

America Letter

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An International
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THE DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM

*Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, Protector
Member of the American Association of Museums*

Your Museum in the
Heart of the Continent
BOX 470 • ELK HORN, IOWA 51531



Pictured here with John Mark Nielsen, the museum's executive director, and Barbara Lund-Jones, curator, Rita Neergaard Hansen (center) considers her gift to the museum as a way to extend her "beautiful Danish heritage way out into the distance."

Rita Neergaard Hansen's Beautiful Danish Heritage

By Eva Nielsen

Rita Neergaard Hansen of Kenosha, Wisconsin has made an incredible gift to The Danish Immigrant Museum. Rita has contributed in her name and that of her late husband, Roy Hansen, \$250,000 for the museum's Holger Danske Endowment Fund in support of collections care and interpretation. Further, Rita has given an additional \$50,000 to update and redesign parts of the present permanent exhibit *Across Oceans, Across Time*. Rita, too, has donated numerous artifacts to the museum's collection — artifacts collected throughout her life and the lives of her Danish immigrant family.

There's more. Rita (as she prefers to be called) has taken the time to share her history with the museum, telling stories of the people and places that have clearly made for a rich ninety-three years.

It was Rita's father, her "Pop," Christian who came home one night with the bright idea of immigrating to America. Though his parents, Peder and Kirsten Simonsen Neergaard,

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Across Oceans, Across Time, Across Generations®: *The Olesens*

By Eva Nielsen

It's 10:30 on a Friday morning and O & H Danish Bakery in Racine, Wisconsin is out of pecan kringle, their most popular flavor. "We had one hundred pecan kringles this morning, but they're already gone," says the woman behind the counter.

Not to worry: there will be more ready in the afternoon. And if you can't wait, well, there are lots of other flavors — apple, raspberry, almond macaroon, and cream cheese to name a few. Not in the mood for kringle? How about some Seven Sisters Coffee Cake, a donut, pumpkin bread, Danish sweet rolls, a chocolate éclair?

Across the street at company headquarters, Eric Olesen, a joint owner of O & H Danish Bakery, is alarmed by the pecan kringle shortage: "Oh no! That's not supposed to happen!"

He would know. Eric Olesen and his family have been supplying Racine residents with kringle for over fifty-five years. O & H Danish Bakery is, obviously, a Danish bakery. But it's also an evolving American business, which now ships baked goods to people's homes and to stores all over the United

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Christian Olesen, pictured here in the 1930s, started working in a bakery soon after his arrival in Racine, Wisconsin.



Director's Corner By John Mark Nielsen

In September, I had the privilege of visiting with Rita Neergaard Hansen in person for the first time. Of particular interest to me was

the time she spent in Iceland during the early years of World War II. Iceland, then a part of Denmark, played a strategic role in the conflict, providing an airbase for planes protecting the convoys plying the u-boat infested waters of the North Atlantic. Rita was there as part of the American legation. Her role was to provide clerical support. She took the opportunity to learn about Iceland's rich heritage. As a student of Icelandic Family Sagas (I wrote a Ph.D. exam on the subject!), I was impressed by the intellectual curiosity of this layperson and high school graduate. Her intellect and vivaciousness has not been dimmed by her ninety-three years!

I was visiting Rita to thank her for her wonderful gift of \$300,000 and her generous intent to continue providing for the museum by including it in her estate. In making her gift, she has both invested in the present and the future. Fifty thousand dollars of her gift will enable the update and redesign of the present permanent exhibit *Across Oceans, Across Time*. This exhibit has not seen substantive change since The Danish Immigrant Museum opened to the public in 1994. Much has occurred in twelve years. New research contributes to our understanding of the immigrant experience; new attitudes have arisen concerning the role of immigration in both American and Danish life; new technologies enable museums to engage visitors in more immediate ways. Her gift will allow us to tell this story in new and exciting ways.

The Danish Immigrant Museum contains over thirty-five thousand artifacts and we continue to grow. This collection requires care, which of course means continuing costs for personnel and the controlled environment in which artifacts

are preserved. Rita wants to be sure the museum has the funds to assure the care of the collection, so she designated \$250,000 to help endow collections care. Indeed, her gift increases the Holger Danske Endowment to over \$1.2 million! Already, the annual earnings from the endowment are helping to meet operating expenses. Rita's gift is an investment in the museum's future.

But her gift is not the only one. Several days before visiting Rita, the museum received a check in the amount of \$75,000 from the estate of Dolores Gregersen Connelly. Dolores was a native of rural Cass County, Iowa who spent much of her professional life as an accountant in Hawaii before retiring to Atlantic. At that time she began working as a volunteer at the Family History and Genealogy Center (FHGC) where she quickly became a loyal and valued member. Sadly, cancer struck and though she struggled valiantly and with dignity, the disease took its toll. Dolores had made provisions for the museum in her estate, stipulating that the proceeds be invested in the Holger Danske Endowment, the proceeds of which are to support the operation of the FHGC—another generous gift, another affirmation of the museum's mission.

Dolores believed in what Michele and the volunteer staff are doing at the FHGC and was willing to provide for our work even though she knew she would not see the fruits of her gift. Rita has been able to share with us in her lifetime and I know she feels a satisfaction in being able to participate in continuing to fulfill our mission. As she has said on numerous occasions, "The museum is my second home." It is, indeed, and it is too the "home" for Dolores and for so many others, preserving the legacies of those who are remembered and those who are our members.

Our future depends on the willingness of members to consider providing for The Danish Immigrant Museum. This can be done in various ways that may benefit not only the museum, but

also the donor. I invite you to contact Thomas Hansen, the museum's director of development, or me to consider how you too might assist us as we continue to share *the legacy and continuing influence of Danish culture as realized in the experiences and contributions of Danish immigrants, their descendants and Danes living in America.*



ADMISSION & HOURS

ADMISSION

(Includes Bedstemor's House)

Current Museum Members:

FREE with Membership Card

Non-Members: Adults, \$5

Children (ages 8-17), \$2

MUSEUM HOURS: Mon.-Fri.:
9:00 am-5:00 pm; Sat.: 10:00 am-
5:00 pm ; Sun.: 12:00 noon-5:00 pm

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

FAMILY HISTORY & GENEALOGY CENTER HOURS

May-Oct.: Tues., Wed., Fri., 9:00
am-5:00 pm; 1st & 3rd Saturday:

9:00 am-5:00 pm

Nov.-April: Tues., Wed., Fri.:
10 am-4 pm

Other Times By Appointment

All facilities are closed on New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving & Christmas.

(Local weather conditions may cause occasional closures.)

Nationally Known String Quartet Partners with The Danish Immigrant Museum

The University of Iowa's Maia Quartet is partnering with The Danish Immigrant Museum in an extended residency during the 2006-2007 academic year. The project, which includes performances of music by Scandinavian composers, has been organized in close collaboration with John Mark Nielsen, the museum's executive director.

The Elk Horn residency grew out of a planned festival of Scandinavian/Nordic music that the Maia Quartet will coordinate on the UI campus and in the Iowa City community in February 2007. Quartet members—violinists Tricia Park and Zoran Jakovcic, violist Elizabeth Oakes and cellist Hannah Holman—are all on the faculty of the School of Music.

The Maia Quartet is making three visits to Elk Horn throughout the school year, each culminating in a performance. During their visits, the quartet will perform in elementary schools in Audubon, Elk Horn-Kimballton, Exira and Harlan—all schools with strong ties to the Danish community. During the residencies, the quartet will introduce elementary students to chamber music in a program that integrates the music of Danish composers with the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen.

The first residency already occurred November 9-10 with performances in Exira and Elk Horn schools. Students were then encouraged to bring their parents to a concert designed for families held the evening of November 10 at the Elk Horn Lutheran Church. The residency also included a visit to the Salem Lutheran Home, a senior center facility.



The Maia Quartet, pictured here, is partnering with The Danish Immigrant Museum to bring the music of Scandinavian composers to the Elk Horn area this academic year. The musicians (from left to right) are Tricia Park, Hannah Holman, Zoran Jakovcic, and Elizabeth Oakes.

The second and third visits—scheduled for February 13-14 and April 13-15, 2007—will culminate in concerts with commentary, one at Grand View College in Des Moines and the other at Dana College in Blair, Nebraska, both schools with strong Danish-Lutheran heritage. The programs for these concerts will include performances of complete works by the Danish composers featured in the preceding lecture-demonstrations.

The Maia Quartet is a 2006-2007

recipient of a Chamber Music America Residency Partnership Program Grant. Funding has been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Chamber Music America Residency Endowment Fund. The Maia Quartet is a member of Chamber Music America. Additional funding for the performances in the Elk Horn area has been made possible by a gift from Dennis Andersen, a former board member from Atlanta, Georgia and a native of Elk Horn.



Museum Participates in Professional Museum Association Conference

The Danish Immigrant Museum participated in this year's Iowa Museum Association and Association of Midwest Museums Annual Conference, held in Davenport, Iowa September 26-29. John Mark Nielsen, executive director, presented at a session called "Ethnic Museums with Diverse Appeal." Representatives from Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah, Iowa and the Oneida Nation Museum in Oneida, Wisconsin also presented. Nielsen's presentation focused on The Danish Immigrant Museum's "Tribute to the Rescuers Essay Contest" and on

the museum's pilot project to use Lego® blocks as a tool in teaching local history in Danish American communities.

It was also announced at the conference that Angela Stanford, The Danish Immigrant Museum's collections manager and registrar, has been elected to a two-year term as vice-chair of the Board of Directors of the Midwest Registrar's Committee, a regional group that serves numerous Midwest museums and historical institutions. Angela also serves as secretary on the Board of Directors of the Historical Administration Program Association at Eastern Illinois University where she did her graduate work.

Olesens . . .

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States and Canada.

It started when two Danes, Christian Olesen (the “O”) and his partner Harvey Holtz (the “H”), opened the original O & H Danish Bakery in 1949. Christian, Eric Olesen’s grandfather, was himself a Danish immigrant, arriving in Racine as a 14-year-old. Christian joined his father, Anton Olesen, who was already living in the United States.

Anton had left northern Jylland in 1921, hoping for a better future in America. He had been a postman in Børgholm and was having difficulty earning enough money to support his six children. With the death of his wife and no foreseeable improvement in his economic opportunities, Anton decided to immigrate to the United States. Anton left the children in the care of his parents in Denmark and set out, eventually making his way to Racine. There, he worked for a farmer (earning \$32 monthly, \$30 of which he sent back to Denmark each month), did other odd jobs, eventually earning

enough to bring his children—including Christian—to the United States.

Soon after his arrival in the early 1920s, Christian got a job working in a Racine bakery where he learned the trade. In 1949, after years of baking experience, he and Holtz opened the original O & H Danish Bakery on the north side of Racine in what was then a Bohemian neighborhood. And, since that time, the lives of the Olesen family of Racine have been deeply intertwined with their baking business.

As soon as O & H Danish Bakery opened, Raymond Olesen, Christian’s son, was in the bakery too. “Our father was a 16-year-old when the bakery opened,” Eric Olesen explains. “So he began helping while he was going to school, cleaning and doing those things that kids would do in their parents’ business. And my father chose, instead of going on to college, to try baking for a year. And he fell in love with baking.”

In 1963 Raymond and his wife Myrna purchased Holtz’s share of the company. Meanwhile, their three boys, Dale, Mike, and Eric, were growing up in the bakery, learning as their parents worked. “They



A pretzel-shaped kringle topped by a crown is a symbol that often hangs outside bakeries in Denmark. This one hangs in the O & H Danish Bakery on Racine’s north side.

taught us the love of baking, the passion for baking. Take pride in everything you do and, above all else, try to enjoy it,” says Eric.

The boys learned from their grandparents too. “I remember,” Eric says, “as a child going in to the bakery. I wasn’t tall enough to reach the bench where they did their work, so my grandma [Eunice Olesen] would turn over a bakery pail and I would work next to her and we would make marzipan.”

And they talked baking at home. “So many times our meals were about our baking. It was our business, so not only did we talk about baking, but we were also eating what we were producing as well,” Eric explains. “If you take pride in what you do, you want to consume it and you can’t be afraid to be critical of it.”

Their parents, through example, showed the boys how to prepare a business for the next generation. Eric feels that his parents were deliberate about putting money back into the bakery in order to make it a healthy workplace. “Our parents recognized that putting money back into the business created opportunity for their three sons,” Eric says. “And their three sons, then, at the point in their lives when they had to make



Three Generations of Olesens: (from left to right) Dale, Eric, Christian, Raymond, Myrna, and Mike Olesen and their kringle in 1989. Christian and a partner, Harvey Holtz, opened the first O & H Danish Bakery in 1949.

Olesens . . .

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a decision about their futures could see a future in this business.”

And that’s what Dale, Mike, and Eric saw: a future in the business—a different future, however, than their parents envisioned.

Eric and his brothers wanted to open another store in Racine, one on the south side of town. They also felt that the family’s mail order business could grow and they suspected that grocery stores might want to sell their famous kringle. Eric explains that his parents supported the brothers’ ideas with patience, with time, and with capital. But they were clear: it was their children’s job to make the vision a reality.

And it is vision, according to Eric, that each successive generation has needed to keep O & H Danish Bakery vital. “Once vision is established the children need to show that they have the passion and skills to accomplish the vision,” Eric explains. “Then...the existing generation needs to trust that vision, trust the ability, and release. My father had all those things: he had children that had passion, vision, ability and then he had the trust to release and let it go. It’s as simple as that, yet it’s as difficult as that.”

As it stands now, all three brothers jointly own the two O & H Danish Bakeries in Racine, as well as the thriving mail order and wholesale businesses. The brothers and their spouses work in the company, using their skills in ways that continue to evolve as the company grows.

And the next generation? Well, Kevin Olesen, Mike’s 23-year-old son, one of the oldest members of the next Olesen generation, has recently chosen to make a career in the company as well.

So, is this what Anton Olesen had in mind when he left Denmark, envisioning a future for his family in America? Probably not exactly. But it is clear that Christian, his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren have built on that initial vision. And they’re making something delicious.



What About the Kringle?

If you go to Denmark today, you will notice that each bakery has a pretzel-shaped kringle topped with a crown hanging outside the shop; it is the symbol of a Danish bakery.

But, wait, in Racine, Wisconsin the kringle is made in an oval, not a pretzel shape. What happened?

Here’s the story. According to Eric Olesen, a joint owner of Racine’s O & H Danish Bakeries, years ago in Denmark, Danish bakers went on strike, demanding to be paid in money rather than in room and board. Many Danish merchants hired Austrian bakers to replace the striking Danes. When the strike was settled, Danish bakers adopted a pastry making technique of the Austrian bakers, modifying it to suit their own tastes. What has resulted is Danish pastry or *Wienerbrød* (“Viennese bread”)—a light, tender, flakey pastry that is made by rolling butter between layers of dough.

Kringle (and many other baked goods) is made from *Wienerbrød*. The name kringle, Eric suspects, comes from the shape of a sailor’s knot used in Scandinavia called a kringle.

As Danes immigrated to America, they brought their recipes with them. And Racine was a popular destination for Danish immigrants. (In fact, according to Eric, in the 1940s the west side of Racine had a greater concentration of Danes than any other city in the world outside Copenhagen.) At some point Racine customers started requesting kringle without the overlapping parts found in the pretzel-shaped kringle; these customers wanted every piece of kringle to have lots of filling. The bakers of Racine complied with this request and, since then, the Racine tradition is to make kringle in an oval shape.

Eric notes that Racine bakers have modified kringle in other ways as well. At O & H Danish Bakery, for example, you will find many different kringle fillings—blueberry, pumpkin caramel, maple walnut, for example—in addition to the customary Danish almond filling. Kringle made in Racine also has icing on top, rather than the traditional granulated sugar topping.

Eric explains the evolution of the kringle in this way: “We of Danish heritage have a lot to be proud of: we appreciate good things, we’re proud of what we make, we want to do the best we can at it, and we want to share our skills with others. That’s evident today in so many things that come out of Denmark and likewise so many things that come out of companies here in the United States that have Danish roots. But at the same time, we’re cognizant of who we are serving as customers.”

And it is possible, too, that these Danish American bakers have influenced Danish kringle. On a trip to Denmark, filled with bakery visits, Eric, his wife and children noted that kringle in Copenhagen is very similar to kringle made in Racine—lots of filling, a variety of filling choices, and icing on top. The rural bakeries they visited tended to have very little filling in their kringle, only the typical almond filling, and usually the traditional granulated sugar topping.



Rita Neergaard Hansen and her late husband Roy Hansen met in Kenosha, Wisconsin in 1931. Nearly twenty years later the couple finally married.

Rita . . . continued from page 1

were farmers in the Grenaa-Æbeltoft area of Jylland, they had no intention of letting their 17-year-old son go to America by himself. According to Rita, Kirsten, a strong-willed woman, said, “We can’t let Christian go alone. We’ll all go.”

So they went. Christian, his parents, and two younger brothers sailed from Denmark in 1888 on the *Thingvalla*, docking in Canada. There, the men were hired by the Canadian railroad, probably, Rita thinks, to lay railroad tracks west across Canada. Meanwhile, the family lived in a boxcar. The men were assigned certain sections of the railroad and, when that section was complete, the family—and boxcar—moved down the tracks to the next section.

Once they completed the job across Canada, the family headed south into Washington State, working their way slowly back east. Along the way, Christian befriended Native Americans. “Pop was the kind of man who was friends with everybody, wherever he was,” says Rita. Christian traded with the Native Americans who, according to Rita, especially wanted a fifty-cent piece or a chew of tobacco.

The family settled in Kenosha as many Danes did in those days, drawn particularly—Rita believes—by the abundance of factory jobs in the area.

When Kirsten died in 1905, Christian wrote to his aunt, Kirsten’s half-sister Maren, herself a widow, asking if she might come to Kenosha to keep house for the family of boys. Maren agreed. When she arrived, a young woman who Maren had worked with in a Danish children’s home, Olivia Poulsen, asked if she might travel along.

Olivia’s parents had passed away. Though she had many brothers and sisters in Denmark, she was curious about America. So, when Maren announced she was going to America, Olivia traveled along with her.

In Kenosha Olivia rented a room and worked in the Greenleaf Inn—cooking, Rita thinks—until she married Christian Neergaard in 1907.

In 1908, Kirsten, Rita’s older sister, was born. Then, in 1912, Rita arrived on the scene. Rita tells happy stories of growing up on a farm outside Kenosha with Danish family and friends nearby. She remembers riding with her father in a muskmelon-packed wagon to the Kenosha farmer’s market. She recalls watching a returning battalion of World War I soldiers marching down the wood plank road by the farm. She tells of rushing home after school to sit and chat with her mother. “Those were precious times, carrying me all the way through my ninety-three years” Rita says. “It was the twilight of the day.”

It was in 1930 that Rita’s mother died from serious burns incurred in a baking accident, leaving Rita with what she describes as an “invisible scar” she has carried ever since. It was the day before Rita’s eighteenth birthday.

The family was devastated. Rita says she and her father fell apart; Rita’s sister Kirsten held things together.

A high school graduate, Rita struggled for a time. She wanted to attend nursing school so that she could “do some good.” But it was the Great Depression and the family needed Rita to earn an income—something she couldn’t do during the three-year nursing program. Rita says in retrospect, “That was God’s way of telling me what he really wanted.” Rita feels that God wanted her out in the world, crossing paths with people and places far and wide. And that’s what happened next.

Kirsten came home one day, announcing that she’d seen an ad for the Civil Service Exam. She convinced Rita to take the exam with her.

Rita and Kirsten passed the exam and within three weeks both were called for domestic Civil Service in Washington, D.C. The family left for D.C. because her father felt: “When Uncle Sam calls, you’ve got to go.”

It was on leave from her civil service job in 1929 that Rita visited Denmark for the first time. In those days, Rita says, Danish immigrants rarely returned to Denmark—mostly because of cost—but Rita tried to convince Christian to travel with her. He was hesitant, saying all the people he knew were gone. According to Rita, he said, “You go. And you come back and tell me all about it.”

Rita felt a connection to Denmark immediately. She remembers especially the moment when she met her mother’s younger sister, Mette Maria. Her Uncle Peter had picked her up at the railroad station with his wagon and two small horses and driven her to their home. “When I saw her [Mette] standing in the doorway with the door light shining down on her, it was just like I saw Mom again. It was wonderful. And when she [Mette] saw me, she thought it was just like when Mom left for America.”

Rita even got to visit the land that her grandparents, Kirsten and Peder, had farmed. She remembers the farmer showing her around the land and then serving her *øl* and *Wienerbrød* (beer and Danish pastry)—a combination that Rita found odd, but “awfully good.”

Back in Washington, D.C., Rita—like her mother—felt the crave of adventure. In 1940 with the outbreak of WWII, Rita

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went to Reykjavik, Iceland with the State Department's Foreign Service. At the time, Iceland was still part of Denmark. "Legally," explains Rita, "we [the U.S.] weren't allowed in to Denmark, so we set up our consulate in Iceland."

Rita served in Iceland, which she loved—though it was considered a "hardship post"—for two years. Then, she was asked to fill a secretarial position in Stockholm, Sweden, not an easy place to get to during WWII.

Rita set out, the only passenger on a trawler traveling from Reykjavik to Aberdeen, Scotland. She said she spent most of the time on the bridge with the captain who would entertain her with stories and songs. "Then," she says, "all of sudden he would stop." There were two guide ships ahead of the trawler, detecting mines in the sea surrounding Iceland and signaling the captain when to change the ship's direction. Rita continues, "I was probably too stupid to be nervous. Isn't that something?"

When Rita reached Aberdeen, she had orders to travel to London by train. Once there she stayed in a hotel where she remembers climbing into the bathtub just as the air raid sirens went off. "And I thought, well, I can't do anything about this now so I had better finish the bath."

Next, Rita was ordered back north to Saint Andrews, Scotland where she and a young British man were the only two passengers on an airplane to the British legation in Stockholm. The plane left late at night and was blacked out as they flew over the sea and over German-controlled Norway. Rita says, "It was a wonderful feeling to pull back the [airplane] drapes and see the lights of Stockholm below. We felt alive in the world again."

After the War, Rita and Kirsten were both asked to go to Denmark on separate American Foreign Service assignments. Rita worked and lived there from 1945 to 1950. Her job was in the visa permit office in Copenhagen reviewing applications made by Americans to travel from Denmark, many of whom needed to travel to Germany.

Rita says of Denmark at the time: "They had nothing. They really had nothing."

In 1950 Rita left the foreign service, returning to Kenosha to marry a man she had met nearly twenty years earlier, Roy

Hansen.

Roy—the son of Danish immigrants—and Rita had met in 1931 in a young people's group in their local Danish church. And their relationship grew from there. "But," says Rita, "Roy always said our marriage day was the day we met."

Roy attended business school in Milwaukee and was working for American Brass, a Kenosha company, when he was drafted. He served in the army for four years during the war—in Germany and in Japan. All the while, Rita says, Kenosha mothers were reaching out to Roy, trying to get him to marry their daughters. But

Roy waited for Rita.

They married. Roy continued working for American Brass and Rita retired. "I felt that this marriage was my new career and I loved every bit of it. We both loved every bit of it."

Rita still lives in the Kenosha house she shared with Roy who passed away in 1991. "But, really," she says, "the museum, to me, is my home." Through the gifts she is making to The Danish Immigrant Museum, Rita says, "I'm extending this beautiful Danish heritage way out into the distance. And that's what I like about it. It's a good feeling."



Volunteer spotlight: Roger Parker

Roger Parker of Elk Horn, Iowa donated his time and expertise to build a cabinet for the museum shop's packing room.

The Danish Immigrant Museum's volunteer spotlight is on Roger Parker, Sr., a long-time Elk Horn, Iowa resident. Parker graduated from Elk Horn High School in 1947 and served in the U.S. Army from 1951-1953 during the Korean conflict. Parker and his wife JoAnn married in 1958; they have one daughter and two sons. He is now retired from farming.

Parker is also a skilled carpenter. So, hoping to make the museum's shop more efficient, manager Pamela Parker asked her father-in-law if he

could create a better workspace in the packing room.

Parker came up with a plan, got the supplies, and started in on the project, which he estimates took approximately 40 hours of labor—all donated. The end result is a beautiful cabinet that has plenty of storage space and is easy to stand at when wrapping gifts or packaging merchandise for mailing.

Thanks, Roger, for your time and your fantastic work!

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From a Curatorial Perspective

By Barbara Lund-Jones

Many visitors to The Danish Immigrant Museum are familiar with the small red building located on our grounds. Known as the Jens Diken House, it has its own special path, which begins at a point behind the museum, curls around a berm and leads to the modest front door. A number of visitors have taken this path, but only a few have seen the interior of the cabin. This is about to change. By Tivoli of next year (Memorial Day weekend), the museum plans to open the Diken House to the public.

The Jens Diken House began its life as a homestead shanty on the plains of North Dakota. It was moved to the museum grounds from the Kenmare area and restored by the Cedar Valley Danes, a support group for the museum based in the Cedar Falls, Iowa area. Currently, a small exhibit inside the museum provides an overview of Jens Diken's life and documents the restoration of his shanty house.

Diken, who emigrated from Denmark in 1880, played a key role in founding the Brorson High School, a Danish folk school near Kenmare, North Dakota.

Diken moved into this shanty house when he arrived in Kenmare around 1901. With the blessing of the area's Trinity Lutheran Church, he soon established a school for boys in his home. Having undergone a life altering religious conversion in 1884, Diken's teaching focused primarily on spiritual training. Diken's efforts were successful, his school grew, and Brorson High School was built in 1905 to accommodate more students. Diken was chosen as the school's principal and served in that capacity from 1905-1907 and again from 1910-1914.

Brorson was never a Danish folk school in the typical Grundtvigian tradition, but was instead a religious school. Traditional Danish folk schools focused on helping students realize their potential and continue the culture and values of the motherland. But Brorson's admitted purpose was evangelical in nature. Most folk schools dealt with the physical life and not the after-life, which was Brorson's focus.

Those of us who are working on the furnishings of the Jens Diken House are seeking to combine an understanding of Diken's life and personality with a knowledge of immigrant frontier furnishings of that time. It is our goal to capture, in so far as possible, the unique stamp of individual personality upon lived space and available furnishings. Research into Diken's diary entries is currently in progress so as to identify specific references to his life in the North Dakota shanty and to acquire a better sense of Diken as a person.



The Jens Diken House, a homestead shanty moved to the museum's grounds from North Dakota, will open to the public Memorial Day weekend 2007.



A 'Weeping Trolls' Update

In November of last year, collections intern Katie Keil discovered that two plastic trolls in the visual storage area were "weeping," or oozing a clear liquid. Knowing that this liquid and the fumes it emits can be toxic, Keil and Angela Stanford, the museum's collections manager and registrar, removed the trolls from storage to a safer location away from

other artifacts.

Since then, the trolls have been part of an experiment. In hopes of discovering how best to slow the deterioration of plastic artifacts, Stanford contacted Christina Kastell with the Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science in Davenport, Iowa. Kastell recommended leaving one troll exposed to standard room temperature and placing the second in a freezer. Stanford did this and has been monitoring the two trolls for nine months.

Here are the results: the troll in the freezer has stopped oozing. The areas covered with the liquid are no longer sticky, but, rather, are hard and solid. This method seems to have "frozen" the deterioration process. There has been little change to the troll left at room temperature. The liquid-covered areas are still there, but have not spread further. The areas are slightly sticky.

This information is being shared with the Putnam, as they too are conducting experiments on deteriorating plastics removed from their collection. The Danish Immigrant Museum is playing a small role in their research. Hopefully, our experiences will assist the Putnam as they try to discover ways to slow the deterioration process in plastics—information that will have long-term benefits for the museum community as a whole.



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Two trolls in The Danish Immigrant Museum's collection are part of an experiment to see how best to slow the deterioration of plastic artifacts.

Scheduled Exhibits at The Danish Immigrant Museum

Mezzanine

- *Fitness, Form and Rhythm in Motion: The Danish Gymnastic Tradition in the United States* (May 2006-March 6, 2007)
- *From Postcards to E-mail: Family and Friends Stay in Touch* (March 30, 2007-February 25, 2008)
- *Across Oceans, Across Time, Across Generations* (March 18, 2008-February 16, 2009)

Lower Level Gallery

Danish American Artist Series:

- Rick Marzullo July 20, 2006-January 3, 2007
- Elmer Petersen January 18, 2007-July 5, 2007
- Cynthia McKeen July 29, 2007-January 2, 2008
- Julia Larsen Maher January 17, 2008-July 7, 2008
- Jens T. Carstensen July 24, 2008-January 5, 2009
- To be determined January 16, 2009-July 7, 2009
- Evelyn Matthies July 23, 2009-January 4, 2010

Bro Alcove

- *Paintings of Edward Matwijkiw* (June 1, 2006-November 8, 2006)

Bro Dining Area

- New, enlarged exhibit of art work by Edward Matwijkiw (May 3, 2007-October 29, 2007); many pieces will be created specifically for this exhibit

Main Floor Front

- Introductory lead-in to the gymnastics exhibit on the mezzanine, August 3, 2006-March 6, 2007
- *The Work of Helle Jørvad, Danish Goldsmith and Designer*, May 24, 2007-January 19, 2009

The Papercuttings of Rick Marzullo on Display

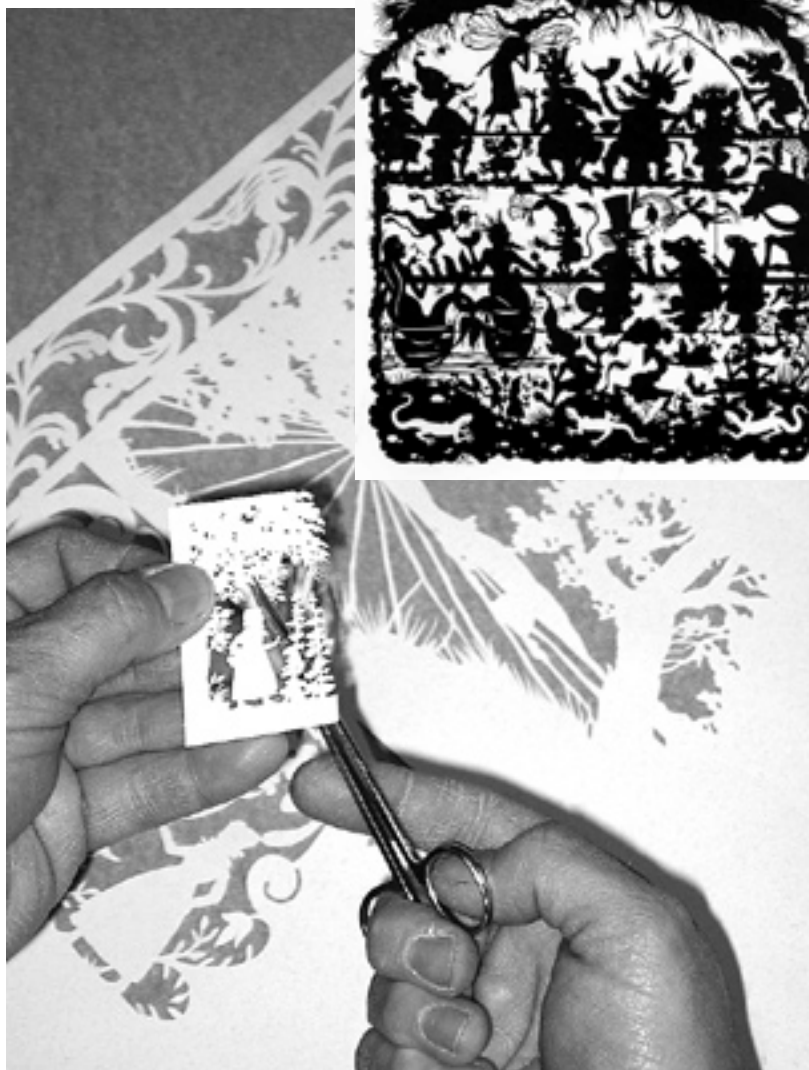
The Danish Immigrant Museum's ongoing exhibition series on Danish American artists currently features the work of Rick James Marzullo, focusing on his remarkable papercuttings. A California native, Marzullo has been pursuing his artistic interests for over four decades. Known worldwide as a master paper cutter, he also paints in oil, acrylic and watercolor, and has created and designed in many other mediums, including stained glass, wrought iron, ceramics, woodcarving and embroidery.

Marzullo's favorite medium of expression during the last fifteen years has been papercutting, a traditional Danish art form. "I began cutting in 1967 after seeing the silhouette cutter at Disneyland. I was fascinated by his ability to effortlessly cut one profile after another."

Using scissors and paper to create his detailed pieces, Marzullo often enhances his papercuttings with watercolor details. His papercuttings are all original designs and one-of-a-kind pieces. "I never do duplicate cuttings, but I may create cuttings on a similar theme. Some cuttings may take hundreds of hours to create, and some take me fifteen minutes. It all depends upon how intricate the design is and how large the final piece will be."

Marzullo's work is featured in the permanent collections of Grand View College in Des Moines, Iowa; the Elverhøj Museum of History and Art and the Hans Christian Andersen Museum in Solvang, California; and at Hyldgaardsminde at Rebild National Park, Denmark.

The Marzullo exhibit opened July 24, 2006 and will run through January 3, 2007.



Rick Marzullo's exquisite papercuttings are currently on display at The Danish Immigrant Museum. Papirklip, as it is known in Denmark, is a traditional Danish art form.



Taxidermy Workshop Proves Useful

Imagine walking into The Danish Immigrant Museum and seeing a mouse scurry under the Victor Borge piano. Or how would you like to be looking at a display of pelts used by Danish settlers and come away with fleas? Thanks to the efforts of Angela Stanford, The Danish Immigrant Museum's collections manager and registrar, all our exhibits are pest-free.

Stanford recently attended a workshop called, "The Assessment and Care of Taxidermy and Natural Items," sponsored by the Iowa Museum Association.

The museum has a handful of taxidermy specimens in the collection—stuffed birds, horns, and bones, for example. And, if not cared for properly, these items can attract insects or rodents.

Among the things Stanford learned at the workshop:

How to tell which items are most at risk: For example, if the marrow is not properly cleaned out of a specimen's bones, feet and beak or if skins have not had all of the fatty tissue removed, these items can attract pests.

How to handle taxidermy and natural history specimens: It's important to be careful around these artifacts not only because they're fragile, but also because they're sometimes treated with dangerous chemicals to "pest proof" them. Occasionally even off-market products such as DDT and arsenic are used.

How to clean taxidermy and natural history specimens: Cleaning such artifacts is a time consuming process, but can make an extraordinary difference in the appearance of a piece.

A Christmas Tree, Danish-Style

At Christmas, our celebrations are often peppered with traditions learned from parents and grandparents. Here are only some of the Christmas tree rituals and ornaments you might find in a Danish or Danish American home this December.

In Denmark, the Christmas tree is often purchased and decorated in the days just before December 25. Usually, the whole family decorates the tree, but sometimes the adults decorate it themselves as a surprise for the children.

WOVEN HEART BASKETS

According to historians, Hans Christian Andersen made the oldest woven heart basket, a green and gold one, in 1861. Woven heart baskets are still found on both Danish and Danish American Christmas trees.

In the United States, woven heart baskets are almost always red and white, the colors of the Danish flag. In Denmark, however, it is common to see baskets in other colors as well.

ORNAMENTS WITH A MILITARY THEME

In 1864 the Danish military experienced a tremendous defeat, losing a large swath of land to Germany. This provoked feelings of national-ity among the Danes; this mood was reflected on the Christmas tree where ornaments in Danish colors, Danish flags and miniatures of military equipment like drums and trumpets became common.

DANISH FLAGS

Often Danish Americans put small Danish flags on their Christmas trees. In the past, this was a tradition in some Danish homes, but is more common in Danish American homes, perhaps as a way of honoring the homeland. Some Danish American families string both Danish and American flags on their trees, celebrating both aspects of their identities.

NISSE

A *nisse* is an elf-like Christmas character who usually lives in barns or attics, taking care of people and farm animals. It is wise to care for the *nisse* at Christmas by giving him porridge or other treats; if you don't, he will make life miserable for you with his mischief. In Denmark today the *nisse* is a Christmas symbol as common as Christmas trees or Santa Claus. Danish Americans often put *nisser* around or on the Christmas tree.

PAPIRKLIP

It is a proud Danish tradition to make *papirklip*, small, exquisite paper cuttings used to decorate at Christmas and Easter. Trees, hearts,

angels, and *nisser* are common *papirklip* ornaments.

WOVEN RIBBON STARS

Small woven ribbon stars are extremely popular on Danish trees today. Normally, families make the stars themselves, but they can be purchased pre-made as well.

CANDLES

Originally, a Danish Christmas tree would have been decorated with candles. It wasn't until 1914 in Copenhagen that the first Danish Christmas tree was decorated with electric lights. Danes today sometimes still decorate with candles and some will even decorate with electric lights too, so the electric lights can be used once the candles burn down.

KRÆMMERHUS

Danes also decorate with *kræmmerhus*, a little round cone of paper. These cones and the woven heart baskets are often filled with sweets for the children.

JULEBUKKE

The tradition of decorating the tree with straw goat ornaments—*julebukke*—originated in Sweden. The *julebukke* is often found in other places around the Danish home at Christmas.

In Denmark it was—and is—a Christmas Eve tradition to join hands and dance around the Christmas tree, singing carols. Most Danish families still honor the tradition and for many Danish children that event is only overshadowed by another big event: opening presents!



From Our Development Director

By Thomas Hansen

The Danish Immigrant Museum has much to celebrate! On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, and dedicated volunteers, I wish to thank all museum members and donors for making this past fiscal year our best fundraising year ever.

We are overjoyed and blessed by the wonderful generosity of long-time member and supporter, Rita Neergaard Hansen of Kenosha, Wisconsin. Her gift of \$300,000 for the endowment and the redesign of our present permanent exhibit, *Across Oceans, Across Time*, is a highlight in a record year in contributions. It is our hope that her generosity will lead others to consider how they might partner with the museum as we seek to expand our purpose, exhibits, facilities and endowment in the years to come. Thank you, Rita, for your momentous gift!

The 2006 Summer Appeal was also successful. To date, more than 295 members and donors have sent in gifts totaling \$50,100 to support our daily activities, to renew memberships, or to help us complete several special projects. We continue to receive gifts from the summer appeal and certainly encourage such contributions.

The museum's membership and donors total now stands at 2,858, up from what we reported to you in the summer issue of our newsletter. We will continue to work towards an expanded annual support base, allowing us to provide increased programming and outreach, support for our collections/curatorial departments and our growing Family History and Genealogy Center.

During the summer months, we have also received several major gifts and in-kind gifts for special projects. We wish to express our gratitude to the following foundations/companies and members/donors for their special contributions:

- Bill and Berniece Grewcock Foundation of Omaha, Nebraska for their generous support of completing our current kitchen and meeting room area.

- Mert and Karen Lund of Sioux Falls, South Dakota for their support of the Family History and Genealogy Center's Tenth Anniversary Special Fund.
- Board Member Mark Nussle and his wife Lori of Palos Park, Illinois for their generous in-kind gift of two Viking Storage Shelving Units.
- Nilfisk-Advance America of Minneapolis, Minnesota for their in-kind gift of a Nilfisk Model GM-80 Museum Kit vacuum cleaner.
- The grandchildren of Niels Christian Bro for their combined gifts to purchase a new traveling display unit in honor of Bro's arrival in America one hundred years ago.
- In memory of Marion J. Walker and in honor of her brother, Anker Johnson a generous gift of \$75,000 was given to the museum by Marion's grandchildren, Britta Hansen Walker, Karma Walker and Erik Peter Walker. This gift will assist us in underwriting future museum programming efforts.

It is also important to recognize our Board of Directors and dedicated volunteers for their efforts this past year. Their extraordinary commitment of time, skills and financial support helped greatly in making this our best fundraising year ever. As I travel across the country meeting with current and prospective members and donors, I am proud to share with them that we have strong board leadership and committed volunteers.

Again, on behalf of The Danish Immigrant Museum's Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers, thank you very much for your wonderful generosity during the summer months and in recent time! We have an exciting future ahead of us and we look forward to working with you in making our ambitious goals a reality. Come visit us when you are in the Elk Horn-Kimballton area.



Additions to the Wall of Honor:

May 1, 2006 – September 30, 2006

The Danish Immigrant Museum's Wall of Honor provides families and friends with a means of preserving the memory of those who emigrated from Denmark to America. Over 4,500 immigrants are currently recognized on the wall. Their stories and the stories of their families contribute importantly to the growing repository of family histories at the museum's Family History and Genealogy center.

If you would like to memorialize your forebearers by adding their names to the Wall of Honor, contact Deb Larsen, membership coordinator.

Hans N. Brown and Anna Maria (Jensen) Brown, Everett and Louise Brown, Panora, Iowa

Sophie Elizabeth Seeman Buckingham, Albert Buckingham, Sioux City, Iowa

Elna Gebauer Fugl, Todd & Diane Zygmuntowicz, Troy, Michigan

Steen Goddik, Johannes and Roelie Goddik, Dayton, Oregon

Jens Carl Jensen, Richard and Shirley Beck, Omaha, Nebraska

Nelse Jacob Mouritson, Warren Kindt, Muskego, Wisconsin

Anna Lydia Norgaard, Caryl West, Harlan, Iowa

Peter Sand, Richard Sand, Kansas City, Missouri



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In Memory . . .

In August, we experienced the loss of two former board members and dedicated volunteers: **Virginia Nielsen** served on the board of directors from 1989 to 1995 and **Leroy Pedersen** served from 1993 to 1999. Each of them served for two terms. They both lived in Elk Horn, although Virginia was a native of Kimballton and had lived in numerous communities throughout the Midwest with her husband, Clayton, a Lutheran pastor; Leroy was a local businessman who consistently worked to assure that the community was supportive of the museum. We are grateful for their generosity and service to the museum. They

will be missed very much.

We also learned this summer that the following members passed away: **Barbara Christensen**, wife of current board member Carlo Christensen, **JoAnn Bollesen**, wife of Arv Bollesen, a former board member from Tustin, California, **Poul Dalby Andersen**, who with his wife Judy, a former board member, was the owner and publisher of *Bien*, and former Danish Consul **Elcar Nielsen** who was consul for the Kansas City area. Also of note, **Gert Madsen**, husband of Jytte, current owner and editor of *Bien* passed away this summer.



Thank You Businesses and Organizations

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

A & A Framing
Atlantic Friends of The Danish Immigrant Museum
Carroll Control Systems, Inc.
Childs & Hall, P.C.
Danebod Lutheran Church
Danish American Club in Orange County
Danish American Club of Milwaukee
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #14
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #15
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #39
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #56
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #348
Danish Club of Tucson
Danish Countryside Vines & Wines
Danish Mutual Insurance Association
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #102, Heartland District
Elk Horn Pharmacy
Elk Horn-Kimballton Community School
Elk Horn-Kimballton Optimist Club
Elverhoj Museum of History and Art
Exira Family Medicine Clinic
Faith, Family, Freedom Foundation
Hardi Midwest, Inc.
Harlan Newspapers
Heart of Iowa Danes
Heartland District of the DBIA
Jacquelyn's Danish Bake Shoppe

Kessler Funeral Homes, Inc.
King of Kings
KNOD
Knudsen Old Timers of The Danish Lutheran Church
Marge's Hair Hut
Marne & Elk Horn Telephone Co.
Nebraska District of DBIA
Nelsen & Nelsen
O & H Danish Bakery
Olsen, Muhlbauser & Co., L.L.P.
Outlook Study Club
Proongily
Rebild National Park Society, Southern California Chapter
Rebild National Park Society, Upper Midwest Chapter
Red River Danes
Ringsted Danish American Fellowship
Royal Danish Embassy
Shelby County State Bank
Sons of Norway
Symra Literary Society
The American-Scandinavian Foundation, Central Iowa
The Viking Club of Orange County
Westergaard Farms and Scandinavian Bed & Breakfast

Memorials

May 1, 2006 – September 30, 2006

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

Cathryn Pedersen Andersen
Ellie Andersen
Jørgen Heller Andersen
Poul Dalby Andersen
JoAnn Bollesen
Barbara Christensen
Arlene Christensen
Anita Dyrhkoop
Lucille Erickson
John Esbensen
Wilfred Eskov
Dagny Gude
Jerry Gude
Derward Hansen
Kenneth Hoegh
Leonard and Helga Jensen
Mary Jensen
Thorvald Jensen
Maxine Johannsen
Mattie Johnson
Elsie J. Juhl
Edith Jensen Keck
Laverne Klindt
Helen Knudsen
Gert Madsen
Margaret Madsen
Carrie Mathisen
Beverly Mattson
Elsie R. McNabb
Sigurd A. Molgaard
Elcar A. Nielsen
Nini Nussle Nielsen
Virginia Nielsen
Signe Nissen
James D. Olsen
Kenneth Olson
Stig Orum
Aurealia Pagh
Leroy Pedersen
Marlene Petersen
Jeannette Pospesil
Emmert Steen



Bro Family Holds Reunion in Elk Horn

Descendants of Danish immigrant Niels Christian Bro gather for a group picture in front of the museum. The Bro family met during the traditional Sankt Hans Aften/Midsummer's Fest weekend of June 23-25, traveling from around the U.S. to spend a few days in Elk Horn-Kimballton and the surrounding area.

In honor of Niels Christian Bro's journey to America one hundred years ago, his grandchildren contributed funds to the museum in his name. Because of their generosity, a new traveling display unit (pictured at left) was purchased. It is now used to promote the museum at festivals, events and presentations around the country.



Generous Equipment Donations to the Collections Department

The Collections Department recently received two wonderful equipment additions in the form of gift-in-kind donations.

Nilfisk-Advance American, Inc., a Danish company with U.S. headquarters in Plymouth, Minnesota, just donated the entire cost of a brand new, specialized vacuum for cleaning artifacts. This vacuum, the Nilfisk GM-80, comes with a micro-tools kit, which can clean delicate artifacts as small as jewelry, as well as large pieces like rugs and tapestries. It

also features a HEPA filter, which traps 99.999% of dust and other airborne particles, making it clean and safe for staff to use. This vacuum was part of the 2005-06 budget, but thanks to the generosity of Nilfisk-Advance, those funds can be used elsewhere.

Board member Mark Nussle and his wife Lori of Palos Park, Illinois purchased and donated two museum-quality cabinets for the storage of artifacts. The two cabinets were designed and

manufactured by Viking Metal Cabinet Company in Chicago, Illinois. One of the cabinets is tall and well suited for several medium-sized artifacts. The second is a lower "flat file" with drawers similar to a map case, making it ideal for flat storage of oversized photographs, posters, prints, and other archival materials.

Nussle's family founded Viking Metal Cabinet Company; Nussle himself was the long-time chief executive until the company was recently sold.



Introducing Our New Interns

Karina Petersen (left) and Katherine Fox are interning at The Danish Immigrant Museum.

Two new interns, Katherine Fox and Karina Petersen, have joined the staff at The Danish Immigrant Museum.

Katherine Fox arrived in August from her home state of Virginia where she just graduated from James Madison University in Harrisonburg. Kate has a bachelor's degree in biological anthropology and plans to pursue a graduate degree in museum studies.

Kate already has some experience working with historical materials. She was employed by James Madison University as the student preservation assistant in the Special Collections Department. There, she worked with a collection of over 4,500 rare books and numerous other archival materials. Kate assisted with monitoring the unstable environmental conditions these materials were stored in and researched the most appropriate and cost-effective methods for re-housing them.

Kate also has experience with grant writing, digitizing collections, and fresco preservation. She worked for two months in Altamura, Italy as a conservation as-

sistant, helping with the cleaning, stabilization, and restoration of the fresco located in the San Sepulcro Chapel in Altamura.

Kate will be working directly with Angela Stanford in collections. She will assist with artifact processing, pest management, inventories, and numerous specific projects.

Karina Petersen arrived in October from Denmark. She grew up in Sønderlev, a small village between Hjørring and Lunstrup. After completing her stu-

dentereksamen at Hjørring Gymnasium, Karina attended Aalborg University, studying intercultural market communication in English and German. She was an exchange student at the University of Montana for a semester in 2004.

After completing her B.A. at Aalborg in 2005, Karina entered the tourism graduate program, which she will complete with an M.A. in 2007. Karina is the third intern to be at The Danish Immigrant Museum through the program.

Since Karina grew up along the Skagerrak, Denmark's north coast, she has always worked in tourism. Her parents managed a restaurant that is a part of one of the biggest resorts in Denmark, so she was introduced early to all aspects of the restaurant, from washing dishes to waiting tables. This led to opportunities working in a large tourist-booking agency in Hjørring. Given her childhood experiences in a resort area, Karina said it was only natural that she would choose tourism as an area of study and work.

Karina and her husband, Jesper Simonsen, enjoy traveling, camping, skiing, beachcombing, and visiting new countries. Jesper will join Karina for several weeks over Christmas.

Karina's tasks at the museum will focus on marketing and advertising. Already she participated on the newly formed Marketing Committee of the Board of Directors. She will also work on our website and learn about American marketing strategies. Terri Johnson will be working closely with her.

We are pleased to have Karina and Kate at The Danish Immigrant Museum.

*Have you
been to our
website lately?*

www.danishmuseum.org





The Danish Immigrant Museum's 2006-2007 Board of Directors

Back Row (left to right): Dagmar Muthamia, Kai E. Nyby, president, Carlo Christensen, State Senator Harriet Albertsen Spanel, Ken Gregersen, Consul Anelise Sawkins, Dr. Gordon Esbeck, Dr. Ronald Bro, Dennis Larson, ex-officio, Kurt Klarskov Larsen, John Molgaard, treasurer.

Front Row (left to right): Harold Jensen, Janet M. Thuesen (with her companion dog, Paaske), Linda Sloth-Gibbs, Lois Christensen, Erna Jensen, Dr. John Mark Nielsen, executive director of The Danish Immigrant Museum, Ane-Grethe Delaney.

Not pictured: Marc Petersen, Julie Jorgensen, Mark Frederiksen, Bridget Jensen, Peder Kirkegaard, Mark Nussle, Benedikte Ehlers Olesen, Lynette Skow Rasmussen; Ex-Officio: Vern Hunter, Nils Jensen



Board of Directors Meet in Elk Horn

The Danish Immigrant Museum's volunteer Board of Directors met in Elk Horn-Kimballton, Iowa for their 23rd annual and 74th regular meetings October 19-21.

The twenty-four-member board from across the country began a full program of committee meetings Thursday afternoon with the Executive Committee, led by Board President Kai Nyby, convening both that afternoon as well as Friday morning. Committee meetings took place Thursday and Friday and Nyby called the annual Board of Directors meeting to order on Saturday.

All members of the board serve on at least one of the following committees: Collections, Finance, Family History and Genealogy Center, Museum Shop, Development, Marketing, Facilities, and Nominating.

Seven new members began their three-year terms with an extensive museum orientation presented by the museum staff. These informative sessions were a great help to the new members as they became acquainted with the daily activities and workings of The Danish Immigrant Museum.

In addition to many meetings, board members and spouses also participated in the celebrations of the Family History and Genealogy Center's Tenth Anniversary Open House on October 19, as well as the Anniversary Banquet held October 21 in the newly renovated Kimballton Town Hall. One of many highlights during the weekend was a trip to the new Danish Countryside Vines and Wines, located two and a half miles east of Elk Horn, owned by Al and Carol Petersen.

Are You a Danish Immigrant or Long-term Resident?

You may not think you're history yet, but you will be some day! We would like to have some information in our library on more recent immigrants or long-term residents from Denmark. If you would be willing to fill out one of our "Immigrant Information Forms" or distribute it at meetings of your local Danish American organization, contact the Family History and Genealogy Center for copies.

Introducing the New Board Members

The following individuals were elected to the museum's Board of Directors at the June meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota. They began their three-year terms with a daylong orientation at the museum before the October board meeting.

Mark Frederiksen, a resident of Papillion, Nebraska, is an attorney specializing in intellectual property. He assisted the museum in obtaining legal trademark for the logo and identifying phrase "*Across Oceans, Across Time*®."

Kenneth Gregersen, a native of northwest Iowa who now summers in Arnolds Park, Iowa and winters in Arizona, was named National Agricultural Communicator of the Year in 1989. He retired as senior vice-president for advertising, promotions, and public relations after a life-long career with Kent Feeds, Inc. of Muscatine, Iowa.

Peder Kirkegaard was born in Denmark and first came to the United States in 1952 as an exchange student from Ladelund Landsbrugsskole. Later he came back to the U.S., married and was the owner of Waukegan Disposal Service. He has developed properties, most recently Trinity Mountain Estates in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.

Kurt Klarskov Larsen is "an American citizen by choice," as he puts it. Kurt immigrated to Canada in 1952, following his military service in Denmark where he founded Blue Giant Equipment Company, Ltd. Later, he also incorporated in the United States and opened a factory in Alabama where he and his wife, a native of Scotland, now reside.

Ane-Grethe Olesen Delaney, a resident of Wayzata, Minnesota, is a chemical engineer as well as a mother and homemaker. Her profession has taken her many places in Western Europe and the United States.

Lynette Skow Rasmussen, a native of Des Moines, is a graduate of Drake University Law School. She serves as general counsel for the Rasmussen Group, Inc. (including Jensen Construction Company) and manages the Rasmussen Foundation.

Janet Thuesen, now a resident of

Sausalito, California, returns to the board after having served from 1996-2002. She retired from Otto Kroeger Associates in Fairfax, Virginia, an international psychological consulting business. Her clients included the White House Staff and Executive Department and Department of Education.

Erna Jensen (Des Moines, Iowa), **Benedikte Ehlers Olesen** (Eugene, Oregon), **Marc Petersen** (Omaha, Nebraska) and **Linda Sloth-Gibbs** (Yuma, Arizona) were elected to second terms. A board member may serve two consecutive terms and then is not eligible for election to the board for three years.



Don't miss this opportunity!
Look for your copy of the Museum Shop
Christmas Catalog enclosed with this mailing.



Rick James Marzullo
Papirklip Above, page 1
One of a kind piece, not available as prints or in any reproduction format.

2006 Christmas
Card & Ornament
Left, page 15
Danish Papirklip
Right, page 16



2006 Museum Shop Christmas Catalog



News from the Family History & Genealogy Center

By Michele McNabb, librarian

Activity buzzes around our Family History and Genealogy Center exhibit table at the Iowa Genealogical Society (IGS) fall conference in Marshalltown. This type of event is a good place to network, to learn about new resources, and to advertise The Danish Immigrant Museum. During the past two days I've spoken with several former patrons and met a number of participants with Danish ancestry, including a few museum members. I'm also mentally preparing for going to Norsk Høstfest, the largest annual Scandinavian festival held in Minot, North Dakota, where once again the museum will have exhibit space.

This has certainly been a summer of travel! In the past four months FHGC staff or volunteers have attended Danish Day in Minneapolis and the Scandinavian Hjemkomst Festival in Fargo-Moorhead, North Dakota-Minnesota; and visited Fredsville, Cedar Falls and LeMars, Iowa; Chicago and Sheffield, Illinois; Dagmar, Montana; and Askov, Minnesota. This year was notable in that two of these localities, Dagmar and Askov, celebrated the one-hundredth anniversaries of their founding.

In July, Development Director Tom Hansen and I drove north, stopping to visit with the Red River Danes, the museum support group in Fargo, North Dakota. After being treated to a delicious dinner (including a cake embellished with an image of our building!), we updated the group on current museum exhibits and future plans. Our journey then continued on to Dagmar, where we were guests of the Dagmar Centennial Committee and Jens and Gertrude Sundsted. Jens, the son of one of Dagmar's pioneer settlers, filled us in on the community's local history and gave us a tour of his farm, including his collection of historic farm equipment. Dagmar's present population is less than two-dozen, but their well-coordinated centennial celebration pulled in some 2,500 visitors!

Later in the summer I found myself



Three of the four women who contributed so much to the founding and operating of the Family History and Genealogy Center celebrate its tenth anniversary: Helen Stub, Margaret Christensen, and Mae Petersen (not pictured: Norma Lange Nelson).



Thomas Hansen, development director, visits with members of the Red River Danes in Fargo, North Dakota.

among the lofty pinewoods of Askov, Minnesota as the museum's representative to the one-hundredth-birthday celebration of the founding of this Danish town and church. Besides trying my first rutabaga milkshake, I met with descendants of many of the families who started the colony. Again, a small town pulled out the stops to celebrate their heritage.

Speaking of anniversaries, the Family History and Genealogy Center is celebrating its tenth year as a department of the The Danish Immigrant Museum. Volunteers who worked in the library in the early years tell me they started with

— continued on page 19



Jandy Jorgensen and Thomas Hansen celebrate Dagmar, Montana's centennial July 7-9, 2006. Jandy was one of the organizers of this celebration that attracted over 2,500 people. Today, the population of Dagmar is seventeen.

a single bookcase in the museum basement. Our need for space grew quickly and since March 2003 the library has had its premises in a separate location on Elk Horn's Main Street. The library collection, the files on immigrants, our volunteer group, and the assistance we can offer visitors and long-distance pa-

trons have grown as well. Now we look to the future with some definite goals in mind of materials we would like to add and new ways to assist people wanting to know about their Danish roots or the American branches of their Danish families. Look for more information in upcoming issues of *America Letter*.



Long-time museum supporters Jens and Gertrude Sundsted hosted museum staff during the Dagmar, Montana centennial festivities.

Wish List

The following items are currently at the top of the FHGC Wish List. If you would like to make a donation of the following items or contribute toward their purchase, please contact Michele McNabb at 877-764-7008 or librarian@danishmuseum.org.

- **FAMILY HISTORIES**

Has someone in your family written a family history or compilation of family data? If so, has a copy been donated to the museum? If not, we would very much like to have a copy. No matter the format—formally published volumes or photocopied material put together for family reunions—we take them all! If you're not certain whether a family history has already been donated, we'll be happy to check our files.

- **BIOGRAPHIES, MEMOIRS AND COLLECTIONS OF FAMILY LETTERS**

Do you have a copy of reminiscen-

ces written down by a Danish immigrant or a transcription of family letters? These materials are invaluable resources for future family historians since they will shed light on the personalities and concerns of our ancestors.

- **DANISH NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED IN THE U.S.**

A number of Danish-language newspapers were published in various communities. They contain local news of interest to immigrants, including obituaries and social notices. Many have been microfilmed by various state historical societies. We have a list of newspapers from Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin and Illinois that we would like to purchase for the collection. An average roll of microfilm costs \$70-80; this winter we are starting an "adoption" program in hopes of adding these titles to our collection.

Activities and News from the Family History & Genealogy Center

- During TivoliFest 2006 the FHGC photo exhibit *There's No Place like Home* attracted many visitors. Photographs of the homes that some sixty Danish immigrants left behind and the homes they made in their new country showed many contrasts in architectural styles and standards of living. Next year's photograph exhibition will feature immigrants who served in the military, so start looking for those photographs now!
- Running a library is not just a matter of putting books on the shelves and files in cabinets; there is a lot of behind-the-scenes work that requires significant investments of time and money. In September we were pleased to learn that long-term support for our activities had come through a generous bequest to the Holger Danske Endowment Fund from the late Dolores Connelly, a longtime FHGC volunteer. Her generosity will help underwrite some of our day-to-day expenses for many years to come.
- A reminder for fall and winter visitors that FHGC hours change at the end of October. From November 1 to April 30 we are open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Appointments for other days can be made in advance by calling the library.



Join us for **Julestuen 2006!**

Spend a *hyggelig* day with family and friends at
The Danish Immigrant Museum's annual Christmas celebration.

Make Danish ornaments,
listen to Hans Christian
Andersen fairy tales, eat
Danish Christmas cookies,
shop in our museum store.

Friday, November 24

9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Saturday, November 25

10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



THE DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM

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2006 Annual Christmas Card and Keepsake Ornament

The Danish Immigrant Museum's 2006 Christmas card and ornament were selected from a photograph by Danish-born photographer Sisse Brimberg.

Brimberg has been with *National Geographic* since 1976. Her photographic studies of Denmark include *National Geographic's* "In Search of Vikings" (May 2000) and "Civilized Denmark" (July 1998).

Brimberg's photographs have been exhibited worldwide, including a long-standing exhibit at The Danish

Immigrant Museum. Her ability to capture truth and beauty on camera has won her worldwide recognition, including first prize from the National Press Photographers Association for her reportage on migrant workers, "Picture Story of the Year."

This is the museum's eighteenth annual Christmas card and the seventh year for the keepsake ornament. We



hope you will make this year's card and ornament a traditional part of your Christmas holidays.

Call 1-800-759-9192 to order your cards and ornaments.

Cards: \$10.00 for a package of ten
Keepsake ornament: \$14.95