

# America Letter



The Danish  
Immigrant Museum

AN INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL CENTER

Summer 2009 • Vol. XXII, No. 2



## Across Oceans, Across Time, Across Generations®: Anni Holm



A conceptual artist, Anni Holm works on her 'Getting My Name Out There' project on the steps of The Art Institute of Chicago.

Anni Holm is getting her name out there, figuratively speaking – and in the literal sense too (but more on that later).

Holm is a conceptual artist. That means she takes a concept and explores it using whatever medium her idea demands. And she has a lot going on. Right now, to name only a few examples, she has an installation at the Second

Bedroom Space in Chicago, one of her pieces is part of an exhibit at Frederiksborg Castle in Denmark, and her work is on display at The Danish Immigrant

Museum through January 10, 2010.

Holm is, by the way, a Danish immigrant. She grew up on a farm in Jutland, near Randers, and came to Northbrook, Illinois as an *au pair*. She returned to the U.S. shortly after finishing that job to attend school at Columbia College in Chicago where she graduated with a degree in photography. She has been in this country for over ten years, currently making her home in West Chicago, Illinois with her husband (who is, himself, a second-generation-American of Philippine descent).

"There are so many things that you long for once you leave

– Continued on page 4

### Inside . . .

New Website Unveiled ..... 3  
Victor Borge Exhibit Opens ..... 6

Your Museum in the Heart of the Continent

BOX 470 • ELK HORN, IOWA 51531 • 712-764-7001 • 800-759-9192 • [www.danishmuseum.org](http://www.danishmuseum.org)



## Director's Corner

In June, my wife and I participated in the annual Cultural Frontrunner meeting sponsored by the Danish Embassy. We met in Palo Alto, California, near the newly opened Innovation Center sponsored by the Danish government. This center is an effort to assist small Danish start-up companies to plan for the future and to grow through working collaboratively with information technology companies in California's Silicon Valley.

The meeting's focus was on how Denmark, as it looks to the future, is in the process of rebranding itself to compete in the global marketplace and to inform people worldwide of Danish innovation and development. Gone is the fairytale world of Hans Christian Andersen (although Danes will not deny the importance of this heritage); excellence in design, attention to sustainability and quality of life are what Danes want to be known for.

Later this year, the eyes of the world will be on Copenhagen, as the city hosts the fifteenth annual conference sponsored by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Known as COP15, the hope is that protocols can be negotiated that will update the Kyoto Protocols of 1997. The Danish government is seizing on this opportunity to showcase Danish innovation in sustainable energy and quality of life issues.

Also at the Cultural Frontrunner meeting, Susanne Nordenbæk, the North American Director for VisitDenmark, showed participants the most recent issue of *Denmark Magazine* '09. The brief articles highlight the eco-friendly aspects of Danish life. I'm grateful to her and to VisitDenmark for sharing copies of the magazine with our members and hope that you will enjoy this look at contemporary Denmark.

What may become clear as you page through the magazine is that there is an appre-

ciation both for the new and the old. The heritage of the Vikings and Europe's oldest monarch stands side by side with sleek modern design and cutting-edge technologies. Combining old and new is an issue that concerns us here at The Danish Immigrant Museum. We do preserve and celebrate the past, but we are also developing new ways of communicating with you as we look to the future.

If you have not already visited our new website at [www.danishmuseum.org](http://www.danishmuseum.org), made possible by a generous gift from the Rasmussen Group of Des Moines, Iowa, I invite you to do so. The pull-downs on the navigational bar across the top of the changing picture will take you to familiar pages, but also new ones. For example, under "Danish Culture," you will still find access to our weekly radio program "Across Oceans, Across Time" that airs on radio station KJAN of Atlantic, Iowa.

New under the "Visit" pull-down is access to our Facebook® Fan Page. Here you can find daily and weekly updates as well as pictures from recent museum events held at the museum, around the country or in Denmark. Over one third of the entire Danish population communicates via Facebook. Already, this is proving to be an exciting way of informing friends and members in Denmark of our activities. Because we are still adding to and revising the site, we look forward to your feedback. You may even wish to create your own Facebook account, which you can do by following the links on the

museum's site.

Finally, I invite you to think about and plan for your future. This issue concerns me and arises from the recent deaths of two of our longtime members. One of them did not have a "Last Will and Testament;" the other did. As it happens, The Danish Immigrant Museum is a major beneficiary of the individual who did. Because the other did not and because there are no direct heirs, the State of Iowa may be the beneficiary of this individual's estate. I don't begrudge the people of Iowa this, but I know that had this individual planned ahead, his church, friends and perhaps even the museum may have been provided for.

Discussing death and estate planning seems like such a self-serving issue. Of course, we at The Danish Immigrant Museum are so grateful for the many that have left bequests to the museum. The bequest we received from the estate of Wayne Alwill (see article on page 13) has been so helpful to our museum. Indeed, an analysis of our annual budgets from the founding of The Danish Immigrant Museum in 1983 reveals that we would find it very difficult to operate without such gifts.

The underlying reason for my raising this issue is planning – planning that directs loved ones to carry out what you desire. If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to contact an attorney to assure that the results of your life and work will be directed as you desire. It really is about planning for the future.

**John Mark Nielsen**  
Executive Director



# Museum Unveils New Website

The Danish Immigrant Museum's website has a new design. Take a look. It can still be found at [www.danishmuseum.org](http://www.danishmuseum.org).

The museum has been working with Applied Art & Technology (AA&T) of Des Moines, Iowa since last winter to design the new site. AA&T is the same firm that produced the museum's video, "Discovery: A Story of Shared Heritage" and the Victor Borge traveling exhibit, *Victor Borge, A Smile is the Shortest Distance Between People*.

One of the most exciting aspects of the new site is that it is internet-based, allowing staff to update the content easily. Something new on the site is the museum's Facebook® Fan Page, located in the "Visit" drop down menu. However, much of the site's content remains the same – for the moment.

Redesigning the look of the website is just the first step in creating a new on-line experience for visitors. The next step is to develop a "virtual museum" on the



site, a place that members can enter – using a password – to gain further access to and interpretation of the museum's exhibits and collections.

What exactly the virtual museum will entail is still in development, but the hope is to provide such features

as panoramic photography of exhibits, access to related oral histories and video – all with more interactivity than is currently available on the site. The museum also plans to archive past exhibits, allowing visitors and researchers worldwide to access them.

## A Midsummer Night's Celebration

It was a warm and sultry evening, but the crowd that was gathering on the grounds of The Danish Immigrant Museum didn't seem to mind. They were coming to participate in the Danish tradition of lighting a bonfire in celebration of the summer solstice,

known in Denmark as Sankt Hans Aften. This can be translated as the evening before the day of Saint John the Baptist.

Danish Brotherhood in America Lodge #341 of Kimballton-Elk Horn proudly co-sponsored the evening. Annette Andersen, lodge president, shared with the group that this particular evening was significant in that it was the lodge's tenth anniversary of organizing the evening event. Picnic food, beverages, sno'brød and games for the grandparents, parents and children were provided by Lodge #341, Rebuild Heartland Chapter and The Danish Immigrant Museum. After a greeting from John Mark Nielsen, the museum's



*The Sankt Hans Aften bonfire envelopes the witch.*

executive director, and a traditional speech by the museum's Danish intern, Jon Jeppesen, Andersen led the gathering in several customary songs.

As the sun began its descent in the west over lush Iowa fields, the glow and crackle of a bonfire stirred the atmosphere. Perched high in the center of the

carefully stacked burning twigs was a figure resembling a witch. As the flames danced around her skirt and then enveloped her, fireworks sounded—all to the great pleasure of the onlookers. Indeed, Danish tradition is alive and well here in America!



*Danish intern, Jon Jeppesen, gives his approval of the witch built by Lodge #341 president, Annette Andersen.*

# Anni Holm

continued from page 1

your country of origin," says Holm. "But the one thing that happens is you also become more of your nationality. I never thought about being Danish living in Denmark, but living here, I think about it a lot because that's what I am."

That's one of the concepts Holm explores in her exhibit at The Danish Immigrant Museum: being Danish. The exhibit includes different pieces from throughout her time in the United States. Holm says, "... one piece in particular is very much about being Danish and feeling more Danish now that I'm in another country. Other pieces in the exhibit are about immigration in general, while most works are inspired by things encountered in the every day."

Holm hopes her exhibit demonstrates that art is more than pretty pictures on a wall. She wants her exhibit to inspire dialogue, interaction,

collaboration, conversation – this is very much part of Holm's focus as an artist. A look at one of her ongoing projects, the one called "Getting My Name Out There," demonstrates how she does this and highlights a difference between Danish and American culture.

When she attended art school in Chicago, says Holm, she was told time and again that in the United States it's all about networking – about getting your name out there, so people remember you.

Holm, who says she has always been interested in language, in words, took the phrase, "getting your name out there," literally and made it into a project. She wrote her name – Anni Holm – on a sign. Then she stood in different locations – by a highway, for example, or on the front steps of The Art Institute of Chicago – holding the sign, waiting to see what kind of response it would elicit.

So how did people respond to Holm, standing with her "Anni Holm" sign?

People would approach her, thinking she was waiting for someone named Anni Holm, asking if they could help her pick the person out. Others would come up, wondering if Anni Holm was a brand or

an advertisement for something. People made marketing suggestions to her, saying she ought to include her web address on her sign. As Holm says, though, "My part is successful because I've established a contact and conversation with a certain person."

"Getting My Name Out There" involves a collaborative element as well. She emailed family and friends, inviting them to participate. Check out <http://anniholm.blogspot.com/> to see people holding "Anni Holm" signs at different locations worldwide. You might even feel inspired to take part in the project yourself; instructions are on the site.

Holm says that getting your name out there is not a Danish value. In Denmark, particularly in Jutland, she says, the mentality is still *janteloven* – an unwritten set of ten rules that she grew up with. (Danish/Norwegian writer Aksel Sandemose is responsible for writing the ten laws in his 1933 novel, *A Fugitive Crosses his Tracks*.) The basic theme of the ten laws is this: don't think you are better than us. The self-promotion involved in getting your name out there is out of sync with *janteloven*.

Holm says that when you come to the U.S., you find the complete



*Holm's self-portrait 'Student ID, 2000' is part of a portrait exhibit at Frederiksborg Castle in Denmark. Holm graduated with a degree in photography from Columbia College in Chicago.*





*Holm's project, NetWorking, involves sitting down with a group of people, knitting a net, and connecting with the people around you.*

opposite mentality: "Here everybody is great, everybody is fantastic."

Holm returns to Denmark regularly for visits and she and her husband do think about returning to Denmark permanently – that's a possibility. But



*Being Danish is one of the concepts Holm explores in her exhibit at The Danish Immigrant Museum.*

here in the U.S. Holm has, well, created a network; she has gotten her name out there.

And as Holm notes, Denmark, like everywhere, changes – has changed in the ten years she has lived in the United States. One difference? "Now," Holm says, "there is a little more networking involved. In general, Denmark has become much more Americanized." Returning to Denmark would mean she would have to start over, make a new professional network.

Networking is another concept that Holm is addressing through her art, through an ongoing project called NetWorking. Part knitting installation,

part performance art piece NetWorking was originally created by Holm and another artist, Nyok-Mei Wong, in 2006.

The NetWorking project visually demonstrates how a network is constructed and is constantly changing. Holm sits in a venue and works on knitting a large net. Viewers are asked to sit down and join her in knitting the net; as people knit, they talk, they connect, they network.

Holm's NetWorking project connected her to another network, a group called Cultural Frontrunners. Cultural Frontrunners was founded by the Embassy of Denmark to connect people in the U.S. who promote Danish culture,

core values and issues in the United States. Most frontrunners are actively organizing cultural events revolving around Danish culture in their communities. They have sponsored Danish cultural events across the country, such as design exhibitions, film festivals, and lectures.

Does this sound a little un-Danish, all these Danes actively networking? Doesn't it sound a bit, ironically, American? Holm says, "I think the embassy realized that it would be a help to every one of us to connect with each other to share experiences. When you are in Rome do as the Romans, right?"

And Holm says there is a difference in approach. She says, "They [Danes] are promoting themselves in a specific way. They aren't saying just, 'It is Danish and it is great!'" Instead, Holm says, Danes are saying, "We're good at doing this. We have come up with this thing, we're interested in helping you to make a better situation for you – and we just happen to be Danish."

Visit Anni Holm's exhibit at The Danish Immigrant Museum. You can participate in the dialogue about what it means, being Danish, an immigrant, and a conceptual artist. Her exhibit runs through January 10, 2010.



Victor Borge: A Centennial Celebration is on display at the museum until March 8, 2010.

## The Grand Opening of *Victor Borge: A Centennial Celebration*

The night of May 22 is one that none of the 120 plus people in attendance at The Danish Immigrant Museum will soon forget. That evening was the grand opening reception for the exhibit, *Victor Borge: A Centennial Celebration*, which is on display at the museum until March 8, 2010.

The museum partnered with the American-Scandinavian Foundation of New York and members of the Borge family to create this exhibit celebrating the centennial of Victor Borge's birth. The exhibit features artifacts, video and photographs relating to Borge's personal and professional life from childhood through his elder years.

Many components of this exhibit were featured in a show at Scandinavia House from January through May of this year, before being dismantled and shipped to Elk Horn.



Janet Borge Crowle, one of Victor Borge's daughters, shared stories about her father.

Because the exhibit space at Scandinavia House is much different than the museum's Mezzanine Gallery, the museum exhibit has a much different look and feel. Borge artifacts from The Danish Immigrant Museum's own collection, as well as two video clips from different performances were also added to the exhibit.

Visitors to the grand opening celebration began arriving a full hour before the reception was to commence. Seats filled quickly and many visitors stood. It was the largest group the museum has entertained in the building at one time.

The evening began with a welcome by John Mark Nielsen, museum executive director, who talked briefly about the new exhibit located in the Mezzanine Gallery and then about the restoration of Victor Borge's first piano, which was situated just behind him. He introduced Consul Lowell and Marilyn Kramme, members who had made the piano restoration possible, and Nor-

man Petersen II, the piano technician who completed the project.

The featured entertainment for the evening was two-fold. First, to celebrate the newly completed restoration of the Borge piano, Glenn Henriksen of Armstrong, Iowa gave a short concert on that very instrument. It was the first time in twenty years that it had been played and the crowd was captivated by the music and by the significance of the event.

Then, Janet Borge Crowle, one of Victor Borge's daughters, gave a presentation about him and included some very personal stories of the man she knew best as her father. There were a few tear-filled moments and many laughs as she shared her thoughts. A photo slide show accompanied her presentation.

For the rest of the evening, there was more music, food, and general celebration. The crowd spilled outside to enjoy the beautiful evening and many took in the new exhibit upstairs. The reception was a huge success.



# The Collection Connection

*By Angela Stanford, Curator of Collections*

In 1989, Hurricane Hugo swept across the Virgin Islands. Victor Borge's home on St. Croix was in its path and sustained damage from that storm. One of Borge's prized possessions was inside and among the damaged pieces: his first piano.

Shortly after the storm, Borge had the piano's outer case restored, but the interior was left alone. In 1994, Borge donated this piano to The Danish Immigrant Museum where it has been on display, but quiet, ever since.

Now, thanks to a very generous gift from Consul Lowell Kramme and his wife Marilyn, the instrument has been restored to playable condition.

In December of 2008, the museum hired Norman Petersen of Mankato, Minnesota, a registered piano technician and a member of the Minnesota/North Iowa chapter of the Piano Technicians Guild, to take on this exciting project. Restoration began shortly before the new year and took three months to complete.

Petersen's process for restoring the Hindsberg #10054 grand piano, which was built in Copenhagen, Denmark sometime between 1925 and 1930, was a lengthy one. Much of the work was done at the museum, with some of the smaller parts being taken back to Mankato for a time.

First, Petersen had to repair damage done by the hurricane. Petersen says that this is the first piano he has seen that had white sand on the soundboard. Also, the glue joints had separated because of the contact with the water from the hurricane. In addition, the toe of the soundboard was loose for five feet on the edge, the laminations in the tenor bridge had separated, and the cap was loose. There were numerous cracks in the soundboard as a result of the wood drying out and shrinking after the storm.

To make sure all of the moisture was out of the wood, the piano was draped with plastic sheeting and a desk lamp was turned on underneath. After this treatment, Petersen

glued about twenty-four spruce shims into the soundboard to repair the cracks.

Next, Petersen had to replace parts that had simply deteriorated with age. The piano needed new strings, tuning pins, and bridge pins. Petersen decided to

replace the tuning pin plank with Delignit™ beech, which is the same pin plank material used in Victor

Borge's Bosendorfer piano. He also replaced all of the damper bushings, which were caked with mud. There was a lot of cleaning to do with dish-washing soap and a scrub brush.

In order to get at the soundboard and pin plank, the gold-colored, cast iron plate, which weighs about 200 pounds, had to be removed. Museum staff and volunteers from Fajen Lumber in Elk Horn answered the call. Petersen spent several days fitting the pin plank to the flange edge of the plate. This joint takes the brunt of the eighteen tons of tension, an average of 170 pounds per string in the center section of the piano. There are 225 total strings.

After reinstalling the plate, again with help from Fajen Lumber volunteers, Petersen restrung the piano with new strings and tuning pins. New strings stretch quite a bit the first year, and the piano has already been adjusted a few times.

The piano action was in great shape and only needed replacement felt punchings under the keys. Petersen did some minor cleaning and lubricating, and then checked the regu-



*Norman Petersen trimming the shims that had been inserted to fill cracks in the soundboard.*

lating adjustments. Many of the original ivories were partially unglued from the keys and had to be re-adhered.

What a big process!

Victor Borge's first piano is an important piece in the museum's collection. It is one of those artifacts that people connect with immediately. In order to better preserve it, the piano will continue to be cared for and treated as if it were still a permanent collection object, one of our traditional "don't touch" pieces, but it will now be available for playing at special events.

The museum staff is so pleased to have this wonderful project completed. It has been a joy to work with Norman Petersen. This project is also a reminder to all of us that our members, like the Krammes, believe in and fully support all that we do here at the museum.

*Norman Petersen wishes to express his sincere thanks to all museum staff and volunteers who helped in so many ways. And I want to extend a big thank you to Norman Petersen for his assistance in completing this article.*



*Victor Borge's first piano being restrung with new strings, tuning pins, and felts.*



# From the Development Director

Greetings! It's a pleasure to say my first "Hello" to you from the America Letter! Since accepting the director of development position in February, I've been able to meet some of you in person; my early travels have taken me to California, Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Wisconsin, Nebraska and Iowa. Each visit has been marvelous, and makes me anxious to meet more of our members and supporters.

For those who don't know me, here's a quick summary of my background. I'm a third generation Dane as my grandparents emigrated from West Jutland on my father's side, and the Skagen area of Jutland on my mother's side. I grew up on a farm five miles east of Elk Horn, which was established by my grandfather, Niels Bro. When my grandfather died during World War II, my father returned home from his Air Corps service in England and purchased the farm from my grandmother.

I grew up on the family farm with my siblings Patricia, Douglas, Susan and Michael. I attended school and the Lutheran church in Exira. In 1980, I received my bachelor's degree from Dana College and eventually became an entrepreneur in the office equipment business. I established Bro Business Center in Harlan, Iowa,

while raising my family there. My two children now live in the Phoenix area. My son Justin is married to Julie Molina of Lincoln, Nebraska. They recently brought my first grandchild, Bailey, into the world! My daughter Rebecca is studying to be an elementary school teacher in Arizona.

In 2004 I sold my business in Harlan. When I learned about the development position opportunity at the museum, I couldn't resist. So, here I am, and so happy to be here!

As I see it, my position as director of development means developing and maintaining relationships with our supporters and members around the country and in Denmark. Of course, we have a fiscal responsibility to manage and enhance; we must always be mindful of this. But our support begins with people, not dollars. So our programs must reach out to and reflect the interests of our supporters and members. I have the pleasure of traveling the country and telling the story of "What's Up at the Museum."

For example, our outreach is becoming a significant part of our mission. We realize that traveling to Elk Horn is not easy for many of you and we want to bring the museum to you... wherever you live. So our outreach programs – like traveling exhibits, genealogy seminars, cooperative projects like the documentation of the California Naver Club collection, and our virtual museum project – are increasingly important. I look forward to hearing your opinions of these and other initiatives as we work together to build a better museum.

In the coming weeks I'll be traveling to Colorado, Minnesota, Chicago, the Northwest as well as Denmark to talk about our plans. If you would like me to visit your area to speak to your group, please contact me. I would love to see you. Oh, and I almost forgot our most important outreach project...I'll be happy to help make æbelskiver whenever you need me!

**Bruce Bro**  
**Director of**  
**Development**  
**dkdevdir@metc.net**  
**facebook:**  
**bruce.dk.museum**



# Board of Directors Meet in Kenosha

The eighty-third regular meeting of the museum's Board of Directors was held in Kenosha, Wisconsin from June 11 through 13 at the Best Western Harborside Inn & Conference Center.

On Thursday evening the board met with representatives of the Danish Club of

Milwaukee and the Brotherhood Lodge #14 to learn more about each organization and how the museum might assist them. One of the outcomes of a similar meeting, held when the board met in February in Brea, California, was that Jon Jeppesen, the museum's most recent Danish

intern, spent approximately two weeks at the Naver Club in Monrovia, California conducting an inventory of their old tool collection.

The two days of meetings concluded with a luncheon attended by museum members from the Kenosha area. Executive Director John Mark Nielsen's presentation included an update on the museum's current programming and our plans for the future. It was also an opportunity to acknowledge and publicly thank three individuals attending the luncheon:

- Eric Olesen of O&H Bakery in Racine, whose family business was highlighted recently in the museum's mezzanine gallery exhibit, *Across Oceans, Across Time, Across Generations*. A story about the family and the success of their business was published in the win-

ter 2006 edition of the *America Letter*.

- Steen Sanderhoff of Le-man USA was acknowledged for his generosity in covering the expenses of shipping the Victor Borge traveling exhibit to venues across the country. The exhibit premiered in Washington, D.C. in January and with its growing exposure and popularity, continues to be travelled throughout the United States.
- And, finally, Rita Neergaard Hansen, who passed away on June 20, the Saturday following the board meeting. Rita was a very generous supporter of the museum, calling it her "second home." Nielsen attended her funeral service on June 25 and spoke of her many gifts to the museum and her special relationship with the staff.



*Rita Neergaard Hansen, pictured here with Executive Director John Mark Nielsen at the Kenosha board meeting, was the daughter of Danish immigrants and a passionate supporter of The Danish Immigrant Museum.*

## Introducing New Board Members

The following individuals were elected to the museum's Board of Directors at the June meeting in Kenosha, Wisconsin. They will participate in a day of orientation at the museum before the October board meeting and officially assume their positions following the annual meeting on Saturday, October 17, 2009 in Elk Horn, Iowa.

**Carol Jensen Mills** is from Dubuque, Iowa. She has a B.S. in Technical Journalism and has worked for fifteen years as biology list manager for McGraw Hill Publishers, College Text

Book Division. She has been an active volunteer in her community's schools, the American Cancer Society and the Humane Society. Carol travels widely with her husband, Gordon, who is president of the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards.

**Kenneth Larsen** is originally from Harlan, Iowa where he and his wife Marlene still own land. They have made Calistoga, California their home for a number of years. Kenneth is a member of the Dan-

ish Soldier's Club and was in the U.S. Marine Corps where he helped develop new technologies and strategies. Kenneth was very involved in past years with computer systems applications and marketing of terminals, data and communications networks.

**Kristi Planck Johnson, Ph.D.** is a professor of education at Marymount University, Arlington, Virginia. She graduated from Dana College, studied at the University of Copenhagen, and received her M.A. from

the University of Minnesota and her Ph.D. from the University of Maryland.

**Mark Strandskov** comes from a family of Danish-Americans who have contributed much to the history of Danes in America. His father Halvor also served on the museum's board from 1995 to 2001. Mark has a B.A. in science and a M.A. in computer science from Central Michigan where he is currently responsible for the direction and operations of the campus data network.

# New Members

## January 1-June 19, 2009

The Danish Immigrant Museum is pleased to identify the following individuals as its newest members. Museum membership is achieved in various ways, through gifts, complimentary or annual gifting. We do appreciate your support.

Linda & Robert Andersen, Avoca, IA  
 Richard Bonnesen, Aurelia, IA  
 Jim & Annette Brown, Michicot, WI  
 Cathy Karr & Jens Carstensen, Monona, WI  
 Louis & Anna Christensen, Mercer Island, WA  
 Roger & Mary Christensen, Ogden, IA  
 Kristen Dailey, Coon Rapids, IA  
 Danish Brotherhood Lodge #16, Minden, NE  
 Judy Davis, Minneapolis, MN  
 Sigrid Festersen, Omaha, NE  
 Daniel & Beverly Gleeson, Mendota Heights, MN  
 John Grandin, Darien, IL  
 Birgit Hansen, Copenhagen, Denmark  
 Kurt Hansen, Rosemount, MN  
 Kent & Connie Hanson, Glendora, CA  
 T. Gunny Harboe, Chicago, IL  
 J. Allan & Irenen Hartley, Osceola, MO  
 Clarence & Evelyn Holtze, Rosemount, MN  
 John & Pam Hoppe, Montgomery, IL  
 Jeanne Hounshell, Yuma, AZ

Fred & Brenda Jackson, Houston, TX  
 Betty Jacobsen, Chicago, IL  
 Darrell Jensen, Audubon, IA  
 Jan Jensen, Inver Grove Heights, MN  
 Erik Jespersen, Holte, Denmark  
 Lois Jessen, Atlantic, IA  
 Gerald & Marilyn Johnson, New Hampton, IA  
 John & Ramona Klaasmeyer, Omaha, NE  
 Anne Marie Knudsen, San Pedro, CA  
 Mark & Anita Larsen, Ringsted, IA  
 Merrill & Lorene Lewis, Bellingham, WA  
 Charles & Karen Lorence, Aurora, IL  
 Camilla Marston, London, England  
 James & Karen Nelson, Delavan, WI  
 Inge Hansen Nord, Reedley, CA  
 Jens Erik Pedersen, Solvang, CA  
 Karin Pfeifer, Laguna Niguel, CA

Mark Pihl, Lake Oswego, OR  
 Douglas & Willa Pledger, Medford, WI  
 Michael & Suzanne Rasmussen, Kirkman, IA  
 Randy Rasmussen, Cokato, MN  
 Richard & Carle Rasmussen, Omaha, NE  
 Robert & Nancy Rasmussen, Berlin, NJ  
 Sandra Rigby, Eugene, OR  
 Poul Schmidt, Myrtle Beach, SC  
 Annette South, Huntington Beach, CA  
 Gary & Judith Tewell, San Luis Obispo, CA  
 Edel Thompson, Ashland, VA  
 Larry & Charlotte Travis, San Antonio, TX  
 Cade Ullerich, Ames, IA  
 Ronald & Suzanne Vallez, San Jacinto, CA  
 Ruth Veigel, Grants Pass, OR  
 Michelle Waghorne, Lapeer, MI  
 William Waghorne, Lapeer, MI  
 Sandra Willis, Villa Ridge, MO

# New Additions to the Wall of Honor

## February 19 – June 19, 2009

The Danish Immigrant Museum's Wall of Honor provides families and friends with a means of preserving the memory of or honoring 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 a family member or friend by adding their name to the Wall of Honor, contact Debra Christensen Larsen, development associate.

JES STEN & LISA STEN  
 JESSEN, Gerda Wallace,  
 Yuma, AZ

LARS PETER LARSEN,  
 Mark & Anita Larsen,  
 Ringsted, IA

JOHANNES (JOHN)  
 SIMONSEN, David  
 Simonsen, Topeka,  
 KS, James & Kathy  
 Simonsen, Wamego,  
 KS, Marvin Simonsen,  
 Osceola, NE, Robert  
 Simonsen, Topeka, KS

## In Honor

The Danish Immigrant Museum has received gifts in honor of the following people or special events from February 19 through June 19, 2009.

Benedikte Ehlers Olesen's birthday  
 Eldon Ericksen



# Thank You Businesses and Organizations

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

A & A Framing (Annette Andersen), Kimballton, IA  
AmericInn of Elk Horn, IA  
Andersen Windows (Sarah Andersen), Bayport, MN  
Answers (Rick Tighe), Atlantic, IA  
Audubon Family Chiropractic (Douglas & Nichole Olsen), Audubon, IA  
Carroll Control Systems, Inc., Carroll, IA  
Cedar Valley Danes, Cedar Falls, IA area  
Danish American Club in Orange County, Huntington Beach, CA  
Danish American Club of Milwaukee, West Bend, WI  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #1, Omaha, NE  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #14, Kenosha, WI  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #15, Des Moines, IA  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #16, Minden, NE  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #17, Chicago, IL  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #56, Lawrence, KS  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #75, Albert Lea, MN  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #84, Lincoln, NE  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #126, Los Angeles, CA  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #144, Dike, IA  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #211, St. Paul, NE  
Danish Brotherhood Vestens Stjerne Lodge #268, Eugene, OR  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #283, Dagmar, MT  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #341, Kimballton-Elk Horn, IA  
Danish Brotherhood Centennial Lodge #348, Eugene, OR  
Danish Club of Tucson, Tucson, AZ  
Danish Ladies Relief Society, Santa Rosa, CA  
Danish Mutual Insurance Association, Elk Horn, IA  
Danish Sisterhood Dagmar Lodge #4, Chicago, IL  
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #176, Dike, IA  
Den Danske Pioneer (Elsa Steffensen, Linda Steffensen), Hoffman Estates, IL

Elk Horn Pharmacy (Tim & Mary Waymire), Elk Horn, IA  
Elk Horn-Kimballton Community School, Elk Horn, IA  
Elk Horn-Kimballton Optimist Club, Elk Horn, IA  
Faith, Family, Freedom Foundation (Kenneth & Marlene Larsen), Calistoga, CA  
Grand View University Danish Immigrant Archive, Des Moines, IA  
Harlan Newspapers (Steve Mores & Allan Mores), Harlan, IA  
Heartland District of the DBIA, Ventura, IA  
JAWICO (Gert Lykke), Anaheim, CA  
Guldsmedemester Helle Jørvad (Goldsmith), Ringsted, Denmark  
Kessler Funeral Homes, Inc., Audubon, IA  
King of Kings Fishing Guide Service & Lodge (Richard & Bonnie Andersen), Anchor Point, AK  
KJAN Radio, Atlantic, IA  
Knudsen Old Timers of The Danish Lutheran Church, Yorba Linda, CA  
Liberty Auto Restoration, Inc., Elk Horn, IA  
Liberty Labs, Inc., Kimballton, IA  
Marne & Elk Horn Telephone Co., Elk Horn, IA  
Marstal Smithy (Judy Hoch), Lakewood, CO  
NE Gen Comm Danish Brotherhood, Omaha, NE  
Nelsen & Nelsen, Attorneys at Law, Cozad, NE  
Nelson Machine & Forge (Steve Nelson), Marne, IA  
O & H Danish Bakery (Eric Olesen), Racine, WI  
Olsen, Muhlbauer & Co., L.L.P., Carroll, IA  
Pacific NW District Lodges D.B.I.A.  
Proongily (Cynthia & John McKeen), St. Paul, MN  
Rebild National Park Society, Southern California Chapter, Glendale, CA  
Red River Danes, Fargo, ND  
Ringsted Danish American Fellowship, Ringsted, IA  
Shelby County State Bank, Elk Horn, IA  
Steffenie's Good Eats Bakery & Grill, Elk Horn, IA  
Symra Literary Society, Decorah, IA  
The Rasmussen Group, Inc., Des Moines, IA  
The Viking Club of Orange County, Seal Beach, CA  
World Cal, Inc., Elk Horn, IA

## Memorials

### February 19 – June 19, 2009

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

Robert D. Aagaard	Jane Clemesen
Clifford Houmann Adelsen	Jean M. Dietrick
Chris Andersen	Amber Esbeck
Alma Bissen	Jeanene Esbeck
Kai Arnold Bodtker	Kathryn A. Hansen
Helen Christensen	William (Bill) Hansen
Karl Christensen	Jonathan Hoifeldt
	Dean Jacobsen
	Carl Erik Kjærgård Jensen
	Eugene Jensen
	Grethe Jensen

Karen Jensen  
Paul Delfs Jensen  
Louie Johnson  
Mary Elizabeth Miller Karwal  
Lucille Kloth  
Arnold Knudtson  
Iona V. Koos  
Robert Mathiasen  
Elaine Nelson  
Leland Nelson

Lorraine Ohms  
Everett Rechtenbach  
Gwen Jacobsen Rosheim  
Marion Rosman  
Harald A. Schjodt  
Cecil Sievertsen  
Clyde & Elva Simons  
David Stewart  
Joe Waske  
Ron Wheatly



Examples of the two smaller sizes of bricks for the Jens Jensen Heritage Path

- > **4" x 8" Brick \$110**  
2-3 lines, 16 spaces per line
- > **12" x 12" Brick \$250**  
5-6 lines, 16 spaces per line
- > **24" x 24" Brick \$1000**  
(not pictured)  
Logo and up to 6 lines, 16 spaces per line

## Jens Jensen Heritage Path: An Opportunity to Preserve Your Name

Many museum members have commemorated loved ones by placing their names on The Danish Immigrant Museum's Wall of Honor. The Wall of Honor, however, recognizes immigrants. ***For those of us who are not immigrants, there has been no way to celebrate and commemorate our heritage. Now there is! We can buy a brick for the path and courtyard in the Jens Jensen Heritage Park.***

The new outdoor venue at the museum is named for the Danish immigrant Jens Jensen (1860-1951) who designed important elements of the Chicago City Park system. Considered the father of the "Prairie School" of landscape architecture and a colleague of the American architect,

Frank Lloyd Wright, Jensen was known for using native plantings to emulate natural environments.

The park will provide landscaping, pergola covered picnic area, walkways, sculptures and a pond. Planting has begun following a landscape plan developed by William Tischler, a noted Jensen scholar and University of Wisconsin faculty member.

Kurt Klarskov Larsen, a board member, suggested that the sale of commemorative bricks could be a way of providing funding for the project. Fellow board

member Mark Nussle and his wife, Lori, have seized and developed this idea. Indeed, they have purchased the first gift in memory of Mark's mother, Thyra, who was born in Kimballton, Iowa, and as Mark says, "was more Danish than his immigrant father!"

The bricks will be used to highlight special spaces as well as pave an extensive path that will wind throughout the park. An order form is enclosed. You can also find additional information and a form on our new website. Go to "Giving" on the navigational bar and click on "Bricks."



# Wayne Alwill: A Major Benefactor

Early in October 2008, Rob Hall, an attorney in Harlan, Iowa, called with news that The Danish Immigrant Museum was one of three institutions named in the estate of Wayne Alwill of Manning, Iowa. Alwill, who died on September 24, 2008, was an only child and had been a bachelor farmer in northeastern Shelby County. At that time, Hall could provide no details on the estate gift. He did ask if we could do some research to identify potential heirs at law as this is an important step in the resolution of any estate in Iowa.

Immediately, we searched our records to identify if Wayne Alwill had been a museum member; he had not. Nor were we able to determine if he had ever visited our museum! But in 1994, shortly after the opening of the newly completed museum building, he had gone into Harlan and working with Hall had drawn up his "Last Will and Testament," naming our museum, Living History Farms of Des Moines, Iowa, and the Shelby County Historical Society as the beneficiaries of his estate. As the days passed we learned that the gift would be the single largest bequest the museum had received to date, totaling approximately \$1.3 million! Who was this person who had so generously provided for our museum and why had he done so?

Despite research, our

answers are speculative. We do know the facts that are conveyed in a simple obituary. Wayne was born to Elmer and Laura Alwill on September 1, 1930 in Manning, Iowa. He attended a

rural, one-room school and then graduated from Manning High School in 1948. In high school, he was a member of the National Honor Society and the Quill and Scroll Honor Society, and in the summer of 1947, he was selected and attended Iowa Boys State as a delegate of Manning's American Legion Post.

Following high school, he farmed with his father in northeast Shelby County. Life and work on the family farm, was interrupted in 1952, when he joined the U.S. Army. He was assigned to the 350th Infantry Regiment stationed at Camp Roeder near Salzburg, Austria. In 1954, he was honorably discharged and returned to the family farm. Here he continued to live after the death of his parents, actively farming until 1984. In that year he moved into Manning, though he would make fre-



*Wayne Alwill, 1930-2008*

quent trips back to the farm and to a second farm he had purchased in southern Crawford County. In early 2007, due to failing health, he moved to the Carroll Health Center where he died.

Michele

McNabb, our librarian and genealogist, was able to discover much about Wayne Alwill's mother's family that might shed light on why he chose to give to the museum. Alwill's maternal grandmother Marie Hansen was born in the Duchy of Slesvig or Schleswig. More familiarly known as Schleswig-Holstein, the Danish king was also the duke of these two duchies, and they were a part of the Danish realm. Her father (Alwill's great-grandfather), Peter F. Hansen, had fought in the Dano-Prussian War of 1864 as well as the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.

Peter, a farmer, may very well have been pressed into service, and most likely on the Prussian side. His loyalties (and this is speculation) probably rested neither with Denmark nor Prussia but with Slesvig/Schleswig, a border state,

containing a population made up equally of Danish and German speakers. Given the Hansen name it is reasonable to conclude a Danish link. Before the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century, however, inhabitants throughout Europe often identified with local jurisdiction rather than the nation state. This was true in what was to become modern Germany as historically this area of Europe had been a patchwork of kingdoms and duchies. As German unification occurred, many from smaller states chose to emigrate rather than fall under Prussian domination. Perhaps Peter did not identify with either Denmark or Germany.

In March 1881, Peter immigrated to Iowa with his wife, Ida Suhr Hansen, and their ten children, including Marie, who would become Wayne's grandmother. The family chose to settle in a border area in Iowa midway between the Danish communities of Audubon and Harlan and the German community of Manning. Perhaps Wayne Alwill had heard stories from his grandmother about growing up in Slesvig and the Hansen name, and he wished to acknowledge that he too had a Danish heritage. That, however, is pure, even wild conjecture! What is not conjecture is our gratitude to him. His gift strengthens The Danish Immigrant Museum.

# My 35-Year Journey to Jutland

By Dr. James Christensen

"You aren't my real mother, are you?"

I have always regretted saying those words to my dear grandmother that day in our farmhouse kitchen.

We had just returned from town where I had overheard my grandmother telling a friend something shocking: my real mother died when I was 3-weeks-old and it was, in fact, my grandmother and my grandfather who were raising me. World War II was in full swing in Europe at the time and my biological father was serving with General George S. Patton's 8th Armored Division. It was all quite confusing to me, a 6-year-old boy.

But when you're a child and know you are loved, you don't particularly care

that your "Dad" is too old



The wedding picture of Jens Marinus and Kirstine Marie Christensen taken in Harlan, Iowa, February 22, 1903.

to play ball with you or that your "Mother" doesn't drive a car. It's just not important. Fast-forward thirty years, though, and my family's historical roots began to grow more and more important to me.

I will quickly admit my search for my roots, my "Journey to Jutland," was not without disappointments or dead-ends.

Indeed, there were times when I just thought, "You have gone as far as you can. It's over. Be happy with what you have."

However, renewed interest would grow again and it would be back to the drawing board.

I recall that day in 1965 when I went out to meet our mailman on Carmel Lynn Street in Torrance, California. I saw him trying to force a large brown paper envelope into our mailbox. My heart began to pound in my chest as he handed the parcel to me with the words, "Got something from Denmark for you today, sir." This envelope turned out to be the "launching pad" for my thirty-five year search for my family roots and history in Denmark.

Moments later, with the envelope torn open, I was reading a letter from a Mr. Poul Rasmussen who worked for the Danish Genealogical Agency with the news he was enclosing two letters from living relatives in Denmark and both were anxious to hear from me. My search had taken off.

My grandparents, Jens Marinus and Kirstine Marie Christensen, met in the village of Manna, Denmark



Dr. James Christensen grew up with his grandparents, Danish immigrants, near Denison, Iowa.

in 1900 where Jens had been dedicated in the Tise parish church and Kirstine in Bronderslev, some five miles away.

My grandfather, Jens, was a very kind man. Apparently, King Christian IX noticed his kindness while he served in the Danish Army from 1896-1899. Jens was a groomsman for the king's horses. When King Christian traveled into the countryside to visit his people Jens would accompany him and care for his horses. One day the king remarked, "Jens, should you marry one day, you will be a kind husband to your wife because you are kind to animals." How true that was. Our Iowa farm was inhabited by peacocks, white pigeons, turkeys, and horses, in addition to the usual livestock found on farms.

The two original Denmark contacts both passed away while I was corresponding with them, but with their help I gleaned some sense of my family history and was able to trace its roots back some one hundred





*The home of James Christensen's great-grandparents, Thomas and Inger Marie Christensen in Manna, Denmark.*

and fifty years. With this information in hand my wife Betty and I made our first trip to Denmark in 1988.

Manna is a serene village some five miles west of Bronderslev. The church which my great-grandparents attended lies on a small hill overlooking the town. While standing there I tried to imagine my grandfather, Jens, playing here as a boy, working on the small family farm and learning many useful skills from his father, Thomas Christian Christensen.

My grandmother, Kirstine, suffered the death of her mother when she was 10-years-old. Her father took her from school, forcing her to do the housework and cooking for him. He sought his peace in alcohol and often beat my grandmother. Meeting Jens gave Kirstine hope of escaping her plight. And she did. One of my Danish relatives recalls Jens the day he left for America and all of the local girls (except

Kirstine) saying, "There he goes, and I don't have his ring!" Kirstine had won her knight and Jens had won her heart.

One of my first letters from Denmark described the day Jens left for America: "He was a tall, striking young man, full of hope and ready to start his life in the new country. Our family took him to the train station in Bronderslev in a horse-drawn wagon. Jens sat on his steamer trunk and our yellow dog, Motts ran behind us."

Jens arrived at Ellis Island on the ship, United States of America. From there it was a train ride to western Iowa where his brother Chris was waiting for him. Immediately he began working on a farm near Irwin, Iowa for \$15.00 a month. A year later he sent for Kirstine and upon her arrival they were married at the Congregational Church in Harlan, Iowa. Their married life got off to a difficult start almost immediately.

While leaving the church their horse-drawn sleigh tipped over into a roadside ditch and Kirstine's chin was seriously cut by the sleigh's runner. However, their dedication to a new life was not halted as they lived out their lives on a farm some seven miles southwest of Denison, Iowa, raised their family and touched the lives of hundreds of people.

One day in 1998 my Glendale, California office phone rang and a voice on the other end of the line said, "Mr. Christensen, this is Steffen Moeller and I think we are cousins." One of my seeming dead-ends had not been dead. A letter written several years earlier by me and sent to Denmark had made its way into his hands in Vancouver, Washington. Soon Betty and I were off to Vancouver to meet my cousin! Another link in the family chain had been connected.

Steffen provided much information for me and soon

another Denmark trip was planned. What joy to find cousins in Roskilde, Randers, Ostbirk, and Vra. For anyone who has had this kind of reunion, you know it is indescribable. Finding a loving family you never knew you had so many miles away, is a blessing beyond words. Now, with help, I have traced my family history back to 1640.

Yes, the time has been fruitful, the ocean has been sailed, and the generations connected. From a tiny Danish village in Manna, Jutland to Ellis Island to Harlan, Iowa for a wedding, and a farm near Denison, Iowa my family history has come together for me to pass on to my children and grandchildren. Indeed, my thirty-five year Journey to Jutland has been worth it all.

*James Christensen lives near Junction City, Oregon with his wife Betty.*

# Young Writers Recognize Actions of Moral Courage

The Danish Immigrant Museum sponsored the fifth annual Tribute to the Rescuers Essay Contest, made possible once again by a gift from the Eric and Joan Norgaard Trust of Northbrook, Illinois. Students from area schools as well as elsewhere in the nation submitted essays that focused on individuals who have demonstrated moral courage in dangerous and difficult times. The first year of the contest was open to students in schools within Audubon, Cass and Shelby Counties in Iowa. The contest is now open to all students across the nation. The awards are also very generous: \$750 for first place, \$500 for second and \$250 for third.

We feature this month, the first place essay, written by a ninth grader from Audubon High School, Dana Johnson, "Heroes of the Holocaust."

*The years of the Holocaust are some of the darkest times in our world's history. And yet from these black days come some of the bravest heroes who stood up to corruption, evil and hate. Some of these courageous men and women came from unexpected places such as the police forces.*

*Policemen all over Germany and countries occupied by Germany were given orders to round up Jews from their homes to be deported to concentration camps. Many of these policemen never questioned their orders. Many of these policemen never stopped to think about the horrors these Jews would be facing in the days to come. Of course, there were some who tried to warn the Jews about their coming arrest but did nothing to stop it. Few officers had the courage to openly resist their superiors.*

*Among these heroic few were the military police of Marechaussee in Grootegast. On March 9 of 1943, these military policemen received an order to arrest a remaining group of Jews in their city. At first the policemen tried to argue that the Jews were ill and should not be deported. They even went so far as to have a physician provide a statement confirming this but their commanding officers would not listen. So the policemen refused to arrest the Jews even though this*

*act of resistance put their own lives in serious danger. Their commanders tried to pressure them into obeying by questioning each of the men individually, by threatening to send them to concentration camps, and finally by giving the men a chance to reflect and change their decision. But the men stood firm. They would not arrest the innocent Jews. Finally the*

*men were told to surrender their weapons and were taken to Vught, a concentration camp in Holland.*

*But, one of the policemen, Henk Drogt, escaped the city before his arrest. He joined the Dutch resistance group and lived underground for the months following his escape. He was wanted by the Nazis but continued to help the resistance effort. At a time when it would have been safer for Drogt to go completely into hiding, he chose to keep*

*fighting for that which is morally right. Drogt helped smuggle downed allied pilots to the Belgian border, he helped hide Jews from the Germans, and he helped in other resistance operations. At the beginning of August 1943 just five months after Henk Drogt refused his superior officers, he was caught. Drogt was put on trial and sentenced to death.*

*Drogt paid for these acts of heroism with his life. But*

*— Continued*



Dana Johnson, a ninth grade student at Audubon High School in Iowa, won first place in the Tribute to the Rescuers Essay Contest. She is pictured here with John Mark Nielsen, the museum's executive director.



in truth, he paid with much more than his life. Drogst was planning to get married, and his girlfriend was expecting a child. Because of Henk Drogst's act of courage, there is a child who grew up without his father, a girlfriend who grew up without her would-be husband, and two parents who had to live with their child's young death. For Henk Drogst and his fellow men's acts of extreme moral courage and determination to do what's right, they were severely punished and in Drogst's case lost their lives. One might ask, "Did these policemen change any-

thing? Did this one act stop the horrors of the war?" The answer is yes. While that certain group of Jews may still have been arrested and taken to a concentration camp, they went there with the knowledge that there is good in this world, and there are people who are willing to stand up to injustice and fight for that good. While these men alone did not change the world, it is all the heroes of the Holocaust, all the heroes during times of war, all the heroes during times of genocide today that when added up have the power to change the world for the

better. It is these unsung heroes and heroines, some of whom went on to live quiet lives and some of whom paid for their acts of extreme courage with their life.

Today as I read about these courageous policemen who stood up to what is wrong and terrible, I feel a strong desire to do my part in making this world a better, more peaceful world. I feel that even though I am one person, I can make a difference. I believe that I can change the life of someone for the better.

The memory of Drogst and

his fellow policemen is one of many tales of true moral courage displayed during the Holocaust. This memory deeply touches me because it shows that there are people in this world who will stand up to wrong when they know they might pay with their death. To me it signifies that even if everyone else is doing what is wrong and evil, there are people who can step out of the crowd and rise above the corruption. As long as there is good in the world, there will be people who continue to stand strong for what is right and just, even in the face of death.

The Danish Immigrant Museum also recognizes Tanner Davis, a fifth grader from Fresno, California for his first place History Day project about Mary Larsen, a museum member who passed away on March 31, 2009. When visiting Tanner and his family in Fresno, Mary shared stories about her experiences during World War II. These stories inspired Tanner's choice. Here's Tanner's essay.

As soon as the conflict of World War II began, Mary Larsen, a Danish nurse knew she had a responsibility to help save the Jews in her country of Denmark. Mary was born on the island of Fyn. Even as a young girl, she knew she

wanted to be a nurse and help people.

In the year of 1936, Mary trained at the Deaconess Hospital in Copenhagen. In 1940, she went to work for a Jewish doctor named Dr. Tuxon. On April 9, 1940, Denmark was invaded by Germany. Hitler's men searched out the Jewish people to send them to a concentration camp. Dr. Tuxon was part of the Danish Resistance Movement. These people sabotaged German efforts in taking over Denmark and capturing Jews. The doctor knew the Nazi soldiers were watching him. He was fearful of being captured and tortured to get secrets. He was also afraid for his family. Mary found Dr. Tuxon in the upstairs bathroom dead from cyanide poisoning. He had committed suicide. Mary knew that actions needed to be taken, so she

decided to be a part of the movement.

Mary went to work in Bispebjerg Hospital in Copenhagen. In October 1943, the Germans aggressively tried to capture the Jews. Mary hid the Jewish people in the morgue of the hospital. When the German soldiers entered, Mary and other nurses covered themselves with bed sheets and appeared as ghosts to frighten the young German soldiers away. To help make their escape, Mary smuggled Jewish families onto the hulls of smelly fishing boats. The children were sedated to help keep them quiet. These boats set sail for Sweden where they would be safe.

Mary's legacy, as painful as it is for her to talk about, was that she helped to save many Jewish families during World War II. Her courage and kind heart

inspire me today. She defended her country and the lives of its people. I am very proud to know my friend, Mary Larsen.

What Mary did not tell Tanner is that her fiancée was apprehended in the Copenhagen harbor, and Mary saw him shot on the spot. She and other nurses were told to return to the hospital. Those Danish Jews who they were trying to rescue that night were apprehended and transported to Teresienstadt Concentration Camp, located in what today is the Czech Republic.

Mary Larsen, who never married, came to the United States in 1960 on a leave of absence from the University of Lund Medical School. Here she worked in numerous hospitals and as a private duty nurse in California before retiring to Blair, Nebraska in 2004.



Tanner Davis, a fifth grade student from Fresno, California won first place for his history day project about Mary Larsen, a Danish immigrant, who helped in the rescue of the Danish Jews during WWII.



# Stamtræ –

## *Danish Roots, American Branches*

### News from the Family History & Genealogy Center

By Michele McNabb, librarian  
genealogy@danishmuseum.org

**THANKS.** We had a wonderful response to the latest *America Letter* – what a generous bunch you folks are! Thanks to Priscilla Kron, Karolyn Ortgies, Robert Simonsen and James and Donna Stenseth for purchasing one or more books on our wish list.

Thanks also to Dennis Andersen, who donated four large display panels for the FHGC TivoliFest lobby display and addi-

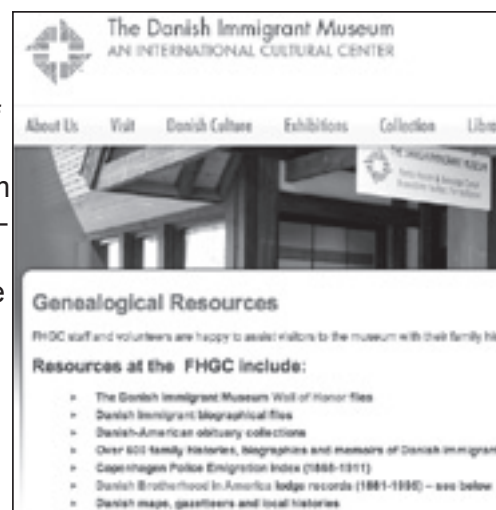
tional storage shelving, Jim Lorensen for contributing to the computer system upgrade, former intern Freja Gry Børsting, for donating *Det jødiske Fredericia, 1675-1902*, and Erik Høgsbro Østergaard, for running down a copy of *Smilet er den korteste afstand ....*

These two volumes provided background information for our compilation of Victor Borge's ancestry. Marion Vierow and William Jones also provided information (and a room key!) on Den Danske Landsby, a defunct tourist attraction near Scarborough, Maine.

## Website/Database Updates

By the time you get this far in the *America Letter* you will know that the museum has a brand-new website! The staff is very excited about having the ability to rapidly add or change content. If those of you who are genealogically inclined click on the "Library & Genealogy" section you will see a drop-down menu with seven sub-page headings, each of which covers a specialized topic, such as information about the translation or research services offered by the FHGC staff. As time allows we will be adding to the drop-down menu to include

indexes to some of our in-house databases, images from our photograph collections and other items, so check the section regularly. For the moment you can now read in its entirety the "100 Pieces of Advice for Danish Immigrants" from 1911 excerpted in the last



newsletter. It can be found under Danish Immigration.

## Skærvindsel, anyone??

At the recent Kenosha board meeting a Danish card game that sounded like "Svendtsel" was mentioned as having been popular among an older generation of Danish immigrants. A bit of online research determined that the game is actually called **Skærvindsel**. An import from Bohemia around 1800, the card game was formerly popular throughout Denmark,

but is now played mostly in Jutland. The name of the game is also sometimes given as **Sjervinsel**, and formerly as **Scharwenzel** or **Scherwenzel** (the term 'Wenzel' being used in German for the permanent trumps). We have obtained Danish instructions for playing and bidding and are getting them translated

into English "card-speak" for anyone who wishes to learn or renew their acquaintance with this popular immigrant pastime. Sources: Card Games in Denmark (<http://www.pagat.com/national/denmark.html>) and 'Skærvindsel' at <http://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sk%C3%A6rvindsel>



# Activities and News

**FAMILY WEBSITES:** If your Danish family has a webpage that is accessible to the public, we would like to know of it to start compiling a list for use in the FHGC as well as on our webpage.

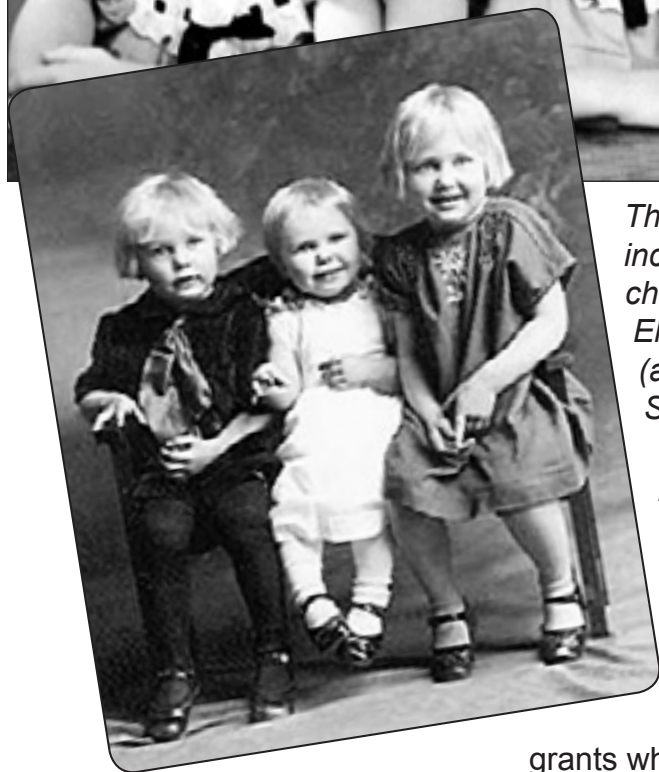
**Danish-American Heritage Society:** Under the auspices of Dr. James Iversen the museum has recently received twenty-eight boxes of **Danish American Heritage Society** (DAHS) archival

material. The organized and inventoried material, which will be housed in the FHGC's Special Collections section, spans 1976-2008 and includes correspondence, manuscripts and general organizational materials.

**NEW COMPUTER SYSTEM:** Thanks to the generosity of several museum members and the in-kind donation of a server from our IT manager, Rick Tighe, the four staff computers at the FHGC are now linked together and are much faster! Mange tak!



*The "Immigrant Babes!" display includes these child immigrants and children of immigrants: June, Liss & Ellen Margrethe Korsgaard, c1947 (above) and Mildred, Harold, Ruth Sand, c1927-28 (left).*



**RAVISHING REDHEADS! – BODACIOUS BLONDES! – DARK-HAIRED DOLLS!** advertises this year's FHGC TivoliFest photo display entitled "Immigrant Babes!" Featured are some eighty photographs of immi-

grants who came to the U.S. as young children and photographs of the American-born children of adult immigrants taken to send back to family in Denmark. The display will be viewable in the FHGC lobby until late summer and then be placed on the museum website.

Supplementing the Victor Borge exhibit at the museum is a two-panel display of **VICTOR BORGE'S GENEALOGY** based on Danish census and synagogue records, Borge's autobiography, and specialized reference works. Born Børge Marinus Rosenbaum in Copenhagen in 1909, Borge's family included many members with both musical talent and a quirky sense of humor. His ancestry includes grandfathers who immigrated to Denmark from northern Germany and Poland in the middle of the nineteenth century and grandmothers whose families were rooted in the Jewish communities of Copenhagen, Hillerød and Fredericia.

**Are you a Facebook fan of The Danish Immigrant Museum?**



# Searching for Kristensens

It is not uncommon for the FHGC to be contacted by individuals planning a trip to Denmark who need help identifying localities, especially villages or parish churches, associated with their immigrant ancestors.

Generally speaking this task is an easy one and after a bit of sleuthing we are able to provide photographs or maps showing relevant sites to include in their itinerary. Several times a year, however, we are contacted by individuals going to Denmark who wish us to find living Danish relatives they can meet during their stay.

The ease or difficulty of doing this depends on many factors, including the number of years or generations that have elapsed since the migration, the size of the immigrant's family of origin, whether other members of the family emigrated or stayed in Denmark, whether they lived in a rural or urban area, and, not least of all, whether there is a Danish relative interested in the extended family history or meeting an American cousin.

This February Donn Hagmann of Shorewood, Minnesota contacted us about trying to find relatives of his wife's immigrant grandfather. Peder Kristensen was a member of the Danish Coast Guard in 1927 when he was given permission to leave the country. He was found on the passenger list of the *S/S Hellig Olav*, which arrived in New York on May 25, 1927. Peder indicated that he was on his way to the home of an uncle, Stephen Petersen in Chicago, Illinois.

Five years later Peder, now known as Peter B. Christensen, married Aster Jeppsen in Tyler, Minnesota. He was a resident there until his early death at the age of 57. His obituary indicated that he was survived by a brother, Chris, in Los Angeles as well as four sis-

ters and three brothers in Denmark, thus seven possible threads to follow.

Peder's 1900 birth record was found in the church records of Bjergby parish on the island of Mors in Thisted County. This northwestern area of Jutland is quite rural and relatively sparsely populated.

This can be advantageous in finding relatives, since it is more likely that people might recognize the names of older family members if they stayed in the area.

Subsequent research showed that Peder's parents, Jens Kristensen and Else Boubjerg, were married in nearby Sundby parish in 1897. The couple had ten children born between 1897 and 1916 in the two parishes and were apparently living in the village of Bjergby in the latter year although the family was not found enumerated in the parish then.

Danish law regarding the privacy of vital records generally extends for 100 years, so additional means of identifying living relatives had to be found. A query was placed on the national Danish genealogical message board asking for descendants of the Kris-



*Shirley Hansen (right) at her grandmother's grave with Kirstin Sandal (DK).*

tensen siblings of Bjergby. No response.

In rural areas local historical societies and newspapers can be invaluable means of communication and information. At this time we enlisted the services of one of the FHGC's Danish volunteers, Erik Høgsbro Østergaard, who eagerly took up the assignment. Erik recontacted the archives and was told, after inquiries had been made with several older local residents of Bjergby, that while the parents had continued to live in the village no immediate family lived there now. Erik then wrote to Anders Holmgaard, the editor of the *Morsø Folkeblad*, asking to put in an inquiry. The resulting article, "American family seeks roots on Mors," and accompanying photograph elicited responses from several individuals who were familiar with descendants of Else



*Fulfilling a lifelong dream: Second cousins Arne Sandal (DK) and Shirley Hansen (MN) visit at the grave of Shirley's grandparents on the island of Mors.*

Boubjerg's siblings. They were able to confirm that several of Peder's brothers and sisters died without children and, that no

immediate family members remained nearby.

In early May, Donn, his wife Nancy, and his parents-in-law landed in Copenhagen and drove up

to Mors, where they visited the newspaper office before being introduced to Arne Sandal. Arne's wife, Kirsten, had researched her husband's family, so knew that Arne's grandfa-

ther was the brother of Else Boubjerg Kristensen, and hence that her husband and Donn's mother-in-law, Shirley Hansen, were second cousins.

The Sandals drove the Hagmann-Hansen visitors around the area, including the cemetery of Ansgar church, where they were fortunate in locating the graves and tombstones of Else and Jens Kristensen, dead over a half-century earlier. Peder had apparently added the middle initial "B" to his name from his mother's family name after arriving in America.

A follow-up article in the *Morsø Folkeblad* chronicled the cousins' encounter, and the creation of a friendly and hopefully enduring link between distant relatives on two continents. And as an interesting aside, Shirley's daughter Nancy discovered that she shared the same birth date as her great-grandmother Else!

## Tombstone Mystery

Last year a Danish tourist happened upon an unusual cemetery marker in the infamous Boot Hill Cemetery in Tombstone, Arizona. It piqued his interest, so he snapped a picture and upon his return to Denmark contacted the Family History & Genealogy Center to see if we had any information about this early denizen of the Arizona Territory who ended up in Tombstone. We didn't, but were intrigued, so started searching for clues about the man. Although we have not yet definitively identi-

fied him, we now know a few facts about the man under the marker.

In the 1880 territorial census 29-year-old farmer H. M. Christiansen was enumerated in Tombstone as one of a large number of single males in the town. In January 1882 he applied to become an American citizen, which means that he had lived in the U.S. (or its territories) for at least five years. In June of 1884 Hans Christiansen married Christina Beck, also of Tombstone. She may previously have been mar-

ried to a local carpenter, Paul Beck. In September of 1890, as a citizen, Hans was listed as a voter in the town of Fairbank, about ten miles outside Tombstone. His cause of death the following year is not known; hopefully, he did not fall victim to the many stabbings and gunfights for which Tombstone had a reputation. The grave of "Christina B. Christiansen" is also located in Boot Hill Cemetery. She died in May of 1893 from "the administering of arsenical poison," in the opinion of a coroner's jury convened in the

matter. Whether there were any children is unknown.

Hans M. Christiansen was born around 1851 and may be the 22-year-old Hans Morten Christiansen who left Lindknud parish in Ribe County, in 1873, arriving in New York City on the S/S Nestorian out of Liverpool. The search continues in both Denmark and Arizona to see if this supposition is correct and to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge about one more Danish immigrant.



# New Faces at the Museum

## WELCOME, NEW STAFF MEMBER ANNIE GREVE –

In May, The Danish Immigrant Museum welcomed Annie Greve to the full time staff. Annie was raised in Kimballton, Iowa where she now resides. She graduated from Elk Horn – Kimballton Community School in 2007 and after high school she attended Des Moines Area Community College in Ankeny for a year. She plans on going back to school next fall or spring to complete her degree. Annie is the youngest of four children and has a lovable St. Bernard named “Louie.”

Annie was hired to assist the development department as they expand their fundraising and outreach efforts. She is responsible for daily inputting of memberships and donations into our PastPerfect system. She is also head docent at Bedstemor’s House from May through September. While at Bedstemor’s she will be taking inventory of the artifacts contained in the home, which has never been done. Annie also helps in the Museum Shop



*Greve works in the development department and docents at Bedstemor’s House*

and greets visitors during the busy summer months. Annie loves the challenge and the variety of her position at the museum and has been a very welcome addition to the staff!

**CLARK INTERNS AT MUSEUM –** Carla Clark, a 2009 graduate of Dana College, has joined the staff of the museum as a summer intern. Carla will be working exclusively on the collections inventory project during her three-month term.

Carla will begin by recording the identification number found on the surface of each artifact along with the location of the piece within the museum. She will then evaluate the physical condition of the artifact and take photos of all sides, details, and damage. During the second stage of the inventory process, Carla will input

this information into PastPerfect, the museum’s collections software system. All descriptions, condition reports, and photographs will be updated or added so that all known information will be searchable within the system.

Interested in museum work, Carla majored in history while at Dana and is excited to broaden her experience and knowledge before making her next career step.

## JOSH WEBER JOINS STAFF FOR SUMMER

– The Danish Immigrant Museum welcomes a new part-time employee this summer. Josh Weber has been hired to work week-ends greeting visitors and managing the museum shop on Saturdays and Sundays. He also just took on the duties of looking after the museum grounds. He helps out by weeding, watering and trimming, keeping the lawns and gardens in top shape.

Josh is a 2008 graduate of Elk Horn-Kimballton Community School and will begin his second year at Iowa State this fall, majoring in architecture.



**GRANT CARLSON –** (left with wife, Sarah), is a graduate student in Library & Information Science at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio, began interning at the FHGC in mid-June. Grant graduated from Simmons College with a history-political science major. During his eight-week internship Grant will be scanning the front covers or title pages of books in the FHGC collection to attach to the item records in Past Perfect, as well as writing or amending finding aids for materials in the Special Collections Department.





# 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 offering their Danish summer home for rental at a reduced price—and all proceeds will be donated to The Danish Immigrant Museum.

- Located in the middle of Jutland, a 10-minute drive from Viborg, two hours to Skagen to the north, two hours to the German border to the south, one hour to the North Sea on the west, and one hour to the Kattegat on the east.
- 45-minute drive to Århus, and 40-minutes to Aalborg.
- Views of the Limfjord from most rooms in the house.
- 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.

- Two bathrooms with showers and one has a hot tub.
- Kitchen with refrigerator, oven, and microwave.
- Flat screen television and DVD player.
- Five minute drive to shopping: bakery, butcher shop, bank, post office.
- The house is available for rental in 2009 and beyond. It costs a minimum of \$1,000 a week. (Usually, it costs around \$3,000.)

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

## Notes from the Museum Shop

*By Joni Soe-Butts,  
Museum Shop Manager*

I just returned from vacationing in Denmark last week. While I was there I took some time to stop by George Jensen's in Copenhagen where I saw some beautiful pieces and was

able to get contact names for individuals that might be able to help me bring a few of his designs into the shop.

I also met Hans Nielsen Marxon who is one of the leading amber/silversmiths in Denmark. I brought back

a piece of his work and have photos of Hans with an exquisite necklace; I am currently working with him to bring more of his pieces in.

Also new to the shop is PEJ Danmark kitchenware and beautifully designed glass vases by Kai Hansen.

If you are looking for that perfect gift for the person who has everything, we now carry Eckland towels and table runners. Eckland has been in business since 1692. This product line has been very popular and I have had to reorder several times.

## 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  
Saturday:  
10:00 am-5:00 pm  
Nov.-April: Tues., Wed.,  
Fri. 10 am-4 pm

**All facilities are closed on  
New Year's Day  
Easter Sunday  
Thanksgiving  
Christmas**

*(Local weather conditions  
may cause occasional  
closures.)*



**INNOVATION THE DANISH WAY**

A Conference sponsored by  
the Danish American Heritage Society  
Radisson Plaza Hotel, Minneapolis, Minnesota

# SAVE THE DATES . . . October 1-3, 2009

## Radisson Plaza Hotel, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Discover new approaches to understanding both contemporary and historical Danish and Danish-American innovation in science and technology, architecture and design, social innovation, the arts and literature.

Explore the unique advantages of a metro area made up of two magnificent cities. With its top-notch arts scene, exquisite dining, fan-favorite teams and stunning views, Minneapolis-Saint Paul is a must-visit destination.

Hear Jørgen M. Clausen, a prominent Danish innovator in industry and education and past President and CEO of Danfoss, one of Denmark's large multinational corporations, and Chairman of the Board of Sauer-Danfoss, a major global manufacturing company.

Join friends from around the country in downtown Minneapolis for engaging talks Thursday through Saturday. Then, stay on for the Sunday's Twin Cities Marathon where runners will pass a half block from the conference hotel on Sunday, October 4.

Program updates and registration on-line coming soon at [www.danishamericanheritagesociety.org](http://www.danishamericanheritagesociety.org).

Susan Jacobsen, Conference Chair » 515 5th Avenue S.E. #1 Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(+1) 612-378-2694 » [susan.jacobsen@gmail.com](mailto:susan.jacobsen@gmail.com) » [www.danishamericanheritagesociety.org](http://www.danishamericanheritagesociety.org)



## America Letter

Published Three Times Annually By  
The Danish Immigrant Museum  
2212 Washington, PO Box 470  
Elk Horn, Iowa 51531  
712-764-7001 800-759-9192  
FAX 712-764-7002  
Eva Nielsen, editor  
[www.danishmuseum.org](http://www.danishmuseum.org)  
email: [info@danishmuseum.org](mailto:info@danishmuseum.org)

### Board of Directors

*President* – Marc Petersen, Omaha, NE  
*Vice-President* – Harriet Albertsen  
Spanel, Bellingham, WA  
*Secretary* – Dennis Andersen,  
Atlanta, GA  
*Treasurer* – John Molgaard, Atlantic, IA  
Carlo Christensen, Glendale, CA  
Lone Christensen, Brown Deer, WI  
Ane-Grethe Delaney, Wayzata, MN  
Mark Frederiksen, Falcon, CO  
Kurt Hansen, Rosemount, MN  
Mia Hansen, Tucson, AZ  
Vice Consul Anna Thomsen Holliday,  
Houston, TX  
Erna Jensen, Des Moines, IA  
Kurt Klarskov Larsen, Oneonta, AL  
Steven Lund, Yuma, AZ  
Cynthia McKeen, St. Paul, MN  
Kay Esbeck North, Ames, IA  
Mark Nussle, Palos Park, IL  
Benedikte Ehlers Olesen, Eugene, OR  
Lynette Skow Rasmussen, Johnston, IA  
Consul Eva Robinson, Butler, PA  
Linda Sloth-Gibbs, Yuma, AZ  
Janet M. Thuesen, Sausalito, CA  
*Ex-Officio*  
Kai Nyby, LaPorte, IN  
Vern Hunter, Fargo, ND  
Nils Jensen, Portland, OR  
Dennis Larson, Decorah, IA

### Staff

#### *Executive Director:*

Dr. John Mark Nielsen,  
[director@danishmuseum.org](mailto:director@danishmuseum.org)  
*General Information, Group Tours,  
Volunteering Opportunities:*  
Terri Johnson,  
[info@danishmuseum.org](mailto:info@danishmuseum.org)  
*Development Director:* Bruce Bro,  
[dkdevdir@metc.net](mailto:dkdevdir@metc.net)  
*Wall of Honor, Donations,  
Memorial Gifts & Memberships:*  
Debra Christensen Larsen,  
[development@danishmuseum.org](mailto:development@danishmuseum.org)  
*Bookkeeping & Financial  
Inquiries:* Jennifer Winters,  
[acctng@danishmuseum.org](mailto:acctng@danishmuseum.org)  
*Exhibit Questions:*  
[curator@danishmuseum.org](mailto:curator@danishmuseum.org)  
*Artifact Donations & Museum  
Loans:* Angela Stanford,  
[registrar@danishmuseum.org](mailto:registrar@danishmuseum.org)  
*Museum Shop:* Joni Soe-Butts  
[giftshop@danishmuseum.org](mailto:giftshop@danishmuseum.org)  
*Donation of Books & Library  
Questions:* Michele McNabb,  
[librarian@danishmuseum.org](mailto:librarian@danishmuseum.org)  
*Genealogical & Translation Inquiries:*  
[genealogy@danishmuseum.org](mailto:genealogy@danishmuseum.org)  
*Custodian:* Tim Frederickson  
*Museum & FHGC Data Entry:*  
Wanda Sornson  
*Administrative Assistant:* Annie  
Greve, [dkaast@danishmuseum.org](mailto:dkaast@danishmuseum.org)