



America Letter

THE DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM

An International Cultural Center

BOX 470 • ELK HORN, IOWA 51531

Spring 2001

Vol. XV, No. 1

Wilderness Exodus: The Danish Mormon Experience in America

For many years the conversion of Scandinavians to Mormonism was inextricably linked with the goal of migrating to Utah. The converts were heeding an urgent millennialistic call to gather to "Zion". The Scandinavian Mormon migration brought some 30,000 proselytes to Utah between 1850 and 1905. Of these, some 17,000 were Danes. Many of the Danes were farmers and artisans whose skills and determination would help build a thriving society in a rainless desert. The Danes who accounted for more than half of the Scandinavian converts had been historically reluctant to emigrate but they responded enthusiastically to the call to Zion. Over three-fourths of the Danes emigrating in the 1850's were Mormon. During the 1860's this percentage was almost two-fifths.

The drama of the Danish migration has been historically overshadowed by the pioneers of 1846 and 1847 who forged the original Mormon Trail to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. However, in order to reach Zion the Danish converts would cross an ocean and a continent to play an important role in the settling of the American west. The early Scandinavian immigrants walked beside wagons or pulled handcarts from outfitting posts in Iowa and Nebraska.

Photographic Portrait of C. C. A. Christensen, c. 1897, age 65, courtesy of LDS Church Archives

C. C. A. Christensen (b. 1831; d. 1912), of Copenhagen, an early convert of the Mormon Scandinavian mission, did more than any other person to capture the images of the history of Latter-day Saint migration to Utah and the life they lived there.



The major turning point in his life occurred in 1850 when he embraced The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He did some missionary work in Denmark and was ready in 1853 to immigrate to Utah. He was, instead, assigned to a mission assignment in Norway. He finally boarded the Westmoreland in 1857, and with his bride, Elise, pushed a handcart 1,300 miles from Iowa City to Salt Lake City. He personally experienced much of what the average pioneer in the early days of Utah lived through and brought this intimate knowledge to his art work.

Christensen was also a talented writer and poet. He was a frequent contributor to Utah's Danish-Norwegian newspaper, "Bikuben", and also assisted the church historian in the preparation of the History of the Scandinavian Mission in which he served three missions. As farmer, painter, poet, and writer, Christensen left an important portrait of life as an early Danish pioneer in Utah.

The narrative vividness of Christensen's paintings play a central role in the "Wilderness Exodus" exhibit.

– continued on page 2



Exhibition Schedule for 2001-2002

**Wilderness Exodus:
The Danish Mormon Experience in America
May 7, 2001- October 28, 2001**

In 1849 the Danish national constitution was amended to allow religious freedom in Denmark. In 1850 Mormon missionaries began to proselyte in Denmark. With these two events came the conversion of 23,509 Danes to the Mormon Church, the largest non-Lutheran religious movement in Denmark. Some 17,000 of these Danes took part in the westward migration that settled the West. This exhibit will explore the contributions and experiences of the Danish Mormon immigrants to America as they left Denmark to a

new home in the Midwest and unsettled West.

**Scenes from Denmark: Images of the Homeland
November 12, 2001-April 7, 2002**

Scenes from Denmark have frequently been among the most treasured possessions in Danish immigrant homes. The scenes kept memories alive and allowed a fanciful revisiting of treasured places in the Old Country. Paintings or prints of Denmark were sometimes brought over at the time of immigration but were often purchased on a later visit or perhaps painted from memory. Sometimes a family member would return to Denmark to paint a favorite scene

The Danish Mormon Experience in America . . . – continued from page 1



Memorabilia and photographs reflecting the life of Anthon H. Lund (1844-1921), loaned by Anthony F. Lund, descendant.

Begun in 1850, the Mormons' Scandinavian Mission (note Andrew Jenson's history, case center) was an enormously rich source of converts willing to undertake the rigors of emigration and pioneer life in the new Zion in Deseret (now Utah). By this time, thousands of exiles from Nauvoo, Illinois had wended their way along the Mormon Trail to Salt Lake Valley. With the foundations of the new Zion in place, church leaders were ready for "the gathering" of new proselytes from other lands.

In 1849 at a church conference in Deseret (Utah) it was announced that missionaries would be sent "to the nations." Of these, Apostle Erastus Snow and Elder Peter Hansen were assigned to Denmark, Elder John Forsgren to Sweden. Elder George P. Dykes, who had been so successful at recruiting Norwegians in Illinois, was invited by Erastus Snow to share their work in Denmark.

A recent change in the Danish Constitution provided for freedom of religion that made the preaching of the Mormon faith legal in Denmark. This was not the case in the other Scandinavian countries. John Forsgren was almost immediately deported for preaching in Sweden, but was able to join Snow, Hansen, and Dykes in Denmark. Of all the missions "opened" by Mormon elders those in Scandinavia and particularly in Denmark would be the most fruitful for many years.

Anthon H. Lund (photograph upper right hand corner of case) led a distinguished career in Utah as an educator, businessman, legislator, apostle, and counselor to two church presidents. He was the first man of Danish descent to reach such a lofty position in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Lund's first exposure to the Mormon faith came in 1850 when Elder George P. Dykes came as a missionary. Anthon spent much

time in the company of the Saints reading and studying even though he was just a boy. He finally joined the church on May 15, 1856, his twelfth birthday.

Anthon began distributing tracts and using his fluency in English to teach those about to emigrate English and to teach Danish to the Mormon missionaries. By age sixteen he was ordained an Elder and was appointed president of the Aalborg Branch of the Mission and a traveling elder in five other missions. In 1862 at the age of eighteen, he immigrated to Utah, where he continued to be very active in the church. From 1893 to 1896, he served as President of the European Mission. At a reunion of Scandinavians in Brigham City in 1902 he could say, "We are now 45,000 and are a great power in our state."

"Skandinaviens Stjerne", Vol. 1, October 1851 (first issue), Vol. 2, 1852, Vol. 6, 1856, Danish language periodicals, loaned by Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

"Skandinaviens Stjerne" (Scandinavian Star), a Danish language publication founded in Copenhagen by Apostle Erastus Snow in 1851, brought information to converts and prospective converts in Denmark. It provided them with fascinating details of pioneer life in Zion and the work that was being done to receive the 'Saints from abroad'. Throughout the life of the publication the editors would be mission presidents assisted by talented young converts serving as writers and translators. Many works first published in "Stjerne" were later printed as books or tracts.

The pages of "Skandinaviens Stjerne" were full of precise instructions and advice for emigrants. Those who would be traveling by sailing ship and then overland by wagon train were warned that the journey to Zion would take from six to nine months. No more than 100 pounds of freight per person should be brought. It was recommended that light weight trunks replace the heavier heirloom trunks. Emigrants were advised of the need for durable shoes, clothing for both very hot and very cold weather, bed-



– continued on page 3

Exhibition Schedule . . .

– continued from page 1

or a second generation descendant would return to capture in visual form the image of a place or of a traditional event about which so many stories had been told. This exhibit will explore images of Denmark and the meaning that they have had for those who produced them and/or those who possessed them.

Danes on the Northern Plains: Patterns of settlement in the Dakotas, Montana and Wyoming

April 22, 2002 - October 28, 2002

This exhibit will explore patterns of Danish immigrant settlement in the Northern Plains states of North Dakota, 2

South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming. The exhibition will focus on community founding, development and historical evolution. The lives of the immigrants, their descendants and the challenges they faced will contribute importantly to the experience of the exhibit. Preservation of this rapidly disappearing history is a primary goal.

The Danish Mormon Experience in America . . . – continued from page 2

ding and tin utensils for cooking and eating. Artisans were encouraged to bring only the best and lightest of their tools. Even the smallest costs they would encounter were detailed.

Through articles reprinted from American newspapers such as Salt Lake City's "Deseret News" and letters from those who had already emigrated from the homeland, "Stjerne" would acquaint the reader with a new world. They would learn about Indian raids, new settlements, grasshopper

plagues, congressional debates about Utah, and, even the Fourth of July. All this detail gave prospective emigrants great familiarity with the Utah Territory, perhaps more than with their own country.



Handcart Replica, wood and metal, loaned by Cass County Mormon Trails Association, Inc.

The goal of the Mormon church leaders was to bring as many of the faithful to the promised land as inexpensively as possible, thus a new experiment in mass migration began. From 1856 to 1860, nearly 3,000 emigrants traveled 1,300 miles from Iowa City, Iowa to the Great Salt Lake Valley by handcart. Many of these "poor Saints" were Danes from the Scandinavian Mission. Handcart travel was more economical than ox teams and even reduced the travel time. Each handcart had a small wagon box 3 or 4 feet long with side and end pieces about 8 inches high. There was one handcart for every five persons.

This replica of a Mormon handcart was made by FFA (Future Farmers of America) members at the Griswold Community High School, Griswold, Iowa, in 1995 for the Iowa Sesquicentennial in 1996. This cart is made of oak except for the axle and wheels. The wheels were obtained from an old fire department water wagon found in Nebraska (most of the original carts were made entirely of oak and hickory but a variation called the family cart was made with an iron axle). Note the oval-shaped wood stand that allows the cart to remain level when left standing. The cart has been used in many parades throughout the area and is housed at Hitchcock House near Lewis, Iowa. Several handcart companies passed through Iowa on their way to Utah in 1856 and 1857.



Handcart Pioneers Coming through the Mountains by C. C. A. Christensen, undated, photographic reproduction of an oil on canvas, courtesy of a private collector.

In the 1850's and 1860's the earliest emigrants of The Church of Latter-day Saints from Scandinavia followed much of the original Mormon Trail forged in 1846-47 when the Mormons were driven out of Nauvoo, Illinois. Traveling by ox cart or handcart the converts from the LDS Scandinavian Mission made their way to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake.

They were shepherded in their migration by leaders who knew the best and safest means of travel for a journey that was fraught with physical dangers. They traveled with fellow Mormons and, in the Mormon manner, addressed one another as "brother" or "sister". Respect for their religious leaders led them to follow rules established for a cooperative migration.

The Danes, who accounted for more than half of the Scandinavian converts, had been historically reluctant to emigrate but they responded enthusiastically to the call to Zion. Over three-fourths of the Danes emigrating in the 1850's were Mormon. During the 1860's this percentage was almost two-fifths.



Emigrant Ship by C. C. A. Christensen, photographic reproduction of watercolor and ink, 1867, courtesy of a private collector

For the Scandinavian Saints every detail of their journey to Utah was precisely planned and budgeted. Mormon missionaries in Scandinavia chartered ships and organized the emigrants into self-governing and self-helping communities on board.

The Forsgren Company with its 294 Saints, the first large group of Scandinavian Saints to immigrate to Utah, sailed on the first leg of their journey from Copenhagen on December 20, 1852. The ship they took from Liverpool on January 16, 1853 was the Forest Monarch, known as the "Mayflower" of the Scandinavian Mission.

The ship depicted here may be the Westmoreland on which artist C. C. A. Christensen emigrated in 1857. In June of 1867 the first company of Scandinavian Saints crossed the Atlantic Ocean by steam cutting the time required.

The Danish Mormon Experience in America . . . – continued from page 3

The influence of Danish Mormon converts who migrated to Utah as a result of the Scandinavian Mission manifested itself throughout the territory. Through crafts, trades, the arts, architecture, agriculture, and industry, Danes brought their talent and strong work ethic to the challenge of colonization. Skilled Danish workmen helped build Salt Lake City and other communities. Large numbers of Danes settled to the north in Box Elder and Cache Counties and to the south in Sanpete and Sevier Counties. Sanpete and Cache Counties became the rich granaries of Utah and many Danes prospered through their own efforts.

In these and other settlements, Danes developed close ties with other Scandinavians as they had more in common with one another than with the English immigrants. In 1902 an estimated 4,000 visitors met in Brigham City in Box Elder County for a great Scandinavian Reunion. Anthon H. Lund, a Danish immigrant of 1862, told them, “We are now 45,000 and are a great power in our state.”

– continued on page 12



Many of the early Danes from the Scandinavian Mission were asked to settle new communities in the counties of Cache and Sanpete. As more Danes came they tended to move where their countrymen resided. Life in these outlying settlements was difficult but the Danes had the fortitude to withstand poverty and hardships without becoming discouraged. Towns such as Spring Town (Spring City), Mt. Pleasant, Fountain Green, Fairview, Ephraim, Manti, Moroni, Pettyville and Gunnison soon dotted the basin of Sanpete Valley along the Wasatch prong of the Rocky Mountains. Danes were particularly numerous in Manti and Ephraim. These towns have maintained a Danish cultural imprint.



Danish Ambassador H.E. Ulrik Federspiel Visits Museum

The Danish Immigrant Museum hosted H.E. Ambassador Ulrik Federspiel, Danish Ambassador to the United States and his spouse, Mrs. Birgitte Federspiel, for a dinner and meeting on February 27. H.E. Ambassador Federspiel visited the Museum to lend his support and help to a major immigration conference to be held in October 2002. This conference is being co-sponsored by The Danish Immigrant Museum, The Danish American Heritage Society (DAHS), Dana College, Grand View College, and the Danes Worldwide Archives in Aalborg, Denmark.

Those attending the dinner were H.E. Ambassador Ulrik Federspiel and his spouse, Birgitte Federspiel, the Honorable Lowell Kramme, Danish Consul from Iowa and his wife Marilyn Kramme, Jim Iversen, president of the Danish American Heritage Society, John Mark Nielsen, chairman of the conference planning committee and his wife Dawn Nielsen, Rick Burns, executive director of The Danish Immigrant Museum and his wife Connie Burns, and Thomas Hansen, development officer from Dana College.

The meeting following dinner focused on planning for

the Immigration Conference. H. E. Ambassador Federspiel agreed to serve on the Advisory Board and provided important insights into ways to make this conference successful. We are looking forward to H.E. Ambassador Federspiel's participation in this very important and exciting conference.

The conference will focus on post-World War II migration. We are hoping to attract a broad range of research topics dealing with relations between Denmark and North America in the post World War II era, including a mix of both academic and non-academic participants. Sessions will examine the economic, social, and cultural factors that have motivated immigration, the laws relating to immigration, and the experiences of those who immigrated. The conference will also explore how immigrant communities as well as the rise of international travel, business, and study contribute to relations between Denmark, the United States, and Canada and what this may mean for future relations.

At the conclusion of the meeting, H.E. Ambassador Federspiel was given a private tour of the Museum.

WALL OF HONOR

December 1, 2000 - March 31, 2001

- Karen Henriksen Bondo, Underwood, IA** - Eileen Denne, Atlantic, IA
- Kjeld Sogaard Bork, Pittsburgh, PA** - Joanne Mudry, Zellenople, PA
- Fischer and Hazel Bruder, Denmark** - Ron and Harriet Holtmeier, Victoria, MN
- Hans Donnergaard, ND** - George, V. Bosley, Aurora, CO; Jerome D. Bosley, Bellevue, WA; Marcia A. Crossett, Seattle, WA; Patricia M. Curkendall, Kirkland, WA
- Peter Grav, Dell Rapids, SD** - Tom Raines, Brookings, SD; Edith Forsch, Sious Falls, SD; Audrey Green, Escondido, CA; Peter Grav, Ontario, CA; Phyllis Frager, Yorba Linda, CA; Rosa Lea Grav, Rapid City, SD; Kerry V. Mooney, Rapid City, SD; Jane Hume, Rapid City, SD; Paul Grav, Enumclaw, WA
- Carrie Knudsen Hills, Harlan, IA** - Marjorie Gram, Sacramento, CA; Helen Petersen, Cedar Falls, IA; Jean Stenberg, Clear Lake, IA; John Richard Hills, Cedar Falls, IA
- Martin Hansen and Maria Bodholdt Holst, Cedar Falls, IA** - Martin Holst, Cedar Falls, IA; Annikki Elkind, Fort Collins, CO; Elin Stub, Philadelphia, PA
- Jens Jorgen and Sofie Andrea Petersen Jensen, Worcester, MA** - Edith Jensen Wilson, Omaha, NE
- Martin and Gertrude Ane Andersen Jensen, Exira, IA** - Carole Thelin Bonda, Albuquerque, NM; Betty Nussey, San Antonio, TX; Bob Jenson, Albuquerque, NM; Brett Mussey, Austin, TX; Gail West, San Antonio, TX
- Bolette Sorensen Jepsen, Onawa, IA** - Cain-Homann-Moeller Family; Stephanie Moeller, Manhattan, KS
- Carl Christian Larsen, Pomona, CA** - Ralph Larsen, Sanford, NC; Dale Larsen, Livermore, CA; Beata Rydeen, Minneapolis, MN; James Jepsen, Pinehurst, NC
- George Christian Petersen, Cedar Falls, IA** - Richard D. Petersen, Stuart, FL
- Godtfred (Fred) Thomsen, Eugene, OR** - Fred Thomsen, Eugene, OR
- Jens Christian and Inger Jensen Thomsen, Bostwick, NE** - Soren Thomsen, Superior, NE



Bollers on a string provided a Danish version of bobbing for apples.

Fastelavn Celebration held in February

The Danish Immigrant Museum sponsored the first annual Fastelavn Evening on February 27. The Elk Horn Town Hall was filled to overflowing as we were all entertained with Fastelavn Boller, Danish folk dancing and the traditional processional march. The Friends of the Museum - Atlantic Chapter co-sponsored this fun-filled evening.

Fastelavn was one of the Danish immigrant celebrations brought over from Denmark. The word "Fastelavn" comes from the German word "Fasteabend" or the evening before the fast. During Denmark's Catholic period, this day was the day before Ash Wednesday or the beginning of the forty-day fast. Before the reformation in Denmark, there were very strict guidelines for what one could eat during the fast. Fastelavn gave Danes the opportunity to partake of more appealing food before being required to eat from the approved list of less in-

- continued on page 6

Holger Danske,
the legendary Danish hero,
sleeps in Kronberg Castle near Elsinore,
waiting full-clad in armor to come to
the rescue of his beloved Denmark.
Holger is coming soon to "stand guard"
and protect your past and future investments in The
Danish Immigrant Museum.
Learn more about
The Holger Danske Endowment
in the next issue.



Memorials

January 1 - March 31, 2001

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

Dorothy Boehur

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| William Brewer | Viggo Nielsen |
| Ann Christensen | Lois A. Olsen |
| Sidney C. Christensen | Verlee Peters |
| Lydia Sorensen Eriksen | Christine Petersen |
| Howard Esbeck | Dale Petersen |
| Violet Farr | Ernest R. Petersen |
| Joyce R. Guldager | Imo S. Petersen |
| Adda Harlow | Maurice Petersen |
| Nora Hecimovich | Roland Petersen |
| Elnor Jensen | Doris Rasmussen |
| Werner Jensen | Vera Reinhart |
| Elizabeth Aagaard Larsen | Magna Thomey Sigg |
| Grethe Larsen | Evelyn Hagedorn Slawson |
| Lorraine Larsen | Nina Sorensen |
| Glynn Lykke | Elmer T. Sornson |
| Lillie Madsen | Helen Thomsen |
| Lenora Moeller | |
| Ronald Mortensen | |

Fastelavn celebration . . .

— continued from page 5

viting foods. After the reformation, the fast was discontinued. The celebration, however, continues to this day in Denmark and was very popular among the Danish immigrants.

An integral part of the celebration is Slå Katten af Tønden or “knocking the cat out of the barrel.” Let us assuage the fears of animal lovers and quickly say that a live cat has not been used for some time; the more popular “sock cat” being used today. The cat (again, not a live cat...only a sock cat) was placed in a wooden barrel and “piñata style” the barrel was struck with a wooden stick until the cat and a barrel full of candy fell to the ground. Whoever struck the blow that brought the deluge of candy was crowned the Cat King and Cat Queen and were honored with a processional march. Ben Burns was crowned Cat King and Mandy Larsen was



Grandparents were called upon to help “Slaa katten af Tønden.”



Folk dancing was an integral part of the evening’s fun.

crowned Cat Queen of our Fastelavn celebration. The processional march, choreographed by Annette Andersen, snaked around the Elk Horn Town Hall until everyone was in their appointed places around the outer walls.

Fastelavn was calculated for fun, fellowship, and enjoyment by the Danish immigrants. This was a time for the community to come together and enjoy each other’s company. Those attending this year’s Fastelavn Aften celebration were treated to an evening of fun, community fellowship, and enjoyment. Plans are already in the works for an even larger celebration next year.



Bro honored by DuPont Company

Dr. Manville I. Bro of Wilmington, Delaware, the son of Danish Immigrants Niels and Laura Bro who settled in Audubon County, Iowa, has been honored by DuPont Company for his contributions. A new series of DuPont awards will now bear his name. The Bro Award for Life Achievement in Fluoropolymers recognizes Dr. Bro’s research and contributions. Among other things his research led to development of DuPont Teflon FEP fluoropolymer resin. Teflon FEP fluoropolymer resin is a fire resistant material with excellent electrical insulation properties. Products created from Dr. Bro’s research are increasingly used to facilitate data communications.

Dr. Bro grew up near Kimballton, Iowa and graduated

from Audubon High School. He attended the University of Iowa, Iowa City, receiving his doctorate degree in 1951. After graduation, Dr. Bro went to work for DuPont Company where he began his research with polymer structures. DuPont received the patent for Teflon in 1960.

Although Dr. Bro retired in 1985, he still continues to work at least two days a week, helping DuPont customers use Teflon FEP to its fullest. The Danish Immigrant Museum salutes the accomplishments of Dr. Bro.

Calendar of 2001 Events for the Danish Villages of Elk Horn and Kimballton

TRADITIONAL CELEBRATIONS

JUNE 23 - SANKT HANS AFTEN

Midsummer's night bonfire, singing, snake bread, singing, fun, and more singing. This event is co-sponsored by the Danish Brotherhood Lodge 341

FJERDE JULI - FOURTH OF JULY

Come join us for an early evening concert and entertainment.

JULY 14 - VALDEMARS DAG (FLAG DAY)

Traditionally celebrated on July 15, we will have a special program during this evening's production of "Number the Stars".

SEPTEMBER 19 - NATURALIZATION CEREMONY

In conjunction with National Citizen Week, the Museum will sponsor a naturalization ceremony. Last year's ceremony included 21 new citizens from 52 different countries. Welcome these new immigrants to the United States and join us for a reception to follow the ceremony.

NOVEMBER 23-24 JULE FEST

Jule Fest is held Thanksgiving weekend. This is a fun-filled Christmas festival with over 25 local businesses, organizations, historical sites and museums ready to help you get into the full swing of the holidays. Visit the unique gift shops, large Christmas Boutique and more.

SPECIAL EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

SUMMER UNDER THE STARS "NUMBER THE STARS"

Fifteen performances will be presented each Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings from July 5 through August 4. In the event of inclement weather, an alternate indoor site will be announced.

July 5, 6, 7	July 26, 27, 28
July 12, 13, 14	August 2, 3, 4
July 19, 20, 21	

AUGUST 9 - 11, KAREN BLIXEN STORY TELLING FESTIVAL

Karen Blixen was one of Denmark's foremost storytellers, spinning tales until her death in 1962. The Danish Immigrant Museum is proud to sponsor a weekend of traditional story telling performances and workshops, featuring local and regional talent.

EXHIBITS AND LECTURES

EXHIBIT: WILDERNESS EXODUS: THE DANISH MORMON EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA

MAY 7 THROUGH OCTOBER 29

June 19 - Lecture by Barbara Lund-Jones
"History Through Image and Memory"

July 3 - Lecture by Bev Larsen
"Iowa Pioneer Women"

July 17 - Lecture by Rick Burns
The Danish Lutheran Mission to Utah"

July 31 - Lecture by Matt Chatterley
"The Iowa Mormon Trail"

August 7 - Lecture by Dr. Gary Hatch
"C.C.A. Christensen - Pioneer Artist"

August 21 - Lecture by Dr. Richard L. Jensen
"Danish Mormon Migration"

EXHIBIT: SCENES FROM DENMARK: IMAGES FROM THE HOMELAND

November 12, 2001 - April 7, 2002

Just a Reminder—

The Museum's SUMMER HOURS

(May 16-September 14) are:

Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.;

Sat. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. &

Sun. Noon to 6 p.m.

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

Free for current members

Danish Immigrant Museum staff members

Rick Burns	..... Executive Director	..... dkdir@metc.net
Barb Hansen	..... Secretary	..... dksec@metc.net
Jennifer Winters	..... Bookkeeper	..... dkbk@metc.net
Barbara Lund-Jones	..... Curator	..... dkcur@metc.net
Marilyn Miller	..... Registrar	..... dkreg@metc.net
Deb Larsen	..... Collections Assistant	.....
Marnell Fox	..... Development Director	..... dkdev@metc.net
Janice Goettsche	..... Museum Shop	..... dkgift@metc.net
Joyce Petersen	..... Coordinator of Volunteers	.....
Connie Johnson	..... Coordinator of Volunteers	.....
Roger Mikkelsen	..... Grounds/Maintenance	.....
Tim Fredericksen	..... Custodian	.....

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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Rick Burns, Editor

Museum staff writers: Marnell Fox, Barbara Hansen, Connie Johnson,
Barbara Lund-Jones, Marilyn K. Miller, Joyce Petersen

Photographers: Museum Staff

Number the Stars back beginning in July

We are excited to bring back *Number the Stars* in our Outdoor Theater this year. After an extremely successful first season, we are in full swing with pre-production for an even bigger and more successful season this year. Last year's performances were seen by about 2,500 people, a credit to the talent of the production crew, cast, and volunteers who pulled it all together. There is excitement in the air as we have begun rehearsals and plans for getting ready for this year's outdoor theater production.

Doug Larche adapted the play from Lois Lowrey's Newbery Medal award winning book of the same name. The story is fictional but told within a historical context. During the German occupation of Denmark in World War II, the Nazis closed down Jewish-owned businesses and began to round up the Jews for relocation to concentration camps. Danish freedom fighters of all ages risked everything in daring, hurried rescue operations involving Danish Jews. Some 7,500 of 8,000 Danish Jews were smuggled to the safety of neutral Sweden.

In this stirring play, young Annemarie and Kirsti Johansen face soldiers, interrogations, fierce dogs, personal danger, the loss of loved ones and their own fears as they try to help their friend Ellen Rosen escape across the ocean to Sweden and safety. Courage, faith, ingenuity, and even fledgling acting skills eventually win the day. All the drama, pathos, adventure, terror, and humor that have made *Number the Stars* a National Best seller (and winner of the Newbery Award and the American Library Association Book of the Year Award)



"Number the Stars" returns for another season at the Danish Immigrant Museum's outdoor theater.

come to life in this powerful adaptation.

The play will begin July 5 and run through August 4. Performances will be each Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evening beginning at 8:00 p.m. Please call the Museum with any questions.



February Board of Directors meeting was held in Phoenix

The 54th Regular Meeting of The Danish Immigrant Museum Board of Directors was held February 9 - 10, 2001 at the Embassy Suites Airport West Hotel in Phoenix, Arizona. The Museum's Executive Committee met Friday morning.

The Board of Directors felt it was important to orient new board members to the Museum. To this end, a new board member orientation was held in the afternoon for the Museum's newly elected board members. Those participating in this orientation were Egon Bodtker, Salem, OR; William Holmquist, Long Lake, MN; Lee Gregersen Jensen, Pleasant Grove, UT; Margaret Johnson, Santa Clara, CA and John Mark Nielsen, Blair, NE.

Friday evening, former board member and long-time supporter of the Museum, Merv Bro and his family hosted a hyggelig evening at his home in Scottsdale for the Board of Directors, their spouses and friends of the Museum living or wintering in the Phoenix area. Merv did an outstanding job of entertaining all of us.

The Committee Meetings were held Saturday morning followed by the President's Luncheon Buffet. The General

Session was held Saturday afternoon with each committee reporting and giving recommendations to be reviewed.

Rick Burns, Museum Executive Director, presented the resolution for "The Holger Danske Endowment Fund". The Holger Danske Endowment Fund will give the Museum a significant financial foundation for future growth and expansion. The Board approved the establishment of the Holger Danske Endowment Fund of The Danish Immigrant Museum subject to minor revisions to be reviewed and approved at the June 2001 board meeting.

Following a busy and productive board meeting, a reception and dinner honoring our Danish heritage was held at the Barcelona Room of the Embassy Suites. "The Danish Baritone", Bjarne Andersen, provided after-dinner entertainment.

New lecture series inaugurated

This year we are adding a series of lectures to our summer activity schedule. Each of the lectures is designed to support and add to the temporary exhibit “Wilderness Exodus: The Danish Mormon Experience in America”. Some of the presentations will deal directly with the exhibit and others will add historical and cultural context to the exhibit. Each of the presentations is free to the public and will take place at the Elk Horn Town Hall beginning at 7:00 p.m. Beginning May 29, 2001 the lectures will continue every other Tuesday evening throughout the summer.

Our first lecture will be given by Loren Horton, Emeritus Senior Historian of the Historical Society of Iowa and independent scholar from Iowa City, Iowa. Mr. Horton’s presentation, “Through the Eyes of Pioneers: Iowa as Described in 19th Century Diaries”, will give participants a historical overview of life in Iowa in the 19th century. Hundreds of thousands of people immigrated to Iowa during the 19th century. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of people crossed Iowa on their way to new homes farther west. Many of these pioneers kept diaries and wrote letters, which offer a wonderful view of this period. These documents describe the land, the people, the towns, and the experience of traveling across the prairie. This program presents 19th century Iowa in the words of the people who actually traversed the state.

On June 5, Gail Holmes, historical writer from Omaha, Nebraska, will give a presentation entitled “Historic Pioneer Trails Through Southwestern Iowa”. This presentation focusing on ten trails of southwestern Iowa contributes much to the story of ‘how the west was won.’ It covers the explosive years between 1804-1857 for the still relatively new American republic. Descriptions of great river traffic and covered wagon trails of Southwestern Iowa will demonstrate how broad Iowa’s heritage really is. Some of the trails to be discussed include the 1804-1806 Lewis and Clark Trail, 1811 Overland Astorian’s Trail, 1837 U.S. Dragoon Trail, 1846 Mormon Trail, 1846 Mormon Battalion Trail, 1849 California Gold Rush Trail and the 1856-1857 Handcart Trail.

Curator Barbara Lund-Jones will give a presentation on June 19 entitled “History Through Image and Memory”. Her presentation will explore the ways in which exhibits focus on historical events, passages, communities and practices. Primary emphasis will be given to an examination of the ways in which exhibits are uniquely positioned to convey a sense of lived presence to their viewing audience. The lecture will be grounded in the development of the “Wilderness Exodus” exhibit and the decisive choices that shaped it.

Bev Larsen, a local historian, will give a presentation on July 3 entitled, “Iowa Pioneer Women”. Who were the earliest pioneer women to come to Iowa? Who motivated them to come, and how did they react to the culture shock of life on the frontier? This presentation addresses these questions by offering selections from diaries, journals and letters from that period. These early women’s voices reflect Iowa’s political progress from pre-territory, to territorial status, and finally to statehood. The audience will recognize the similarity to

women of today, and indeed of any generation.

Executive Director Rick Burns will present a lecture on July 17 entitled, “The Danish Lutheran Mission to Utah”. This lecture will deal with the establishment of the Utah Mission to reclaim the Danish Mormons. The Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America began seriously discussing a mission to reclaim the Utah Mormons in 1897 conference reports. This missionary effort began first as a campaign to raise awareness and support for a Utah mission in both Denmark and the United States. The official beginning of the mission, however, was not until 1904 with the arrival in Utah of Pastor Hans Hansen. This lecture will deal with the evolution of thought within the Danish Lutheran Church which led to the formation of the Utah Mission and the impact this mission had on Utah development.

Matt Chatterley, president of the Iowa Mormon Trail Association and author of *Wend Your Way: A Guide to Sites Along the Iowa Mormon Trail*, will give a presentation entitled, “The Iowa Mormon Trail” on July 31. This presentation will deal with the historic Iowa Mormon Trail. The exodus of the Mormon people from Illinois across the Great Plains to the Salt Lake Valley was the most monumental movement of a people in the settlement of the American West. This lecture will bring alive an important part of Iowa history.

On August 7 Dr. Gary Hatch, associate professor of English at Brigham Young University, will give a presentation on the poetry of Danish immigrant C.C.A. Christensen. Entitled, “C.C.A. Christensen - Pioneer Poet”, Dr. Hatch’s presentation will deal with the Danish poetry of C.C.A. Christensen, a Danish Mormon painter, poet, farmer, and missionary. Our current exhibit features prints of many of Christensen’s paintings.

Our last lecture will be given on August 21 by Brigham Young University professor, Dr. Richard Jensen. Dr. Jensen has done extensive research on Danish and Scandinavian Mormon immigration to the United States. This lecture will give insights into the migration of almost 18,000 Danes to the American West.

FAMILY HISTORY & GENEALOGY CENTER

Stamtræ

Editorial note: The Family History and Genealogy Center is open from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.

Greetings from the Family History and Genealogy Center. We are pleased to approach the tourist season, the time of year when we are privileged to meet you either for the first time or upon a return visit. You are always a most welcome guest. I hope you are making plans to stop in to see what is new in the genealogy library.

Before you venture from home, however, be sure to tuck your family sheets and pedigree charts into your luggage. One of the most frequent exclamations we hear is, "Oh, I wish I had brought some ancestral dates and places with me." We can often locate the parish in Denmark where your family came from if you have names, places, and the dates of births, marriages, confirmations or deaths. We can then assist you in ordering microfilm of church and census records from Denmark. The microfilm can be delivered to your own area where you can read them in leisure.

Success stories are always rewarding. Recently a request came to the Museum from a lawyer who resides in New York. He was searching for heirs to an estate in Denmark. With the details he disclosed and through the Wall of Honor files, we were able to provide information about the family. The history that accompanied the Wall of Honor entry proved to be of vital importance. The histories you provide, either through the Wall of Honor program or through donations, are adding to our genealogical resources.

Many of you are interested in contributing to the Family History and Genealogical Center in other ways. The following are some of the resource needs of the Family History and Genealogy Center.

- History books of churches and towns.
- Microfilms of church and census records from Denmark and Danish American communities in the United States.
- Cemetery records.
- Scrapbooks and obituaries from Danish settlements.
- Gazetteers, atlases and directories.

We are presently working toward purchasing a complete set of 113 sectional maps of Denmark. These large-scale maps are detailed to show the location of the tiny villages. For most folks who visit Denmark, their fondest memories of the trip were to find the old ancestral home and to walk in the footprints of those whose genes we carry. These maps will help us to pinpoint some of those villages and farms so more of you can experience the pleasure of seeing the old home. You are invited to participate in the purchase of these maps. The cost of two of the large-scale maps is approximately \$40.



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.

A contribution to this fund will help us reach our goal in having this valuable tool. You may wish to give maps in memory of a loved one. If you wish your contribution to go to a specific project, please clearly annotate that wish, either on the check or in a note accompanying the check.

Margaret Christensen



Volunteer spotlight

Chances are very good that if you stop in the Family History and Genealogy Center at The Danish Immigrant Museum on a Wednesday morning you will find Alice Petersen there. Alice, who has always been interested in family histories, started volunteering once a week when the center opened in 1996. One of her projects has been copying information from the Wall of Honor files and placing the copies in notebooks so that these histories are readily available to museum visitors. These files are a tremendous resource for individuals doing research at the Museum.



One can easily understand Alice's interest in preserving and sharing Danish immigrant stories, given her background. All four of her grandparents came from Denmark. Alice was born in Kimballton, the oldest of two daughters of Martinus

Notes from Development

It was with great pleasure that I assumed the position of Development Director in November 2000. As a fourth-generation Danish American much of my heritage was lost as my family, like the families of many Danish Americans, melded into American society in a community where few people shared our ethnic heritage. Only when my children, as grade-schoolers, came to me with questions regarding their ancestry did I become aware of the great importance heritage has in shaping who we are and who we become. Since it's beginning, The Danish Immigrant Museum has played a major role in bringing our heritage to life for me, my children, and hopefully my grandchildren.

Each day, as I visit with people like you who share my Danish heritage, I realize more and more why we must continue to pursue the mission of the Museum to tell the story of the Danish immigrant experience and to preserve the history, traditions, and culture of Danish Americans. It is not for those who have lived the experience so much as it is for those who will come after us.

For several years as a financial planner and as a fundraiser for other non-profit organizations I helped others realize their goals and visions. Today I share in the goals and vision of everyone as we work together to continue to build a monument to all the Danish immigrants who have contributed so

much to America.

The construction and dedication of the Museum was the main focus of the people who first envisioned creating an institution to honor our heritage. Part of their dream included making the Museum not just a repository of artifacts but also a center for teaching all Americans about our culture and traditions through ever-changing exhibits and educational programs. "Building" this part of the vision is our job today. Just as it takes small and large gifts and contributions from many people to turn a dream into a building constructed of bricks and mortar, it also requires continuing support to expand that vision to include the things that breathe life into a building.

This is an exciting and challenging time for all associated with the Museum. I look forward to having the opportunity to share my personal excitement with you in the near future.

Marnell Fox

Director's Corner



The Danish Immigrant Museum is gearing up for a summer filled with activities and entertainment. Our exhibit, "Wilderness Exodus: The Danish Mormon Experience in America", has already brought praise from visitors to the Museum. This exhibit will continue at the Museum through the end of October. As a complement to our exhibit, we have added a summer lecture series beginning May 29 and running every other Tuesday evening throughout the summer. Some of the lecture topics have been chosen for their specific applicability to the exhibit, while others will provide a more general understanding of the historical context of the exhibit. The combination of this excellent exhibit and the lecture series is an exciting new offering.

We are well underway with preparations for this year's Outdoor Theater. We have decided to produce "Number the Stars" again this year. The cast has been selected; they are preparing for the new season beginning July 5 and running through August 4. Performances will be each Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening beginning at 8:00 p.m. Approximately 2,500 people saw our performances last year and we hope

to increase that number this year. In addition to the Outdoor Theater, we are also producing the Karen Blixen Storytelling Festival August 9, 10 and 11. We hope this will add something new and exciting to our summer offerings and highlight the storytelling tradition.

There are many other exciting programs and events happening this year. Please check the Calendar of Events section of this newsletter for more information on these events. As the Museum takes on the new and exciting challenges of expanding and growing, our financial needs also increase. The Museum as an institution is continuing to mature and grow in significant ways. The progress made over the last few years is tremendous. The potential is even more inspiring. You are the foundation of the Museum and it is through your generous giving that we are able to have a Museum that is continually increasing the standard by which it is judged.

We hope you are able to visit the Museum this year. We welcome your visits and hope you feel that you are a part of this wonderful project. Please accept my personal thanks for your membership in the Museum and your continued generous support.

Spotlight . . .

— continued from page 11

and Anna Nelson. Her father was a carpenter and managed the Green Bay lumberyard. Alice attended Kimballton, Iowa schools through the 10th grade and graduated from Audubon (Iowa) High School. After graduating from high school, Alice met LuVerne Petersen on a blind date. Her sister and LuVerne's brother were dating at the time.

Alice and LuVerne have lived a full and active life in southwestern Iowa. Alice and LuVerne began their life together farming east of Poplar, Iowa. After a year of marriage, LuVerne went into the Service. His stint lasted two years, a year of which was spent Saipan during WW II. After four years, Alice and LuVerne moved to their farm three miles north of Kimballton where they raised their two daughters. For 28 years Alice was employed by Salem Lutheran Homes in Elk Horn, Iowa, from which she retired as Human Resources Manager. Alice, always interested in preserving history, kept a Salem Lutheran Home scrapbook during the time she was there. Eight years ago, Alice and LuVerne, who have been married now for 57 years, built a new home and moved to

Kimballton.

Since 1973 they have traveled at least once a year to visit family in Washington, Oregon, and California. Besides giving her time to volunteer at The Danish Immigrant Museum, Alice enjoys quilting, counted cross stitch, spending time with her five grandchildren and, of course, putting together memory albums. The Danish Immigrant Museum would like to thank Alice for all she does to support the Museum. The success of the Museum is dependent on dedicated and committed volunteers like Alice Petersen.



ANNUAL LEADERSHIP SOCIETY

January 1 – December 31, 2000

In recognition of all contributions of \$1,000 or more to the Museum during calendar year 2000*



The Danish Mormon Experience in America . . . — continued from page 4



Pettyville, oil on canvas (undated) by Rose Ludvigson McIff and Pettyville's First Record Book [inset], 1873, loans coordinated by History House, Manti, Utah.

Pettyville was settled in 1873 by George Petty and 15 families, largely from Manti, Ephraim and Utah's Dixie country. The land was owned by the Indians and the Mormons only had "squatter's rights". This painting portrays the Erick Ludvigson home in the background. His son, Elmer, has gone to fetch water from the creek. Water rights were important to the people of Pettyville. The original handwritten record book (inset) by James Chauncy Snow contains the original agreement on water rights and land parcels for the settlers. The journal also includes precious family records, including a copy of a blessing given in the Kirtland Temple (Ohio) in 1837 by Joseph Smith. Pettyville ceased to exist in the 1880's and the settlers moved to nearby Sterling.

Anonymous

Anonymous

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Tour of Denmark planned for August, 2001



Phyllis Hoegh will be leading another tour to Denmark August 12-23. For each ticket sold, the Museum receives a contribution. If you are planning a trip to Denmark, you can also help support The Danish Immigrant Museum. Seats are filling fast. For more information, please contact Phyllis Hoegh at 712-764-4111.

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