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THE DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM

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Across Oceans, Across Time, Across Generations®: The Bansens

by Eva Nielsen

In Upstate New York, Josie (Bansen) Severtsen raises goats so her three boys can drink the milk—not a chore most young mothers are working into their schedules these days. When you learn just how many Bansens are milking animals across this country, however, it isn't surprising.

For starters, in Yamhill, Oregon, Lloyd Bansen still milks a few cows and goats himself; his son Robert Bansen has taken over his dairy operation. Down the road in Dayton, Dan Bansen has 1,400 jerseys producing organic milk; his daughter Jamie works on the farm with him full-time. In Monmouth, Jon Bansen has a herd of 165 jersey cows. Out in Blair, Nebraska Ted Bansen is selling milk from his cows to community members in his spare-time. Finally, back in Ferndale, California, Pete Bansen works the dairy his grandparents, Peter and Anne Bansen, once owned—the place where all this milking business got started eighty-five years ago.

Technically speaking, the milking started in Denmark. Peter Bansen was born in 1892 on the Danish island of Ærø. His father was a cooper—a barrel-maker—but the family also worked a farm, grazing animals and growing food for the family.

Only, food was not particularly plentiful on Ærø in the late 1800s. In fact, by century's end, records show people on the island were measuring smaller than people had been at the beginning of the century. Food was less abundant; nutrition was poorer;

Peter Bansen and Anne Andersen wed in 1919 in Ferndale. "Peter and Anne were," says their son Lloyd, "extremely frugal, but they were a dashing young couple."



Peter and Anne Bansen, Danish immigrants, started their dairy on a farm outside Ferndale, California, pictured here in 1969. Peter's grandson, Pete, who owns the dairy today, says, "There was never any doubt that Peter wanted to be in Ferndale. He must have looked at the sky here and found it so comforting...It looks just like the sky in Denmark."

people were not thriving. As an 18-year-old in 1910, Peter Bansen chose to leave the island.

Peter immigrated to Ferndale, California where his uncle, Peter Christensen, was farming. He worked with his uncle for several years, but because his fellow workers were mostly Portuguese, he wasn't learning much English. So when the opportunity arose for a new job – working on a dairy for a widow – he took it. There he also met his future wife: the widow's daughter, Anne Maria Nicolina Andersen.

The Andersens were Danish immigrants too. Anne was born in 1895 in Sonderup, where her family owned a bar. As Lloyd Bansen, Peter and Anne's son, explains it, Anne's father was an alcoholic; leaving the bar behind seemed a wise idea under the circumstances.

The Andersen family immigrated to the U.S. when Anne was a 10-year-old. They went first to Illinois, but Anne's mother was not fond of the climate and, according to Lloyd, declared, "It's either Denmark or California."

So the family settled in Ferndale, California, renting land and raising dairy cattle. Unfortunately, Anne's father was killed by a bull when he was 40-years-old and, as a result, the family needed hired help. That's how Anne met Peter Bansen.

A lengthy courtship allowed Peter time to save money for a place of their own; after a year of marriage, Peter and Anne bought their dairy farm outside Ferndale.

The couple had three sons, Norman, Stan, and Lloyd. Naturally, the boys grew up working with dairy cows. The family had one stanchion barn (stanchion meaning the metal stall that

– continued on page 4



Director's Corner

By John Mark Nielsen

As I write this, my wife and I are looking forward to a trip to Denmark where, in the Rebild Hills of northern Jutland, I will be the American main speaker for the 96th annual Fourth of July celebration. By the time you read this, the event will be a memory, hopefully, of a festive day when it did not rain. (Those who have been to the Rebild festival know what downpours can occur!)

This honor has been afforded me because of you and because of what we have accomplished together. My selection comes, largely, because the Rebild National Park Society recognizes what we, who are involved with The Danish Immigrant Museum, have achieved.

Twenty-five years ago, we were full of dreams; but we also knew that if dreams were to be realized, work and sacrifice would need to occur. Thousands, literally thousands, have contributed in various ways to the creation of our museum. Some have contributed through annual memberships and responses to special appeals; some have placed loved ones on the Wall of Honor; some have provided for the museum in their estates. Each has been important in his or her own way to realizing our dreams.

Especially we must thank the over one hundred individuals who have served or are serving on the museum's Board of Directors. And I also include their spouses. Service on the board is without ANY reimbursement and members pay ALL the costs of attending board meetings three times a year. In addition, many of them make sizeable annual contributions. These are individuals who are devoted to working on your behalf in fulfilling the mission of The Danish Immigrant Museum.

Today, we celebrate a museum building that is paid for due in large measure to the generosity of the Lauritzen Corporation. We celebrate active programming at three sites in Elk Horn (museum, Family History and Genealogy Center, and Bedstemor's House) and in venues around the country. And we celebrate an enhanced, informative website.

In my Rebild speech, my focus was Jefferson's stirring words from our Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they have been endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." I believe the pursuit of happiness has been and is an important factor motivating human migration.

Certainly, it was the pursuit of a kind of happiness in the urge to explore possibilities that motivated three of my grandparents to leave Denmark in the early years of the twentieth century. My *farfar*, John Nielsen, settled in Minnesota; my *morfar* and *mormor* Ejnar Solevad and Else Povelsen met and married in California. Each in his or her own way found happiness; each paid a price. My two grandfathers never saw their parents again. Indeed, when shortly before his death my *morfar* was asked whether he had made the right choice in immigrating to the United States, he answered, "no." He said he had not understood what the significance of separation from family for a lifetime would be. The pursuit of happiness can be bittersweet and can involve sacrifice.

It is the support and even the sacrifice of so many that has permitted The Danish Immigrant Museum to become what it is today. As we face the future, we are affirmed by the recognition that we are receiving—whether it is by the Rebild National Park Society or recently by the Scan|Design by Inger and Jens Bruun Foundation in funding our program of bringing Danish graduate students to serve as interns at the museum.

We also know that challenges lie ahead. Four dollars per gallon gasoline may affect travel that will, in turn, impact the number of visitors we receive at the museum; uncertain financial markets may lead potential donors to be more cautious in their benevolence; individuals on fixed-incomes may have to make choices over where limited resources are spent. Mindful of these challenges, we continue. Perhaps it's just a bit like those early immigrants who recognized that they could not go back. Instead, we will innovate and, through continued hard work, we will move forward and even flourish.

That's what we did twenty-five years ago and that's what we'll do today.

That's what we did twenty-five years ago and that's what we'll do today.

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Speaker to Stress Cultural Bridges at Denmark's Salute to America

BY DAVID HENDEE
WORLD-HERALD
STAFF WRITER

Reprinted with permission from The Omaha World-Herald; Published Friday, July 4, 2008.

The right to pursue happiness – singled out in the Declaration of Independence – challenges people to build bridges of understanding to one another, says a Nebraskan who's in Denmark for that nation's annual salute to America.

John Mark Nielsen of Blair said physical and legal barriers to immigration may stop or slow a society's change.

But people can bridge cultural boundaries by how they live their lives, he said in remarks prepared for today's Fourth of July celebration at Rebild National Park on the Danish mainland in northern Europe.

Nielsen, executive director of the Danish Immigrant Museum in Elk Horn, Iowa, and an English professor at Dana College in Blair, was the Danish festival's American speaker.

The Rebild celebration is the oldest and largest official celebration of

America's independence held outside the United States. Danish-Americans started the observance in 1912. The festival annually attracts 20,000 to 30,000 people.

Nielsen said the common response to some immigrants by nations such as the United States and Denmark is to erect physical or legal barriers. He said perceived or actual resistance by immigrants in accepting the culture of the host country can cause frustration.

Americans tend to think the assimilation process of immigrants occurs more rapidly than it actually does, Nielsen said. That's because of Americans' relative lack of interest in history and their longing to shape a national identity out of a multicultural experience, he said.

"Moreover, groups who do not share the same religious beliefs inspire suspicion and even dread," he said.

Danes face similar challenges, although Denmark has homogeneity not found in U.S. society. But Denmark's 200,000 Muslims make up 3.5 percent of the population, with Islam the largest minority religion in Denmark behind the

state-run Lutheran Church.

Danes today are debating the impact of Muslim workers and asylum seekers who've migrated to their tiny Scandinavian country. The new Danish People's Party arose with nationalistic and anti-immigration policies.

The 2005 publication of 12 political cartoons in a Danish newspaper depicting Islam's Prophet Muhammad – along with Denmark's military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq – focused Muslim ire on the country.

Nielsen said U.S. social conflict and interest in the diverse experiences of minority and immigrant groups resulted in the recognition during the last 50 years that America is not a "melting pot" but a "tossed salad."

He said many groups retain elements of separate identities while being unified by common language and social assumptions in the way a salad dressing binds the lettuce, tomatoes, mushrooms and croutons.

In a global community, the political borders that separate one country from another are easily crossed, Nielsen said.

"The social, cultural and spiritual boundaries that distinguish one people from another are more difficult to transit," he said.

Nielsen said crossing these boundaries begins in the workplace and continues as children attend school and become involved in sports. The acceptance of ethnic foods helps the progression.

Nielsen said Danes could give Americans lessons in pursuing happiness. University of Michigan researchers said this week that Denmark, with its democracy, social equality and peaceful atmosphere, is the world's happiest country. The United States ranked 16th.

Nielsen said he believes the pursuit of happiness is an important factor in migration. He said it motivated three of his grandparents to leave Denmark in the early 20th century to create new lives in California and Minnesota.

Each found happiness. Each paid a price. Nielsen's grandfathers never saw their parents again.

"The pursuit of happiness can be bittersweet," he said.



John Mark Nielsen speaks at the Rebild celebration, the oldest and largest official celebration of America's independence held outside the United States.

Bansens . . .

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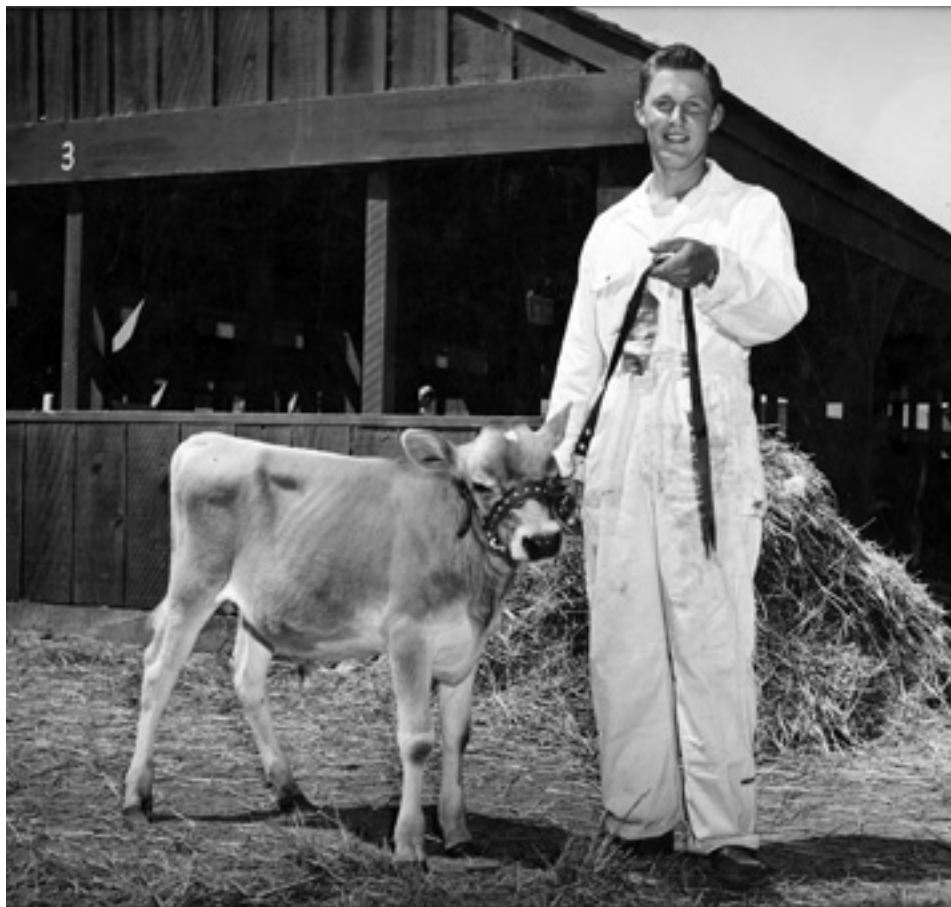
locks the cow in place while it's milked). They started out milking twenty-five cows using milking machinery. In the early days, they milked the cows into 5-gallon pails, walked the pails to the creamery and strained the milk. Later, they installed a pipeline above the cows that funneled the milk to a refrigerated, stainless steel tank.

Today it would not be possible to make a living on twenty-five dairy cows the way Peter Bansen did when he started. But, as their grandson Dan Bansen says of his grandparents, "They lived off the land... they went through the Depression and they didn't need anything. Grandma made rye bread once a week. She sewed. They had a garden and an orchard... She canned and preserved."

After serving in the military, Anne and Peter's son, Stan, and his wife Dora started their own dairy on rental property near Ferndale. And when their son, Lloyd, graduated from Dana College in Blair, Nebraska he returned to the dairy business as well. Eventually, he and his wife, Ann, took over Peter and Anne's farm when they retired. (Norman became an English professor at Dana College and a founder of The Danish Immigrant Museum. See inset.)

Grandchildren arrived on the scene – grandchildren who got to grow up close to their grandparents. In the summer between milkings, there were weekly trips with the grandparents down to the redwood trees. There were cookies and aebleskiver and frikadeller and something called Danish soup, which is, Lloyd says, beef broth with yellow dumplings, meatballs, vegetables, rice, raisins and "everything else, but the kitchen sink." And, definitely, when there was something to be discussed that the grandchildren shouldn't know about, there was the Danish language.

Eventually both Stan Bansen's family and Lloyd Bansen's family relocated to Oregon—both needing more land than was available in the Ferndale area at the time.



Anne and Peter's son Lloyd, pictured here with a cow in 1944, is still raising cattle – dairy replacement heifers – in Yamhill, Oregon. "I simply can't stop working," he says. "I'll stop when they stick my ashes in an urn. I really love it."

When Lloyd and his family moved up to Yamhill, Oregon, they moved seventy cows along with them in a semi-truck. At the peak of their production, Lloyd's dairy operation was milking 300 cows a day.

Now, in his "semi-retirement" as a 78-year-old, Lloyd raises dairy replacement heifers. When the cows turn 2-years-old and are about to have their first calves, he sells them to dairy herds. He also has twelve to sixteen old cows hanging around the place – cows that have served him well that he can't bear to get rid of. There are some goats. And there's a herd of sheep his daughter Josie left behind when she left home. Oh, and Lloyd just spent nine days making 150 acres of hay—some of it for his cows, the surplus to be sold to an organic beef producer.

Meanwhile, the dairy business has grown into something of a Bansen tradition: Anne and Peter had fourteen grandchildren; four of them have made a career in dairy farming.

Of course, the dairy business has changed significantly over the years—is "in constant evolution," as Pete Bansen, Peter and Anne's grandson who now farms the Ferndale place, says. "You get a different idea and try it and keep what works."

Organic farming is one of the movements that several Bansens are working with today. Jon Bansen, son of Lloyd and Ann, works an organic dairy farm in Monmouth, Oregon.

Jon says that it wasn't difficult for him to make the shift to organic farming: he has always grazed his cows. "This kind of farming is very similar to how my grandfather did it – no antibiotics, no



Ted and Jon Bansen, grandsons of Peter and Anne pictured here as boys, have both continued the Bansen dairy tradition—Jon with an organic dairy farm in Monmouth, Oregon, Ted raising cows and selling milk to members of the Blair, Nebraska community.

pesticides.”

Jon is a member of Organic Valley, a marketing co-op of about 1,000 dairy farmers that operates out of LaFarge, Wisconsin. His cousin, Dan Bansen,

son of Stan and Dora, is a member of the co-op also.

Dan works the dairy in Dayton, Oregon that his parents started when they came north from Ferndale. He says, too, that switching to organic farming was natural for him. “It was pretty clear their grazing system was a good fit; it’s a grazing system that came from Denmark to Ferndale, up to Oregon.”

Dan’s farm is in contact with Danish dairy traditions in other ways too: they have used some Danish genetics on their dairy farm.

Dan explains that in the dairy world, the goal is to find the superior producers—which cow produces the most milk, which is free from disease, which cow is tough. Then, the objective is to make sure this line of cows is performing the same over generations—to find the superior line of genetics.

The Danes, says Dan, have a particularly advanced tracking system where every calf is recorded and followed through its life. So Dan’s dairy has purchased some semen from Danish cattle and some

Danish companies have purchased cattle semen and embryos from him.

It’s clear that the Bansen grandchildren feel connected to a family tradition through their farming. “If I’ve had any success with it,” says Dan, “the credit belongs to my parents and grandparents...”

He continues, “If my grandfather and father and uncle had not been successful and had not left a good feeling about it, we wouldn’t be doing it.”

Down in Ferndale, working the home place, Pete Bansen, Lloyd and Ann’s son, explains it like this, “I had no money out of college. But when I came to Ferndale, I just went around town and set up accounts at businesses where I needed supplies. And they just let me. They had never lost a dime on my grandfather or my father and so they figured they wouldn’t lose anything on me either.”

“It’s a great gift,” Pete says, “to be able to continue the family farm.”

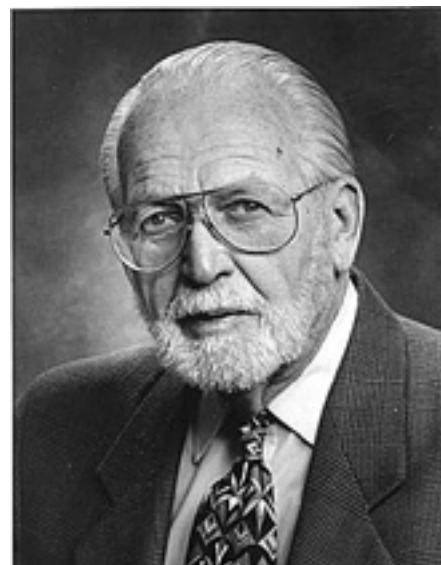
Norman Bansen, a Founder of The Danish Immigrant Museum

Norman Bansen, Peter and Anne Bansen’s son, is credited with the idea for The Danish Immigrant Museum and was a driving force behind making the concept a reality.

Bansen and another Dana College professor, Richard Jorgensen, presented the idea for a museum focused on Danish immigrant heritage to the Dana College Board of Regents in 1979. He was also a member of the exploratory committee appointed by the Danish American Heritage Society to study the idea of creating a national museum. Once The Danish Immigrant Museum was established, Bansen served on the board of directors for many years.

Born in 1920 in Ferndale, California, Bansen attended Dana College for a few years starting in 1939 before enlisting in the U.S. army. Stationed in India, he served until 1946, afterwards returning to Dana and graduating with a degree in English in 1947.

Bansen completed an M.A. in English at the University of Minnesota, then returned to Dana to teach English starting in 1951. He spent a year as visiting professor of Scandinavian studies at the University of California Berkeley. In 1970, Bansen was named a Knight of Dannebrog by King Frederik IX of Denmark, an honor given for meritorious service to the Danish state.



The son of Anne and Peter Bansen, Norman Bansen, pictured here in 1995, was one of the driving forces behind the creation of The Danish Immigrant Museum. He passed away in Blair, Nebraska in 2004.

Bedstemor's House Turns 100

One of the events during the museum's 25th anniversary year was the centennial of the construction of Bedstemor's House by Danish immigrant Jens Otto Christiansen.

Born in Aulum parish, near Ringkøbing in western Jutland, in 1863, Christiansen emigrated in 1889 with a friend, Thomas Nielsen Jersild who later became a reverend. After spending time in Minnesota and Nebraska, he settled in Elk Horn, Iowa just before the turn of the twentieth century, where he spent the next fifty years as a businessman and resident.

According to local lore, he built Bedstemor's House in 1908 as a residence for himself, but apparently never lived in the house, renting it out to a series of Danish-American families for a number of decades before selling the property in the 1930s to the newly-established Salem Home in return for lodging and support for his remaining years.

During his years at the Salem Home, Jens Otto lived in the same room and functioned as the home's unofficial mail carrier. Jens Otto lived at Salem Home until his death in 1949. The only member of his family to emigrate, he was buried in the Elk Horn Cemetery without a grave marker.

Through the efforts of Danish volunteer Erik Høgsbro Østergaard, contact was made over the past year with a local archivist and members of Jens Otto's family in the Aulum area. This resulted in the museum's being given copies of his correspondence from and photographs taken in Elk Horn and images from the Aulum area. Museum intern Marianne Sletten Paasch wove this material into an audio-visual presentation about Jens Otto and his house that premiered during Bedstemor's House's "birthday party" held during this year's Tivoli Fest celebration.

In commemoration of Jens Otto Christiansen's contributions to the community and with donations from Danish Brotherhood Lodge #341 and the Tivoli Fest Committee of the Better Elk Horn Club, a tombstone with a picture of the house that he built was placed on Jens Otto Christiansen's grave and unveiled on Tivoli Fest Sunday.

A tombstone (right) with a picture of the house that he built was placed on Jens Otto Christiansen's grave and unveiled on Tivoli Fest Sunday.



Jens Otto Christiansen, pictured here in front of Bedstemor's House, was born near Ringkøbing in western Jutland. He settled in Elk Horn in the late 1800s.



Danish immigrant Jens Otto Christiansen built Bedstemor's House in 1908. The house, which The Danish Immigrant Museum now operates as an exhibit venue, celebrated its 100th birthday during this year's Tivoli Fest.



Kimballton, Iowa's Little Mermaid Statue Rededicated



John Mark Nielsen, executive director of The Danish Immigrant Museum, delivers the keynote address at the rededication ceremony of Kimballton, Iowa's Little Mermaid statue. Purchased thirty years ago, the bronze statue was recast for Kimballton's 125th Anniversary Celebration.



The Danish Immigrant Museum continues to mark its 25th anniversary year, here with a float in this year's Tivoli Fest parade. Tivoli Fest took place in the Danish Villages May 24 and 25.

As part of Kimballton, Iowa's 125th Anniversary Celebration on June 21, the replica of Copenhagen's Little Mermaid statue was re-dedicated. Robert Olesen of Modesto, California, who created the statue as an art student in 1978, returned to Kimballton for the ceremony. The town of Kimballton purchased the sculpture from Olesen thirty years ago, placing it in a prominent place on Main Street as a tribute to Danish author Hans Christian Andersen and to their Danish heritage.

After thirty years of exposure to the elements, it was time the mermaid had a "facelift" and Billy Marples, resident artist of Kimballton, was asked to recast the bronze statue. Marples is the owner of the New Genesis Art Studio located on Kimballton's Main Street.

John Mark Nielsen, executive director of The Danish Immigrant Museum, was keynote speaker at the rededication ceremony. Pastor Tony Ede of Immanuel Lutheran Church blessed the new fountain and the Little Dane folk dancers danced around the mermaid fountain to end the celebration.



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www.danishmuseum.org



Elk Horn-Kimballton, Iowa students pose with Liberty the bald eagle outside The Danish Immigrant Museum in March. Thanks to museum member Mike Howard who is also a supporter of SOAR, a Dedham, Iowa organization that cares for injured or orphaned wild birds, these students experienced a special joint field trip with The Danish Immigrant Museum and SOAR.

Field Trip Pairs Museum Visit with Raptor Presentation

Museum member and Kimballton business owner Mike Howard used his connections with The Danish Immigrant Museum and local organization SOAR (Saving Our Avian Resources) to help create a special field trip experience for 150 school children in March. Thanks to Howard, the students from Elk Horn-Kimballton and Exira, Iowa not only visited new exhibits at the museum, but also experienced a raptor learning presentation on museum grounds.

SOAR is a non-profit organization based in Dedham, Iowa that provides care for injured or orphaned wild birds with the goal of returning them to the wild. Those birds that cannot survive on their own are used in the group's education programming, helping people learn more about raptor biology, conservation and habitat.

Howard, who is the owner of Liberty Labs, Inc. in Kimballton, sponsors the care of one of these permanently injured raptors, a bald eagle named Liberty. Liberty has a deformed wing and cannot safely return to the wild so she is part of SOAR's education programming and was a highlight of the March field trip.

During their visit to the museum, the students were divided into two groups. While one group listened to the raptor

learning presentation held outside on the grounds, the other group visited the new exhibits on display inside the museum. Erin Harney and Angela Stanford of the curatorial department offered activities. The students came together at the conclu-

sion of the event to witness the release of a rehabilitated male red tail hawk and a rehabilitated screech owl back into the wild. Approximately one hundred local residents also participated in the day's events.



Students visited new exhibits and participated in special activities inside the museum. Then they experienced a raptor presentation and met Liberty the bald eagle outside on museum grounds.

Internship Program Funded by The Scan|Design by Inger & Jens Bruun Foundation

This spring the museum was awarded a grant by The Scan|Design by Inger & Jens Bruun Foundation of Seattle, Washington. The grant allows the museum to establish the Inger and Jens Bruun Scan|Design Internships, a program that brings up to four Danish graduate students per year to intern at The Danish Immigrant Museum. The grant defrays costs associated with stipends, housing, transportation, visa application and administration of the program.

This grant formalizes and funds a

program that has been in place at the museum since 2003. Since then, the museum has provided eight students—five from Danish universities and three from American universities—with graduate internship opportunities in museum studies, history, or tourism. The most recent Danish intern, Marianne Paasch returns to Denmark in July; two new interns arrive in August. The museum hopes to expand the program further to include sending American graduate students to intern at Danish museums.

The Scan|Design by Inger & Jens Bruun Foundation was established by the Bruuns to promote and strengthen the relationship between their native Denmark and their adopted home, the United States. Throughout their lives, even after they had immigrated to the U.S., Denmark continued to hold a place in their hearts. With the formation of this foundation, their vision of strengthening the relationship and goodwill between the two countries is carried on.



Intern News

The FHGC had its first Danish intern this winter and spring with the arrival of Aalborg University graduate history student Marianne Sletten Paasch in February. In addition to working on database projects and doing translations, Marianne taught basic Danish language classes to an eager group of students and spent three weeks working with the collection at the Sheffield Historical Society in Sheffield, Illinois. She also put together an introductory audio-visual presentation on Bedstemor's House and its builder, Jens Otto Christiansen, for visitors to that site.

Some of you may have met Marianne at the annual Danish summer festival in Chicago or the Scandinavian Hjemkomst Festival in Fargo-Morehead in June. Marianne's internship ended on June 30, to be followed by a month of travel in the U.S. before she returns home to finish



Marianne Sletten Paasch, a graduate history student at Aalborg University, interned this winter and spring with the Family History & Genealogy Center.

her final year of graduate studies. We will miss her!

In late summer we will welcome two new interns from Denmark; Yvonne Skov Grønlund from Rosk-

ilde University will intern at the Family History & Genealogy Center and Helle Hovmand-Olsen, a student at the University of Copenhagen will intern at the museum.

Across Oceans, Across Time, Across Generations to Open at Museum

In late July The Danish Immigrant Museum opened a new exhibit: *Across Oceans, Across Time, Across Generations*.

The exhibit focuses on three Danish-American families that started businesses in the United States and have developed and grown those businesses over several generations. The exhibit features the following families: The Olesen family and O & H Bakeries of Racine, Wisconsin; the Andersen family and Andersen Windows of Bayport, Minnesota; and the Bansen family dairy farms located in Oregon, California, and Nebraska.

The exhibit will also include a section on research tools that visitors can use if they are interested in pursuing their own genealogical research.



Consider this . . .

As a tax deductible donation, give your family members an annual "gift membership" to the museum. Help us grow our membership and care for the collection.

For more information, contact
Debra Christensen Larsen at
1-800-759-9192.

The Collection Connection

By Angela Stanford

Hello and happy summer wishes to all our members.

This is the first in a regular column to be written by the curator of collections and registrar for The Danish Immigrant Museum. This will be a place where readers can learn about the museum's ever-expanding artifact collection and some of the procedures and challenges related to maintaining a collection of this size and scope.

In this issue, I would like to give an update on an article published in an earlier *America Letter*. As you may recall, the Danish American Athletic Club, based in Chicago, Illinois, loaned a 1922 club banner to the museum for a 2006 exhibit on the Danish gymnastic tradition. Because of serious concerns about the banner's fragile condition, the piece was not included in the exhibit.

In 2007, the Danish American Athletic Club decided to convert the loan of the banner into a donation and the museum accepted it into the permanent collection. Last summer, trained conservators at the Midwest Art Conservation Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota evaluated the piece. These experts provided a detailed analysis of the banner's condition and the recommended treatment process. The banner was returned to the museum to wait for the necessary funding to cover the cost of this expensive,

but necessary process.

I am excited and privileged to report that we now have the funding necessary to provide the maximum, most complete treatment recommended by the Conservation Center. Irma Ørum of St. Charles, Illinois and the Danish American Athletic Club of Chicago have each provided half of the necessary funds for conservation. Thanks to these generous gifts, after treatment this banner can be exhibited and enjoyed by the public, though still for limited periods.

This fall, the banner will travel back to the Conservation Center in Minneapolis for treatment. The process will likely take several months to complete. Look for a final update in a future issue of the *America Letter*.

Thank you to all members and particularly to all artifact donors who are so generous, not only in sharing their family heirlooms, but also in providing the funds necessary to preserve them. Artifact care is costly—archival supplies, equipment used to maintain stable environmental conditions, shelving and cabinets for storage, proper light filters to protect from UV rays, and staff time are all necessary components of caring for a collection in perpetuity. Your support is crucial to The Danish Immigrant Museum's continued ability to preserve the collection and share it with visitors for generations to come.

On Display at The Museum

Jens Carstensen - A Dane from Dane County

On July 27, 2008 The Danish Immigrant Museum introduced Jens Carstensen and his artwork to the visiting public. Carstensen is a well-known painter from Monona, Wisconsin and is featured in the museum's Danish-American Artist Series in an exhibition entitled, *A Dane from Dane County*.

Carstensen is often described as a landscape painter, who focuses on upper Midwest landscapes (Iowa, Wisconsin, and Michigan). *A Dane from Dane County* features thirty of his paintings, including landscapes and still lifes.

Carstensen was born in the United States, but returned with his family to Denmark at a young age. There, he spent his childhood among the beautiful landscapes of northern Jutland. Carstensen returned to the United States in 1950 at the age of twenty-four. After working fourteen years in the New York and New Jersey areas, he settled in Dane County,



Jens Carstensen's "Hills at Richland Center" is one of the landscapes exhibited in A Dane from Dane County. Carstensen says that it is the feeling that is portrayed in a work that is of importance.



Wisconsin and has remained there since. Carstensen feels that he belongs in the Upper Midwest because the countryside—with its rolling hills, farms, and bodies of water—reminds him of Jutland where he spent his early childhood.

Carstensen's motivation for painting these landscapes comes from his love of nature. He explains, "The painter sees a scene at a given time of day at a given time of year and says, 'I wish I could revisit this anytime I want to, so I could get the feeling I have right now.' But this is impossible. You could come back the next year under seemingly identical conditions, but it wouldn't be the same. The scene would not be exactly the same, and furthermore, you would not be the same."

Carstensen goes on to say that the painter solves this problem by creating a painting, which reflects the entire feeling he had at the moment of his experience.

A Dane from Dane County will run through January 5, 2009.

Carstensen's "The Artist Contemplating Marriage." (left) Carstensen was born in the United States, but spent his youth in Denmark, returning to the U.S. at the age of twenty-four and settling, ultimately, in Monona, Wisconsin.

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To access this benefit, a minimum \$100 annual membership and an assigned Access Code is necessary.

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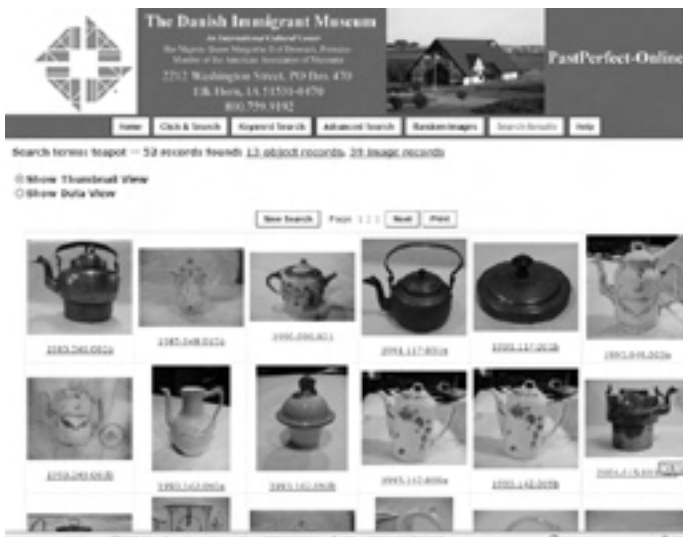
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NE Gen Comm Danish Brotherhood, Omaha, NE
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Northwest Danish Foundation, Seattle, NE
O & H Danish Bakery, Racine, WI
Odense City Museums (Torben Grongard Jeppesen, Director), Odense, Denmark
Olsen, Muhlbauer & Co., L.L.P., Carroll, IA
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Westergaard Farms and Scandinavian Bed & Breakfast (Dale & Ellen Westergaard Jackson), Whiting, IA
World Cal, Inc., Elk Horn, IA



Sign Up Now for E-museDK News

In an effort to keep members informed of current museum news and events, The Danish Immigrant Museum is creating a new e-mail outreach program, **E-museDK News**, which will be available September 1.

The words "museum," "Muse" and "to muse" are all related. The word museum comes from the Greek and means a

place for the Muses, the nine goddesses of Greek mythology who were sources of inspiration and creativity. To muse means to think deeply, which is what a good museum should make you do.

So, we invite you to muse over that which is happening at our museum by subscribing to **E-museDK News**. Sign up for this free service by submitting your

e-mail address to the museum's membership coordinator, Debra Christensen Larsen, at **development@danishmuseum.org**. This will facilitate an efficient and economical way for the museum to keep you in the know. Be assured that we will never sell or distribute your e-mail address.

Memorials

October 9, 2007 – June 20, 2008

Through various funds, memorials have been received in loving memory of the following individuals:

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Harold & Esther Andersen
Olga & Axel Andersen
Ronnie Andersen
Per A. Arenskov
August H. Asmus
Dorothy Jorgensen Baldwin
Ernest Gilman Baldwin Jr.
Norman C. Bansen
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Bernadine White
Paul A. Wickland
Anna Wieben's Grandparents
Margaret Wilberg
Mads & Anna Wolff

New Additions to the Wall of Honor

October 9, 2007 – June 20, 2008

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 forbearers by adding their names to the Wall of Honor, contact Deb Larsen, development associate.

CLAUDE ANDERSEN, Patricia Morgan, Ottumwa, IA

HENNY EDITH ANDERSEN, William & Joan Kruzan, Huntington, IN

OSCAR CHRISTIAN JULIUS ANDERSEN, William & Joan Kruzan, Huntington, IN

PEDER RASMUS GODFREDSSEN & JOHANNE MARIE GODFREDSSEN, Paul & Marie Sorensen, DeKalb, IL;
Anita Clark, DeLong, FL

AAGE T. HANSEN, Children of Aage T. Hansen including

Joyce Anderson, Goldfield, IA; Howard Hansen, Spring Hill, FL; Harlan Hansen, Sun City, AZ; Mervin Hansen, Sun Prairie, WI; Frank Hansen, Scandinavia, WI; Jerry Hansen, King, WI

MARTIN CHRISTIAN HANSEN, Martin & Jeanette Hansen, Brownville, NE

DAGMAR K. JACOBSEN, Bente A. Ellis, San Jose, CA

KRISTEN KJELDSSEN JENSEN, Wanda Sornson, Elk Horn, IA; Linda Czarnecki, Papillion, NE; Helen Prall, Carlisle, IA

JOHANNE THERESIA BECH ANDERSEN KNUDSEN, William & Joan Kruzan, Huntington, IN

LARS PEDER RASMUSSEN (KNUDSEN), John & Nancy Hackley, Burnsville, MN

NIELS CHRISTIAN SORESENSEN LUND, Mert & Karen Lund, Sioux Falls, SD

KRISTIAN POULSEN, Kristian Poulsen, Sierra Madre, CA

ANDREW PETER (PEDERSEN) VITHEIN, Merlyn & Jeanette Knudsen, Harlan, IA; Lyle & Jeannine Poldberg, Carter Lake, IA



Stamtræ –

Danish Roots, American Branches

By Michele McNabb, librarian
genealogy@danishmuseum.org

Most of us think of Danish immigration as starting in the latter part of the 19th century. This past January, while in Philadelphia for the winter meetings of the American Library Association, I was wandering around the oldest neighborhood of the city

and happened upon an enlightening 1685 quotation from William Penn painted on a wall in a mini-park. In it, he mentioned the numerous ethnic groups—including Danes—then living in Philadelphia, remarking that de-

spite strife in their European homelands, they were doing so “multi-culturally and peaceably;” this was a situation achieved over 320 years ago that seems increasingly elusive in so many parts of our modern world.



Activities and News from the Family History & Genealogy Center

- A small change has been made in the FHGC summer hours. From May through October the FHGC is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9-5, but hours on the first and third Saturday of each month are now 10-5. If you are coming from out of town and wish research assistance, particularly on Saturdays, calling in advance is strongly recommended.
- The FHGC was sad to say farvel to long-time volunteer Esther Sand-Henderson, who retired as an active volunteer in April and to Jens Christoffersen of Houston, Texas, who passed away on November 30, 2007 at the age of 93. A retired antiquarian book dealer, Jens was a helpful and

willing consultant about older books donated to the museum. We will miss his expertise and delightful humor.

- Welcome to several new FHGC volunteers: Kathryn Hansen, who is working on the obituary collection; Wanda Sornson, Jo Avey, and Jeanette Lillehoj, who are training as reference volunteers, and Allis Sega, who is doing translations from her home in Nevada.
- The FHGC now has a complete index to the deaths of Danish Brotherhood members reported in the organization’s magazine from 1916 to 1995.
- Upcoming speaking events in 2008 by the FHGC include the

following:

August 11: Danish Brotherhood Lodge #15 meeting in Des Moines.

September 27: two presentations on Danish and Slesvig-Holsten ancestral research at the annual Family History Workshop held at Minnesota State University in Morehead.

- October 1-4: The FHGC will be providing research assistance at the museum booth at the Høstfest celebration in Minot, North Dakota.
- Workshops on Danish and Slesvig-Holsten genealogy will also be held locally through Iowa Western Community College. See the IWCC fall brochure for further information.



Are You a Danish Immigrant or Long-term Resident? Many Danes have immigrated to the U.S. since WWII, have been exchange students or resided in this country for longer periods of time. If you fit one of these categories, the FHGC would like to have some information in our library on you! Contact Michele McNabb at the FHGC for copies of Immigrant Information Forms for yourself or for distribution at meetings of your local Danish-American organization.

When a Domingo is a Dane

Shortly before last Christmas, when winter gloom was hovering outside the FHGC windows, John Domingo of Williamsburg, Virginia paid a brief visit to inquire about his paternal Danish ancestors who had settled in eastern Nebraska. Well, “Domingo” not being your usual Danish surname, visions of a swarthy, shipwrecked Spanish sailor washed up on the Jutland coast immediately danced in my head! I promised Mr. Domingo that I’d look into his ancestry to see if I could verify that he descended from Danes and, if so, try to ascertain where his unusual family name came from.

The first part of the puzzle was not difficult. The 1900 to 1920 censuses of the Weeping Water area of Cass County, Nebraska showed two Domingo households with reported Danish ancestry headed by **John Domingo**, born in May 1854, and **Jacob Domingo**, born in March 1856. John reported that he immigrated in 1872 and Jacob in 1876. A subsequent search of the 1880 census found both young men working as farmers and living in the Hiram Lobaugh household in Ford County, Illinois.

No initial emigration records were found in 1872 or 1875 for any individuals named Domingo, but a Jacob Domingo traveled back to Denmark a number of times. A departure record was found for him in February 1883; Ellis Island arrival records in 1908 and 1915 clearly indicated that he was the Cass County Jacob Domingo, but gave no clue of his whereabouts in Europe.

The arrival of a Joh. Domingo from Germany to New York in August 1881 suggested a possible second entry record for John, whose Danish name had likely been anglicized and might have been Johannes, and two Liverpool to New York arrival records for a Jorgen Domingo and a Jorgen ‘Domineason,’ both of whom were born in Denmark about 1854, in October 1880 and June 1872 respectively, suggested a possible alternative given name.

Mr. Domingo had some evidence that his ancestors had come from the area of Himmark on the island of Als in what



These baptismal records, located through an online search of church records, helped establish that John Domingo’s name in Denmark had been Jørgen Dominicussen.

was formerly Sønderborg County. This area, considered part of north Slesvig, had been ceded to Germany after the Dano-Prussian War of 1864, which possibly might explain the lack of Danish emigration records.

Armed with the approximate birthdates given in the 1900 census, an online search of church records for Svenstrup parish, where the village of Himmark is located, was made on <http://arkivalieron-line.dk>, where images of parish registers and some census records may be found. A short search produced the following baptismal records and accompanying notations:

Jørgen Dominicussen, born May 5, 1854, confirmed 1869, “left for America 1872,” son of shoemaker in Himmark Jørgen Dominicussen and wife, Ellen “Smeds” (the blacksmith’s daughter).

Jacob Dominicussen, born March 16, 1856, confirmed 1871, “to America,” son of shoemaker Jørgen Dominicussen and wife, Ellen “Smeds.”

So Jørgen obviously became “John” and the somewhat-unwieldy Dominicussen

became “Domingo” in the process of assimilation. But where did the unusual surname come from and how far back might it be traced?

The 1845 census of Svenstrup parish showed **Jørgen Dominicussen** and wife Ellen Christensen residing with a 2-year-old son, Dominicus Dominicussen, in Himmark village. Jørgen was listed as the “son and heir” of the head of the household, smallholder Christen Christensen and his wife, Sophie Jørgensen. However, Jørgen’s name did not indicate a blood relationship to the older man. Further research in the carefully annotated parish records turned up additional data that altogether form an example of the mixed naming patterns found in many Danish families of the area:

Bachelor Jørgen Dominicussen, son of **Dominicus Jørgensen**, of Himmark, age 27, married Ellen Christesen [sic], age 21½, daughter of blacksmith Christen Jørgensen, on November 4, 1842. Over these three generations we see the transition from the use of patronymics

Domingo . . .

continued from page 16

to a fixed surname, something which generally occurred earlier in the Slesvig-Holsten area than in Denmark proper.

Cooper Dominicus Jørgensen died at the age of 43 on 15 December 1828 following a 4-day illness, leaving a wife and 4 children: Jørgen (born October 15, 1815), Peder, Dominicus and Jacob. Within a year, on October 10, 1829, Sophie Jørgensen, widow of the late cooper "**Mincus**" Jørgensen, age 41, married bachelor Christen Christensen of Hemark, son of the late Christen Lauritzen of Svendstrup, age 45. Not having children of his own, Christen apparently adopted Sophie's eldest son as his heir,

as reported in the 1845 census.

Bachelor Dominicus Jørgensen of Himmark, son of tailor **Jørgen Peder-sen** of the same place, married spinster Sophie Jørgensdatter, daughter of smallholder Jørgen Jørgensen of Torp, on October 24, 1812. The 1803 census of Svenstrup parish shows 18-year-old "Dominkus Jürgensen" working as a servant in Himmark in the household of Jürgen Jacobsen. This census, written in both Danish and German, is typical for the area and reflects the mixed ethnic background of the families living there.

Dominicus "Pedersen," son of Jørgen Pedersen of Hemark, was baptized in the Svendstrup parish church on 22

January 1786. Among his godparents were Jørgen Dominicussen of Elstrup, and Dominicus Christensen of Hemmark, suggesting that it might be at this point that the somewhat unusual ecclesiastical name entered the family line. However, the name was clearly not an unfamiliar one, for 26 instances of the name in various incarnations show up in the northern part of Als alone in the 1803 census.

From Pedersen to Jørgensen to Dominicussen to Domingo in less than a century. There is probably no dark-haired Spanish seaman in this lineage, but instead a name given to honor a godparent which then was passed on as both a patronymic and given name, and eventually taken to America.



Tenth Anniversary Special Fundraising Campaign

Thanks to a generous matching grant from board member Dennis Andersen for the last stage of the campaign, the FHGC has successfully reached its goal of raising \$25,000 in celebration of its tenth year as a library department. Proceeds of the campaign will be used to purchase microfilms of Danish-American church records, place some Danish Brotherhood in America indexes on the museum website, and partially underwrite a cataloging internship. We thank the following individuals and organizations who made contributions to this project:

Mert & Karen Lund, Sioux Falls, SD
Bent & Henni Christensen, Huntington Beach, CA
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #341, Kimballton-Elk Horn, IA
Harriet Fort, DeWitt, NE
Dennis Andersen, Atlanta, GA
Lamont & Lois Christensen, Elk Horn, IA



Board member Dennis Andersen, pictured here, offered a matching grant, helping the FHGC successfully raise \$25,000 in celebration of its tenth year as a library department.

Community Heritage Society of Kimballton, IA

Sharon Ludington, Atlantic, IA
Virgil & Charlotte Sorensen, Exira, IA
Sid & Sharon Winchell, Atlantic, IA
Orvie & Margaret Christensen, Kimballton, IA

Ruby Eagan, Detroit Lakes, MN
Merlyn & Jeanette Knudsen, Harlan, IA
Nancy Maynard, Bayside, WI
Michele McNabb, Atlantic, IA
Dick & Norma Nelson, Elk Horn, IA
John L. & Janis Pientok, St. Francis, WI
Gerald & Margaret Sorensen, Minden, NE
Leo & Gayle Stuart, Walnut, IA
Caryl West, Harlan, IA

Jens & Dorothy Sorensen, Kimballton, IA
Estate of Donald Esbeck, Tipton, IA
Gordon & Janice Esbeck, Tipton, IA
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Harlan, IA
Esther Riis, San Diego, CA
Forest & Kirsten Strnad, Faribault, MN
Wendell & Irene Larsen, Elk Horn, IA
James & Linda Ballantyne, Boone, IA
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John & Lisa Caffrey II, Frisco, TX
Ralf & Inga Hoifeldt, Urbandale, IA
Mark & Lori Nussle, Palos Park, IL
Dick & Edna Jacobsen, Gig Harbor, WA
Harriet Albertsen Spanel, Bellingham, WA
Descendants of Hans Peder Andreas Sand, DK and US
Laurits & Mary Ellen Nielsen, Golden Val-

ley, MN
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Judy Davis, Minneapolis, MN
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Kenneth Mumm, Marion, IA
Joseph Bordeville, Point Roberts, WA
Suzanne Gilbert & Brian McNabb, Los Angeles, CA

Pamela Myers, Chanhassen, MN
Robert & Carolyn Harvey, Battle Creek, MI
Charles & Gwen Wells, Clinton, MO
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #15, Des Moines, IA
Kurt & Joy Larsen, Oneonta, AL

Volunteer Spotlight – Ralf and Inga Hoifeldt

One of the services offered by the museum is the translation of Danish letters and documents into English. The FHGC receives a large number of requests for this. Although ostensibly retired, two of the hardest-used museum volunteers are Ralf and Inga Hoifeldt, whose home is in the Des Moines suburb of Urbandale.

Although they make occasional forays down I-80 to Elk Horn to visit the museum, they mostly work out of their home, tackling a wide variety of submissions that may involve crabbed handwriting, imaginative spelling and punctuation, and the challenges of old Gothic handwritten or print texts.

Immigrants to the U.S. in the early 1950s, Ralf and Inga are featured in the new update to the permanent museum exhibit. In addition to their work for the museum, they also periodically volunteer their services to the Danish American Archives and Library at Dana College.

Ralf and Inga are part of a small group of individuals



Ralf and Inga Hoifeldt of Urbandale, Iowa volunteer their translating services for The Danish Immigrant Museum.

who volunteer their services to the FHGC. We would like to have a few more individuals join this select company. If you are comfortable in both written Danish and English, have a computer, and are willing to volunteer your expertise every now and then, please contact Michele McNabb at the FHGC. Proximity to Elk Horn is not necessary, since most communication is done by email and the USPS.



Danish-American Veterans History Project

For several years FHGC volunteer Herb Christensen has been interviewing and videotaping World War II and other veterans about their military experiences as part of the Library of Congress Veterans History Project and depositing a copy of the materials pertaining to the Danish-American veterans at the FHGC.

Christensen now is expanding the scope of his project with the establishment of the Danish-American Veterans History Project. In addition to obtaining narratives of veterans' experiences, he is hoping to produce a documentary for educational purposes. Christensen is asking that Danish-American veterans of all conflicts and military actions who are willing to be interviewed or who have questions about the project contact him at 3802qmtk@metc.net.

The project is estimated to cost around \$16,000 to produce. Donations may be sent to American Legion Post 0322, 2207 Park St., Elk Horn IA 51531.



Vacation in Denmark and Support The Danish Immigrant Museum

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

- The house is located in the middle of Jutland, a 10-minute drive from Viborg, Denmark's second oldest town (after Ribe). It's two hours to Skagen to the north, two hours to the German border to the south, one hour to the Atlantic Ocean on the west, and one hour to the Kattegat on the east.
- The house is a 45-minute drive to Århus, Denmark's second largest city, and a 40-minute drive to Ålborg.
- There are wonderful views of the Limfjord from most rooms in the house.
- The house has three bedrooms—two with queen-sized beds and one with two bunk beds. It sleeps six adults comfortably, but can sleep a total of eight.

- The house has two bathrooms, both have showers and one has a hot tub.
- There is a kitchen with refrigerator, oven, and microwave.
- The home has a flat screen television and DVD player.
- There are beautiful views of unbelievable sunsets year-round from inside and from the outside decks.
- Stroll down the hill to the water, visit an inn or—some nights—watch sailboat races.
- The home is a five minute drive to shopping—bakery, butcher shop, bank, post office.
- With electric heat, this is a wonderful place to stay in any season.

The house is available for rental in 2008 and beyond. It costs a minimum of \$1,000 a week. (Usually, it costs around \$3,000.) Again, all proceeds are being generously given to The Danish Immigrant Museum.

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



ADMISSION & HOURS

ADMISSION

(Includes Bedsternor'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.)*

Celebrating our 25th Anniversary!



The Danish Immigrant Museum

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