

# America Letter



The Danish Immigrant Museum

*Celebrating 30 Years*

Summer 2013

30<sup>th</sup>



**INSIDE:** The "Story" Behind the Museum Building  
Victor Borge Causes Laughter in Museum!  
Celebrating 30 Years!



## Director's Corner

by John Mark Nielsen

**In early June, Dawn and I had an opportunity to sit down with Christian Castenskiold near his home in Rancho Santa Fe, north of San Diego. Chris, as he insists upon being called, is the oldest living member of Denmark's royal family and the only family member to become an American citizen, having come to the United States on a tourist visa in 1951. This was shortly after his cousin, King Frederik IX, had assumed the throne and Chris had completed his Danish military service in the Royal Guards.**

We asked him what had led him to become an American. Without a moment's hesitation, he said "the American Army." We were a bit taken aback, but he explained:

When he came to New York, he understood that should he desire to remain in the United States longer than six months, he was subject to being drafted into the U.S. military. Two days short of his 26th birthday, when he would no longer be eligible for the draft, he was notified to report to the local Selective Service office – he had been drafted. At this point he had a choice: to serve in the U.S. military that was engaged in the Korean War or to return to Denmark.

Chris wrestled with this decision. Indeed, some of his American friends tried to persuade the New York draft board that this was not fair; he had already completed military service and was almost of an age that he would be ineligible. Ultimately, he was invited to meet the head of the city's draft board who indicated that it was his choice to either enter the army or return to Denmark and only be able to visit America again as a tourist. He chose to serve. And what his army service taught him was "it doesn't matter who you are; it's what you can do." That phrase, he said, has become a motto for him.

Following his honorable discharge from the U.S. Army,

Chris married his sweetheart, Cecily, the daughter of an English father and Danish mother, and they settled in California, where he was instrumental in pioneering the Arctic route for Scandinavian Airline Systems (SAS). He then went on to work for a number of companies in Southern California and to be one of the giants of the Danish immigrant community there.

Shortly after The Danish Immigrant Museum was founded thirty years ago and in the spirit of "it's what you can do," he and his good friend, Victor Borge, made a video soliciting support for construction of the museum in Elk Horn. He has been a loyal and generous museum member since those early days. During my tenure he has been a valued advisor, one who is upbeat and encouraging despite challenges.

Earlier this year, Chris called to discuss the new museum name that the Board of Directors will vote to ratify at the annual meeting in October – Museum of Danish America. As an immigrant, he has had a deep appreciation for our present name – The Danish Immigrant Museum.

He echoed this again in our conversation just weeks ago, expressing nostalgia for the vibrant Danish immigrant community that existed in Los Angeles following World War II. More importantly, he conveyed something of the inner struggle immigrants can experience, struggles that we, who are their descendants, can't fully understand.

And yet, Chris Castenskiold is also one who looks to the future. It's inherent in his motto "it's not who you are, but what you can do." As we evolve as a museum, the name – Museum of Danish America – allows us to embrace a broader audience. This is an important step, one that we take in the midst of celebrating our 30th anniversary. But even as we take this step, we must and will remember that the immigrant generation is the genesis of our story and our institution.

**COVER PHOTO:** *Performing in the Council Ring, the Community Danish Folk Dancers entertain guests at the 30th Anniversary and Sankt Hans Aften celebration on June 22.*





## Museum Welcomes New American Intern

If you have visited the museum in the past month, you may have seen a familiar face. Madeline Mongar, a summer intern from 2012, has returned to the collections department as the new year-long Inventory Assistant, an internship that focuses on the complete inventory of the artifact collection.

Madeline, a native of Creston, Iowa, graduated in May from Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, Missouri with a bachelor's degree in history and a public history minor. She spent her final semester abroad interning at the City of Westminster Archives Centre in England. This experience combined with her summer internship at The Danish Immigrant Museum last summer makes her a great fit for this position.

With the inventory project expected to be completed during the summer of 2014, Madeline will be responsible for helping us reach that goal.

She will first focus on finishing the textile collection, a process that includes creating descriptions, recording details of physical condition, and taking photographs. She will also insert new acid free tissue between each layer and will reduce overcrowding by moving some pieces to new boxes. Once the textiles are finished, Madeline will help to complete the remaining object collections in Visual Storage, specifically the large Danish Brotherhood in America collection.

Welcome back, Madeline!

## America Letter

Summer 2013, No. 2

Published three times annually by  
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Terri Amaral, Rochelle Bruns  
*Bedstemor's House Staff*: David Thurston, Trudy  
Juelsgaard, Rochelle Bruns and Doug Palmer  
*Danish Intern*: Jesper Ø. Jacobsen  
*American Interns*: Natalie Smith and Madeline Mongar

## 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:

Monday-Friday, 9:00 am-5:00 pm  
Saturday, 10:00 am-5:00 pm  
Sunday, 12:00 noon-5:00 pm

### BUSINESS HOURS

Monday-Friday  
8:00 am to 5:00 pm  
All facilities are closed on  
New Year's Day;  
Easter Sunday; Thanksgiving;  
Christmas

(Local weather conditions may cause  
occasional closures.)

712-764-7001

www.danishmuseum.org

### FAMILY HISTORY & GENEALOGY CENTER HOURS

May-October:  
Tuesday-Friday, 9:00 am-5:00 pm  
Saturday, 10:00 am-5:00 pm  
November-April:  
Tuesday-Friday,  
9:00 am-5:00 pm



## ***The “Story” Behind the Museum Building***

*by Tova Brandt, Albert Ravenholt Curator of Danish-American Culture*

**If you drive Highway 173 between Elk Horn and Kimballton, you can see the red-tiled roof of the museum’s building peeking over the rolling hills. As you approach the museum’s driveway, the building is hidden behind earthworks covered with native grasses and wildflowers. Only as you continue down the curving driveway do you finally see the full structure, welcoming visitors with the three flags of the United States, Denmark, and the State of Iowa.**

As the museum celebrates 30 years since its founding, we also celebrate 20 years since the museum’s iconic building was completed in 1993.

And just as there are stories behind the artifacts and exhibitions that visitors come to see, there is a story behind the building itself. Without the vision and talents of the people behind Story Construction, the museum might have a very different facility.

For many years after its founding, the museum building was only a series of architectural drawings. The Lutheran church in Elk Horn had donated land on the west end of town for the museum building – but nothing had

been built. Several years had passed since the museum incorporated, and some individuals were starting to doubt that this project would ever (literally) get off the ground.

The original concept called for five different buildings arranged around a courtyard, much like traditional farms in Denmark. One building was for storing the collections, one was a visitor center, one was for administration, and two buildings were to be dedicated to exhibitions. The architects, Astle/Ericson & Associates from Omaha and Salt Lake City, were hopeful that the entire complex could be built--however, fundraising was going more slowly than anticipated.

The museum needed innovative thinking and the resignation of a board member to accomplish its goals.

The story begins with James (Jim) Thompson, a Danish immigrant born in 1879 in Testrup, Maarslet, near Aarhus. Jim was educated as a carpenter. Two of his tools from his apprentice days, a mallet and a wood plane, are part of the museum’s permanent collection. In 1902 he





*Kenneth and James Thompson in 1938, shortly after James Thompson & Sons established themselves in Ames, Iowa.*

immigrated to Albert Lea, Minnesota, and began working in the building trade. He met another Danish immigrant at a Danish Brotherhood social – Katherine (Kate) Jensen, who had immigrated at the age of eight with her family. After courting by horse and buggy, they married in 1908. Both of their sons, Kenneth and Russell, joined their father in the building trade, and together they formed James Thompson & Sons in 1934 – first in Albert Lea, then Ames, Iowa in 1935. In the midst of the Great Depression, the promise of building projects at Iowa State University offered opportunities for construction. In 1936, James Thompson & Sons got their first project at what was then called Iowa State College; they built Roberts Hall, a residence hall for female students.

Though the company's corporate history does not mention it among its milestones, perhaps it should note



*Norman Riis in his youth, "ready to face any challenge."*

the visit to Denmark that Jim and Kate took in 1952. While visiting family, they sparked the interest of a young great-nephew, Norman Riis, to consider opportunities to study and work in the United States.

Norm traveled to the United States in 1954 through an exchange program with the American Scandinavian Foundation to study and work with James Thompson & Sons and Lechner Engineering Company in Ames. Jim had had mixed experiences in the past when sponsoring Danish family members to come work for him, and he was skeptical when Norm stepped off the bus in 1954 and looked too skinny to work construction.

Skinny or not, the young man worked hard. Norm was required to have a two-way ticket, \$200 in cash, and the promise of a job that would pay him at least \$200 a month. He only had a one-way ticket paid by his grandparents, not much cash, but did have a promise of work – within a few months, he had earned enough money to repay his grandparents for the plane ticket.

When his time as a trainee concluded in 1955, he returned to Europe and secured a visa to immigrate to Iowa a year later and put himself through school. One of his motivators? He had met Rita K. Raveling while in Iowa. They married in 1961, six weeks after Norm graduated with a civil engineering degree from Iowa State University.



*Thompson family in 1952. Kate Thompson sent this photo to Norman before he traveled to Ames in 1954. He remembers thinking that the photo was of their backyard "and I was totally impressed with the beauty and wealth of their surroundings. Later I found out that the photograph was taken outside of Memorial Union" on the Iowa State University campus.*

– Continued on page 6

# Building

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When Riis graduated there were ample opportunities for civil engineers – the entire nation was in a building boom – but he chose to accept an invitation to rejoin Thompson & Sons. Jim's son Russell, had been the firm's lead engineer but had died in a 1961 car-train accident. Norman Riis joined the firm as an estimator, meeting some of the need left by Russell's death. Even though he was a great-nephew of Jim Thompson, as far as the company was concerned he was "never considered a member of the family, and I was glad for that," Norm says. His success was based on his own skills and abilities. Norm spent 40 years with the company, eventually becoming the chairman.

## The new museum needs a building

By 1990, Norm was a member of the museum's board of directors and James Thompson & Sons had evolved into Story Construction Co., an employee-owned company still in Ames. Recognizing that the young museum organization needed momentum to grow but lacked the resources to take the next big step of construction, Norm proposed that Story Construction would only build as much as the museum could afford: when the museum ran out of money the construction would halt, to resume again when additional funds were raised. "We as a business were always experimenting with different approaches," Norm says.

Because Story Construction was employee-owned, Norm needed his fellow shareholders to support this plan. Did he convince his partners in Ames? "I did – I said we were going to do it and we did it," he commented. As for the museum board, Norm cites the now-famous line from another Iowa-based story, "If you build it, they



*Museum groundbreaking in 1988. Iowa Governor Terry Branstad helped drive the horse-drawn plow.*



*The foundation and basement began to take shape in early 1991, while snow was still on the ground.*

will come." The board knew they had to move forward, and one way to do that was to do it piecemeal.

So Norm resigned from the museum board and took on the role of Team Leader for the Story Construction crew. In 1990 the basement was excavated. Through the winter of 1991 large slabs of concrete began to form the foundation and the

basement structure – even as snow blanketed the fields. By spring the concrete floor for the ground level was in place, and two flagpoles flew the Danish and American flags. By June 1991 a tall column was built, looking like a chimney or smokestack – in fact, it was the elevator shaft that would eventually be surrounded by the rest of the building. The museum





*A Rejsegilde is a Danish custom of hoisting a wreath to the highest point of a new structure. In this case, it was the museum's elevator tower completed in 1991. The sign on the front of the lift reads "Story Construction Co. salutes the Danish immigrants."*

took the opportunity to have a Rejsegilde, a Danish builders' custom of hoisting a wreath to the highest point of a new structure, topped with a Danish flag.

In 1992 the first of the wooden timbers were brought on site and



*The timber-framed structure took shape in 1992.*

assembled. Slowly the building took on the shape of a large timber-framed barn, but there were still no solid walls or roofing material installed. The structural timbers created the skeleton for the building. Not until 1993 did the structure finally get enclosed, and there were still many interior details yet to finish. At a preview event for museum donors, development director Dennis Nissen pointed out that the museum still needed carpeting, and challenged everyone in attendance to "buy" one or more square yards at \$15/yard.

Norm kept an eye on the progress of the museum building, and superintendent Dan Ward was also a key individual in keeping the project on track. Board members present during the construction remember it as one of the cleanest construction sites they'd ever seen, and that might have been due to Norm's influence. One day when the work team was gathering in the unfinished building for a meeting, Norm chided the workers for walking across the concrete floors with their muddy boots. The workers installed a Danish-style boot scraper outside of the museum's front door and

inscribed "Norman Riis" in the hand-hold portion – thus, his name is permanently part of the building.

The museum building officially opened to visitors in 1994. The focus shifted from constructing the building to creating a positive visitor experience. The museum collections moved in and continued to grow, the Family History & Genealogy Center organized and quickly outgrew its space, and the museum's original asphalt shingles were upgraded to a metal tile roof. For 20 years the core building has stood to greet visitors and create a space to "celebrate Danish roots and American dreams."

And for much of the past 20 years, Norman and Rita Riis have enjoyed retirement in Boulder, Colorado. Story Construction had implemented a mandatory retirement age of 65 in order to allow aspiring young engineers and managers to advance in the company and gain ownership. "I retired on October 6, 2000, left town the next day on an extended trip west, never went back to work and never missed it." He and Rita enjoy their children and grandchildren and enjoy frequent travels to Europe

*– Continued on page 8*

# Building

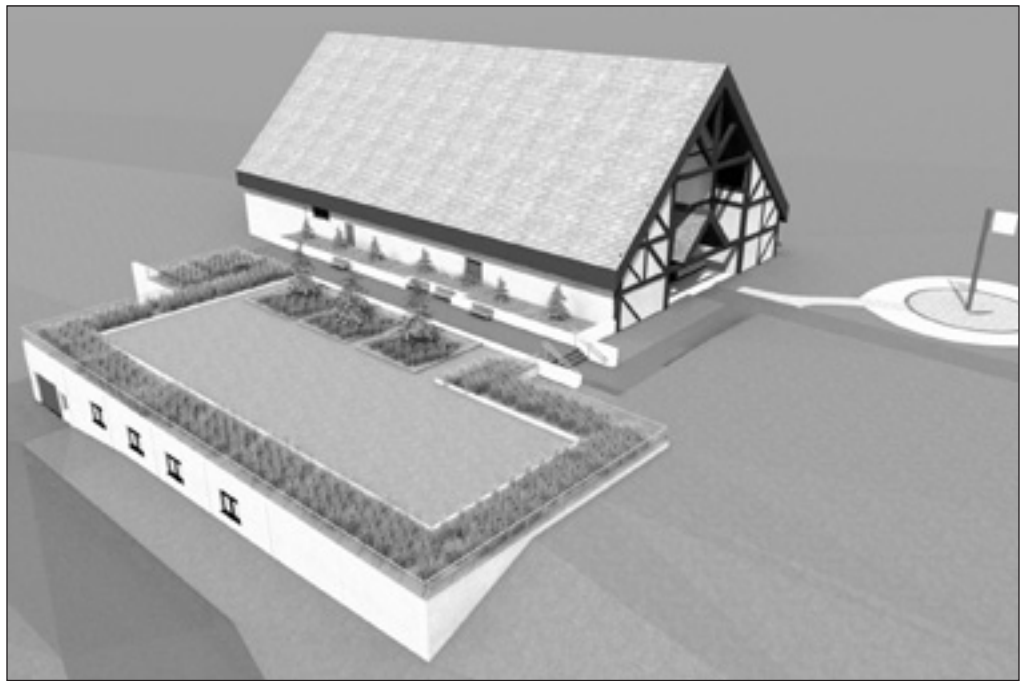
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and other parts of the globe. They visit Norm's siblings and nieces and nephews in Denmark, and Norm is glad to see that Denmark has emerged through the last few decades "happier and better off" than when he last lived there in 1954.

## Building for future needs

The museum no longer expects to construct a five-building complex as the original site plan suggested. We no longer expect the Danish-American world to come in person to Elk Horn. Instead, the museum facility is a home base for reaching out to all corners of Danish America, whether in the museum's own neighborhood or in communities around the country. The museum building needs to be welcoming, attractive and engaging for those who visit in person; the building also needs to support a growing range of outreach activities that bring the museum to other audiences through traveling exhibitions, workshops and presentations, lending to other museums, and developing more online connections to the museum's artifacts and resources.

To meet those needs of a 21st-century museum, the next phase of the museum facility is a new Curatorial Center to be built on the west side of the existing building. The proposed addition will add over 8,000 square feet of collection storage, so that the museum can continue to acquire artifacts that tell the ongoing story of Danish America. There will be an exhibit prep room to support the development of both on-site and traveling exhibitions, including space to store crates when they are not on the road. Curatorial offices will move into the new addition, providing room for full-time curators as well as interns and volunteers that contribute to the department. Outside, trucks of all sizes will be able to off-load their deliveries and wheel pallets smoothly into the building. On top of the



*Architect's rendering of the Curatorial Center addition, the next phase of the museum's building.*



*A new plaque next to the museum's entrance credits the original architects and builders.*

addition, a green roof will insulate the space below and provide a vantage point to enjoy the western horizon.

The Curatorial Center allows the museum to look forward to opportunities that the new addition will facilitate. At the same time, the museum celebrates the individuals and the "Story" that made the first big step possible. As of this summer, visitors to the museum will notice a plaque to the left of the main entrance. The plaque features an engraving of the original museum site plan and the names of the architects and the builders. So if you don't notice Norman Riis' name on the boot scraper to the right of the door, be sure to look for it on the plaque to the left!



*Norman Riis demonstrates the proper use of the Danish-style boot scraper next to the museum's front entrance.*



# Victor Borge Causes Laughter in Museum!

**New in the galleries: vintage performances by Victor Borge, the “Clown Prince of Denmark!”**



*Bill and Marilyn Gift of Clive, Iowa introduce their grandchildren to the music and comedy of Victor Borge.*

A new interactive kiosk invites you to browse selections of Victor Borge’s live performances and television highlights. Warning – you might laugh out loud!

Installed next to Borge’s first piano, this kiosk celebrates the living legacy of his comedy and music. For some visitors, it is a way to renew an acquaintance with Borge’s inspired humor. For others, it is a new introduction to one of the 20th century’s greatest entertainers. Enjoy this new addition to the museum’s galleries on your next visit to Elk Horn.

The kiosk is made possible through the generosity of H. Rand and Mary Louise Petersen of Harlan, Iowa.

## Victor Borge Legacy Award Supports Young Musicians

**On April 22, the museum building filled with piano music as four talented young women performed in a recital on Victor Borge’s first piano. The performers were the winners in the second year of the Victor Borge Legacy Award, a competition for high school piano students in southwest Iowa and eastern Nebraska. From Bach to Brahms, Chopin to Debussy, the recital showcased talent and provided the audience a wonderful afternoon of classical music.**

1st place, Omaha region: Ye (Cassie) Huang of Omaha, Nebraska

1st place, Southwest Iowa region and winner of the essay competition:

Mallory Huggins of Council Bluffs, Iowa

2nd place, Omaha region: Gelilah Johannes of Omaha, Nebraska

2nd place, Southwest Iowa region: Katie Payne of Woodbine, Iowa

Award winners were selected through two competitions in conjunction with the Southwest Iowa Music Teachers Association and the Omaha Music Teachers Association. First and second place winners received awards of \$1,000 and \$500, respectively. In addition, winners submitted a 500-word essay about the legacy of Borge that was judged for an additional \$500 cash prize. The contest is sponsored by R. James and Janet Borge Crowle (Borge’s daughter) of Saint Michaels, Maryland, and by the Eric and Joan Norgaard Charitable Trust in Crystal Lake, Illinois.



*John Mark Nielsen (back row) with recital performers Cassie Huang, Mallory Huggins, Katie Payne, and Gelilah Johannes, and curator Tova Brandt.*

# Celebrating 30 Years!

On June 22 the museum was packed with guests as our celebration started with tours of *Danish Modern: Design for Living*. Glenn Henriksen entertained on Victor Borge's first piano, followed by "Danish Troubadour" Flemming Behrend, performing traditional folk songs on his acoustic guitar.

Dinner for 200 was held in a sprawling white tent on the east lawn of the museum grounds. Dignitaries included Governor of Iowa, Terry Branstad, and Ambassador of Denmark to the United States, Peter Taksøe-Jensen and his wife, Gitte Wallin Pedersen.

Following the dinner the traditional Sankt Hans Aften festival was held complete with folk dancing and bonfire at dusk.



*A visitor reads interpretive panels in the newly-completed Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park pergola.*



*Curator Tova Brandt leads one of two tours through the featured exhibit, Danish Modern: Design for Living.*





*Around 200 guests enjoyed the tent banquet and its toasts, songs, speeches and meal.*



*Dr. John Mark Nielsen, along with his grandchildren by his side, spoke about the anniversary of the museum.*



*Governor Branstad reminisces about his presence at the museum's groundbreaking.*



*Ambassador Taksøe-Jensen speaks about his work and the United States/Denmark relations.*



*Vice Consul Anna Thomsen Holliday (left) and Governor Branstad (middle) chuckle as Board President Dagmar Muthamia and Ambassador Taksøe-Jensen look on.*



*Exira-Elk Horn-Kimballton high school students help serve the meal, along with staff from The Danish Inn.*



*Folk dancing by the Community Danish Folk Dancers takes place in the council ring with many delighted onlookers.*



*“Danish Troubadour” Flemming Behrend of Olympia, WA provides joyful, authentic atmosphere with Danish folk songs.*



*Board members present for the Friday evening meal at the Danish Countryside Vines and Wines include (front, left to right) President Dagmar Muthamia, Vice President Garey Knudsen, Secretary Flemming Smitsdorff, Treasurer Kenneth Larsen and Executive Director John Mark Nielsen. Middle row (l to r) Cynthia McKeen, Dorothy Feisel, Anna Thomsen Holliday, Lone Christensen, Cindy Adams and Linda Steffensen. Back row (l to r) Marian Ostergaard, Ronald Bro, Jerry Schrader, Kristi Johnson, Tim Burchill and Erik Andersen.*



*The evening closes with the annual Sankt Has Aften bonfire.*



## New Members February 16, 2013 – June 14, 2013

The Danish Immigrant Museum is pleased to identify the following 35 individuals, businesses and organizations as its newest members:

Kathleen Abernathy, Glendale, AZ  
Audrey Bockelman, Harrisonville, MO  
Dennis and Judy Christensen, Cedar Falls, IA  
Kevin and Sue Christensen, Omaha, NE  
Neil Collins, Poinciana, FL  
Brad and Sheridan Currie, Kettering, OH  
Danebod Lutheran Church, Tyler, MN  
Danish Ladies Relief Society of San Francisco, CA  
Fajen Construction (Larry Fajen), Elk Horn, IA  
Aase Hansen, Burbank, CA

Diane Heilesen, Forestville, CA  
Frank Heilesen, Santa Rosa, CA  
Michael and Karen Hudson, Bondurant, IA  
John Impagliazzo, Northport, NY  
Virginia Jensen, Lincoln, CA  
Jesper Ø. Jacobsen, Odense, Denmark  
Margaret Johansen, Luck, WI  
Inger Kjær, Birkerød, Denmark  
Beverly Knapp, Panora, IA  
Brian and Jackie Knudsen, Lakeville, MN  
Jody LaCanne, Exira, IA  
Herb Larsen, Cedar Falls, IA  
Jamie Louzan, Ellicott City, MD

Charles and Vicki Merrill, Elk Horn, IA  
Diana Murdoch, Medford, OR  
Paul and Sandra Nelson, Ames, IA  
Nancy Norgaard, Bronx, NY  
Erik Nørkjær, Aulum, Denmark  
Wendy Petersen-Bjorn, Rockford, MN  
Nancy Porter, Iowa City, IA  
Linda Reep, Harlan, IA  
Nancy Sandborn, Sebastopol, CA  
Paul and Jackie Smith, Windsor Locks, CT  
Arlene Stork, Arlington, NE  
Story Construction Co., Ames, IA  
Kathrine Winkler, Aarhus, Denmark

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## Memorials February 16, 2013 – June 14, 2013

Lee Anna M. Adams  
Anders Peder Andersen  
Chris and Olga Anderson  
Lois Berg  
Carol J. Christensen  
Elly and Svend Christensen  
Virgil L. Clemens  
Betty Spandet Currie  
Hans and Mathilde Farstrup  
Frank Heilesen, Jr.  
Norman Henriksen  
Edward J. Houck  
Professor Niels Ingwersen  
Ellis Jacobsen  
Karen Elfrida Elisabeth Jacobsen  
Virgil C. Jacobsen  
Norma Valborg Jensen  
T. G. and Kirstine Jensen

Tage E. Jensen  
Johannes and Ane Jensen  
Niels W. and Ingrid H. Jorgensen  
Eda K. Petersen Keltner  
MB Kolding  
Inga M. Larsen  
Kurt Klarskov Larsen  
Lars and Marie Larsen  
Sena and Hans Larsen  
Ardyth Henriksen Laursen  
Dorothea Laursen  
Helen Pedersen McNichols  
Elna K. Nelsen  
Fern Nelson  
Karen Lynn (Jensen) Nelson  
Harley Nielsen  
Heleen Nielsen

LeVern and Marilyn Nielsen  
Marilyn Nielsen  
Merlin J. "Smitty" Nielsen  
Emil Noelck  
Inger and Emil Noelck  
Phyllis Olsen  
Marianne Owen  
Jytte Lise Gudnitz Palazzolo  
Crystal Pash  
Flemming Vedsted Pedersen  
Vivian Poldberg  
Hans Christian (Chris) Rasmussen  
Alice M. Sorensen  
Hanne Tjell  
Ernest W. Weiss, Jr.  
Walter Westergaard  
Thelma "Sally" Nielsen Wold

## New Additions to the Wall of Honor

February 16, 2013 – June 17, 2013

The Danish Immigrant Museum's Immigrant 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 to the growing repository of family histories at the Museum's Family History and Genealogy Center.

**IRENE LILLI ANDREWS (1953) Santa Rosa, California** - Danish Ladies Relief Society of San Francisco, CA

**NIELS PETER JENSEN (1868) Chicago, Illinois** - Neil Collins, Poinciana, FL

**CHRISTINE (LARSEN) LINSEL (1870) Council Bluffs, Iowa** - Carolyn Christiansen, Johnston, IA; Donald Christiansen & Mercedes Martin, Carlsbad, CA; and Robert & Martha Christiansen, Tempe, AZ

**HANNAH JACOBSON PETERSON (1863) Scranton, Iowa** - Michael & Karen Hudson, Bondurant, IA

**MARTIN PETERSON (1862) Scranton, Iowa** - Michael & Karen Hudson, Bondurant, IA

**DORTHEA MARIE LINDSTROM VITHEN (1892) Audubon, Iowa** - Jeanette Knudsen, Elk Horn, IA; Jeannine Poldberg, Carter Lake, IA

# The Collection Connection

By Angela Stanford, Curator of Collections and Registrar

**As we celebrate our 30th anniversary, there have been many conversations about the beginnings of The Danish Immigrant Museum and the changes we have seen over the past three decades. Beginning in 1983 with a dream and strong devotion, the museum has seen growth in all facets of the organization, including membership and fundraising, our active intern and volunteer programs, and the wide range of high-quality merchandise in the shop.**

Out of some of those conversations, we developed a document that speaks to the progress of the curatorial department, which encompasses both collections and exhibitions. It was an impressive chronology, and we wanted to share the highlights with you, our membership.

In the fall of 1984, the museum hired its first paid employee, June Sampson as executive director. Also acting in the role of Curator and Registrar, she laid a strong foundation for the curatorial department, developing policies and forms that would guide the museum for many years. Artifact donations began in 1985, well before there was a building to house a collection. Artifacts were stored in several rented spaces in Elk Horn and even at the homes of a number of volunteers.

In 1990, we acquired Bedstemor's House and for the first time had a physical place for visitors to begin to interact with the museum and its collection. It was interpreted as a Danish grandmother's home and furnished to the turn of the 20th century, the period in which it was built.

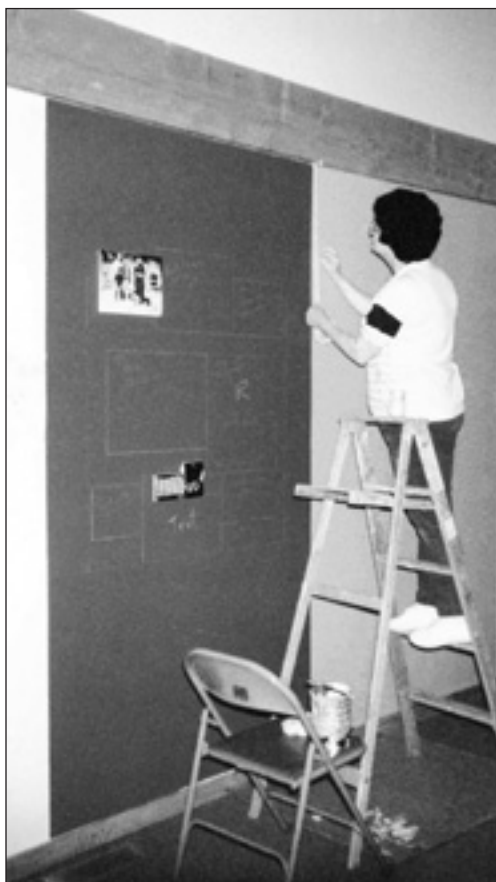


*Early artifact storage was in a rented space in Elk Horn, 1987.*

When the main museum building was opened in 1994, the core exhibition *Across Oceans, Across Time* was installed on the main floor. It consisted of 19 panels communicating the decision to leave Denmark for the United States, how and where immigrants established communities, and the development of churches, schools, and fraternal organizations. The exhibit featured dozens of artifacts from the museum's growing collection including clothing, tools, photographs, and trunks.

The lower level remained exposed concrete and was used only as a cataloging and staging area for donations until the late 1990s. Between 1998 and 2000, the lower level was finished and became two large collections storage areas. One of those was Visual Storage, which is still a focal point in the museum today. This large room houses most of the collection and is glass on three sides, allowing visitors a broader view of the collection than can be on exhibition. Staff and volunteers worked innumerable hours relocating collections to





*Early stages of installing the original core exhibition on the main floor, 1994.*

the museum, unpacking and inventorying, and assigning homes on the new shelving. Since that time, artifacts have been stored in a safe, organized, and climate-controlled environment.

The formation of the Collections Review Committee in 2005 was a turning point for the collection.



*Welcome panel of the original core exhibition, 1994.*

This committee is responsible for evaluating all donation offers and making careful decisions about what pieces are added to the collection. The committee continues to be guided by answers to questions like: Does the artifact fall within the museum's mission? Does this piece have strong documentation? Is it a duplicate of something already in the collection? Does its condition or physical size impact our decision? In order to cultivate a strong collection, the museum has become very selective about what is acquired.

In the fall of 2006, a complete inventory of the artifact collection began. Through this project, every single artifact in our estimated 35,000-piece collection is described,

measured, and photographed. Their locations and physical conditions are also recorded, as well as any known history about each piece. All of this information is added to our database, which helps us more easily track the collection and makes it accessible for exhibition or research. As of 2008, those records are also available to our members at the \$100+ level thanks to our website feature called "View Our Collection." Inventory is a time-consuming project, but it is estimated to be completed in the summer of 2014. Few museums have fully inventoried, cataloged, and digitized collections – we will soon be among those that do!

Between 2008 and 2010, the core exhibition *Across Oceans, Across Time* saw major changes. The original 1994 version was dismantled from the main floor, redesigned, and installed in the lower level gallery. It is supplemented by different artifacts than previously displayed and is complimented by the presence of Visual Storage, which contains thousands of examples of the families, communities, and groups being described in the exhibition. This exhibit also received a large expansion to bring the story of Danish America into the 21st century.

*– Continued on page 16*



*Volunteers cataloging artifacts inside what is now Visual Storage, 1998-99.*

# Collections

continued from page 15

As our collection and our exhibitions program have grown, the need for additional space has become vital. In the fall of 2012, the board of directors approved architectural plans for a curatorial center addition. This project will expand current facilities by 8,000 square feet, including necessary collections storage to alleviate overcrowding in current spaces and to provide adequate room for future growth. This addition would also include a large space for exhibit preparation and crate storage as well as a loading dock. With fundraising efforts underway, the current plans are to occupy the new space in 2014.

This spring has brought fresh attention to Bedstemor's House, a building that had remained largely unchanged since 1990. All contents have now been inventoried, cataloged, and digitized – there are almost 1,200 pieces in that building alone! Some rooms and furnishings have also been shifted to make the house more inviting and accessible. Drainage issues were addressed when the new decking for the front porch was installed, and brand new custom-made storm windows were hung in mid-June.

*Danish Modern: Design for Living* opened in April of 2013 and received widespread coverage including KMTV's *Morning Blend* program (based in Omaha), local radio spots, and area newspapers, the *Des Moines Register* and the *Omaha World Herald*. This exhibition, developed by the museum, will travel to at least two additional venues within the United States and was scheduled to coincide with the museum's 30th anniversary. It is our largest show to date, filling two galleries. *Danish Modern* will be on view in Elk Horn until January 2014.

Things have changed since 1983! Exhibitions have expanded and begun traveling, reaching larger and diverse audiences. We attract members and visitors alike through many programs in Elk Horn and



*Visual Storage and nearby Wall of Trunks today; collections are organized by type and size inside this area.*



*Current framed collections storage.*

beyond. The collection continues to grow and its scope is impressive. Policies and procedures are in place to help us continue to meet the professional standards of the larger museum field. These achievements have been possible through the dedication of board members, staff, volunteers, donors, and members. Just imagine what the next 30 years will bring!



# Thank You Businesses and Organizations

February 16, 2013 – June 14, 2013

**These businesses and organizations have received 'complimentary' memberships or contributed annual memberships of \$100 or more. We recognize their generosity and support in each newsletter during their membership.**

A & A Framing (Annette Andersen), Kimballton, IA  
Andersen Windows (Sarah Andersen), Bayport, MN  
Answers (Frank R. Tighe), Atlantic, IA  
Atlantic Friends of The Danish Immigrant Museum, Atlantic, IA  
Boose Building Construction (Mary & Connie Boose), Atlantic, IA  
Carroll Control Systems, Inc. (Todd Wanninger), Carroll, IA  
Cedar Valley Danes, Cedar Falls area, IA  
Country Landscapes, Inc. (Rhett Faaborg), Ames, IA  
Danebod Lutheran Church, Tyler, MN  
Dania Ladies Society, Chicago, IL  
Danish American Club in Orange County, Huntington Beach, CA  
Danish American Club of Milwaukee, West Bend, WI  
Danish American Heritage Society, Decorah, IA  
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 #56, Lenexa, KS  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #84, Lincoln, NE  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #144, Dike, IA  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #227, Detroit, MI  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #268, Junction City, OR  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #283, Dagmar, MT  
Danish Brotherhood Centennial Lodge #348, Eugene, OR  
Danish Ladies Relief Society of San Francisco, CA  
Danish Mutual Insurance Association, Elk Horn, IA  
Danish Sisterhood Ellen Lodge #21, Denver, CO  
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #176, Dike, IA  
Danish Sisterhood Heartland District, Johnston, IA  
Danish Sisterhood Midwest District, Chicago, IL  
Den Danske Pioneer, Hoffman Estates, IL  
Elk Horn-Kimballton Optimist Club, Elk Horn, IA  
Faith, Family, Freedom Foundation (Kenneth & Marlene Larsen), Calistoga, CA  
Fajen Construction (Larry Fajen), Elk Horn, IA

German American Heritage Center, Davenport, IA  
Hall Hudson, P.C., Attorneys at Law, Harlan, IA  
Harlan Newspapers (Steve Mores & Alan Mores), Harlan, IA  
Heartland District of the DBIA, Des Moines, IA  
Henningsen Construction, Inc., Atlantic, IA  
House of Denmark, San Diego, CA  
King of Kings Fishing Guide Service & Lodge (Richard & Bonnie Andersen), Anchor Point, AK  
Kirsten's Danish Bakery (Poul & Kirsten Jepsen), Burr Ridge, IL  
Knudsen Old Timers, Glendale, CA  
Leman USA, Sturtevant, WI  
Los Angeles Naver Club, Monrovia, CA  
Main Street Café (Sune & Barbara Frederiksen), Berea, KY  
Marge's Hair Hut (Kent & Marge Ingerslev), Elk Horn, IA  
Marne & Elk Horn Telephone Co., Elk Horn, IA  
Nelsen and Nelsen, Attorneys at Law, Cozad, NE  
O & H Danish Bakery (Eric Olesen), Racine, WI  
Olsen, Muhlbauer & Co., L.L.P., Carroll, IA  
Outlook Study Club, Elk Horn area, IA  
Pacific NW District Lodges D.B.I.A., Eugene, OR  
Proongily (Cynthia McKeen), St. Paul, MN  
Rebild National Park Society, Southern California Chapter, Glendale, CA  
Red River Danes, Fargo, ND  
Ringsted Danish American Fellowship, Ringsted, IA  
scan|design foundation BY INGER & JENS BRUUN, Seattle, WA  
Shelby County State Bank, Harlan, IA  
Sorrel Urban Bistro (Soren Pedersen), Houston, TX  
Story Construction Co., Ames, IA  
Symra Literary Society, Decorah, IA  
The Danish American Archive & Library, Blair, NE  
The Danish Home, Chicago, IL  
The Iron Shop (John Asberry), Exira, IA  
The Rasmussen Group, Inc., Des Moines, IA  
Yah-Whooo Organic Garden (Kurt Rasmussen), Vacaville, CA

## In Honor February 16, 2013 – June 14, 2013

**Through various funds, gifts have been received in honor of people or special events:**

Irene Lilli Andrews  
Ron and Mary Bro's 80th birthdays  
Jesper Ø. Jacobsen's internship  
John Mark Nielsen's knighthood  
Wayne and Peggy Wegwart

## *A reminder about mailing addresses!*

Mail to all departments of the Museum other than the Family History & Genealogy Center should be sent to the Museum's street address, 2212 Washington St., Elk Horn IA 51531.

Mail to the FHGC should be directed to a separate address: PO Box 249, Elk Horn IA 51531.



# Stamtræ –

## *From Jakobsen to Haxhøg - Danish Name Changes in a Historical Perspective*

by Jesper Ø. Jacobsen, FHGC intern

The regulation of names - both first names and surnames - is far from being a new invention. Denmark is one of the countries that has produced the most legislation regarding names in history. Before 1904 Danes had only one legal option for changing their name but few took advantage of the possibility as it was a very expensive and complicated procedure. The Danish government had a restrictive name policy that began in the 1770's and was maintained into the 1900's. This policy was aimed at getting people who were related to each other to use the same surname and keep it from one generation to another. This turned out to have an unforeseen and undesirable effect, leading to the proliferation of surnames ending in "-sen." To combat this unwanted effect, in 1904 the Danish government made it easier to change one's name. The first Name Act that replaced the 1904 Act came into effect in 1961 and expanded the possibility of acquiring a new surname. In the following years this possibility was broadened even more. In the latest Name Act from 2006, revised in 2012, many previously prohibited names became legal. However, the undesirable effect that acted as the starting gun for creating the Name Act of 1904 is still far from resolved.

### 1526 - 1899

The first Danish name legislation was created in 1526 when King Frederik I ordered the Danish nobility to use fixed family names derived from their coats-of-arms. However, this regulation was only applicable to a very limited part of Danish society.

Some ordinary citizens, but mainly those in the more educated middle class, often adopted Latinized versions of their ordinary surnames or aliases, such as *Holgersen* to *Olivarius* and *Bertelsen* to *Bartholinus*. Or they might use their father's (Latinized) occupation as an inspiration for creating a surname, such as *Smed* to *Fabricius* or *Foged* to *Prætorius*. Others might Latinize a location name: *Broby* became *Pontoppidanus* and *Skagen*, *Scavenius*. Not many of these names exist nowadays as later on people started Germanizing their names instead, changing *Bredsten* to *Breitenstein*, *Kromand* to *Krüger*, *Skrædder* to

*Schröder*, *Fisker* to *Fischer*, *Møller* to *Müller*, *Smed* to *Schmidt*, and so on. In the same period "patronymics," where a person's surname was formed by a relative's (most often the father's) first name with a suffix that showed the relationship and whether the person was a male or a female, were widely used among the peasantry. Children of *Anders Hansen* would thus be known as *Hans Andersen* or *Hansine Andersdatter*. Even though the surnames among the peasants were very similar they did not have a hard time identifying each other due to the common use of aliases often derived from names of animals, seasons, places or one's appearance. If a peasant's hair was curly he might have used "*Krøl*" ("curly" in English) as an alias. If a peasant originally came from Jutland but lived on Lolland, his alias might have been "*Jyde*," and so on.

The first Name Act was enacted in 1828 under King Frederik IV. The act, applicable to the population in general, required families to use a fixed family name derived from either a patronymic or an alias that was commonly used within the family. The idea behind the act was to stabilize the use of surnames, thus making it easier to distinguish between people and their relationships in the community. The 1828 Act was thereby intended to end the use of patronymics and constantly changing surnames. However, the residents in rural areas had a difficult time adjusting from their age-old traditions and consequently often baptized their children with two sets of surnames in order to accommodate both tradition



and the new law. The father was to determine which surname the future family had to use. In addition, the 1828 Act also charged the parish pastor with ensuring that no children were given inappropriate names. This last addition to the act was reportedly added because of a father who allegedly had a passion for Danish aquavit and wanted to name his daughter Snapsiana.

By the mid-19th century Denmark was on a conflict course with the German states and preparing for a possible confrontation. When authorities drafted men to serve in the army they discovered from the baptismal certificates presented by the drafted young men that many did not have a fixed family name or that their surnames were derived from their fathers' given names. This caused great confusion and trouble for the authorities and led the Ministry of Church and Education to issue a circular reminding pastors that children were always to be baptized with their father's surname. This surname was to be used by all the children in a family and was to be maintained in following generations.

However, the 1828 Act, made while Denmark was still an absolute monarchy, and the 1857 circular proved to have some unintended effects. While the Danish government did in fact reach its objective of having all Danish families use a fixed surname, suddenly the vast majority of the Danish population had a surname ending in "-sen." In the same period large numbers of people were moving away from the rural parishes and into the cities. Copenhagen in particular saw a great increase in population. Most migrants did not use their aliases after moving to the cities and this resulted in large numbers of residents with similar names living closely together, which was very unfortunate in terms of forging new relationships and for identification.

Before the 1904 Name Act people who applied for a name change had to go through a complicated and expensive procedure. An application had to be sent to the King (in a legal context "King" is often used as another term for a government department; such as the Department of Justice). Required documents, such as birth certificates, etc. from the county in which the applicant resided had to be sent along with the application. Once the county magistrate stamped the application it was sent to the Danish Chancellery (before 1848) or the Department of Justice (after 1848), where it was either accepted or rejected. Once a decision had been made the application was then sent back to the county magistrate, who would eventually give it to the applicant. The application had to be written on stamped paper for which a fee had to be paid. There had to be an appropriate explanation of why the person wanted to change his/her surname. One reason might be the frequency of the previous surname. If the requested surname was found to be unique to an unrelated family the application would be rejected. Because the name change could include the children of the applicant, any adult children had to either agree or disagree with the application.

The fees associated with the application were high and only a few people took advantage of the opportunity. People only did so if it was very important for them to obtain a new name; such as in connection with adoptions, where the new parents wanted the adopted child to have their surname or in situations where the mother of an illegitimate child married and wanted the child to have the same surname as her husband. If the mother's husband was not the father of the child the application for a name change would have required consent from the stepfather.

## 1899 - 2013

Following a review of Danish naming traditions in 1899 a reconsideration of the law was taken by the Danish government. After several years' debate the Name Act of 1904 was formally signed by King Christian IX, to take effect after a list of protected names was compiled. When a surname was determined to be protected it was not possible for anyone to use it without the consent of the 'owners' of the surname. Originally 7,391 surnames were protected, including those of national heroes. By 1987 almost 70,000 surnames were protected. Apart from making it easier to change one's surname, the Name Act of 1904 also made it possible for divorced women to take back their maiden names.

The idea behind the 1904 act was to facilitate people to change their surnames for a period of 10 years. A new application procedure was created, so that it was possible to apply either the original way or through a town judge or local chief of police.

Even with less bureaucracy only a few people took advantage of the new law. In the decade after 1906 only 6,000 surnames were changed and the use of "-sen" surnames remained a problem. A government campaign promoting the possibility of changing one's surname led to a doubling of applications, but despite this effort people did not change their surname in large numbers, partly because it remained a costly business. From 1906 to 1920 only 10,000 surnames had been changed and the 1904 Act was then extended for another 10 years. In 1940 the Danish Government decided to extend the act indefinitely. This remained the situation until 1961, when the Name Act, as we in Denmark know it today, was passed.

With the Name Act of 1961 the process of applying for a name change was altered for good. Now the *Statsamt* was responsible for considering applications. In 1981 a revised act was passed that increased the choices of surnames and made it possible to select a surname that one's ancestor had used.

Applications for "protection" of surnames from 1904-1961 can be found in the various Danish provincial archives or the State Archive in Copenhagen and contain a lot of genealogical information. Applications for name

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# Name changes

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changes before 1904 are located in the State Archive in Copenhagen. Applications between 1904 and 1961 are located in the provincial archive for the area where the applicant came from. Because these records contain private information about the applicant, the accessibility requirement is 75 years.

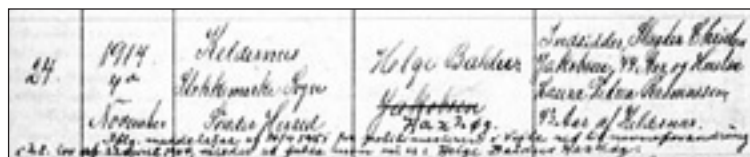
The latest Name Act was passed in 2006 and has been revised a couple of times since. The Act made it less expensive and easier to change one's name. It also further extended the choices of first names and surnames from which to choose. Many previously prohibited names became legal. It is now possible, for example, for unmarried couples to take the surname of either partner as well choosing a middle name as a surname whether or not this name is "protected." Another major change was the rules dealing with protected names. Now a lot of previously protected names are available to choose from. It is not possible to choose a surname which is used by fewer than 2,000 people, but those used by more than 2,000 people are open for use. Also the application process has been simplified. To change one's name one now just contacts one's parish pastor and gives him/her the application. There is still a fee associated with the name change, but it is far less expensive than it used to be.

However, no rule goes without exceptions. The surname applied for has to have some kind of family or partner association, such as having previously been the surname of the applicant, or having been used by one's ancestors as far back as the great-great-grandparents. It is also legal to choose the surname of one's parent's new partner if he/she gives permission and the surnames of current or previous foster parents can also be chosen.

It is also possible for married and unmarried couples to change their surname to that used by one of the partners. Any completely new surname must not have any similarity with "protected" surnames, business names, artists' names, foreign historical persons, first names or be inappropriate. One of the biggest changes that came with the Name Act of 2006 is the reintroduction of patronymic names and the use of double surnames. Nearly the same set of requirements goes for the changing of middle names. In terms of changing a first name it must be classified as a first name and must not be inappropriate.

## Example

A fairly good example of the liberalization that happened after the passing of the Name Act of 1904 is that of a Danish man whose baptismal name was *Helge Balder Jakobsen*. In 1951 he formally changed his surname to Haxhøg. The inspiration for that name was his life. At the time of his name change he worked on farms, where he often used to chop the tops off sugar beets. "Chop" is "hakke" in Danish, of which "Hax" is a derivation. Working on a farm is outdoor work and that was his inspiration for "Høg." "Høg" was a mixture of the words for "hay" and "hawk" which in Danish are "hø" and "høg."



*Helge Balder Jakobsen's 1914 baptismal record in Stokkemærke parish, Maribo County, shows his later name change to Helge Balder Haxhøg.*

## Curious about Danish names? The following websites may be helpful:

*What names are accepted and not?*

<http://www.familiestyrelsen.dk/samliv/navne/soeginavnelister/godkendtefornavne/>

*What surnames are unprotected?*

<http://www.familiestyrelsen.dk/samliv/navne/soeginavnelister/frieefternavne/>

*How many people in Denmark have the same name as you?*

<http://www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/emner/navne/HvorMange.aspx>

*When did your first name have its heyday in Denmark? Statistics from 1985-2013.*

<http://www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/emner/navne/Baro.aspx>

*What are the most popular Danish names for newborn children?*

<http://www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/emner/navne/navne-til-nyfoedte.aspx>

*What does your first name mean? Where is it most common? Are there variants in other languages?*

<http://www.behindthename.com/>





# Stamtræ – It's All in "a Name"

by Wanda Sornson, Genealogy Library Assistant

This past January the Family History and Genealogy Center did a brief genealogy search for the family of Jørgen Hansen and details of their emigration to, and later fate in, the United States. However, with no geographical information to go on, attempts to locate them with any certainty in the United States were unsuccessful. A few weeks later another request for the same family was received from a former Danish intern who had worked at the Danish Emigration Archives (DEA) in Aalborg. While interning for The Danish Immigrant Museum she had also spent some time at the Sheffield Historical Society in Illinois. She had been contacted by DEA for help in searching for this family, and she in turn contacted the FHGC. It was thought by this time that the family had possibly settled in Sheffield, Bureau County, Illinois. We were asked to resume the search for Jorgen Hansen and his family, focusing on that area.

Maribo, Fuglse, Fuglse, Fuglse village, 1 Gaard [farm], 14, 1850 census

Name:	Age:	Marital status:	Occupation in household:	Occupation:	Birth place:
Jørgen Hansen	31	Gift (married)		Svigers: Soldat, hjemme, dagleier [Rasmus Mortensen og Else Madsdatter] (son-in-law: soldier on leave; day-laborer)	Herritslev parish, Maribo Co.
Ane Kirstine Rasmusdatter	33	Gift (married)		hans Kone [Jørgen Hansen] (his wife)	her i S. (in this parish)
Hans Peter Jørgensen	4	Ugift (single)		deres Barn [Jørgen Hansen og Ane Kirstine Rasmusdatter] (their child)	Do [her i S.] (in this parish)
Mads Christian Jørgensen	2	Ugift (single)		deres Barn [Jørgen Hansen og Ane Kirstine Rasmusdatter] (their child)	Do [her i S.] (in this parish)

Maribo, Fuglse, Fuglse, Krønge Skoledistrikt [school district], Also Village, En Parcel, 107, 1860 census

Name:	Age:	Marital status:	Occupation in household:	Occupation:	Birth place:
Jørgen Hansen	40	Gift (married)	Hufader, Parcellens ejer (head of household, owner of parcel)		Herritslev Sogn, Maribo Amt
Ane Kirstine Rasmusdatter	43	Gift (married)	Hans Kone (his wife)		Fuglse Sogn, Maribo Amt
Hansine Sophie Jørgensen	10	Ugift (single)	Deres Barn (their child)		Fuglse Sogn, Maribo Amt
Maren Johanne Jørgensen	7	Ugift (single)	Deres Barn (their child)		Fuglse Sogn, Maribo Amt
Rasmine Cecilie Jørgensen	5	Ugift (single)	Deres Barn (their child)		Fuglse Sogn, Maribo Amt
Bolette Jørgensen	1	Ugift (single)	Deres Barn (their child)		Fuglse Sogn, Maribo Amt
Dorthe Jørgensen	18	Ugift (single)	Tjenestepige (maid-servant)		Vester Ulslev Sogn, Maribo Amt

Transcriptions of the 1850 and 1860 censuses of Fuglse parish show the six children of Jørgen Hansen, all with the patronymic 'Jørgensen.' Their mother, Ane Kirstine, was also referred to by her patronymic, Rasmusdatter.

The 1850 Danish census of Fuglse parish, in Maribo County, records Jørgen Hansen as a 33-year-old day-laborer residing with his parents-in-law along with his wife, Ane Kirstine Rasmusdatter (33) and children, Hans Peter Jørgensen (4) and Mads Christian Jørgensen (2). Note that the children's names followed the early patronymic system: the children of Jørgen were given the surname of "Jørgensen" or "Jørgensdatter." In the 1860 Danish census for the same location the two sons were no longer living in their parents' household, which had been augmented by the addition of Hansine Sophie Jørgensen (age 10), Maren Johanne Jørgensen (7), Rasmine Cecilie Jørgensen (5), and Bolette Jørgensen (1), increasing the original family of two parents and two children to one with six children. A search for the two sons resulted in finding them, now ages 14 and 12, residing in 1860 with a Martin Rasmussen, who was identified as their maternal uncle. This confirmed the information on the family given in the original research request.

The family's emigration registration from Denmark, dated May 13, 1869, is recorded in the Danish Data Archives database at <http://ddd.dda.dk>. On it the surnames of both parents and five children, Mads Christian, Hansine Sophie, Maren Hanne, Rasmine and Bolette, were all listed as *Hansen*. The eldest son, Hans Peter Jørgensen, did not emigrate with the family.

*New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957* found at [Ancestrylibrary.com](http://Ancestrylibrary.com) shows the arrival of the Hansen family in New York on June 2, 1869, following a typical cross-Atlantic passage time of about two weeks. The names on the passenger list match those on the Danish emigration list, again all with the Hansen surname. One

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## *All in a name* continued from page 21

discrepancy noted was that their place of origin was listed as “Holland, Netherlands,” an obvious misinterpretation of the word “Lolland,” since their place of departure was actually Copenhagen, Denmark. No information other than New York was given as the destination for the family.

Because the family immigrated in 1869, they should have been enumerated in the 1870 US federal census. A census search of Ancestrylibrary.com produced no hits for a likely “Jorgen Hansen.” Although men with variant spellings of the name born in Denmark showed up in a number of states, none the right age were living in Illinois and none had a wife named Ane/ Anne/Anna. A search was then made for Jorgen Hansen in the 1880 federal census, again with no positive results. Since we had been given the possible location of Sheffield, Illinois, this information was added to the search – again without results. A similar search was made using HeritageQuestOnline in 1880 and 1900 using as a search term only the surname “Hansen” and limited to persons born in Denmark – again, nothing matched the facts on hand.

For some not fully understandable reason, a search in these databases using a wife’s name will often produce results when the husband’s name does not. Therefore, searches using variants of the name of “Ane Kirstine Hansen” were also made – unsuccessfully. Things were becoming very frustrating, but knowing this is the nature of genealogical research one does not take ‘not found’ as a definitive answer. The certain facts we knew were exactly where this family came from in Denmark, their ages, when they immigrated, plus that they purportedly settled in Sheffield, Illinois.

Since the parents conceivably might have died shortly after arriving the search focus now turned to the children. Searching for Mads Christian Jorgensen in US censuses from 1870 through 1930 produced only one person who fit with the known facts regarding Mads, but further investigation proved that he was not the son of Jorgen and Ane Kirstine. Nor were searches using the girls’ names with the surnames Hansen and Jorgensen productive. The fact that three of the four daughters had double given names complicated matters. A search of the Illinois statewide marriage index, 1851-1900 yielded no likely matches. Nor did trying [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) using the original names provide any clues to the residency or marriages of the girls. Bolette Jorgensen/Hansen, the youngest of the children, had the most unusual name. After much iteration a search using the name Bolette “Hansen” in FamilySearch.org resulted in a citation for the marriage of a woman with this name to a Hans Jorgen Rasmussen on 10 February 1880 in Sheffield, Bureau

County, Illinois, extracted from records of the Danish Evangelical Church there. This did, however, anchor this member of the family in the Sheffield location, something which was corroborated by researchers with the Bureau (IL) County Genealogical Society. However, no later records could be found for this couple using the name of Rasmussen.

At this point, it was time to re-evaluate our strategies. The children in Denmark were given the patronymic surname of “Jørgensen” because their father’s given name was Jørgen. They immigrated with their parents, and their surname on those emigration and immigration documents was listed as “Hansen.” Now – did the children use Jorgensen or Hansen in the United States? The search was further confounded when no likely “Jorgen Hansen” was found in the 1870, 1880 or 1900 censuses. Therefore, we focused our attention on the name “Jorgensen” and the possible variations that name might take in the United States. “Johansen” is one name that was often substituted for Jorgensen; another one was “Johnson.” In an initial census search using these possible alternative surnames with the children’s given names resulted in no results, nor did using just the given names of the children, plus “Illinois.”

Since using the possible surname variants resulted in no additional information, it therefore was time to focus on the given names of the children. Danish given names often become abbreviated or changed in the United States, and often individuals were called by their second given names rather than their first names. Using “Sine” instead of “Hansine” resulted in nothing. Looking at the name “Rasmine,” it was decided to try “Mine” or “Minnie,” and voila! -- in the 1880 census a young woman by the name of “Minnie Johnson” appeared living in Sheffield, Illinois, whose age indicated that she was born around 1856 in Denmark. “Minnie” being a variant of “Rasmine,” the often-used surname change from Jorgensen to Johnson, the closeness of her birth year, and her residence in Sheffield were all evidence convincing enough to think that we had finally found one of the children of Jorgen Hansen. If so, were the others hiding under “Johnson” as well in the censuses?

Using the surname “Johnson,” a search was made for Mads Christian, the only immigrant son, but no results were found. Dropping the name of Mads, and using only *Christian* Johnson, a person was found in Lancaster County, Nebraska, in 1880 with a four-year-old son born in Illinois. This man was born in Denmark in 1848, which fit with the birth date of Mads Christian Jorgensen. Trying to find a marriage for Christian Johnson in AncestryLibrary.com provided no information. However,



a search of the Illinois Statewide Marriage index listed the marriage of a Christian Johnson and Carrie Hanson in Bureau County on the 17 December 1873. The son of Christian, Willie, was enumerated twice in the 1880 Lancaster County census. On one document, he was living with his father, Christian Johnson, in a Rasmusson household; on the other he was alone, enumerated as the ward of an "Ole Nielson." Searching Lancaster County records for this name resulted in finding the marriage of Christian's sister, Hansine Sophie, as "Hansena Sophia Johnson," born in Denmark in 1850, to Ole Nielson on 7th December, 1872. We now had a link between Christian and Hansine in *Nebraska*, not Illinois, although the birthplace of Christian's son indicated that he had been there earlier.

Trying the name of Maren Johanne Johnson resulted in no information. In the 1880 census for Bureau County, Illinois, however, there was a Danish-born "Hannah" Crooks, married to Samuel Crooks, whose birth year fit that of Maren Johanne. The 1900 federal census found the couple living in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where Hannah's birth information was confirmed. Hannah's name and location were in an obituary found for Lydia (Bolette) (Johnson) in Sheffield, Illinois.

A definite connection had now been established with Sheffield in Bureau County, Illinois. The Bureau County Genealogical Society provided additional details which affirmed that we had found the correct family members. Jorgen Hansen had become "George Hanson" in the United States, and was found enumerated as such in the 1880 federal census for Sheffield with his wife, "Annie Hanson." An article from the Sheffield newspaper documented the 55-year wedding anniversary of Mr. & Mrs. J. G. Johnson. This article stated that the wife's name was "Lydia," and that she had come from Lolland, Denmark, with her family when she was ten years old. This information fit with the facts we had about Bolette. In one record she was listed as "Lydie," so Bolette (pronounced Bo-let-teh) had become Lydie, and then finally, Lydia. The information provided by the Bureau County Genealogical Society included a copy of the marriage license from the State of Illinois. This document listed the husband's name as "John G. Johnson" rather than the "Hans Jorgen Rasmussen" found in the church record and the wife as "Bolette Johnson." Danish-American churches in the late 19th century were served

by Danish-educated pastors who used the original Danish names in their records, and it was this practice that allowed us to track Bolette. The transition of "Hans Jorgen Rasmussen" into "John G. Johnson" was also typical of Danish immigrant name changes. The couple remained in Sheffield, which was confirmed by the 1880 and later federal censuses. With the discovery that the Jørgensen/Hansen children had used "Johnson" as their surname in the United States, the tracing of the family suddenly became much easier.

### Research and Name Changes

This is a case in point of what can happen when immigrants arrived in the United States. The naming patterns of the home country often are not used in the immigrants' new home. There are many reasons for this. The pronunciation of names by the Danish immigrant may often be misinterpreted or misspelled by census takers or other record keepers. Names may be transcribed incorrectly when converting original documents to transcribed copies. Names may be abbreviated, spelled phonetically, or middle names used rather than a person's first given name. Names may even be changed from a foreign-sounding name to a common English one that is somewhat comparable to the original name. Instances have been found where immigrants chose to use another surname because too many people had the same name in a certain area. Or perhaps they chose to use the wife's surname for a certain reason. Many times names that ended in "-sen" in Denmark became "-son" in the United States. All of these possibilities can cause frustration when trying to research immigrants.

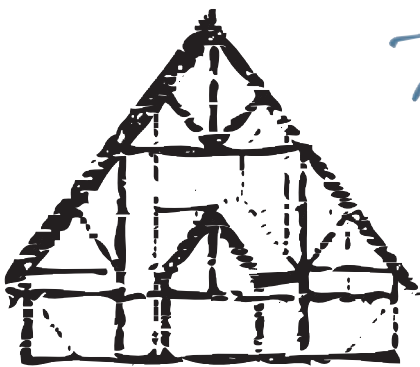
When doing genealogical research, there is not always a specific, direct path to be followed. One must be aware that not only do name changes exist, but also of the possible changes that one name can take. Multiple research resources, i.e., historical and genealogical organizations, county and state records, archival materials, and online sources must all be investigated. By using multiple resources, the information being gathered will at some point suddenly begin to align with the known facts, and then the tracking process becomes easier. The Jorgen Hansen family is a great example of name changes that can occur and the problems they create when doing research. At the same time, a research project such as this teaches the researcher skills that can be applied to future research.

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