



# America Letter

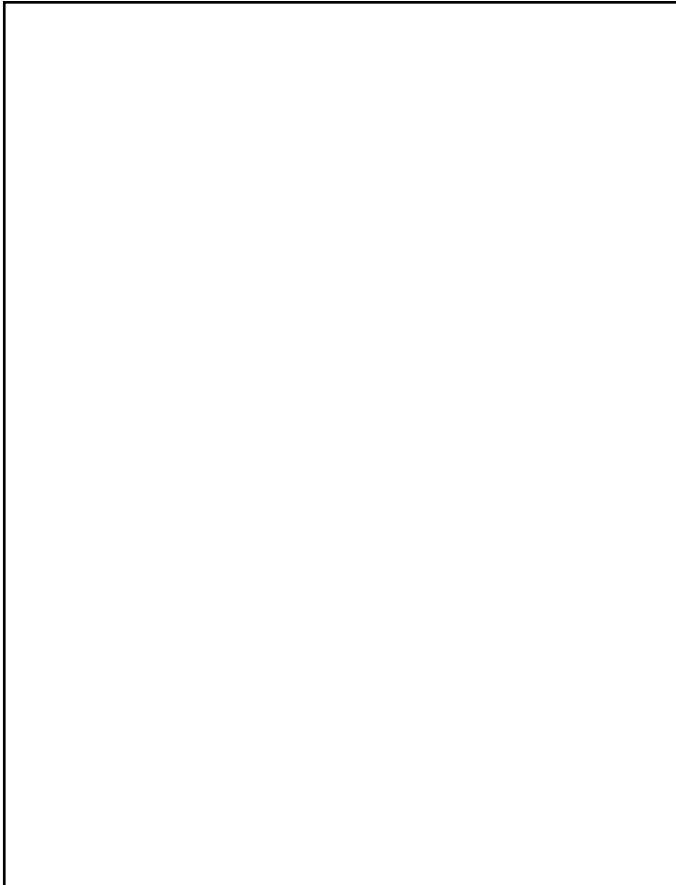
THE DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM

An International Cultural Center

BOX 470 • ELK HORN, IOWA 51531

Fall 1999


Vol. XIII, No. 4



## Many are charmed by the miniature village of Ebeltoft, installed at the Museum in late July

Children move excitedly from building to building, peering through windows and getting down on their hands and knees to look through doors. Adult visitors are amazed by the age and vitality of the builder. Those who have traveled to Denmark and who have seen Ebeltoft are particularly intrigued by this recreation. Others are charmed by the whimsical elements of the folk art.

The miniature village was built by the late Richard Storkfelt (1900-1998), a Danish immigrant who, in his 90s, recreated in his backyard the village of Ebeltoft, Denmark. His grandmother had lived in this village and, as a boy, he had spent many summers there. He recreated the buildings from memory and with the help of photographs using a one-eighth scale. During his working years, he was an electrician by trade. Drawing upon this skill, he wired the miniature

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## A rich tradition of Danish Heritage is preserved in Danevang, Texas

The Danish Heritage Preservation Society of Danevang (DHPSD) was founded 1992 to remember, preserve and honor the lives, customs and values of the Danish immigrants who, in 1894, established in Danevang the only surviving Danish community in the South. The Society was founded by a handful of first and second generation descendants of these immigrants. For so small a nucleus, the achievements of the Society to date have been quite remarkable.

The Society has held festivals and gatherings celebrating the Queen's Birthday, Danish Constitution Day, Julefest, and other occasions. A massive historic photo project was conducted in 1998 in conjunction with the Institute of Texan Cultures. As a result of these community-wide sessions, Danevang has one of the most outstanding photographic negative collections of any community in Texas. At present, the Heritage Society is embarking on educational projects for area school children. A portable trunk is being prepared with tools, household items, food samples, songs, and simple folk games and dances for students to learn.

In 1993, the DHPSD raised funds to purchase a site for its headquarters. It bought three acres of land from the Danevang church at the northeast intersection of FM 444 and State Highway 71. In time, this purchase became known as Heritage Park. The Society acquired the Park's first building in 1994. At that time the pioneer house of Hans Peter and Maren Jensen, built in 1894, was moved to the park grounds, 3/4 mile east of its original location. The intent was to return the house to its condition prior to the First World War. The fact that the Jensen house dated from Danevang's founding was particularly well suited to the Society's interpretative project. Concurrently, a

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## Danish Royal Opera Quartet enthralls audience

A concert by The Royal Danish Opera Quartet on November 3rd turned out to be the major cultural event of the season as a crowd of some 250 men, women and children gathered at the Elk Horn Lutheran Church to hear these leading singers from the Royal Danish Opera company.

The repertoire consisted of classical opera, Danish folk songs and some popular show tunes. The crowd was par-

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# Danevang, Texas . . .

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1930's farm shed and its contents, a rich collection of artifacts known locally as the "Hansen Museum", were donated by the family of Harold Hansen to the Society and moved to Heritage Park. The Hansen Shed, which is used as a Society work space, also doubles as a display area for small exhibits.

The first years of the Danevang settlement were disastrous despite the long hours and hard work put in by the settlers. Some of them had come directly from Denmark, but most came from Iowa and Illinois. Hans Peter and Maren Jensen had joined some 90 other Danish immigrant families residing in the midwest who purchased land through a developer at \$9.00 per acre and moved to southeast Texas to form a new farming community. The Jensens had originally immigrated from Denmark, met, married, moved to Iowa, raised a family, and farmed as tenants for 29 years. In Texas, Jensen farmed the land and, for six years, carried mail between El Campo and Danevang for a yearly salary of \$500.

During the first years, the settlers tried to grow the wheat and oats that had flourished in the northern climates. The humid and tropical heat of the Texas Gulf Coast caused their crops to mildew in the fields. Soon they realized that the cash crop of the region was cotton. Ranching took the place of dairy farming. It was not long before the Danes of Danevang were regarded among the best and most successful farmers of the region. Then came the hurricane of 1900 (the one that wiped out the city of Galveston) bringing destruction to crops and buildings. Some Danevang residents

later chose to move on to the new settlement in Solvang. Most, however, persevered. In time, they formed many coop-

exterior

quilt

cotton bales

Cotton modules in the gin yard await further processing. The compacted cotton will be ginned and put into bales. The Danevang Cooperative Cotton Gin sells the cotton seeds for feed and for the making of cotton seed oil.

erative ventures such as their telephone company. To this day, the Danevang Cooperative Cotton Gin is one of the busiest in the country. This year it will set a new record by ginning 56,000 bales (the former record was 49, 000).

The Jensen's one-and-one half story frame house, built in 1894, had a one-story attached kitchen and porch. Details indicate that the house was a prefabricated structure which would have been shipped in sections and assembled at the site by the owner or a carpenter crew hired for the occasion<sup>1</sup>. The wood frame, particularly, is peculiar in size and spacing of studs and rafters. Windows are arranged symmetrically and reflect the same location as those at the opposite elevation. The interior is painted wood bead-board<sup>2</sup>. 1-1/8 inch thick Douglas fir flooring was used on both floors. Wood stoves in kitchen and dining rooms provided heat. Roof slopes, as elsewhere in Danevang, were steeper than those in neighboring towns.

Initially, the family was unable to afford wood drop siding for the house exterior. They elected instead to sheathe the house with the same Douglas fir material used for flooring, applied vertically. Wood drop siding was added later, as resources permitted. The strength of the flooring/sheathing undoubtedly contributed to the house's longevity, since it survived major hurricanes in 1900, 1909, 1939, 1945, 1963, and 1983. The 1945 storm scored a direct hit on Danevang, destroying the community church.

The house, at one time, had a "secret" stair riser which slid horizontally to reveal a small steel safe for valuables. Everyone in Danevang seemed to be aware of the safe, but must have realized that it could contain little on its owner's meager income, so its security was never breached. In the 1930's and 1940's, the house was occupied by daughter Elizabeth, her husband, V. J. Juhl, and two daughters. Maren Jensen resided there until her death in 1943. During this period, the kitchen was removed from the south side of the house to become an outbuilding, and was replaced by a porch. Dormers, a bay window and several additional rooms were added at the north and east sides. By the time the Danish Heritage Preservation Society was formed, the original property had passed from the Juhl daughters to the H. D. Madsen interests. The house, badly deteriorated, was allowed to remain undisturbed on the property for two years, and then graciously donated by the Madsen family to the Heritage Society.

In 1995, the Society completed work on the house exterior, and the shed exterior and interior. House dormers, bay window, and wings were demolished, and a replica of the original kitchen was

<sup>1</sup>The stair has a vestigial top riser, indicating that amateur carpenters had problems in assembling stair elements. Interior wood trim has a cant to the edges suggesting a more sophisticated origin than existing lumber sources of the day.

<sup>2</sup>Interior partitions are a single 7/8 inch thickness of wood bead-board, beaded both sides. Bead board at interior surfaces of exterior walls was installed continuously from first floor to roof, and second floor framing was fastened through the finish material to support the second floor.

Top, an exterior view of the pioneer house that belonged to Hans Peter and Maren Jensen. The exterior restoration was completed in 1995. Above, an interior view of the Hansen Shed which currently doubles as the DHPSD work space and display area.

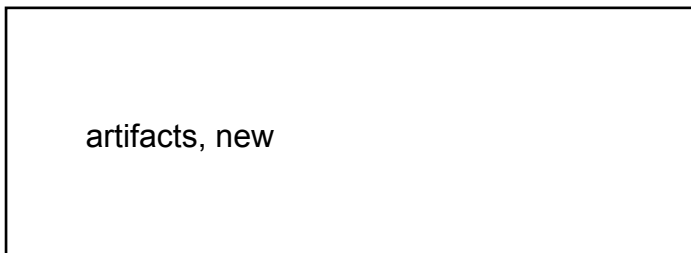
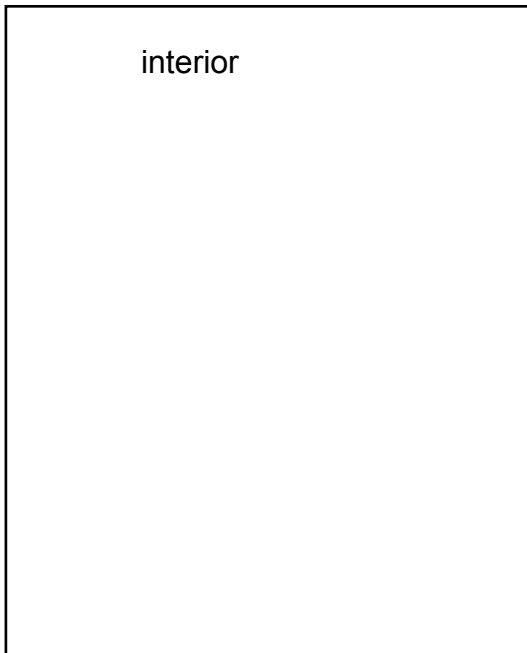
# Danevang, Texas . . .

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added. Work continued on the house interior. Society members laboriously removed one layer of painted masonite, six layers of wallpaper, and many tacks before discovering the original paint. In 1998 a contractor was hired, and the house interior restoration was completed. Major painting was completed in 1999, following the original color scheme.

The Danish Heritage Preservation Society of Danevang regards their Heritage Park as a living heritage of those brave Danish Americans who settled in this area of Texas. It is in this light that they will show and interpret the Park. As part of their future plans for Heritage Park, the Society will undertake the construction of farm outbuildings, and a barn like museum structure. The latter building will serve as their interpretive center with exhibit spaces, work spaces, a library and related facilities. The building of the barn museum is regarded as the Society's most challenging project to date. Groundbreaking is scheduled during a Fastelavn's celebration March 3rd and 4th, 2000.

Editorial note: Material for this article was supplied by Bridget Jensen and by Hans Jensen, both of whom reside in Houston, Texas.



Photograph taken in February 1999. Top, the Jensen house parlor. Restoration has been completed since that time and the room painted according to the original color scheme. Above, a temporary display of kitchen utensils is set out in the reconstructed kitchen space. The display will be replaced by kitchen furnishings appropriate to the time period. The wood bead-board walls have already been painted.



## Wall of Honor

These are the registered names of immigrants who have been placed on the Wall of Honor in The Danish Immigrant Museum, from July 1, 1999 to September 30, 1999. Following the registered name are the names of the family and friends who have made contributions toward this special recognition of the immigrant. Family and friends are also asked to submit the story of the immigrant and their family history, where it is then placed in the Family History and Genealogy Center. The Wall of Honor is an excellent starting point for visitors to the Museum when searching for their own name, or that of a family member.

- Christian W. Christensen, Hancock, IA** – Esther Christensen, Harlan, IA  
**Mads & Maria Margretha Jacobsen Christensen, Humboldt, IA** – Arlie & Ardy Askelson, Indian Hills, CO  
**Ole Christian and Martha Lauritzen Christensen, Elkhorn, IA** – 3 Sons & Families % Leonard Christensen, Springfield, MO  
Andrew and Serena Pederson, Christiansen, Holden, MO – 1st Generation Christiansen Pederson Cousins (% Mildred Massman)  
**Christian Olaf Christiansen, Atlantic, IA** – Hugo & Mary Ann Block, Stephenville, TX  
**Laarens Clausen, Avoca, IA** – Family of Laarens Clausen % Jean Redinbaugh, Neola, IA  
**Chris and Caroline Eibey, Ogden, IA** – Gordon & Sharon Jones, Prairie City, IA  
**Finn B. Eriksen, Kimballton, IA** – Mrs. Finn (Lydia) Eriksen, Waterloo, IA  
**Soren Simonsen & Kjestena Marie Petersen Faaborg, Audubon County, IA** – Gerald K. Faaborg, Joplin, Mo; Darwin L. Faaborg, Colorado Springs, CO; Lyle Faaborg, Atlantic, IA; Judy Patten, Harlan, IA  
**Erick Rasmus & Laurina Marie Nielsen Goldman, Albert Lea, MN** – Leo & June Buchan, Florence, AZ; (Magnus) & Pearl Goldman, Duluth, MN; (Leonard Erick Goldman), Albert Lea, MN; Alvina & Florence Goldman, Albert Lea, MN; (Alan) & Doris Wedge, Florence, AZ; Leonard & Katie Goldman, Isle, MN; Ed & (Marge) Goldman, McGregor, MN; Donald & Arline Goldman, Isle, MN; (Harold) & Ann Rapp, Florence, AZ; (Paul) & Rosanne Goldman, Webster, MN; (Kenneth) & Margaret Goldman, Aitkin, MN; Norman & (Pat) Goldman, Ft. Myers, FL  
**Anton Hansen, Ashwood, TX** – Henry & Nancy Hanson, Sweeny, TX  
**Hans Christian Hansen, San Francisco, CA** – Nels K. & Doris Mae Nelson, Bloomington, MN  
**Jens Christian Jorgen Hansen, St. Paul, MN** – Nels K. & Doris Mae Nelson, Bloomington, MN  
**Kathrine Hansen, Tyler/Askov, MN** – Nels K. & Doris Mae Nelson, Bloomington, MN  
**Lars Jorgen and Andrine Jensen Jacobsen, Dannebrog, NE** – Allan D. Jacobsen, (JACOBSEN'S GRANDCHILDREN) Audubon, IA  
**Tage Ketelsen, Detroit, MI** – Eric & Ginger Ketelsen, Rochester, MI  
**Christen Kjolhede, Alta, IA** – Arnold & Marian Kjolhede, Alta, IA  
**Martin Peter and Marie Petrine Buch Larsen, Kimballton, IA** – Children: Chris L. Larsen, Anna Dortha Larsen Rasmussen, Laura Eline Larsen Pedersen, William A. Larsen, Alfred Eli Larsen, Martha M. Larsen Hansen  
**Peter & Mary Mortensen, Shelby County, IA** – John Martinsen, Bellevue, WA  
**Peter S. & Nina Mosegaard, Junction City, OR** – Arnold Bodtker, Junction City, OR  
**Hans Nielsen Mumm, Staplehurst, NE** – Ann Render, Springfield, MO  
**Holger Sanbeck Nielsen, Marcus, IA** – Beulah K. Nielsen, Kimballton, IA  
**Harald Olsen, San Diego, CA** – Dean & Roselynn Brown, San Diego, CA; Warren & Donna Burton, Alpine, CA; Frank & Effie Triplett, San Diego, CA; Ida & Willy Harloff, San Diego, CA; Alfred & Edith Wulff, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada; Leo & Else Kruse, El Cajon, CA; Carl & Betsey Tranberg, San Diego, CA; Jorgen & Gerda Rasmussen, Dan Diego, CA  
**Peter Pedersen, Gowen, MI** – Susan Conner, Sisters, OR  
**Niels and Bodil Madsen Petersen, Chehalis, WA** – Owen & Bodil Petersen Bratvold, Coeur D'Alene, ID  
**Maddes & Anne M. Hansen Smidt, Shelby County, IA** – John L. Martinsen, Bellevue, WA  
**Anna Christina Hummelgaard Smith, Battle Creek, IA** – Dorothy S. McVinue, Ida Grove, IA  
**Jens Thuesen, New York, NY** – Karen Massaro, Santa Cruz, CA

# Richard Storkfelt and Ebeltoft

Editorial note: Ebeltoft village was a gift delivered to the Museum with great love, the love and admiration of a grandson for his grandfather. As a grandfather, Richard Storkfelt represented a vitality and a continuing growth and personal unfolding that was deeply inspirational to those who allowed themselves the time to get to know him. As he built the miniature village of Ebeltoft, he became increasingly freer as an individual and lighter of spirit. Both Wesley and Willy Reddick found his transformation truly inspirational and grew closer to him during this period. Because of the uniqueness of this experience, Wesley was asked to write about his grandfather and what the building of Ebeltoft meant to him. The portrait that unfolds in the following paragraphs adds a rich dimension to the experience of Ebeltoft village.

Richard Storkfelt came to America as a skilled licensed electrician, but had to start off in this new world as an unskilled laborer. Painting, shoveling snow and odd jobs kept enough money coming in, that when added to his bride's earnings as a dressmaker's assistant, they made room and board plus a little savings.

At times he was frustrated though. He had spent several years in Copenhagen as the electrical foreman in a large manufacturing plant. He was respected by his crew and relied on by management to get the job done and done right. Here in America, though, no one knew that. Richard knew only a few words of English and his Danish master electrician's license meant very little to anyone except himself and a few Danish friends.

Still he worked hard. With his arduous Danish trade school apprenticeship and his perfectionist furniture-maker father's strict hand ever present in his mind, Richard attacked every job with zeal, doing it by the book, or better when the book was not available.

He had to prove to his new country, his father and his two older brothers (who were less than respectful of his vocation) that he was worthy. Richard often said, "If you work harder and do a good job, you are rewarded. That's how it works in America." As a result, Richard was always working.

By the time he was established and had a house of his own in Sharon, Massachusetts, he could build just about anything, and so he did. Hi-fi cabinets and speakers, (he loved music and taught ballroom dancing with his wife Dagmar), a two-car garage, light fixtures, gardens and so on.

He did eventually earn his American electrician's license and worked as company electrician and foreman in a couple of manufacturing plants. He retired in 1965 at the vibrant age of 65, but continued to work for extra income and the electrical needs of his three daughters and extended families.

Richard's history of making things remained strictly

live man

Photo by Willy Reddick

Richard Storkfelt emigrated from Denmark in 1925, locating in Massachusetts. He soon settled in the town of Sharon with his young bride, Dagmar Larsen. He supported himself and his family through his work as an electrician, a trade which he began learning at 14. It was well into his retirement that he began to build the miniature village of Ebeltoft.

utilitarian until the summer of his 82nd year. That is when he built something completely unnecessary and whimsical in his backyard, a 10' tall windmill, with moving blades and interior lights. It was fashioned after the one he remembered outside the village of Ebeltoft, Denmark where he spent summers with his grandmother.

The making of a whimsical object was something different for Richard. It was a bold step in a new direction. Why hadn't he done something like this

earlier? The death of his second brother was just two years before. Maybe his brother was the last family connection he had to the old country and now Richard needed a visual connection. Also maybe now that his older brother John was gone, there was no one left looking over his shoulder, no one to prove anything more to, and no one left to say (even in

rooftop

Storkfelt's carving of "Arthur Fiedler on the roof" attests to both his love of music and a whimsical sense of humor. Photo by Willy Reddick

dancing figures

Photo by Willy Reddick

Storkfelt's Tivoli figures were modeled after Royal Copenhagen figurines - Clown, Columbine and Harlequin - works in art faience associated with Christian Joachim.

## Richard Storkfelt . . .

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Richard's mind) that making something whimsical was a useless waste of time.

After the windmill, he spent several years making light fixtures of his own design for himself and his family. They kept him occupied, that's for sure. They kept him moving and thinking, but they began to serve another function, as important as any other: self expression.

In 1985, he built a miniature (16"x24") replica of his grandmother's house in Ebeltoft complete with stork and working lights, of course. Then in 1990 after a few more light fixtures, he built the outdoor version of his grandmother's house, put it next to the windmill with connecting concrete walkway and pansy border, and the village of Ebeltoft was started. Next was his grandmother's outhouse (complete with grandmother). Then at the age of about 93 came the town hall, 5' x 3' and 10' tall to the clock tower.

As the village grew, so did Richard's imagination. He began to think more like an artist, carving wooden figures to inhabit the village, pondering the color and shape of their hair and clothes, and making them horse-drawn wagons, a seesaw and a swing. Even though his manual dexterity was waning, rather than simplifying, his carvings became more complex, more creative and more alive. At age 96-97 he built the largest building in the village. A church, 10' long, 6' wide

and 10' tall to the steeple. Plus a full congregation of carved individuals, no two alike, depicting the marriage ceremony of one of his granddaughters. All told the village boasted a population of over 50 figures including horses, storks, a dog, the mermaid of Copenhagen harbor, a princess and "Arthur Fiedler on the roof," a token symbol of his undying love for music.

As the village grew it seemed to take on a life of its own and Richard became giddy with the thought that he was the creator.

The idea of the village started as something he simply wanted to do, with no outside force causing him to build it. Then it changed to something he needed to do, a need that came from inside. The excitement and the challenge of creating a thing from the imagination inspired and energized him. His ability to express his thoughts and memories, not just of the architecture of the village, but the people in it is what gives the village its magic. Richard had a happy and musical heart and we can see and actually feel that when standing in the town center next to the Tivoli performers. Richard loved to show anyone this insider's glimpse of his wonderful Denmark. The village also reflects his love and respect for the Danish culture mixed with his love for America, its opportunity and freedom.

The church with its red and blue roofs was big enough, Richard would say, for him to sleep in. It was his last structure. He died several months after its completion.

What started out as inspiration from Richard's memory grew into inspiration for all who knew him and now hopefully for those who experience the village in the Museum. The family would like to express their deepest appreciation to The Danish Immigrant Museum for its insight and dedication to the illumination of the Danish American experience.

full view

Richard Storkfelt was born February 14, 1900. The date of each building corresponds with his age at the time of construction. For example, the Town Hall was built in 1993; he was ninety-three years old when he built it. In 1997, when he was ninety-seven years old, he built the church and carved the people in it.

# Danish Royal Opera...

- continued from page 1

ticularly pleased with three selections, including Kehrasu, from Carl Nielsen's opera "Maskarade". (A traveling exhibit from the Carl Nielsen Museum in Odense, on view at The Danish Immigrant Museum last summer, had peaked interest in Denmark's most famous composer.) Danish folk songs included Glemmer du, Knud Lavart and Kom Frit. Interspersed among classical arias such as Nessum Dorma by Turandot and O Mio Babbino Caro by Gianni Schicchi were medleys by Gershwin and Broadway hits such as One Day More from "Les Miserables". As they were taking their bows, two little girls in Danish costumes presented soprano Marie Kindberg and mezzosoprano Annie Kleinstrup with red roses. The quartet honored the applause of the enthusiastic and appreciative crowd with an encore of What a Wonderful World.

That morning the Quartet had given an educational program for 200 high school music students at the Atlantic, Iowa, high school. Prior to the performance, Inez Venning (wife of Director John Venning and Danish educator) presented the students with some background about Denmark, opera, and the various "voices" of the quartet. John Venning, Director, of the non-profit Danish Royal Quarter, said, "We particularly enjoy interacting with students and showing them how much fun opera can be."

The Danish Immigrant Museum and the Danish Windmill were hosts for this very special visit. Many area citizens assisted with transportation, the performances and the reception which followed the concert. The performers stayed in private homes in Elk Horn and Kimballton where they received a taste of Danish/American hospitality - Iowa style. On the morning of November 4th, the quartet said their good-byes to their host families and boarded a van to catch their late morning flight to Chicago where their US tour will conclude after a series of concerts in that city.

Financial support from The Danish Immigrant Museum's Board of Directors, the Danish Windmill, Corp. and the Cass County Arts Council made it possible to keep admission prices for the evening concert very low . . . just \$5 for adults and \$2.50 for children. All money donated and all funds from tickets sales were given to The Royal Opera Quartet to help defray travel expenses.

The United States tour was coordinated by Ester Fesler, President of the Upper Midwest Rebild Chapter in Minneapolis, and by Linda Steffensen of Den Danske Pioneer in Chicago. The quartet arrived in Minneapolis October 25 as guests of Rebild and presented a series of concerts in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and, a concert at Dana College in Blair, Nebraska, before arriving in Elk Horn. Steffensen has said that she would like to see more such groups perform for what could become known as the "Danish-American Cultural Triangle" in the midwest . . . namely: Minneapolis, Blair/Elk Horn and Chicago.



Benedicte Riis, dressed as Tante Andante, begins work with a new group of students.

## The Danish Immigrant Museum offers a unique educational experience

Benedicte Riis, an educator from Ebeltoft, Denmark, spent the week of October 25th at The Danish Immigrant Museum where she taught approximately 265 of the area's third and fourth grade school children. As Tante Andante, her program of song, round games and paper cutting art kept her audience captivated. They joyfully learned Danish and English songs and Danish American immigrant history. The Danish Immigrant Museum provided an excellent location and backdrop for this talented and energetic Danish musician. A special thank you is extended to the organizations which funded this project: the Iowa Arts Council, the Elk Horn Kimballton School, the Aid Association for Lutherans and the Audubon County Players. This unique educational experience will be presented in greater detail in the next issue of the America Letter.

**The America Letter:** Published Quarterly  
Available through annual membership in The Danish Immigrant Museum. Contact the Museum for membership levels and benefits.

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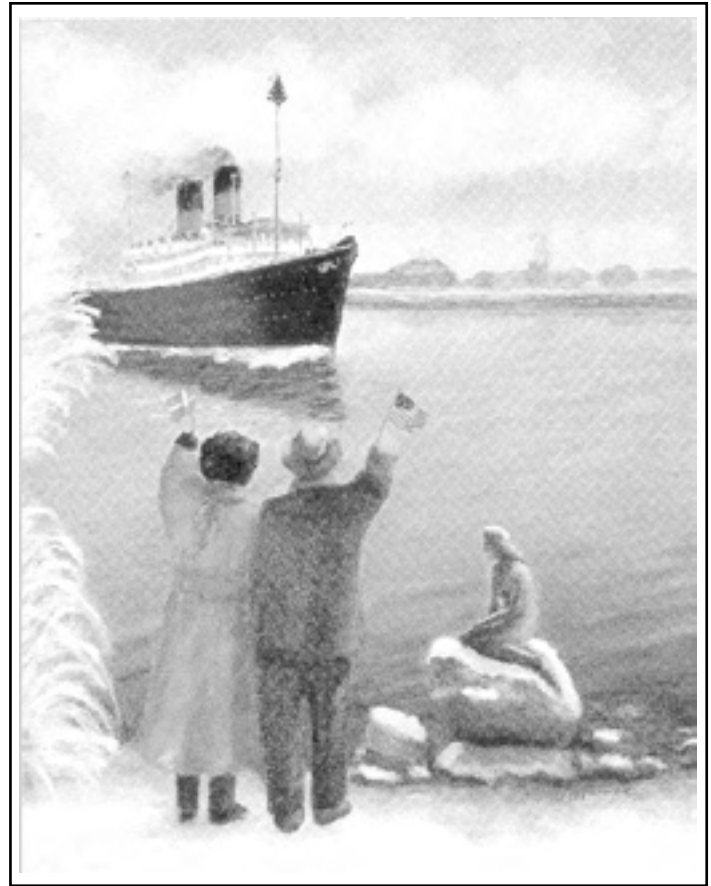
Photographers: Ronald Jones, Museum Staff

# Arrival of Christmas ship portrayed in Museum's 11th Annual Holiday Card

The Museum Shop is proud to announce the release of The Danish Immigrant Museum's 11<sup>th</sup> annual Christmas card. The title of the painting used for the card is "Juleskibet Ankommer" which translates "The Christmas ship is arriving." The traditional Christmas scene depicts the arrival of a Christmas ship sailing into Copenhagen harbor while those on shore wait with excited anticipation. The Little Mermaid is incorporated into the scene as well. The artist, Lissi Vange relates that for many years after the Danish ships stopped sailing, Norwegian, Swedish and other ocean liners continued to stop in Copenhagen, bringing immigrant loved ones home for Christmas. As a young woman living in Korsor, Denmark, the artist remembers the radio announcements "Juleskibet ankommer..." signaled that the Christmas season had truly arrived.

In the words of the artist, Mrs. Lissi Vange, "In the painting I have used an old-fashioned ship, but contemporary people. I think it fits The Danish Immigrant Museum's theme Across Oceans, Across Time." Although the Danish immigrants crossed an ocean to make their new life in America, they never forgot Denmark as their homeland.

Lissi Vange of Palatine, Illinois immigrated to the United States in 1954. She has worked diligently to preserve Danish traditions and heritage while raising her family. It is only in the past decade that she has been able to give active expression to her lifelong passion for creating art. During the last several years, she has created paintings on both porcelain and canvas. Many of her canvas paintings depict Danish landscapes. She has shown her work at the Annual Scandinavian Day Picnic in South Elgin, IL and has recently been a featured artist at the Dunton Gallery in Arlington Heights, IL.



Christmas cards may be ordered through the Museum Shop by writing or phoning, (800) 759-9192, during Museum hours. Buying and sending these cards helps support the Museum's mission of preserving the culture and traditions through telling the story of the Danish immigrant and the Danish American experience.



## Fall 1999 Museum Shop Catalog is now available

The Museum Shop has released the Fall 1999 Museum Shop Catalog just in time for holiday shopping. The 32-page full color catalog features a delightful collection of gift items in a range of prices for every budget. Some favorite products are offered as well as a great many new items.

The catalog also includes descriptive information about the designers and artists whose products are featured, as well as educational information about traditions and history. It is a publication designed to offer both reading and shopping pleasure. If you do not receive your catalog in the mail or if you wish to have one sent to a friend, please phone (800) 759-9192 during Museum hours and we will be happy to help you.

## The February 2000 Board meeting will be held in Atlanta, Georgia

The 54th regular meeting of the Board of Directors of The Danish Immigrant Museum will be held in Atlanta, Georgia on February 10-12, 2000. Collaborative planning is underway with representatives of the Danish American Chamber of Commerce, the Viking Club of Georgia, Rebild Chapter and other interested Danish clubs and persons of the Atlanta area. The focus is on the Saturday night gathering which promises to be a joint-sponsored gala event with a broad invitation to all Danish Americans. As schedules and commitments finalize, we hope to announce that we have booked the Carter Center for this memorable occasion. If you are need of a winter vacation, plan to join us in February in Atlanta - and bring your dancing shoes!

## *Annual Leadership Society*

Those persons who have contributed \$2500 or more in the past 12 months, from October 1, 1998 to September 30, 1999:

Anonymous

Anonymous

Mervin Bro, Scottsdale, AZ

Lydell and Barbara Christensen, Pittstown, NJ

Charles and Joanne Frederiksen, Ames, IA

Gronbech Family Trust, San Diego, CA

Clyde and Emma Johnson, Omaha, NE

Lowell and Marilyn Kramme, Des Moines, IA

Bruce Lauritzen, Omaha, NE

Margaret A. Nielsen Estate, Beaverton, OR

Irene Nissen, Cedar Falls, IA

Erik and Jackie Olsen, Mesa, AZ

Tom and Nadine Paulsen, Bellevue, WA

Rand and Mary Louise Petersen, Harlan, IA

Halvor Strandskov, Arlington, VA

\*deceased

American Express Foundation, Princeton, NJ

Cedar Valley Danes, Cedar Falls, IA

Marne and Elk Horn Telephone Co., Elk Horn, IA

Sudan Mission (Sudanmissionen), Christianfeld, DK and Kenmare, ND

Viking Metal Cabinets, Chicago, IL

Woodmen of the World, Highlands Ranch, CO

## *Lifetime Leadership Society*

Those persons who have given a cumulative amount of \$25,000 or more:

Anonymous

Anonymous

Mervin Bro, Scottsdale, AZ

Alma O. Hartvigsen, Harlan, IA

Gunnar Horn, Omaha, NE

Gertrude Gronbech Estate, Washington, DC

Roland Jensen, Des Moines, IA

Clyde and Emma Johnson, Omaha, NE

Martha Jorgensen Estate, Audubon, IA

Lowell and Marilyn Kramme, Des Moines, IA

Bruce Lauritzen, Omaha, NE

Folmer and Vera Nyby, Fountain Hills, AZ

Erik and Jackie Olsen, Mesa, AZ

\*Olga Olsen, Watertown, SD

John I. Petersen, Estate, Waterloo, IA

Archie Petersen Estate, Harlan, IA

Rand and Mary Louise Petersen, Harlan, IA

Eugene M. Robinson, Pensacola, FL

Schultz and Schultz-Nielsen Memorial, Tustin, CA

\*Ava Simonsen, Audubon, IA

\*Harold L. Sorensen, Exira, IA

Wilber Williamson, Des Moines, IA

\*deceased

Danish Brotherhood in America, Highlands Ranch, CO

Danish Mutual Insurance Association, Elk Horn, IA

Elk Horn Lutheran Church, Elk Horn, IA

Kulturministeriet, Copenhagen, Denmark

Lutheran Brotherhood, Minneapolis, MN

Marne and Elk Horn Telephone Co., Elk Horn, IA

Peter Kiewit Foundation, Omaha, NE

Shelby County State Bank, Harlan, IA

State of Iowa, Des Moines, IA

Viking Metal Cabinets, Chicago, IL

## **Reddicks contribute time and talent to village**

Wesley and Willy Reddick, both practicing artists, spent a week in Elk Horn helping to set up their grandfather's village for display. We take this opportunity to introduce our readers to them.

Wesley Reddick (top) attended the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art in Copenhagen majoring in sculpture. His large and small scale work has been represented in several galleries in the Boston area and he has enjoyed several commissions by individuals and institutions. His large scale public friendly sitable sculptures are in the permanent collection of the Kendall Whaling Museum, the Cape Cod Community College and the Fuller Museum of Art. Wesley has supported himself as an artist through his custom carpentry and custom woodworking. He particularly enjoys projects which challenge him and which offer the opportunity for creative problem solving. Two of his most recent projects which he has particularly enjoyed is the array of specialty display cases for the Kendall Whaling Museum and the 460' long boardwalk through a wetland wildlife sanctuary for the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Willy Reddick was an artist from early on. Growing up in a family of artists, it was natural for her to go on to art school. Willy began her career as an artist/painter immediately following her attendance at the Massachusetts College of Art and has always been self-employed as an artist. She has worked commercially as a handpainter and designer for the toy industry and as a successful fine artist showing and selling her paintings and white-line woodblock prints in shows and galleries throughout the Boston area. She has been honored with commissions by the Kendall Whaling Museum for several of her works, including a 48' life-size mural of an Atlantic humpback whale. She and her husband, Wes, have studio workshops at their home in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts.



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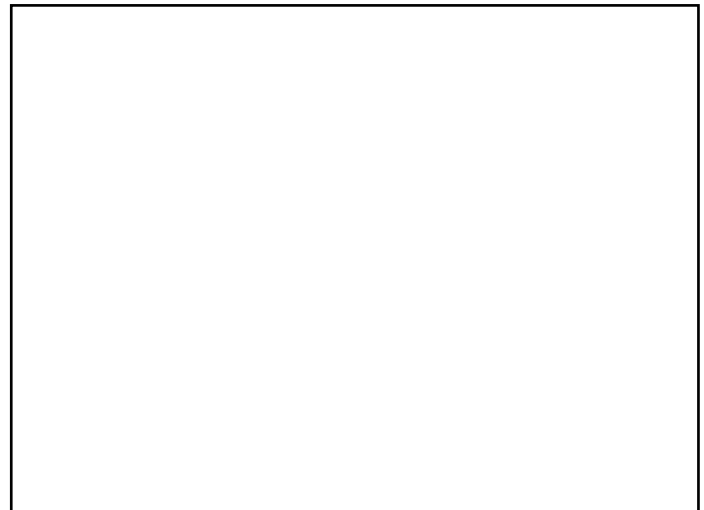
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# Board of Directors elects seven new members at annual meeting

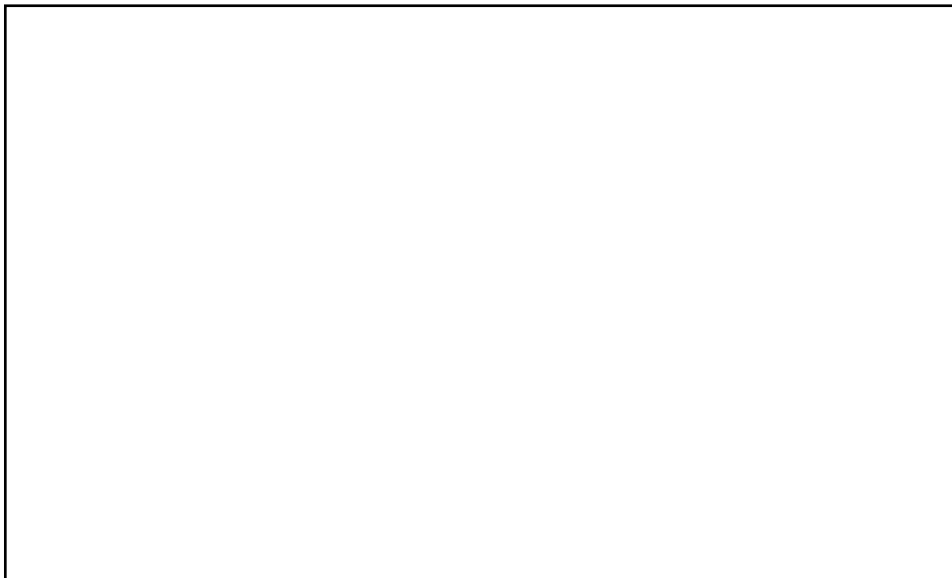
The Board of Directors of The Danish Immigrant Museum met in Elk Horn, Iowa on October 14-16 for the 16th Annual meeting and the 53rd Regular meeting of the Board of Directors. The Board members, spouses, guests and the Museum staff gathered at the Danish Inn in Elk Horn for the President's Dinner on Thursday evening. Throughout Friday, the Board's standing committees held meetings at the Museum.

The meeting of the full Board was called to order by President Charles F. Frederiksen at 8:30 a. m. on Saturday, October 16 at the Elk Horn Town Hall. Seven new Board members were elected along with five current members who were re-elected for a second three-year term. Re-elected to a second three-year term were Harold Berg, Ogden, IA; Carol

– Continued on page 12



Outgoing President Charles F. Frederiksen (left) and newly elected Board President Halvor Strandskov exchange congratulations.



## Consul visits Copenhagen

During a recent visit to Copenhagen, Consul Lowell Kramme (left), accompanied by his daughter Maria and wife Marilyn, updated American Ambassador Richard Swett on happenings at The Danish Immigrant Museum. He also presented him with the book *Embracing Two Worlds: The Thorvald Muller Family of Kimballton*, edited by Barbara Lund-Jones and John W. Nielsen. Consul Kramme served on the Museum's Board of Directors from October 1993 through October 1999. He has been a very active supporter of the Museum.



## Demonstrations in Danish cross-stitch continue

Aveline Marks of Omaha, NE, who has worked extensively in Danish cross-stitch and demonstrated widely in this form of needlework, will demonstrate her craft from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. during Julefest (Saturday, November 27). She will also continue her demonstrations during the third Saturday of each month. Her schedule for early 2000 is as follows: Saturday, January 15; Saturday, February 19; Saturday, March 18. These dates are, of course, dependent upon the weather. A severe snow or ice storm will automatically cancel her demonstration for that day.

*Just a Reminder –*

### The Museum's FALL AND WINTER HOURS

(September 15-May 15) are:

Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.;

Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. &

Sun. Noon to 5 p.m.

Admission: \$3.00, adults; \$1.50, children

Free for current members

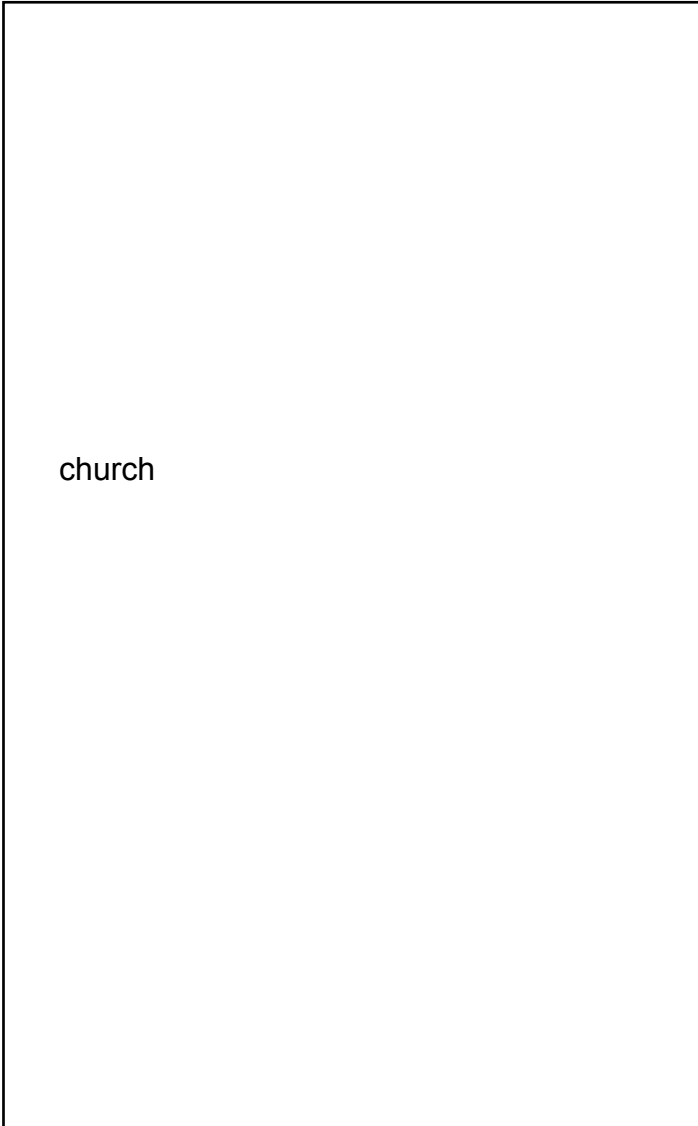
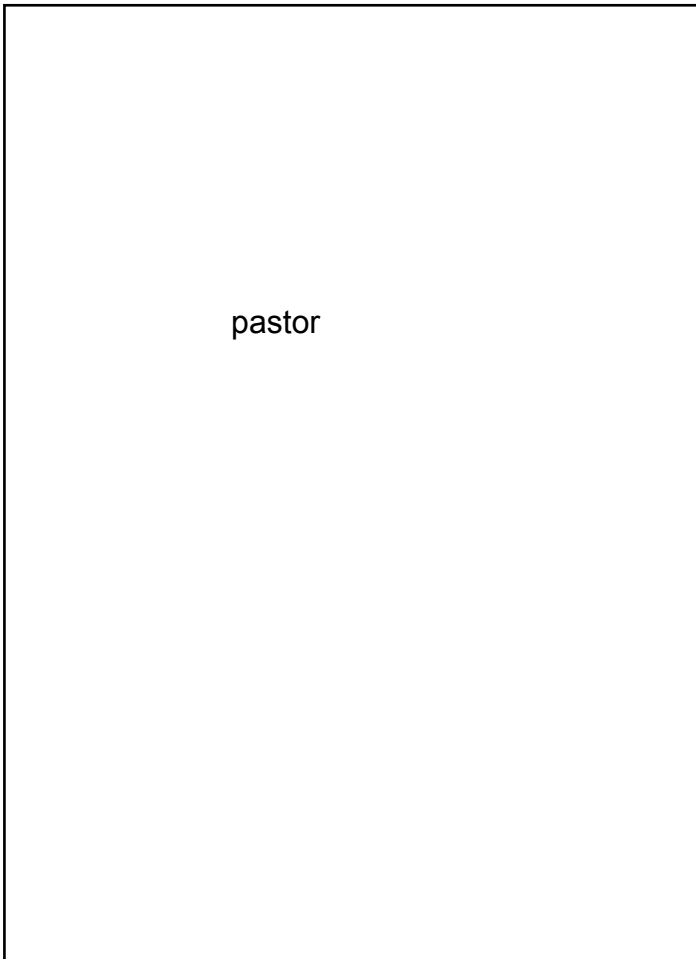
# Miniature village . . .

– continued from page 1

buildings for lighting. In time, he added figures to populate the village, often naming them after friends and family. He sculpted some of the figures to represent earlier phases of his own life.

This remarkable folk art creation was first brought to the Museum's attention by the curator at the Fuller Museum of Art in Brockton, Massachusetts. The Fuller Museum had mounted a special exhibition of the village late last year and, following its closing, inquired as to whether The Danish Immigrant Museum might be interested in acquiring this striking folk art production.

Storkfelt's grandson, Wesley Reddick, and his wife, Willy, who had set up the 1998 Ebeltoft exhibit at the Fuller Art Museum, volunteered their labor to set up it up here. Their close familiarity with the village was an invaluable asset in mounting the display at The Danish Immigrant Museum. They, in close collaboration with volunteer Ron Jones, worked long hours to assure its best presentation in this space. Wesley, himself a finish carpenter, undertook important restorative work on the windmill, always striving to maintain the distinctive quality of his grandfather's stylistic signature. Willy Reddick, using her expertise as a colorist, gave a number of the buildings a fresh coat of paint using the same shadings that Storkfelt had originally put on them.



Those visitors who have been to Ebeltoft, Denmark readily recognize Storkfelt's replica of the Town Hall. At left, the pastor presides over his congregation seated in the church. The congregation may be seen through a back window in the church; ...but to see the minister, visitors must kneel down and peer through the door or a low window at church front.

The acquisition of a major collections gift such as the miniature rendition of Ebeltoft village represents the collaborative efforts of many individuals. A special thank you is extended to all of those who helped make this acquisition reality. We wish to express our deep appreciation to the daughters of Richard Storkfelt - Elsie Gleichauf, Elaine Leedham and Grethe Reddick - who gave the village to the Museum and who had the foresight to realize the importance of preserving and sharing this treasure of Danish immigrant heritage with future generations.

We thank all of those made it possible to bring the village from Massachusetts to Iowa, a distinct challenge in itself. Special thanks goes to Harold and Lois Berg (Iowa), Merv Bro (Arizona) and Lis and Iver Jorgensen (California) for their financial contributions which funded the move and the installation of the village at the

overview w/mermaid

Storkfelt has peopled the heart of Ebeltoft village with his folk carvings. The Mermaid and the Tivoli figures occupy center stage. But at right, just in front of the yellow house, there is a representation of Storkfelt's grandson Wesley Reddick, his wife Willy and their dog Baron. Closer to the foreground, visitors are welcomed to Ebeltoft by a male figure holding a sign.

Museum. Working with Jim Breining of Five Oaks Charters in Des Moines, we were able to engage the services of a trucking company, Crawford Trucking Inc. of Des Moines, willing to deliver the village to us at the cost of mileage only. The loading on that end was taken care of by family members and the unloading on this end by volunteers. We give a special salute to those volunteers who braved Iowa's summer heat (90's) to bring the heavy structures of Ebeltoft into the Museum: Bill Gift, Paul Hansen, Lynn Johnson, Andy Kissel, Eivind Lillehoj, Lyle Pedersen and Wesley Reddick. Wesley oversaw the physical loading of the village in Massachusetts and its unloading in Iowa, ensuring that its packing, handling and movement were undertaken with great care.

wagon

parade

### Ringsted holds centennial celebration

Ringsted, Iowa held its centennial this past summer, August 13-15. One of the high points of this remarkably well organized event was the presence of the RingstedKoret from Ringsted, Denmark. The RingstedKoret gave both vocal and folk dance performances throughout the weekend. The city of Ringsted, Denmark and town of Ringsted, Iowa have long enjoyed a warm relationship and an exchange of friendship among their citizens.

# Plans for Julefest 1999 are underway



Plans for the annual Julefest celebration in the Danish villages of Elk Horn and Kimballton are well underway. The annual festival will be held November 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. The celebration will include Danish food, craft boutiques, entertainment and an appearance by Father Christmas. The local gift shops will be decorated in holiday splendor and will be fully stocked with Christmas gift ideas for the entire family.



Many activities are being planned for The Danish Immigrant Museum. "Story Time with Grandma Ruth", featuring Ruth Herman Nielsen reading translated Danish children's stories, is a perennial favorite for the youngsters. Traditional Danish homemade Christmas cookies will be served. The demonstration on making Danish Christmas tree ornaments is a popular activity and will be repeated this Julefest. The annual Christmas tree decorated with traditional Danish ornaments will have a prominent place on the exhibition floor. A sing-along with Danish Christmas songs is an added feature this year. A quilt drawing will be held on Saturday, November 27<sup>th</sup> and someone will be the lucky winner of a

beautiful king size handmade Amish quilt donated by Museum member, Laura Binns of Panora, IA. The Museum Shop will feature drawings for door prizes and special pricing on selected gift items.

Bedstemor's House will be open during Julefest and will be decorated for Christmas with a traditional Danish Christmas tree. Coffee and cookies will be served to guests who wish to experience Christmas at a turn-of-the-century Danish grandmother's house.

Julefest will also offer Museum visitors an opportunity to enjoy a range of exhibits. The miniature Ebletoft Village with its delightful carved characters is of special interest for children as well as adults. A special exhibit opening for the holidays will focus on Elk Horn's early folk school, the first of its kind to be founded by Danish immigrants in the United States. Visitors will also be able to see the dramatic progress made in the Lower Level Visual Storage Area, which first opened to the public as a "work in progress" during Julefest 1998.



## New Members . . .

— continued from page 9

Jorgensen, Dike, IA; John Molgaard, Atlantic, IA; Norma Lange Nelson, Elk Horn, IA; and Janet Thuesen, Falls Church, VA. The seven new members elected for a three-year term are Dennis Andersen, Atlanta, GA; Thomas Christensen, Bettendorf, IA; Anne Marie Douglas, Chicago, IL; Vern Hunter, Fargo, ND; Joy Ibsen, Evanston, IL; Ellen Westergaard Jackson, West Des Moines, IA; and Clark Mathisen, Omaha, NE.

The Board of Directors elected their officers for the current year. Halvor Strandskov of Alexandria, Virginia was elected President of the Board and Janet Thuesen of Falls Church, Virginia was elected Vice President. Helen Stub of Minneapolis, Minnesota was elected as Secretary and John Molgaard of Atlantic, Iowa was elected Treasurer. The officers terms will run from October, 1999 to October 2000.

Board meeting dates for the year 2000 were announced under new business. The Board of Directors will convene in Atlanta, GA, February 10-12; Chicago, IL, June 8-10; and again in Elk Horn, IA on October 19-21 for the 17th Annual meeting.

On Saturday evening, the Board hosted 160 guests at the T-Bone Club in Audubon, Iowa. The large crowd of friends of the Museum was treated to an extraordinary buffet dinner. Following the dinner, guests were entertained by "Sweet Inspiration" from

Harlan, Iowa. The female quartet and their band, well known in the region for their pop vocal arrangements, were well received by the audience.

Outgoing board members Jim Iversen of Ames, IA; Svend Koch of Cedar Falls, IA; Royal Danish Consul Lowell Kramme of Des Moines, IA; and Leroy Petersen of Elk Horn, IA were presented plaques recognizing their years of dedicated service. Retiring President Chuck Frederiksen of Ames, IA was also presented a plaque recognizing his outstanding service as President of the Board of Directors for the past two years.

The keynote speaker for the evening was Mr. Tom Morain, Administrator of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Mr. Morain delivered a powerful and challenging message to the audience of Museum board members and supporters. Mr. Morain encouraged those involved with The Danish Immigrant Museum to understand the historical significance of the Museum's mission to future generations. He encouraged them to extend as well the scope and depth of the vision for the Museum's future.

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## Conserving the past, brightening the present:

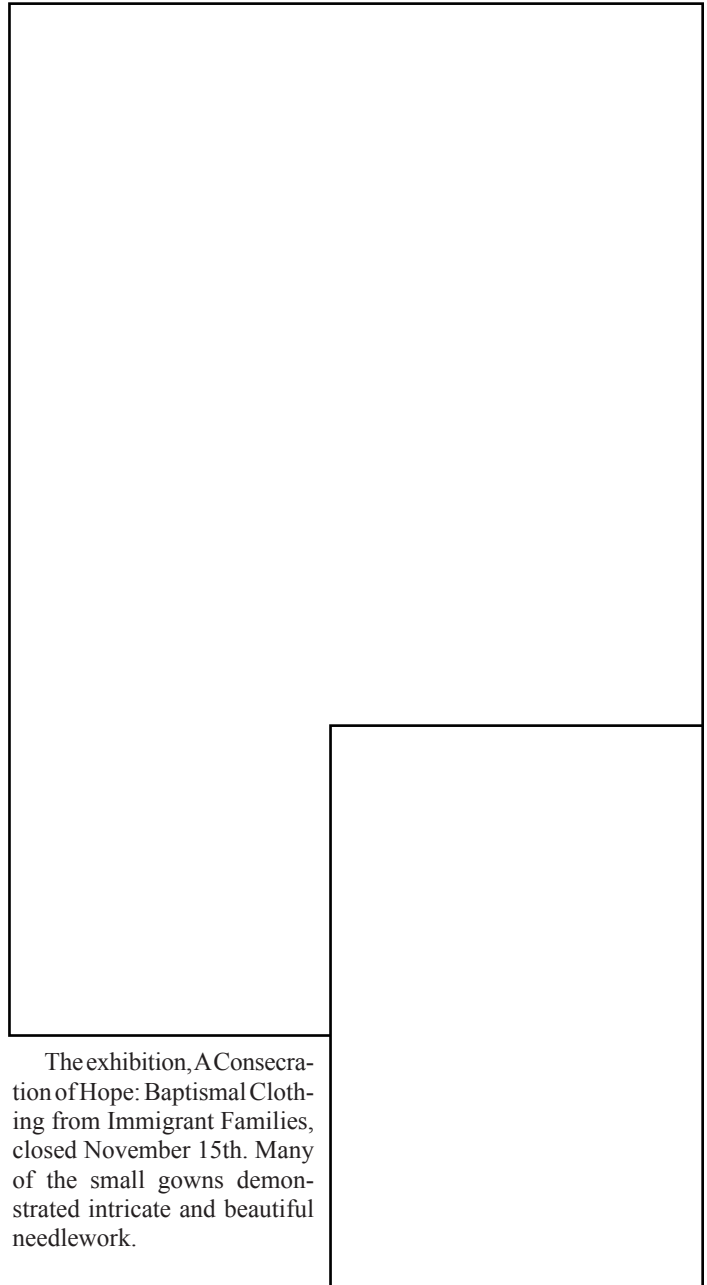
# A look at how the christening gowns were prepared for exhibition

Editorial note: So many of our visitors have expressed interest in the process we used to prepare the baptismal gowns for display that we have decided to share this information with readers of the [America Letter](#).

It was necessary to clean the majority of the small garments prior to the exhibition, as so many had yellowed with time. In consultation with Laura Gilbertson, textile curator and conservator at Vesterheim, the following cleaning process was used for these delicate garments. They were gently hand washed in Orvus<sup>1</sup>, a very mild detergent used in dairies and available in some quilt shops. Distilled water was used in all the processes described here to avoid any damage to the fabrics from the mineral content of tap water. Sturdier fabrics were pre-soaked in a “anionic surfactant” such as “Biz” or “Snowy”. Those garments with persistent stains were immersed in a mild bleaching solution comprised of equal parts of hydrogen peroxide and distilled water, placed in a ziplock bag and left overnight. They were never endangered by this procedure as the bleaching process comes to a natural stop. The garments were then washed again in mild detergent and distilled water and rinsed thoroughly. All garments were dried on a flat, covered surface. In total, thirty of the garments on display were delicately hand washed; twelve of the dresses required pre-soaking and peroxide treatment because of severe staining. The results were so successful that they underscored the conservation benefit of this type of care.

Credit for the success of this treatment goes to Fern Kissel, Collections Assistant, who moved each of these small garments through their various cleaning processes with great care and warm concern. In the course of their treatment, she became quite attached to the individual gowns and the “personalities” given to them by their makers.

<sup>1</sup>Proportion: 1 teaspoon of Orvus to one gallon of water.



The exhibition, A Consecration of Hope: Baptismal Clothing from Immigrant Families, closed November 15th. Many of the small gowns demonstrated intricate and beautiful needlework.



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## The Danish Brotherhood in America offers a 15 day Scandinavia tour which kicks off with Denmark's 4th of July, 2000 Rebild Festival

The three-day 4th of July, 2000 Rebild Festival in Denmark will mark the beginning of a 15 day Scandinavia tour being organized by The Danish Brotherhood in America. The itinerary is unusual in that it provides four different options after the initial three days that the group will spend in Rebild. One option is provided for those people who want to strike out on their own and travel independently. The other three options all involve traveling as a group but with a choice of touring Denmark, Sweden or Norway. Those staying in

a group will be taken to all the most popular sites in that country. Those traveling independently may, if they wish, join the others on the return home or they can make other plans.

Prices vary based on city of origin and the tour option chosen. For more information contact Jim Breining of Five Oaks Charters in Des Moines 1-800-310-6754 or Jensen World Travel 1-800 T JENSEN or by looking for complete tour details at [www.jensenworldtravel.com](http://www.jensenworldtravel.com).

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# Members of the Royal Danish Consul group are hosted at the Museum

Those people who attended a special luncheon on 24 July at The Danish Immigrant Museum in Elk Horn, Iowa were treated to a rare privilege, a guided tour by Museum Curator Barbara Lund-Jones of the inner portions of the Visual Storage area and the other artifact storage and exhibit preparation areas of the Museum which visitors to

the Museum ordinarily do not see. Ms. Lund-Jones explained the artifact accessioning and handling process, including the numbering process and system, record keeping and the arrangement of artifacts on the many shelves which visitors to the Museum can see through glass walls. The behind-the-scenes tour and explanation by the Museum's Curator proved to be most interesting and informative.

The luncheon was hosted by the Museum and Honorary Consul Lowell Kramme and Mrs. Marilyn Kramme of Des Moines. The visit to the Museum was part of a three-day meeting of the Royal Danish Consuls for Denmark who serve the Midwest, conducted by Consul General Bent Kiilerich of Chicago. Those who attended the meeting included the Consul General and Mrs. Ses Kiilerich, Deputy Consul General Joachim Rehder and Mrs. Alice Rehder, Vice Consul Lisbeth Christensen, all of Chicago; Consul David Christensen of Detroit, Consul Ray Daubjerg and Mrs. Cherry Daubjerg of Houston, Consul Ib Michael Gersmann and Mrs. Sue Gersmann of Corpus Christi, Consul Barry Nelson James and Mrs. Diane James of Milwaukee, Consul Lowell B. Kramme and Mrs.

Marilyn Kramme of Des Moines, Consul Bruce R. Lauritzen and Mrs. Kim Lauritzen of Omaha, Consul Karen E. Nielsen of Kansas City, Consul Anelise Sawkins and Paul Kenworthy of Minneapolis, and Vice-Consul Anna Thomsen and Hal Holiday of Houston.

Several Museum Board members and their spouses attended the event at the Museum as well. The guests were greeted by the Museum's Executive Director Leo Hensley; the luncheon was organized on premises by Pat McClure, Museum Shop Manager, and Jo Byriel, Development Coordinator. The consuls and their spouses and friends, many of whom had not had the chance to see the Museum before, left the Museum impressed with the building, exhibits, and artifacts and stated their conviction that the Museum is deserving of the support of all Danes and Americans of Danish descent across the United States. The consul group also toured the Danish Windmill, Bedstemor's House in Elk Horn, and the Little Mermaid in Kimballton while they were in the area.

Editorial note: This article was excerpted from *Den Danske Pioneer*, September 27, 1999 issue. Some editorial modifications were made.

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## Exhibition Schedule

1999

### **And the People Came . . . Elk Horn's Folk School, a Crucible of Danish Immigrant History**

November 26, 1999 - May 7, 2000

The first Danish Folk School in the United States was founded in 1878 in Elk Horn, Iowa. Hundreds of immigrants studied at the school at one time or another and through their very presence gave Elk Horn a position of vital importance in Danish American history. Historian P. S. Vig estimated that between two and three thousand Danish men and women studied at the school for varying lengths of time before fanning out across the globe to assume their different positions in life..

2000

### **Hans Christian Andersen: Life and Art 1825-1875**

April 1, 2000 - July 31, 2000

A traveling exhibition organized by the Odense City Museums in Denmark, comprised of 20 large panels illustrating the life and career of Hans Christian Andersen through texts and images. The exhibition follows the writer from his birth in Odense in 1805 through his life in Denmark and Europe to his death in Copenhagen in 1875. There are two fields of text: one describing Andersen's life and art, while the second contains excerpts from recollections and letters by the writer himself as well as by some of his contemporaries. The text is accompanied by beautiful color reproductions of related images.

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### **And the People Came . . . Elk Horn's Folk School, a Crucible of Danish Immigrant History**

closes May 7, 2000

### **Danish American Cultural Life in Chicago**

May 26, 2000 - November 5, 2000

Through the years, Danish American social groups and institutions in Chicago have taken many forms, ranging from homes for the young and the aged to clubs for socializing and singing. One of the more prominent of these has been the Dania Society of Chicago, considered to be the oldest Danish society in America. This exhibition will examine the richness and range of Chicago's Danish American cultural life from a historical perspective.

### **Pictorial Treasures: The work of Nulle Øigaard and Ib Spang Olsen**

August 7, 2000 - October 16, 2000

Danish tapestry artist Nulle Øigaard is recognized for her magnificent pictorial tapestries that often are referred to as paintings of cloth. Inspired by nature and the metaphysical world, she creates fabric collages filled with beauty and vivid colors. Ib Spang Olsen is one of Denmark's foremost graphic artists and illustrators. His extensive output includes book and magazine illustrations, book covers, pencil drawings and sketches. Among these are his much admired H. C. Andersen illustrations. The exhibit, organized by the Nordic Heritage Museum, seeks to give an overview their work. Lena Torslow Hansen has contributed in an advisory capacity.

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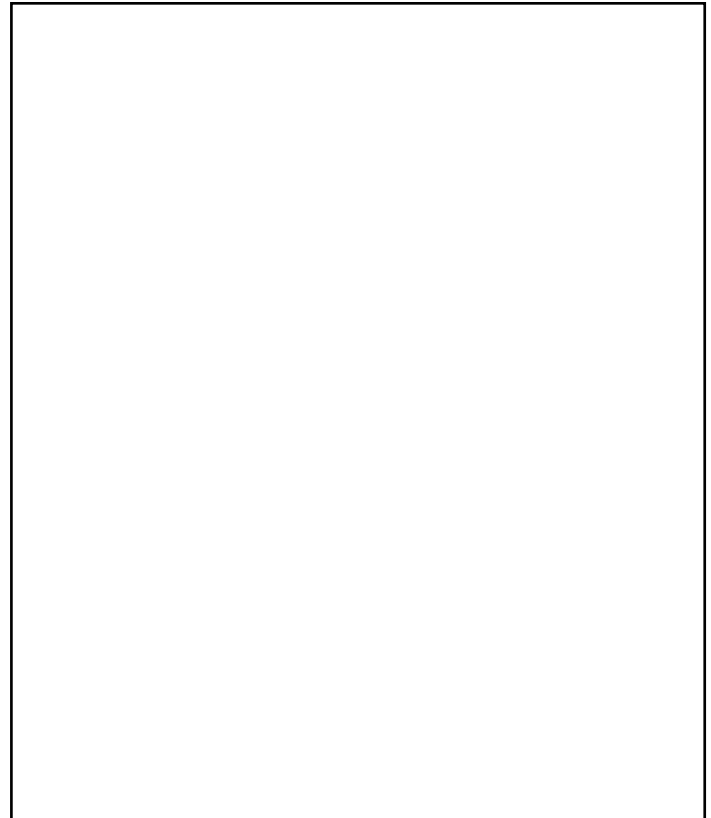
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# German Hausbarn currently being reconstructed in Manning, Iowa bears witness to Danish history as well as German

We celebrate with our Manning, Iowa neighbors to the north their 350-year old German Hausbarn reconstruction project. This enthusiastic endeavor is an impressive addition to the area's ethnic richness and heritage. The oldest barn in Iowa, and possibly the oldest barn in the United States, is now in Manning, a town founded in 1881 primarily by immigrants from Schleswig-Holstein. Believed to be the only example of authentic hausbarns in the United States, the building will undoubtedly attract many visitors of various ethnic backgrounds and geographic locations.

For those interested in styles of building, the reconstruction is of considerable interest historically in that the German Hausbarn was originally built under the Danish flag, approximately 350 years ago. The boundary lines which now delineate Germany were previously guarded by Denmark, Prussia and Austria under the rule of a succession of royalty, dictators, and British Occupation Forces. Rulers and governments have come and gone, but the hausbarn has remained intact and staid, until 1996 when it was dismantled and shipped to the United States.

This particular hausbarn was donated by a young farmer, Claus Hachmann in Schleswig-Holstein, who wanted it removed from its location on his farm. A team of students, headed up by Dr. Engemar Johannson, curator of the Molfsee Open Air Museum in Kiel, Germany took detailed measurements and drew meticulous plans prior to the dismantling and shipping to Manning. The precise instructions enabled the reconstruction to take place east of Manning on a 10-acre site. This site already boasts a 1914 house, 1917 barn and outbuildings which are on the National Register of Historical Places, and are in the process of renovation, and slated to become a functional heritage farm. A new museum building will be built in the future which will house artifacts and records preserving the area's Germanic



heritage. The preservation efforts are overseen by the Manning Heritage Foundation (712-653-3089).

The hausbarn's massive 40' high framework looms large on its 46' x 68' footprint. The thatching of the roof is nearing completion and the brickwork is progressing along. Only a portion of the original brick was shipped along with the massive timbers, in order to conserve the total weight of the shipment.

Similar replacement brick has been found in the US for completing the brickwork on the lower half of the walls. Even though there are various styles of hausbarns, this one is typical in that the living quarters for the family are on one side of the ground level and the other side is penned off for the farm animals. The shared space under one roof maximizes the use of heat and minimizes the use of precious building materials. Of course, being able to tend to the animal chores is much easier in the cold winter months also.



# Director's Corner

In the August edition of the America Letter, I talked about our strategic planning process and our need to address the issues that will be relevant to the Museum over the next twenty years. The Board members provided the finishing touches to the planning document during the October 16 Board meeting. I promised to say more about the Museum's strategic plan for the future in this issue of the Director's Corner and I am pleased to say that there is a lot of information to report to you regarding these plans.



Our programs are the heart of The Danish Immigrant Museum. As a stated goal we will strive for excellence in our programming. Quality educational programming at the Museum will be dependent upon the availability of financial and staff resources. We are making progress in our educational programming; however, the presence of permanent highly qualified staffing is essential to our goal of excellence. Another program that is of the highest priority is our Family History and Genealogy Center. The Center is currently staffed with three highly qualified volunteers who have done an excellent job of implementing and building the program that has served hundreds of people from around the country and Denmark as well. In order to accommodate more people and provide growth to the Family History and Genealogy Center, we will be required to add a professional staff member to the Museum.

Adequate funding is essential to adding and retaining highly qualified professionals. The Museum has identified two ways that we will be able to provide additional and essential funding to support excellence in programming. First, the base of members and donors to the Museum must be expanded. Currently we have approximately 2,500 members and donors. I believe

we will have to grow that number to more than 4,000 over the next three to five years to support the additional funding needed to add new programs and professional staff to the Museum. The second initiative that would provide additional significant funding is to create a permanent endowment. The endowment concept should be incorporated into our future plans to provide financial stability and growth for the Museum's programs and services.

An exploratory committee is addressing the feasibility of a future capital campaign to provide funding for a permanent exhibit gallery and a community cultural center for the Museum. Both a permanent exhibit gallery and a community cultural center are part of our long range building objectives in the strategic plan. Both are critical to the future programming of The Danish Immigrant Museum. However, a permanent endowment would be incorporated as a priority in any future capital campaigns for the Museum.

The governance of The Danish Immigrant Museum will change in the new plan. Another governance level will be created to assist in developing the funding programs of the Museum. The current Advisory Council will take on a more active role in promoting the Museum and its programs. I am very optimistic that our new and expanded governance organization will create greater enthusiasm and support from the Danish American communities throughout the country.

I believe our members and supporters of The Danish Immigrant Museum want to know of the Museum's plans, dreams and vision for the future. Bold plans for the Museum are on the drawing board. So I will use the Director's Corner to keep you informed and to ask for your thoughts and ideas. I would like to thank you for your past support of the Museum and ask for your continued support in the coming year.

**Leo Hensley**

## Protector

Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark

## Patron Members

The following persons have made a gift of \$1,000 or more in the past 12 months, between October 1, 1998 and September 30, 1999:

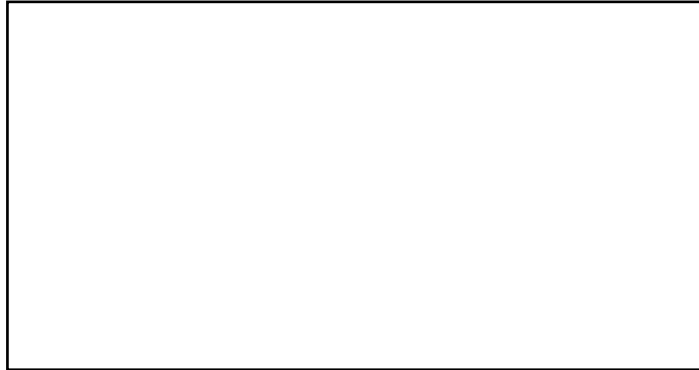
Dennis Andersen, Atlanta, GA  
Helmer Andersen, Chippewa Falls, WI  
Mildred Andersen, Elk Horn, IA  
Robert and Jean Beck, Cedar Falls, IA  
Harold and Lois Berg, Ogden, IA  
Arnold Bodtker, Junction City, OR  
Jack and Barbara Christensen, Yankton, SD  
Dr. Ross Christensen, Waterloo, IA  
Thomas and Jan Christensen, Bettendorf, IA  
Gordon and Janice Esbeck, Tipton, IA  
Howard Esbeck, Ames, IA  
Stuart and Rosalyn Fallgatter, Mesa, AZ  
Asta Forrest, Fountain Hills, AZ  
Harriet Fort, DeWitt, NE

Earl and LaVena Fries, Des Moines, IA  
Rosa Hansen, Hampton, IA  
Stew Hansen, West Des Moines, IA  
Martha Helligso, Omaha, NE  
Leo and Judy Hensley, Elk Horn, IA  
Gunnar Horn, Omaha, NE  
Vern Hunter, Fargo, ND  
James and Marge Iversen, Ames, IA  
Frode and Catherine Jensen, New Canaan, CT  
Lis and Iver Jorgensen, Gilroy, CA  
Virgil Karmgard, Fargo, ND  
Peter and Susan Kelly, Glastonbury, CT  
Lawrence and Jane Larsen, Harlan, IA  
Marlene Larsen, Calistoga, CA  
Richard Ledet, Des Moines, IA  
Margaret Lykke, Council Bluffs, IA  
Charles Manatt, Washington, DC  
John and Geri Martinsen, Bellevue, WA  
John and Karen Molgaard, Atlantic, IA  
Ruth Nielsen, Omaha, NE





FAMILY HISTORY  
&  
GENEALOGY CENTER  
**Stamtræ**



The Family History and Genealogy Center's three core volunteers: Mae Petersen standing at far left, Norma Lange Nelson and Margaret Christensen. The Center is open from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.

Editorial note: Since the Center's opening in 1996, many family mysteries have been resolved and important family linkages established. This is the second of three Stamtræ columns devoted to such stories. The current article is written by core volunteer Margaret Christensen.

Success stories can be told after most every work day in the Family History and Genealogy Center. These stories take many forms. For instance, the day has been a successful one when a patron has found an ancestor's name on a microfilm containing names of members of one of the Danish Brotherhood lodges. Recently, a beginning researcher had that experience while attending a genealogy workshop held at the Family History and Genealogy Center. In her first attempt to use a microfilm reader, Gloria was overjoyed to find her grandfather's birthplace in Denmark, providing her with the key to find earlier generations through further research.

Success comes in many ways. An Elderhostel program on Danish Culture was offered in the villages of Elk Horn and Kimballton during the first week in October. A series of classes in the fundamentals of genealogy sparked great interest in novice genealogists when they came to the Family History and Genealogy Center to start the search for their roots. For the seasoned researchers it was a week of excitement and sharing. Ample time was allotted to utilize the research tools in the Center's library. Several favorable reports of locating parishes resulted from instruction in the use of a Danish Atlas that had been the subject of a genealogy class presentation.

In the January 1999 (Vol. XIII, No. 1) issue of the America Letter, an article was written about Kay, an elderhostler in 1998 who unsuspectingly unraveled the story of her grand-

father's secret life while thumbing through the surname file index in the Family History library. I am pleased to pass along a recent development of the story.

A letter was recently sent to me from Alice, Kay's "surprise" cousin, both of whom are the granddaughters of an individual who, during an interval in his life, had relocated his wife and children to California. Remaining in Illinois, Mr. S. fathered an additional child which he reared for five years before following his wife and children to California. Alice (of the second family) described an emotional meeting of the cousins when Kay traveled with anticipation from California to unite with Alice waiting with anxiety at her home in Michigan. I treasure having been involved in the drama.

It is actually you, our readers and supporters, who contribute most greatly to our success. Please continue to support the Family History and Genealogy Center with your contributions of family histories, genealogies, resource books and financial gifts. Your help in building the library and its facilities is the greatest success story of all.



## Patron Members . . .

— continued from page 16

Mark and Lori Nussle, Palos Park, IL  
Folmer and Vera Nyby, Fountain Hills, AZ  
Henry and Sharon Olesen, Woodstock, IL  
Robert Olsen, Carroll, IA  
Nadjeschda Overgaard, Kimballton, IA  
Thelma Petersen, Harlan, IA  
Tom and Julie Rosen, Fairmont, MN  
Anelise Sawkins, Minneapolis, MN  
Dorothy Schulze, Caledonia, MN  
Lemuel and Edith Sprow, Mound, MN  
Janet Thuesen, Falls Church, VA  
Svend and Lois Toftemark, Eugene, OR  
Erik and Lissi Vange, Palatine, IL  
Wilber Williamson, Des Moines, IA

AT&T, Jacksonville, FL  
Audubon State Bank Charitable Foundation, Audubon, IA  
Charitable Gift Fund, Boston, MA  
Danish American Club of Orange County, Villa Park, CA  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #15, Urbandale, IA  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #183-Troy, Cohoes, NY  
Danish Old People's Home, Rochester Hills, MI  
Emerald Excavating, Inc., Eugene, OR  
Leman USA, Inc., Sturtevant, WI  
Marne & Elk Horn Telephone Co., Elk Horn, IA  
Royal Danish Embassy, Washington, DC  
Viking Metal Cabinets, Chicago, IL

# A search for family meets with dramatic success

The search for Jens Christian Jensen's background began when Fay Jensen came to the Family History and Genealogy Center to learn how to proceed in her research. Her visit to the Center was prompted by a local newspaper article about a gathering of the Lund-Fredericksen family made possible through the efforts of Margaret Christensen in October 1997. With the assistance of the Family History and Genealogy Center, Fay undertook a diligent search of Danish church and census records on microfilm to gather pertinent information on Jens C. Jensen.

In October of 1998, Anton Gammelgaard traveled from Arhus, Denmark to Elk Horn, Iowa in search of participants for a television program he was producing for Danmarks Radio (DR), a communications organization comparable to public radio and television stations in the US. His goal was to link Danish and American families who had lost contact. Fay's enthusiastic research came to mind and she was invited to be interviewed. The stage was now set for a series of dramatic developments. The video clipping of Fay's interview

was aired on Danish television. Many became aware of her search for family and of her wish to establish identification for the photo she showed of an ancestor. Within two weeks contacts were made with two elderly gentlemen who identified the man in the old photo as Christian Johansen.

Fay and her husband Wayne, the grandson of Jens Christian Jensen, made a trip to Denmark. When they arrived at Danmarks Radio (DR), the Jensens were escorted by a TV crew to the church at Andst, Denmark and then into the village of Gamst where newly found relatives, the descendants of Wayne's great uncle, Christian Johansen, welcomed them. Video clips of the introductions to the Borge and Herdis (Johansen) Sorensen family and the lawn party that followed were made available to the public via the station.

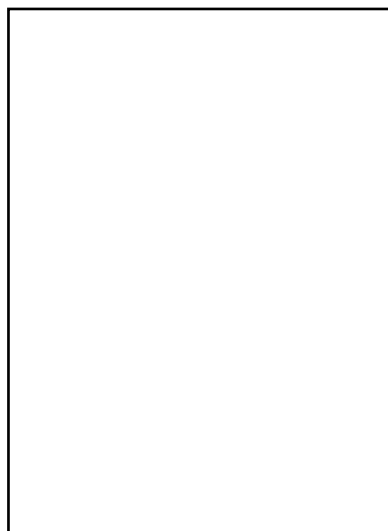
The Jensens and the Sorensens experienced the utmost in family history research, having located a part of their extended family line, visiting the nativity of a grandfather, walking the paths he tread, viewing the fields and visiting with kin on the site of the old homestead where Borge and Herdis Sorensen presently reside.



## Volunteer spotlight

In the August issue of the America Letter the focus of the Volunteer Spotlight was on those volunteers who painstakingly number artifacts for The Danish Immigrant Museum. In this issue we take a look at three volunteers who regularly work with the artifacts prior to the numbering process.

Paul Hansen, Karolyn Ortgies, and Alice Simonsen are providing invaluable assistance in readying artifacts for their extended life in the Museum. When the open "basement" area of the museum was in the process of being converted into the viewable storage area now known as Visual Storage, the Museum's many hundreds of artifacts had to be packed away in boxes and stored in other areas of the museum and at off-site locations. With the opening last fall of the



Karolyn Ortgies

Visual Storage area, trained volunteers were assigned the seemingly overwhelming task of "unpacking" the "treasures" contained in hundreds of boxes. Some of the artifacts already had permanent identification. Others had only temporary ID tags attached. In either case, those unpacking must use an official Condition Report to record the type of object, its ID number and its condition. The Condition Report is a very important part of collections related activity. Whenever an ar-

tifact is subjected to a major relocation or move, a Condition Report must be completed. This is necessary in order to determine if any damage or deterioration has occurred to the artifact since it was last inspected. These Condition Reports are used by the volunteers to record even the most minor of blemishes and/or evidence of aging. There is a "graphed" area on the report which allows the volunteer to sketch in the location of wear or damage, allowing for precisely detailed reporting as it is needed.

How did these volunteers become involved with this vital work of the Collections Department? Paul, Karolyn and Alice had all responded to an ad in the paper inviting anyone interested in such work to attend a training session. After being taught the procedures and requirements of the work, they began working in "the fish bowl" . . . as some refer to the Visual Storage area. This area affords visitors a view (through glass walls) of essential museum work that generally occurs out of sight of visitors. Even though the volunteers and the Collections staff can be seen, they cannot be heard outside of the environmentally controlled Visual Storage space. And since the work demands so much concentration, they are largely impervious to those visitors looking at the "completed" items around the perimeter of the area.

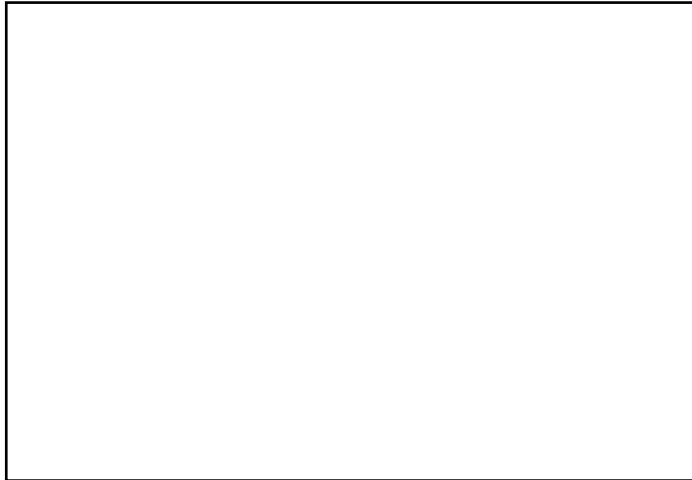
Each of these volunteers brings unique abilities to this important Collections Department work.

Paul Hansen was one of four boys born in Kimballton to Alfred and Emma Hansen. Proud of his Danish heritage, Paul had three grandparents who immigrated from Denmark: Peter C. and Kristine Jakobsen Kirk and Rasmus Hansen. The latter was one of the first Danish settlers in this area and donated the land for the Elk Horn

– Continued on page 19

# Volunteer . . .

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Alice Simonsen

Lutheran Church. When Paul was in 7th grade, the family moved to Cedar Falls for a year then to the country near Council Bluffs, returning to Elk Horn when he was in 9th grade. After graduating from the Elk Horn school, Paul served in the Navy for three and one half years. Following WW II, he married Joyce Griffith, came back to Elk Horn, and began working at the local newspaper. The newspaper, originally started by his father's brother in Kimballton in the early 1900's, and for which Paul's father worked for 50 years, had been purchased in 1929 by Joyce's father. In 1952 Paul and Joyce took over ownership of The Review which they edited and published until Paul's retirement. He and Joyce raised a family of five children in Elk Horn and now have four grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Besides helping at the museum, Paul enjoys playing golf, wood-working, and has a large collection of golf balls. He is involved in the Elk Horn Lutheran Church, serves on the Salem Lutheran Home's Board of Directors, and is a member of Elk Horn's City Council, the Legion, the Better Elk Horn Club, and the Optimist's Club.

Naturally, as the volunteers were unpacking, anything having to do with the newspaper business was automatically referred to Paul as this is his main area of expertise and interest. His excellent powers of observation and his understanding of how mechanical things "work" make him very helpful to the museum staff in terms of many other types of artifacts as well. Paul remarked that the recent unpacking of the original molds used for making part of the Madsen car (four of which were made in 1901) was quite memorable.

Karolyn Ortgies brings to her work at the museum an excellent background in business and antiques appraisal. She was the second of two daughters born near Lewis, Iowa to Arnold and Erma Westphalen. When she was two years old they moved to a farm southwest of Elk Horn. After attending rural school for three years, Karolyn went to the Elk Horn school. Following high school, she attended beauty school and, after obtaining her license, was employed at the Powder Puff in Atlantic. Karolyn married Duane Ortgies who works with the Federal Government Natural Resource Soil Conservation Service. Karolyn and Duane lived in Atlantic for 23 years and then moved to Elk Horn after their son finished high school. They purchased a home that they opened as a Bed and Breakfast; they also owned and operated The Tinder Box, a gift shop. After discontinuing the B & B, Karolyn began a new

enterprise, a Tea Room, which she ran for four years. Now "retired", Karolyn, besides volunteering at the Museum, keeps busy with her family, which now includes a daughter-in-law and granddaughter; singing in the Elk Horn Lutheran Church choir and antiquing. Karolyn says that a major highlight of her life was the three-week trip to Denmark she and her cousin, Julie Fleshner, took in 1991. During this trip she was able to see the family home in Soby-Aero where her grandfather grew up.

Karolyn's interest in antiques goes back to her high school days when her aunt had an antique shop. She advised Karolyn to purchase antiques which Karolyn and Duane have done since they were married. She has a deep appreciation for these objects and for their history. Of her work in the museum Karolyn comments, "I love it. Its fun to see what comes in."

Alice Simonsen has strong Danish roots and a keen interest in all things related to family histories and the Danish immigrant experience. She is one of two daughters born south of Elk Horn in Clay township to Fred and Agnes Jacobsen. All of her grandparents had come as young adults from Denmark, settling in the Audubon, Cass, and Shelby County areas. Alice attended Clay #7 country school and Elk Horn high school. Following graduation, she was employed by Squealer Feed Co. She married Egon Simonsen, and, following two years of residence near Avoca, they moved to the home where they farmed for many years. In 1967 Alice began employment at the Shelby County bank where she worked for 23 years prior to her retirement. She and her husband have three children, 10 grandchildren and five great grandchildren. Alice and Egon are currently in the process of moving to a home in Elk Horn. Alice has kept a journal since 1958 and is working on family history books for her children. Prior to her work in Visual Storage, Alice helped with mailings and did some work in the Family History and Genealogy Center. In her current job as an "unpacker and condition reporter", Alice finds that she enjoys the detail work and also finds it interesting to see what families have chosen to donate to the museum.

In the fourteen months that the Visual Storage area has been open, several volunteers have given of their time and talents. Some helped early on and then went on to other activities. Others continue to help occasionally, as their personal schedules allow. Those who have given a hand at one time or another are Rosa Clemsen, Gudrun Jacobsen, Jeanette Lillehoj, Virginia Nielsen, Joanne Potts, Verdella Smith, Jens Sorensen, Neva Theede and Allene Weavers. The dramatic progress made in the settlement of the Visual Storage area is directly attributable to efforts of all who have worked in the Lower Level storage area.

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# Calendar of 1999 - 2000

## Events for the Danish Villages of Elk Horn and Kimballton

**NOVEMBER 26, 27, 28 - JULEFEST 1999.** Craft boutiques, Danish foods, entertainment, Father Christmas visit.

**MAY 27, 28 - TIVOLI FEST 2000** in Elk Horn. Annual celebration includes parade, folk dancing, authentic Danish foods, craft demonstrations, and much more.

**JUNE 24 - SANKT HANS AFTEN** (Burning of the witch). Traditional mid-summer celebration held on the grounds of The Danish Immigrant Museum. Danish food and fun for the whole family.

**OCTOBER 21, 22 – STATE AND NATIONAL HAND CORN HUSKING CONTESTS** in Kimballton. Parade of horses, huskers & wagons, Iowa's Best Huskers, Nation's Best Huskers, Danish and American foods, and much more.

# Elderhostel Iowa 1999

Danish culture and genealogy were the primary attractions of the annual Elderhostel held in the Danish villages October 3rd through 8th. Thirty-eight guests, one of whom came from Switzerland and the remainder representing 15 states, were in attendance. Most of those enrolled in this educational adventure were of Danish heritage. Elderhostel is a popular program of continuing education for persons 55 years and older. The National Elderhostel organization is in Boston but the Elderhostel in Elk Horn/Kimballton is sponsored by Iowa Western Community College with Carol Brockman as coordinator.

The Danish Immigrant Museum is a supportive participant at Elderhostel. The Museum's Family History and Genealogy Center extended flexible library hours to those who wished to conduct family research and had extra volunteers on hand to assist as needed. Genealogy Researcher Margaret Christensen, a core volunteer in the Center, conducted a workshop entitled, "Genealogy: Who Am I and Where do I Come From?"

Authentic Danish meals followed lectures on Danish customs, folk schools, fairy tales, family finding and architecture. Crafts, dancing, singing and tours of historical interest rounded out the busy schedule of the Elderhostel "students".



— Harlan, IA Tribune Graphics

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