea. His seascapes can

01. *Skagen Beach with Old Shipwreck*
Holger Drachmann,
oil on canvas, 1878,
Skagens Museum.



be viewed as symbols of their rugged labor as the roughness of the waves, the violence, and danger all point to a kind of mythologizing of the local sailor.

Fellow Skagen artists Michael Ancher (1849 – 1927) and P.S. Krøyer (1851 – 1909) were also concerned with detailing the lives of the local seamen – although in more overt ways. In their paintings, Ancher and Krøyer position the native fishermen as the ultimate emblem of heroic labor. In Krøyer's *Fishermen Hauling a Seine Net at Skagen Nordstrand. Late Afternoon* (1883), the men are depicted as hearty, down-to-earth workers. He suggests a deeply physical bond between the fishermen's bodies and the vast landscape

and seamlessly integrates them through the use of a uniformed color palette and the glaze of light over the entire scene. Krøyer and Ancher's fishermen paintings suggest an interesting moralizing ethos: by highlighting the men's unified labor, dignity, strength, and skill, they position the men as courageous heroes. Although Drachmann's seascapes do not use the fisherman or sailor motif as explicitly, there is still a strong sense of his engagement with this idea of the heroic seaman. Through both his paintings and written works, we know he had a fascination with the unglamorous-yet-noble life of the sailor. Perhaps Drachmann saw their lives as an escape from the frills, celebrity, and excess of his own life.

02. *The Reef of Skagen*

Holger Drachmann,
oil on canvas, 1902,
Skagens Museum.





A MOVE TOWARDS SIMPLICITY

By the 1870s, Holger Drachmann had become somewhat of a household name. He was a larger-than-life figure, the life of any party, and a man who often found himself on the front pages of newspapers and celebrity gossip columns. The public interest surrounding Drachmann's professional and personal life is well documented. However, it seems clear that Drachmann had mixed feelings about his fame. On the one hand, scholars argue that he used the stories, gossip, and public frenzy as a way to self-mythologize and establish the "Drachmann brand" for himself to ensure social relevance. Yet on

the other, he expresses a longing for simplicity and balance in his life. He himself was the one to equate the flux and naturalness of the sea to his own identity and inner desires — a statement that seems to reject the grandeur of Drachmann as a mythic figure. Skagen offered a beacon of simplicity and remoteness that he was looking for.

Moving to Skagen was a way to escape the demands and pressures of life in the cities. This was true not just for Drachmann, but for almost all of the Skagen artists. The plainness of life was appealing not only because it allowed them to completely immerse themselves in the artistic lifestyle and focus on painting, but it also gave them

the opportunity to explore what it meant to live in an isolated community among locals who were seemingly "untouched" by the forces of industrialization and Europeanization. The remoteness and primitiveness of Skagen made it possible to equate the lifestyle of the locals as something utterly Danish at the time. The region's removal from outside influence gave a sense of a pristine or "authentic" Danish identity that was captured in the Skagen painter's works to various degrees.

03. *Fishermen Hauling a Seine Net at Skagen Nordstrand.*

Late Afternoon

P.S. Krøyer, oil
on canvas, 1883,
Skagens Museum.



It should be noted that this desire to equate folk primitivism with national identity was by no means unique to Denmark; similar return-to-folk movements were happening all across Europe at the time. For example, French post-Impressionist Paul Gauguin's (1848 – 1903) interest in the rustic natives of Brittany and the Abramtsevo peasant-craft workshop in Russia demonstrate this phenomenon. In terms of aligning national identity with folk peasantry, nothing could be more European. And indeed the Skagen painters were completely tuned into this international artistic trend.

In Anna Ancher's (1859 –1935) painting *A Field Sermon* (1903), she captures the details of an unsophisticated religious meeting set in a field and led by a lay preacher. Ancher is looking at the provisional gathering as a testament to the rustic character of the Skagen natives and their devotion to tradition. The depiction of the locals' lives as pared-down is underscored in many of the Skagen painters' works. This kind of ethnographic-realism happening at Skagen became a hallmark of what was considered a pure Danish identity and tradition at the time.

Drachmann, although not focused on ethnographic painting, was still engaged with the larger issue of defining Danish national identity in the wake of globalization. Certainly his seascapes demonstrate his interest in the simplicity and the nostalgia of sailing as an appeal to a uniquely Danish tradition. In his dissertation he argued that the marine painting genre in Denmark held an elevated status because Danish artists were not only painters, but sailors themselves. Drachmann is clearly equating the seaman lifestyle — and by extension, a life of simplicity and primitiveness — to a collective national identity.

04. *A Field Sermon*

Anna Ancher, oil
on canvas, 1903,
Skagens Museum.



“Hygge is humble
and slow. It is
choosing **rustic** over
new, **simple** over
posh, and **ambience**
over excitement.”

- **Meik Wiking**, *The Little Book of Hygge:
Danish Secrets to Happy Living*, 2016

Today's alignment of the word *hygge* to a
national way of being reflects the concepts
Skagen painters projected a century earlier.

Drachmann was, perhaps, the most internationally oriented artist at the colony, having traveled with his father in his youth and taken trips all around Europe and later, North America. He certainly would have been aware of the growing interest in folk-primitivism happening across Europe and keen on incorporating these themes into his work.

NOSTALGIA AND MODERNITY, AN UNLIKELY PAIR

In Denmark the growing interest in what were considered traditions of a bygone era and the revivalist mentality towards primitive lifestyles marked a shift in the nation's relationship with the past.

Skagen, in particular, became the epicenter of this phenomenon. The work of the Skagen artists clearly demonstrates an interest in nostalgia and a romanticization of the lifestyles soon to be lost to industrialization. Drachmann's ship paintings appeal to a sentimental time when highly skilled sailors maneuvered the seas through traditional systems and mechanics. The paintings position sailing as a deeply rooted tradition, and one that would slowly become obsolete in the wake of expanding railroad systems and more technologically advanced ships.

However, the Skagen artists' use of nostalgia in their thematic content and subjects by no means

marked the colony as backward-thinking or unprogressive. They, in fact, demonstrated some of the most cutting-edge and modern approaches to painting from the time. By combining nostalgia with modern ideas such as universalism through simplicity, and reaction to industrialization, the Skagen painters demonstrated that any rigid boundaries between modernity and nostalgia were unstable.

At Skagen, nostalgia was a cornerstone of their sense of modernity. For many of the artists,

including Drachmann, nostalgia became a way of thinking about the past as a potential for how one should live. Thus they “went native” and chose radical simplicity over excess as the ideal model for modern life. Moreover, nostalgia was woven into the ethos of the many modern artistic movements from the time; for example, the Arts and Crafts movement in England and later, the Art Nouveau movement in Belgium and France, were rooted in a deep sense of nostalgia that became productive in establishing a radically modern style.



THE SKAGEN COLONY

Each summer from the late 1870s until the turn of the century – a time when large numbers of Danes were immigrating to America, a group of Scandinavian artists (mainly painters) descended on Skagen, a fishing community in the northernmost tip of Denmark.

Without any requirements to adhere to a common approach, the group embraced painting en plein air and depicting scenes of the local fishing culture and their own social gatherings. They gathered regularly at the Brøndums Hotel, which is now home to the Skagens Museum – founded in 1908 when the traditional gatherings of the group were coming to an end.

05. *Holger Drachmann*
P.S. Krøyer, oil
on canvas, 1895,
Skagens Museum.



S ***I Am Sea:
Holger Drachmann with Pen and Brush***
Through May 24, 2020 at the Skagens Museum
<https://skagenskunstmuseer.dk/en/>

Drachmann, in particular, was emblematic of this strange marriage of modernity and nostalgia. He crafted a persona of a radically modern urban bohemian, yet his paintings are fundamentally tied to a sentimental yearning for past simplicity. This tension between the two proved to be completely cued into the trends happening across Europe. The ideas being discussed and worked through at the colony were no different.

and tradition as a rejection of everything they felt was wrong with modern, urbanized society. For many of them, the simplicity and primitiveness of the locals became the hallmark of Danish identity.

Olivia Woodruff worked as an intern at the Skagens Museum for the exhibition “I Am Sea: Holger Drachmann with Pen and Brush.”

More than anything else, the Skagen artists’ colony represented a generation’s aspiration for nostalgic simplicity through a strong connection with the landscape and a focus on simple and traditional ways of living. Drachmann fully embraced these themes and made use of them in subtle ways through his seascapes. At Skagen the artists viewed their revival of a spiritualistic contact with nature



we laughed when days were merry

By Holger Drachmann. Translated by Mark Stone. From *The Complete Delius Songbook*, p. 11. Mark Stone & Steven Barlow, Boosey & Hawkes, 2011. "The original Danish text was taken from Drachmann's 1879 collection *Ungdom i digt og sang*, setting the first two verses of three."

We laughed when days were merry
And spun joy's thread for years,
Now we can shoulder bravely
A sprinkling of tears;
When bitter tears have ended,
We'll venture out to where
Our hearts in dance were blended;
No dancing now is there.

In silence there we settle
On benches in the shade
Where golden sunrays revel
With rafters in play.
To sit there in the darkness
Yet see the sunlight soar,
Rejoicing in the gladness
Of old. We ask no more!

Vi lo jo før saa længe
Og spandt paa glædens traad,
Nu kan vi sagtens trænge
En smule til graad;
Naar graaden saa er standset,
Saa gaar vi ud og ser
Paa stedet, hvor vi dansed;
Dér danser vi ej mer.

Dér sætter vi os stille
I skyggen paa en bænk,
Hvor solens straalere spille
Med tavlede stænk.
At sidde selv i skyggen
Og se, hvor solen lér,
At glæde os ved lykken,
Som var. Hvad vil vi mer?

collection connection



The Danish American Athletic Club of Chicago made this felt banner to use in parades, exhibits, and demonstrations during the 1960s and 1970s. *Gift of Carl Steffensen, 2019.002.001*

This year marked the 800th anniversary of *Dannebrog*, the Danish flag. A current exhibition at the museum celebrates the occasion.

Within the museum's collection are many examples of the Danish flag being used. Commemorative plates, housewares like vases and doilies, pins and other jewelry, and of course as the basis for Danish Brotherhood in America membership ribbons. There are also numerous photos that show the flag displayed during events like club gatherings or parades and on churches, schools, and businesses. Featured here are some of the more unexpected uses found amongst the museum's artifacts.



This Danish soldier is one of 277 figures from the collection of Leslie Kingsbury Marzolf. He purchased them at Thorngren's Toy Shop on Strøget (one of Europe's longest pedestrian shopping streets) in Copenhagen between 1961 and 1962, and they were displayed in his den in Ann Arbor, MI until his widow donated them. *Gift of Marion Marzolf, 2017.011.017*

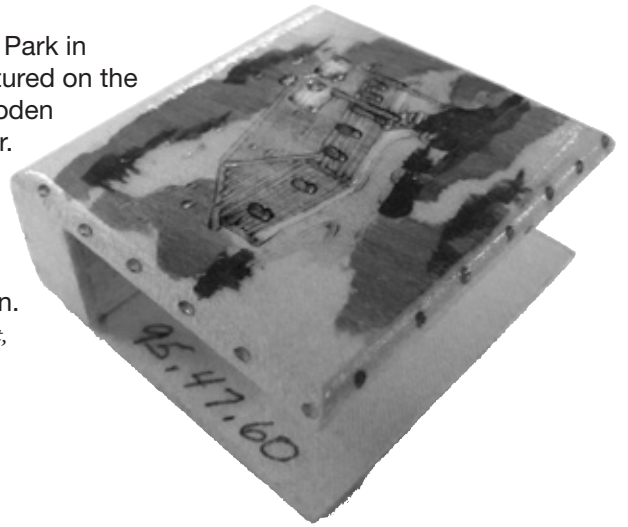


By Angela Stanford

“Hilsen fra Randers” appears on a porcelain egg cup below a Danish flag. While little is known about this piece, it was clearly a souvenir from this community in Denmark. *Gift of Olga Olsen, 1988.001.152*



Rebild National Park in Denmark is featured on the front of this wooden matchbox cover. The Danish flag flies next to its U.S. counterpart beside the cabin. *Gift of Asta Forrest, 1995.047.060*



The flag can also be used as a garment, as evidenced in this image of Ingeborg Andersen of Omaha, NE in 1908. The top of the bodice area and the hem of the skirt are decorated with a garland-like trimming. *Gift of Ken and Margaret Wandel, 1990.069.012*



Measuring about 2 ¼” square, this pincushion has connections to Ringsted, IA around 1911. It is part of a pair; its match being a U.S. flag. *Gift of Ellen Schmidt, 1986.148.014b*



exhibition calendar



DANNEBROG AT 800

Multimedia Room
Through January 2020

*Sponsored by the Scandinavian
Society of Cincinnati*

01. KINGS, QUEENS, AND COMMONERS: PORTRAITS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

Main Floor Gallery
Through May 31, 2020

*Sponsored by the Danish
Sisterhood Lodge #15,
Milwaukee, WI*



02. NEW NORDIC CUISINE

Kramme Gallery
Through January 5, 2020

**In 2020, New Nordic Cuisine will
be at the following venues:**

**American Swedish
Historical Museum**
Philadelphia, PA
January 25 - August 23, 2020

Norway House
Minneapolis, MN
September 11 -
November 8, 2020

Major support for New Nordic Cuisine comes from the American-Scandinavian Foundation, Erik and Eva Andersen, and the Estate of Erik Sorensen. **National tour** sponsored by Cynthia Larsen Adams & Gary M. Adams, Embassy of Denmark in Washington, DC, O&H Danish Bakery, The Danish Pioneer Newspaper, Humanities Iowa, Nordic Council of Ministers, Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, Anna Thomsen Holliday & Hal Holliday, and the Honorable Lynette Skow Rasmussen & Kurt Rasmussen.

The exhibit's debut in Elk Horn was made possible by David & Polly Hendee, David & Helen Esbeck, Hutchinson and Bloodgood LLP, Lowell & Marilyn Kramme, Mark & Lori Nussle, along with the following **Supporters:** Siggi's Dairy, Iowa Tourism, Midwest Groundcovers LLC, Sagaform, Marnie Jensen & Kenny Bogus, Carol Svendsen & Jay Mead, Nils & Kathleen Jensen, Carl & Frances Steffensen, Anders Sand, Beth Bro-Roof & John Roof, Bruce Bro, Craig Molgaard & Amanda Golbeck, Danish Brotherhood Lodge #15, Dennis Andersen, John Rasmussen, Lyle & Dorothy Stadvold Feisel, Randall & Margaret Ruggaard, Rasmus & Jennifer Thøgersen, and Susan B. Vitek, DDS.

Coming June 2020 - January 2021:

**ART NOUVEAU INNOVATION: DANISH
PORCELAIN FROM AN AMERICAN
COLLECTOR**

Main Floor Gallery

events calendar

**SIGN UP FOR OUR MONTHLY E-NEWS TO RECEIVE UPDATES
ON EVENTS AND PROGRAMS HAPPENING NEAR AND FAR.**

JULEFEST

November 29-30
Elk Horn and Kimballton

*In memory of Edith E. Larsen
(1920-2019), lifetime resident of
Elk Horn and tireless volunteer
at the museum and Bedstemors
House, admission to MoDA's three
locations during Julefest is at no
charge.*

*"We honor her extraordinary life
as a wife, mother, educator, world
traveler, and most of all, friend."
- The family of Dr. Jerold P. and
Marilyn Jorgensen*

HOLIDAY CULTURAL FESTIVAL AT THE DURHAM MUSEUM

December 6, 4-9 pm
Omaha, Nebraska

HYGGE HOLIDAY: MUSEUM OPEN HOUSE

December 12, 2-7 pm
Free admission, refreshments,
holiday shopping, family-friendly
activities, and music.

Guest speaker Kathy Wilson
presents "The Man Who Invented
Christmas" at 2 pm, exploring the
role that Charles Dickens and his
Christmas Carol have played in
defining holiday celebrations.

CHRISTMAS EVE & CHRISTMAS DAY

The museum will close at noon on
Christmas Eve and remain closed
through Christmas Day

NEW YEAR'S EVE & NEW YEAR'S DAY

The museum will close at noon on
New Year's Eve and remain closed
through New Year's Day

kings, queens, and commoners

PORTRAITS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

On view September 21, 2019 –
May 31, 2020

*Exhibition sponsored by Danish
Sisterhood Lodge #15, Milwaukee,
Wisconsin.*

Portraiture is one of art's oldest genres. In the days before photography, portraits were available only to the most elite members of society: kings, queens, and aristocrats. Subjects and artists put a lot of thought into composition, clothing, objects, staging, and symbolism.

Today we are more accustomed to informal snapshots. But the power of a good portrait can still convey an individual's personality and tell us something about a life.

Here we share some of the images currently exhibited in the Main Floor Gallery.



Detail of
Queen Louise (1724-1751)
Artist unknown
Denmark, circa 1750

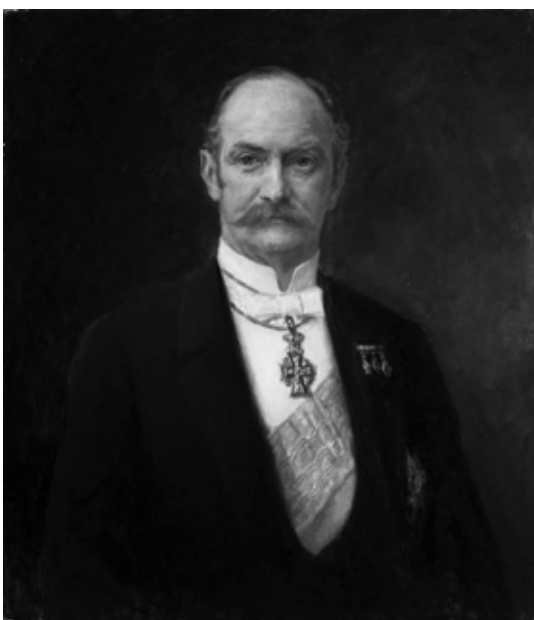
Queen Louise was born into the British royal family; her father would later reign as George III. She married Frederik V in 1743. Her son would later rule Denmark as Christian VII.

Gift of the estate of Bjorn Anker Jensen, 2014.050.001



Detail of
King Christian IX (1818-1906, ruled 1863-1906)
August Schiøtt
Denmark, 1868
Gift of Christian Castenskiold, 2017.049.001

Full view
 on page 20.



King Frederik VIII (1843-1912, ruled 1906-1912)
Otto Bache
Denmark, 1909
Gift of Christian Castenskiold, 2017.049.002

This portrait was recently cleaned and conserved thanks to support from Lowell and Marilyn Kramme.

ART CONSERVATION

So just what do we mean when we say the painting was ‘conserved?’ Conservation is the process of stabilizing and preserving an object or artwork by letting the maker’s intentions inform the work that needs to be done, whether it be cleaning or repairs.

For example, paintings often have a layer of old varnish that covers the paint itself. Over time, that varnish yellows and also accumulates pollutants from the air, which affect the intensity and even the color of the paint. Removing that varnish layer, as was done with King Frederik VIII, brightens the work and restores the artist’s original colors, allowing the viewer to enjoy the artwork as it was intended. King Frederik’s canvas was also slightly loose, causing a wavy surface in some areas. This was addressed through minor repairs and tightening. These efforts make the painting stable and safe to exhibit.

The museum relies on generous support from members to assist with the costs of conservation. If you are interested in preserving the museum’s collections, please contact Angela Stanford, Registrar and Curator of Collections.



Gift of the Danish Brotherhood in America, 1994.203.542



Gift of Leroy & Joan Kiertzner, 2004.051.010



Gift from the estate of Helen Nielsen, 2013.010.001



Gift of Mabel Mathisen, 1994.068.002



Gift of Victor Borge, 1994.293.002



Gift of the estate of Ruth Adler Lassen Schreiber, 2004.058.086



Gift of Peder Larsen, 2000.265.005



This page, clockwise from top left: Detail of *Artist's grandmother*, C. H. Harcke, 1927. *Unidentified young boy*, Artist unknown. Detail of *Dr. Max Henius (1859–1935)*, Artist unknown, Early 20th century. *Victor Borge*, Birgit Jacobsen, United States, 1993.

finding humor in genealogy

At the Genealogy Center we often have people researching their ancestors who are holding a picture in their minds of what they are hoping to find. We do forewarn patrons that they may be confronted with information that may not fit that image.

In the October 2019 issue of “Antique City Roots” there was a rather humorous article which speaks to this problem of “perfect ancestors.” This article was written by Gayle Stuart, the president of the Walnut Genealogy Society, who is also a volunteer at the Genealogy Center of the Museum of Danish America. She has given her permission to include this article in the America Letter.

Gayle wrote:

Having recently attended a large gathering of my family, I was asked different questions about the family history. Having not brought the family history with me, I wasn't prepared to answer the requests. I have had the following article for some time and thought this might be the time to use it.

TOP TEN REASONS FARM TRUCKS ARE NEVER STOLEN

10. They have a range of about 20 miles before they overheat, break down or run out of gas.

9. Only the owner knows how to operate the door to get in or out.

8. It is difficult to drive fast with all the fence tools, grease rags, ropes, chains, syringes, buckets, boots and loose papers in the cab.

7. It takes too long to start and the smoke coming up through the rusted-out floorboard clouds your vision.

6. The Jack Russell terrier on the toolbox looks mean.

5. They are too easy to spot. The description might go something like this: The driver's side door is red, the passenger side door is green, the right front fender is yellow, etc.

4. The large round bale in the back makes it hard to see if you're being chased. You could use the mirrors if they weren't cracked and covered with duct tape.

3. Top speed is only about 45 mph.

2. Who wants a truck that needs a year's worth of maintenance, u-joints, \$3,000 in body work, taillights and windshield.

1. It is hard to commit a crime with everyone waving at you.



By Wanda Sornson

Some of the above could be how we find relatives or ancestors, not who we think they should be or how they should act. Everyone should have a relative that we may not want to claim, but they belong to us anyway.

I laughed when I read the list of reasons regarding the farm truck. As I thought about it, it could refer to the ancestors we find for some patrons who are much less than perfect. Some patrons handle it very well, find it humorous, because after all, people are people. Some patrons do have a bit of trouble accepting the negative aspects of their ancestors' lives. In reality, times have not changed all that much, and who are we to judge their motives or actions.

The other thing I realized as I read those ten reasons, is that genealogy researching is much like driving that truck. It is impossible to quickly do research – there are too many distractions to check out, and they are not always relevant. But sometimes it is necessary to throw out the dead ends. We usually proceed rather slowly because we have to use caution. Often it is difficult to look back at the areas you have covered so you had better be using some kind of tracking device to monitor your progress. And, I'm sure just as that truck has no turning signals, when following an ancestor's trail back there may be little or no signals to guide the direction in which we should go.

What is important to remember is that we don't always find the untarnished ancestors that we hope to find.

Remember:

**“Aunty,” Jem spoke up,
“Atticus say you can choose
your friends, but you sho’
can’t choose your family,
an’ they’re still kin to you
no matter whether you
acknowledge ‘em or not,
and it make you look right
silly when you don’t.”**

- *To Kill a Mockingbird*,
Chapter 23

new additions to the wall of honor

JULY 1, 2019 – OCTOBER 8, 2019

The Danish Immigrant Wall of Honor provides families and friends with a means of preserving the memories of 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 personal histories at the museum's Genealogy Center. You may find a list of the immigrants on the Wall of Honor at www.danishmuseum.org.

The information below includes the immigrant's name, year of immigration, location where they settled, and the name and city of the donor.

JOHN F. RASMUSSEN (1964)
Hicksville, NY – Supreme Lodge
of Danish Sisterhood of America

jens jensen heritage path

JULY 1, 2019 – OCTOBER 8, 2019

The Jens Jensen Heritage Path is a place to celebrate an occasion or achievement, recognize an individual or organization, or honor the memory of a loved one. Twice a year the pavers will be engraved and placed within the Flag Plaza: May and October.

These individuals have contributed a paver in the sizes of small, medium or large.

Estate of Herbert M. Jacobsen by
Lowell R. Jacobsen, executor,
Fairway, KS

Rosemary Matthiessen & family,
Sterling, IL, including George
& Wendy Matthiessen, Robert
Matthiessen, and James, Amy,
Alice & Jacqueline Morrison
John & Karen Molgaard,
Atlantic, IA



By Deb Christensen Larsen

memorials

JULY 1, 2019 – OCTOBER 8, 2019

**Through various funds, donors
have provided gifts received in
memory of:**

Harold & Esther Andersen
Richard Lee Andersen, Harlan, IA,
my husband
Emily S. (nee Lykke) Butler
Jens T. Carstensen
Etlar Simon Christensen
Myra D. (nee Vig) Christensen
T.K. Christensen
Darrell Christensen of Fargo, ND
Lotte Christensen, my wife
Raymond Christensen,
Rosemount, MN, my father
Shirley Jean Christensen Regnier
Congour
Hans & Mathilde Farstrup
Lois Girtz Halley
Bent & Lydia Hansen
Roger Hansen of Carroll, IA, my
father
Olivia Elizabeth Ibsen, Urbandale,
IA
Betty Ingerslev
Herbert M. Jacobsen
Roland & Anitra Jensen
Tage Ketelsen
Svend V. Koch, Cedar Falls, IA
Dale Krog, Tracy, MN
Glenn Krog, Lake Benton, MN
Irene R. (Petersen) Ladd
Ezra B. Larsen

Allan Larsen, my husband
Gladys Holland McCrory, Atlantic,
IA
Elsie Rasmussen McNabb
Larry Nelson
Andy J. Nielsen
Byron (Barney) Olsen
Glenn Robert Olsen
Irma Ørum
Helen Parker, Council Bluffs, IA,
my mother
Niels M. Pedersen
James Peterson
Sharlene Roge
Geraldine Elizabeth Nash
Schubeck, my mother, who
died on July 20, 2019, at the
age of 103
Burdette "Bear" Thomsen, my
dad's 2-year anniversary of
passing
Thelma Esbeck Wehde
Jacob & Dorothea Wolff



in honor

JULY 1, 2019 – OCTOBER 8, 2019

**Through various funds, donors
have provided gifts received
in honor of people or special
events.**

In celebration of Ellen C.
Bourquin's 90th Birthday
Loren Christensen of Vines &
Wines presentation at Atlantic
Friends of the Museum meeting
Marilyn Gift making our daughter's
baptism kransekage
Paul Roge

MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP MAKES A GREAT GIFT

For lives that are already
stuffed full of "stuff," a
museum membership gives
back while also giving
access. Even last minute,
a new membership or
renewal is easy to arrange,
thoughtful, and rewarding.
Contact us any time for gift-
giving throughout the year.

new members

JULY 1, 2019 – OCTOBER 8, 2019

**The Museum of Danish America
is pleased to identify the
following 32 individuals as its
newest members:**

Donna Bame, Rogers, AR
Robert Bau, Northglenn, CO
Jerry & Connie Bergstrand,
Show Low, AZ
Laurie Cappellin, Cary, NC
Geraldine Coutlee,
Rockford, IL
Bruce Diebold, Waltham, MA
Steve & Sheryl Ferguson,
Grimes, IA
Patrick & Janet Greving,
Elk Horn, IA
Stephen & Connie Hansen,
Minden, NE
Jenny Andersen & Chad
Juelsgaard, Elk Horn, IA
Douglas & Laurie Kessler,
Bakersfield, CA
Karen Kron, Boise, ID
Dave & Maggie Larsen,
Marshall, MN
Alan & Kay Leibel, Winnsboro, TX
Greg & Diane Lemoine,
Rockton, IL
Fredrick Lloyd, Ames, IA
Dennis Mar, Pacific Grove, CA
Rosemary Matthiessen, Sterling, IL
Fred & Amy Moreau, Malvern, IA

Frank Myers, Ponder, TX
Christie Chaney & Norman
Nielson, La Mesa, CA
Rob & Ronell, Nymand,
Brayton, IA
Evelyn Osland, Leroy, MN
James & Candy Paulsen,
Fresno, CA
Benjamin & Vera Petersen,
Exira, IA
Cary & Cheryl Rasmussen,
Osseo, MN
Marilyn Renback, Lennox, SD
Russell & Judy Stiley,
Nunn, CO
Del & Ingrid Stites, Omaha, NE
Roger & Summer Swanson,
Fairborn, OH
Todd Thompson, Sioux City, IA
Fred & Margaret Townsend,
Des Moines, IA



organization associates

JULY 1, 2019 – OCTOBER 8, 2019

These 72 organizations have contributed memberships or gifts-in-kind of \$100 or greater or have received complimentary or reciprocal memberships in recognition of exemplary service to the museum. We acknowledge their generosity in each edition of the *America Letter* during their membership.

Arcus AS (Aalborg and Linie Aquavits), Hagan, Norway
Atlantic Friends of The Danish Immigrant Museum, Atlantic, IA
Audubon Family Chiropractic (Douglas & Nichole Olsen), Audubon, IA
Boose Building Construction (Marty & Connie Boose), Atlantic, IA
Carroll Control Systems, Inc. (Todd & Jalynn Wanninger), Carroll, IA
Country Landscapes, Inc. (Rhett Faaborg), Ames, IA
Danebod Lutheran Church, Tyler, MN
Dania Society of Chicago, Chicago, IL area
Danish American Athletic Club of 1922, Chicago, IL area
The Danish American Archive and Library, Blair, NE
Danish American Club in Orange County, Huntington Beach, CA area
Danish American Club of Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI area
Danish Archive North East (DANE), Edison, NJ
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #1, Omaha, NE

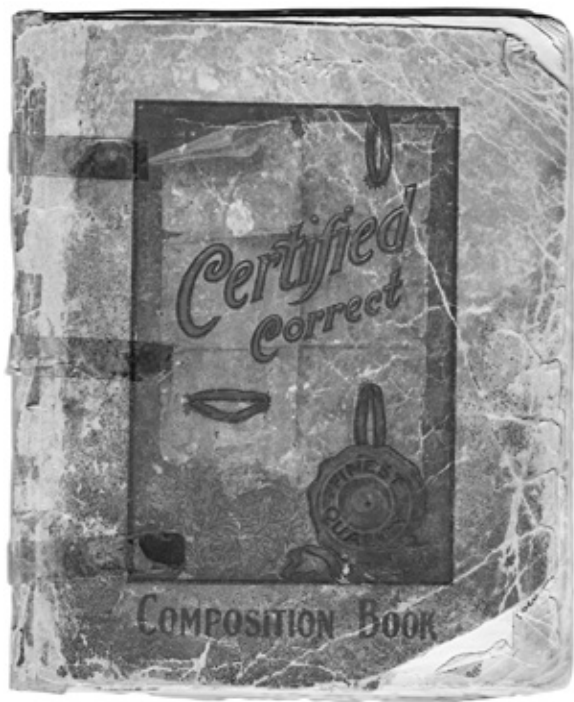
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #15, Des Moines, IA
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #16, Minden, NE
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #29, Seattle, WA
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #35, Homewood, IL
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #268, Junction City, OR
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #283, Dagmar, MT
Danish Brotherhood Centennial Lodge #348, Eugene, OR
The Danish Canadian National Museum, Spruce View, Alberta, Canada
Danish Club of Tucson, Tucson, AZ
Danish Cultural Center of Greenville, Greenville, MI
The Danish Home, Croton-On-Hudson, NY
The Danish Home of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Danish Mutual Insurance Association, Elk Horn, IA
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #3, Davenport, IA
Danish Sisterhood Dagmar Lodge #4, Chicago, IL
Danish Sisterhood Dronning Margrethe Lodge #15, Wauwatosa, WI area
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #20, Kenosha, WI
Danish Sisterhood Ellen Lodge #21, Denver, CO area
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #102, Des Moines, IA area
Danish Sisterhood Flora Danica Lodge #177, Solvang, CA
Danish Sisterhood Lodges, Heartland District, Iowa-Minnesota & surrounding states

Danish Sisterhood Lodges, Nebraska/Colorado Districts, Lincoln, NE & Denver CO areas
Den Danske Pioneer (Elsa Steffensen & Linda Steffensen), Hoffman Estates, IL
Elk Horn Lutheran Church, Elk Horn, IA
Elk Horn-Kimballton Optimist Club, Elk Horn & Kimballton, IA area
Elverhoj Museum of History and Art, Solvang, CA
Exira-Elk Horn-Kimballton Community School District, Elk Horn, IA area
Faith, Family, Freedom Foundation (Kenneth & Marlene Larsen), Santa Rosa, CA
Hacways (Helene & Nanna Christensen), Hals, Denmark
Wayne Hansen Real Estate, LLC, Elk Horn, IA
Harlan Tribune Newspapers, Inc. (Steve Mores & Alan Mores), Harlan, IA
Henningsen Construction, Inc. (Brad Henningsen, Vice President), Atlantic, IA
House of Denmark, San Diego, CA
Independent Order of Svithiod, Verdandi Lodge #3, Chicago, IL
Kirsten's Danish Bakery (Kirsten & Paul Jepsen), Hinsdale, IL
Knudsen Old Timers, Glendale, CA
Landmands Bank (Jeff Petersen, President) Audubon, IA
Marne Elk Horn Telephone Co., Elk Horn, IA
Nelsen and Nelsen, Attorneys at Law, Cozad, NE

Northwest Danish Association,
Seattle, WA
O & H Danish Bakery (Eric
Olesen), Racine, WI
Olsen, Muhlbauer & Co., L.L.P.,
Carroll, IA
Oxen Technology, Harlan, IA
Petersen Family Foundation,
Inc. (H. Rand & Mary Louise
Petersen), Harlan, IA
PH-Consulting Group, Inc. (Peder
& Andrea Hansen), Omaha, NE
Proongily (Cyndi McKeen),
St. Paul, MN
The Rasmussen Group, Inc.
(Sandra Rasmussen and Kurt &
Lynette Rasmussen),
Des Moines, IA
Rebild National Park Society,
Southern California Chapter,
Los Angeles, CA area
Red River Danes, Fargo,
ND area
Ringsted Danish American
Fellowship, Ringsted, IA
Royal Danish Embassy,
Washington, DC
Royal Danish Guard Society,
Chicago, IL area
Scan Design Foundation,
Seattle, WA
Shelby County Historical Society
& Museum, Harlan, IA
Shelby County State Bank, Harlan
and Elk Horn, IA
Supreme Lodge of the Danish
Sisterhood of America
Symra Literary Society,
Decorah, IA
Upward Mobility (Susan Vitek),
Hinesburg, VT

MUTUAL BENEFITS

While we don't offer traditional advertising opportunities, sponsoring exhibits and programs often comes with a lot of recognition and simultaneously supports the museum's mission. Contact us for ideas on how your business or organization can reach out and make an impact!



from the archives

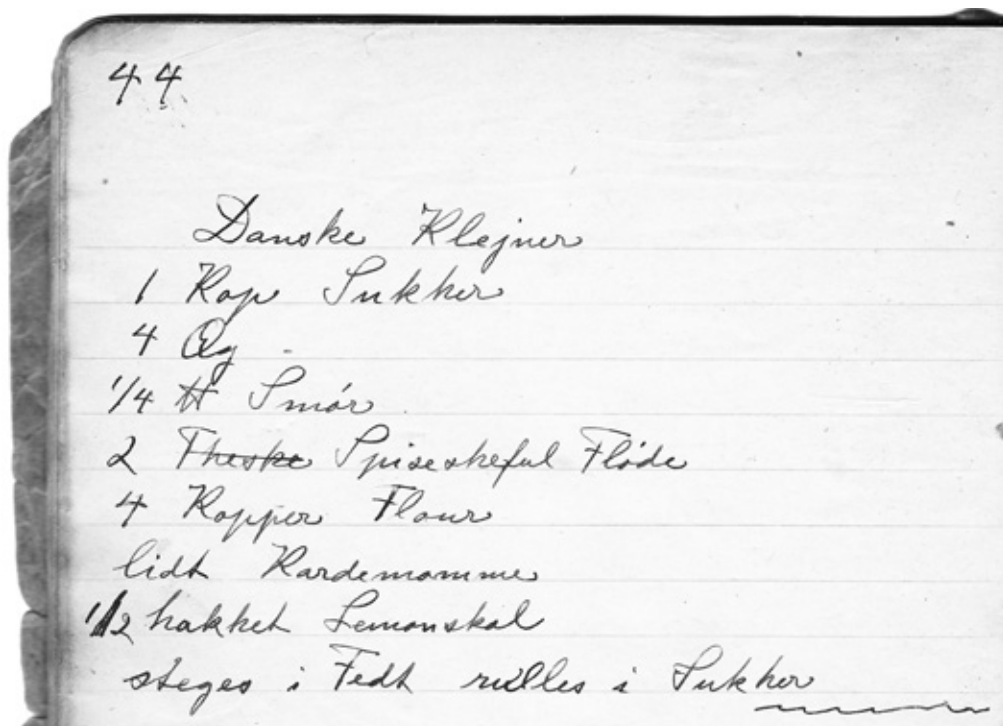
Winter is a wonderful time to bake, and Danes are known for their *weinerbrød*, or pastries. I would like to share with you this well-loved homemade recipe book that was donated in 1994, the year the museum opened.

The book came to us from the Estate of Hilda L. Christoffersen (1905-1994), and we know only that it was created by and belonged to Hilda's mother, Anna Christensen.

ABOVE is the cover of the composition notebook she used.

AT RIGHT is her recipe for Danish Klejner, a traditional Christmas snack. Notice how she uses both Danish and English in her recipe writing.

The recipe is translated completely to English on the next page. 1994.039.071



By Cheyenne Jansdatter

danish *klejner*

1 cup sugar
4 eggs
¼ lb butter [1 stick]
2 tsp heavy cream
4 cups flour
A little cardamom
½ a chopped lemon rind



[Roll out dough. Cut into diamond shapes with a lengthwise slit in the center. Loop bottom point through the slit to twist.] Fry in fat, roll in sugar [powdered].

For more guidance than provided here, watch a demonstration from Lyngby, Denmark's Frilandsmuseet (Open Air Museum):
<https://youtu.be/iay5zUYw8c4>

Photo: <https://www.madopskrifter.nu/>

MUSEUM & DESIGN STORE

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Saturday 10 am – 5 pm
Sunday Noon – 5 pm

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Memorial Day – Labor Day

Closed: New Years, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas.



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danish america

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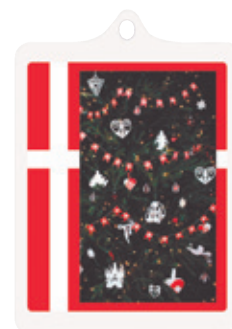
Happy 800th Birthday!

The national flag of Denmark, *Dannebrog* (meaning the banner of the Danes or the red banner), is inscribed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the oldest continuously used national flag. But while Guinness dates the use of the flag to 1625, the creation myth dates the flag to 1219, meaning that 2019 marks the flag's 800-year birthday. The Danes' use of *Dannebrog* is "in many ways" distinct, as they fly the flag most often for personal events, whether it is to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, or just welcoming a loved one home.

Museum of Danish America's Annual Christmas Tree

Papirklip, paper-cutting, is a Danish tradition that continues among many people of Danish heritage in the United States. Each Christmas Annette Andersen of Kimballton decorates the museum's tree with her own handmade *papirklip* ornaments and *Dannebrog*.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CARD & ORNAMENT



02

includes
red
ribbon



back

01. *Museum of Danish America's Annual Christmas Card 2019*, #6025, \$15/pkg of 10; #6024, \$2/singles.

02. *Annual Keepsake Ornament 2019*, #6026, \$16. Members receive a 10% discount! More to see in-store and online: www.danishmuseum.org/shop. Orders by phone to 712.764.7001.