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**ON THE COVER**

Artwork of Victor Borge from a clipping of the section, “TV and Radio Magazine; Programs - People - Week of June 10-16,” from The New York Herald Tribune, 2007.050.065, Gift of the Royal Danish Embassy

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**America Letter**

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WHY “AMERICA LETTER?”
Letters that were written by immigrants to family and friends back in Denmark
are called “America letters” by historians. These letters are often given credit for
influencing people to come to America because they were full of details of how good
life was here. We call our magazine America Letter because we also want to tell the
good news about the museum and encourage people to join us!
Among all of the challenges of the past year and all of the bad news filling our televisions and social media, there were still many moments of joy, achievement, and celebration. There were still weddings and births, completed projects, and fresh starts. But good news rarely makes headlines, so these celebrations and personal achievements usually remain private.

For the museum, our most public moments have been navigating restrictions, determining how and when to safely welcome visitors, and rescheduling events and programs for online formats. None of these are very celebratory, but at least we’ve been able to stay active at fulfilling our mission.

And so, there was not a lot of fanfare in October when the board of directors approved a new Strategic Plan. But let me say that again: We have a NEW STRATEGIC PLAN! In spite of the past year’s road bumps, the board maintained its commitment to crafting and approving the document which will guide our priorities for the next three years, 2021 to 2023.

Our process was a long time coming. A committee of board and staff members began to meet regularly in 2018 to shape a vision for the coming years. We realized quickly that the museum faced many significant questions: Who will be the museum’s audience in the future? How will the museum best meet their needs and interests? And what do we need to start doing now in order to be ready to engage and inspire those future audiences?

These are big questions, not easily answered. But if we are to ensure that the Museum of Danish America remains relevant and resilient into the future, the answers to these questions help point the way.

The new Strategic Plan, therefore, is built around a period of inquiry. We will be exploring new ideas, testing out new programs, and collecting data as we go. We will be asking questions of members, non-members, neighbors, visitors, and other stakeholders. We will be talking with and learning from our peer museums and sharing our ideas and successes with them, in turn.

There will be opportunities for you to help the museum in this effort. We will be sending out surveys in the coming year, and your responses will be important for us to paint a full picture of our members’ preferences, passions, and suggestions. If you follow the museum on social media, your likes and comments affirm when we are going in the right direction or when we might need to alter course. If ever you want to pick up the phone or write us a note, we are always glad to hear from our members directly.

We are grateful for the support of our members, which allows the museum to meet the challenges of today while still looking toward the future. We aim to continue earning your support while we attract new individuals and new generations to our museum family.

By Tova Brandt
The 2021-2023 Strategic Plan recognizes that the Museum is at a turning point in its history. The Committee, therefore, decided to develop a three-year plan instead of the usual five-year plan because this plan is designed less to implement a new vision than to seek answers to questions about our audience and mission going forward. We believe that at the end of the three-year period we will have a clearer idea of what actions the Museum needs to take to create a sustainable future, one that is responsive to a changing mission and audience.

In summary, the Plan seeks to test various hypotheses about future audiences and programming, and to identify metrics to analyze the outcomes of these tests.

**KEY INQUIRIES IN THE PLAN**

**Audience:** Identify current and future audiences and communities for the Museum’s offerings, and the mission-driven programs that would appeal to them. Among the Museum’s audiences (local, regional, national), which offer the best opportunities for engagement, visitation, and membership? What programs, within the mission, values, and vision of the Museum, would appeal to identified audiences?

**Membership:** Update membership benefit structure. How does the Museum of Danish America attract and retain members?

**Collections:** Evaluate strengths of the Museum Collections for preservation, exhibit, and events usage. Does our current collection and collection strategy support exhibits and events that appeal to a changing audience?

**Genealogy:** Identify the specific role the Genealogy Center should play in the mission of the Museum. How does the Genealogy Center advance the mission and sustainability of the Museum as a whole?

**Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park (JJPLP):** Make the JJPLP a more active focus of Museum programming and events. How can the JJPLP support the audience goals of the Museum of Danish America?

**Finances:** Along with enhancing current activities to grow the endowment and planned giving, develop new ways of generating and diversifying income. How can the Museum of Danish America achieve long-term financial stability?

**Human Resources:** As decisions are made about audience focus, exhibits, events, and revenue potential of various programs, identity the human resources necessary to implement these new initiatives. Does the Museum of Danish America have the people in place to develop and manage new initiatives?
board of directors
meeting
FEBRUARY 11-13, 2021
VIDEO CONFERENCE

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Nils Jensen, Portland, OR

We’re adapting to the Zoom platform, but we would much rather meet in person! Committee meetings, social hours, and the regular board meeting were all held virtually. We accomplished museum business and had a little fun, too.

Our June meeting will also be virtual, but we aim to hold our October regular board meeting and annual meeting in person, in Elk Horn.

WHAT ARE THE COMMITTEES, AND WHAT DO THEY DO?
As an example, the Nominating Committee determines the composition of the board by identifying, recruiting, and proposing board members; it is always looking for candidates. This committee leads the board in identifying the type of board member the organization needs. The committee develops written descriptions of the board members’ responsibilities, screens and interviews candidates, and recommends candidates to the full board for approval at each June meeting.

New board member selection focuses on candidates who will be committed to attend meetings, actively participate in committees, contribute financially as able, and actively promote the Museum of Danish America. The committee looks at diversity of geographic location, gender, age, variety of work and life experience, organizational and institutional affiliations, special interests and skills - all which lead to the success of our museum.

Members of the Nominating Committee are: Anders Sand, (Chair), Dennis Grey, Connie Hanson, Marcia Jante, Marnie Jensen, Elly Jorgensen, Lars Matthisen, and Mike Nielsen.

If you have questions about becoming a board member, please feel free to contact Development Manager Deb Christensen Larsen, the staff liaison to the committee.

It’s not all work!
exhibition calendar

current

SNAPSHOTS:
TRAVELING WITH THE POET HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN
Artwork by Danish artist Susanne Thea
Main Floor Gallery
Through June 6, 2021

MIGRANT
Kramme Gallery
Through May 2, 2021

THE VICTOR BORGE LEGACY AWARD:
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF MUSIC
Multimedia Room

traveling

ART NOUVEAU INNOVATION:
DANISH PORCELAIN FROM AN AMERICAN COLLECTOR
Sponsored by The Danish Home of Croton-on-Hudson and the Albert Victor Ravenholt Fund

Brunnier Art Museum,
Iowa State University
Ames, IA
Through May 9

Flint Institute of Arts
Flint, MI
June 12 – Nov. 28, 2021

NEW NORDIC CUISINE

Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum
Decorah, IA
Through Sept. 6, 2021

Hjemkomst Heritage Center
Moorhead, MN
Nov. 15, 2021 - March 7, 2022

coming

WEDDINGS
Kramme Gallery
May 28, 2021 – 2022

BRUSHES & LENSES:
TWO GENERATIONS OF ART
Main Floor Gallery
June 26, 2021 – Nov. 2021

WHO WAS VICTOR BORGE?
Born in Denmark in 1909, Borge was quickly identified as a piano prodigy, and by age nine, received a full scholarship to the Royal Danish Academy of Music. Eventually developing his signature “stand-up” style of performance which merged comedy and music, he toured throughout Europe. However, after the German occupation of Denmark during World War II, he escaped to Finland and then America. Although he did not speak English, he found that humor and good music were universal methods of communication, and he was able to adapt his show to new audiences.

EXHIBITION ON VIEW IN THE MULTIMEDIA ROOM
FROM FEBRUARY 5, 2021
THE AWARD IS SPONSORED BY
R. JAMES & JANET BORGE CROWLE,
THE ERIC & JOAN NORGAARD CHARITABLE TRUST,
AND THE CHARLES W. & NORMA J. WILSON FOUNDATION.

“A smile is the shortest distance between two people.”

This quote is almost inescapable when researching Victor Borge. He was, after all, “The Clown Prince of Classical Music” - known for combining his talent on the piano with his ability to make people laugh. Audiences were kept on the edge of their seats, uncertain of, but eager for, whatever he would do next.
War nor age slowed down Borge. At 90, he was still performing up to 60 shows a year. At the time of his death in 2000, he had been honored at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and received four knighthoods from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. His impact was powerful and far-reaching, and he brought joy to millions of individuals around the world.

THE HISTORY OF THE AWARD
In 2011 an award program was created at the Museum of Danish America “in order to preserve and promote Victor Borge’s legacy as a musician, entertainer, and cultural ambassador.”

The goals were, and remain:

- To preserve and promote Victor Borge’s legacy, especially among younger audiences
- To encourage young piano students to continue their musical studies
- To promote the Museum of Danish America as a cultural center

Initially, only students from the Omaha and Southwest Iowa regions were eligible to compete; in 2016, students from the Des Moines area began to participate in the program as well. Each year, the first and second place winners from each of the regional competitions must write an essay on a pre-selected topic relating to Victor Borge’s life and career. The essays are judged by a panel of three readers, including Janet Borge Crowle, Victor Borge’s daughter who, along with her husband Jim, sponsored the award from its start.

The six students then come to the museum for a recital, where they are asked to play a portion of their repertoire from memory. Prizes are awarded, and the first and second place winners of the essay portion of the contest are named.

The piano used in the recital is a part of the museum’s permanent collection, donated by Victor Borge himself. Purchased in Copenhagen while Borge was still a young musician, this 1929 Hindsberg grand piano was the first piano that he owned. When the students sit down on the bench to perform, they are truly touching history.

Since its inception, 44 awards have been given to 39 different winners. (Some students chose to compete in multiple years.) While the students who win first prize are not permitted to compete again, any other student is welcome to come back a following year, should they wish to have another shot at winning first place.

REFLECTING: WHAT BORGE AND THE LEGACY AWARD TEACH US
Unfortunately, Victor Borge’s name is not as well known today as it used to be even a few decades ago, especially among newer generations of piano students. One winner even admitted that without this award, she “may still [be] oblivious about his lasting legacy.” However, through this program, students from this region can connect to Borge and engage with his work through the lens of their personal experiences.

The essays written by the students are each saved for the Museum of Danish America’s records. Reading the essays provides a sense of the varied ways in which the students have connected with and learned from Borge. In addition, as part of this year’s exhibit, we asked past winners if they would be willing to share a written or recorded piece that reflected on what the award and Victor Borge have meant to them. Several students submitted materials, which are included in the exhibit. Looking through this wealth of material, both old and new, has shown not only how Borge impacted students at the time of the recital, but also how, years later, Borge and the Victor Borge Legacy Award have continued to influence the participants in their personal and professional lives.

For some of the students, connecting with Borge’s legacy has been a deeply personal experience. For Tylar Meister, a winner in the 2016–2017 competition, reflecting on Borge brought back memories of his grandfather, a sentiment echoed in his original essay and a recorded piece for the exhibit. He has kept up with his piano studies in college and sees Borge as foundational to his performances and experience.

By Diya Nagaraj
Different aspects of Victor Borge’s life and performances connected with different winners – for some, it was his story of immigrating to the United States and being able to succeed at the highest levels of the music industry. For others, it was his ability to interpret music in new and unique ways. And for still other students, his ability to turn a piano concert into a performance through the seamless addition of humor had the most impact. These essays are a testament to Victor Borge’s broad appeal, which has allowed his performances to continue to entertain and inspire to this day.

Michelle Sargent, a winner in 2011-2012, now teaches piano and works as an accompanist. For her, she says, “winning the competition gave me confidence that it was possible for me to have a future as a musician.” She was not the only student to mention the confidence boost that came with winning such an award. Borge’s lively, bold performance style has inspired confidence in many performers’ abilities.

In the words of Harry Simmons, one of the first recipients of the Victor Borge Legacy Award, Borge’s greatest contribution was “reinventing performance practices to capture the hearts of a new generation of listeners.” Although Borge is no longer with us, this award is another way he is capturing the hearts of future generations.

The exhibit The Victor Borge Legacy Award: Celebrating 10 Years of Music is on display from February 5 through the end of 2021, and the annual Victor Borge Legacy Award recital will be held this July.

Janet and Jim Crowle, Dawn and Dr. John Mark Nielsen, Marilyn and Lowell Kramme at the inaugural Victor Borge Legacy Award, held Sunday, April 22, 2012.
The winners of the 2015 award, Anna Reelfs, Katie Payne, Jonathan Vusich, and Jonathan Herman

Janet Borge Crowle and Dr. John Mark Nielsen with three of the 2012 Victor Borge Legacy Award winners, Harry Simmons, Justine Petersen, and Michelle Sargent

Two of the winners of the 2014 award (from left to right), Emily Umphreys and Emily Zhang, with Dr. John Mark Nielsen (middle)

At the 2014 awards, Janet Borge Crowle embraces winner Moriah Hellstrom, while Dr. John Mark Nielsen and fellow winner Katie Payne look on

Lowell and Marilyn Kramme (left) and Dr. John Mark Nielsen (right) with two of the winners of the 2012 Victor Borge Legacy Award, Justine Petersen and Mallory Huggins

The winners of the 2015 award, Anna Reelfs, Katie Payne, Jonathan Vusich, and Jonathan Herman

Winners of the 2013 Victor Borge Legacy Award: Cassie Huang, Mallory Huggins, Katie Payne, and Gelilah Yohannes, with Dr. John Mark Nielsen and Tova Brandt

Janet Borge Crowle and Dr. John Mark Nielsen with three of the 2012 Victor Borge Legacy Award winners, Harry Simmons, Justine Petersen, and Michelle Sargent

Two of the winners of the 2014 award (from left to right), Emily Umphreys and Emily Zhang, with Dr. John Mark Nielsen (middle)

Three of the 2018 award recipients, Tylar Meister, Laura Liu, and Alina Hatfield, with Rasmus Thøgersen

The 2016 recipients, Jonathan Boissy, Marissa Mathia, Anna Reelfs, and Larissa Tibbles (left to right) of the Victor Borge Legacy Award with Janet Borge Crowle (center)

Three of the 2017 award recipients, Moriah Heilesen, Kate Doolittle, and Ben Franco with Janet Borge Crowle and Rasmus Thøgersen

event calendar

The following includes both events happening at the Museum of Danish America and events which will be attended by one or more representatives from the museum - subject to changes. Keep up with the goings-on (and other interesting content) by following us on Facebook and Twitter!

**BROWN BAG LUNCH**  
*Square Stories*  
By Lise Kildegaard  
May 20, Noon on Facebook  
*Sponsored by Danish Sisterhood Lodge #15, Milwaukee*

**TIVOLI FEST**  
Danish Villages  
May 28-29

**DANISH AMERICAN HERITAGE SOCIETY VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**  
June 5

**BROWN BAG LUNCH**  
*As Certain as Danes & Taxes*  
with Ulrik Boesen  
June 10, Noon on Facebook

**VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING**  
June 10-12

**SANKT HANS AFTEN**  
Virtual and In-Person  
June 26  
*Sponsored by the American Scandinavian Foundation*

**REBILD FESTIVAL**  
Rebild, Denmark  
July 4

**10TH ANNUAL VICTOR BORGE LEGACY AWARD PIANO RECITAL**  
Bro Dining Room  
July 17

**HOOVER’S HOMETOWN DAYS**  
West Branch, IA  
August 7

**DANISH FESTIVAL**  
Greenville, MI  
August 20-21

**BOARD & ANNUAL MEETINGS**  
Elk Horn, IA  
October 14-16

**JULEFEST**  
November 26-27

**OUR ANNUAL MIDSUMMER BONFIRE**, this year also featuring:  
- Excellent musical acts  
- International and virtual participation

**BE LIKE GREENVILLE**, and host a MoDA pop-up exhibit at a venue near you. Contact Diya Nagaraj for info.

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watch & learn

**MANY PROGRAMS AND EVENTS ARE NOW AVAILABLE ON THE MUSEUM’S FACEBOOK PAGE AND YOUTUBE CHANNEL.**

[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/DANISHMUSEUM] [WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/DANISHMUSEUM]
collection

connection

As we look back at the decade of recitals performed on the Victor Borge piano, it is fitting to share a little about the instrument itself. According to the serial number, it was manufactured in 1926. Borge himself said, “The piano maker Hindsberg created the instrument on which I was able to produce the tone and touch for which I was praised throughout my career.” As the first piano he ever owned, it held special value to him.

When Borge had to leave Denmark during World War II, his piano remained behind, under the care of his brother. After it was safe to return, Borge reunited with his piano and practiced on it daily in his home, Frydenlynd. Later, the piano was moved to St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands, where it continued to see regular use.

In 1989 Hurricane Hugo hit the Virgin Islands. Borge’s estate sustained significant damage, including this piano. Following the storm, Gilsonite Music Industries of New Jersey was hired to restore the case, though the instrument itself remained unplayable. The piano was donated to the museum in 1994, and though silent, acted as a significant visual reminder of the career of this great Danish immigrant performer.

Between December 2008 and March 2009, as the centennial of Borge’s birth approached, and thanks to funding from members Lowell & Marilyn Kramme, the museum contracted with Norman Petersen, a Registered Piano Technician from Mankato, MN, to return the piano to playable condition. Many conversations were held about whether to restore it to completely like-new condition or to simply make the necessary repairs. Ultimately, the museum decided on a blending of the two: retain the history shown in the stains, cracks, and paint loss, while replacing the key components for quality sound and performance. For example, instead of replacing the yellowed and cracked ivory key tops, Petersen repaired and reglued the tops that Borge’s fingers had touched.

When he donated the piano to the museum in 1994, Borge said, “The piano has been reconditioned and comes to you a slightly battle-scarred but vigorous senior citizen. I have long considered this the dearest of my personal possessions, and it is of great comfort to have this part of me in your care.” He would undoubtedly be pleased that this dear possession continues to be used and enjoyed in a way that not only honors Borge’s legacy, but also inspires continuing generations of performers.

01. During restoration, most components were removed from the case and returned piece-by-piece. 02-03. Some of the soundboard was damaged by water from the hurricane. Those areas were re-glued, and cracks were filled with shims. The entire soundboard was then cleaned and re-varnished. The wood layers of the bridges were splitting toward the back, and they, too, were glued. 04. The plate was also cleaned, and the rusted areas were touched-up with gold-colored paint.
05. St. Croix, 1970s: Borge’s canine audience watches as he plays his Hindsberg piano in his home. 2007.047.002, gift of Janet Borge Crowle. 06. All keys were cleaned, as well as the workings inside. Some key tops were repaired and re-glued, but those remained original. 07-08. The pin plank, red felts, tuning pins, and strings were all replaced. The original dampers were put back in place.
genealogy in newspaper archives

One of my favorite resources in genealogical research is newspaper archives. They can be overlooked by those doing family research, because people tend to be more focused on finding the vital records. Sometimes, though, if a vital record cannot be found, it may be possible to find information in a local newspaper.

I regularly use newspaper archives to find obituaries, birth notices, marriage announcements, and other events which can connect individuals and verify family facts. Newspaper archives allow one to obtain bits of information, discover amazing stories, and, occasionally, find a photo that cannot be obtained from official record searches.

**BROTHERS?**

In the example here, taken from a 1925 *Grand Island Daily Independent* newspaper article called "Brothers but Names Differ," you get the story of why two brothers' surnames are different, even though they have the same parentage. This clip also shares that other family members changed their surnames as well.

Any descendants of the article's subjects, Adolf Christiansen or George Drostgaard, who are doing genealogical research would likely be at a disadvantage if they did not know of this name change in the family's past. If the story had not been passed down, the odds are high that the only way an individual would know about the name change is if they had looked in the newspaper archives and found this article. Without this knowledge, a researcher could miss the relationship between the Christiansens and the Drostgaards, resulting in missed family information and possibly leading to false facts on the family as a whole.

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The original name of the brothers was Christiansen. In Copenhagen, however, there were so many names alike that a certain professor prevailed upon himself to "manufacture" some new ones that would not bear similarity. He compiled a large list of them, and, in conjunction with the Danish government, which offered anyone opportunity to change names for a small fee, he sold names to those whose names were common and numerous.

Enthusiastic with the plan, George explains, and bored by the number of mistakes that came with the over-popular name of Christiansen, George changed his name to Drostgaard as did several other members of his family. Adolph, however, stuck to the old family name of Christiansen. Hence it is George Drostgaard and Adolph Christiansen.

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By Amanda Skellenger

Clipped from Newspapers.com
*The Grand Island Daily Independent*
Grand Island, NE
July 1, 1925 • Page 12
A REVEALING LETTER
Sometimes, you can be searching for one thing in the archives but stumble upon something different—and find an amazing person and story. While searching newspaper archives for a Jens Jensen, I came across a Jens K. Jensen. Jens K. was a Danish immigrant who arrived in 1902 and lived in Boston and North Dakota before settling in New Mexico. Through a little bit of searching, I discovered a number of articles that told of his interesting life here in America.

Once in New Mexico, Jens K. became a teacher, went to college, earned a degree at the age of 63, and became a renowned naturalist and ornithologist. I also found a 1945 article in *The Santa Fe New Mexican* called “Jens K. Jensen Has First Word From Brother In Denmark.” The article tells about how, in 1945, after five years of no contact, Jens K. finally received a letter from his brother, who was in the newly liberated, German-occupied Denmark. The letter described life during the war, including the Danish underground and Nazi cruelty. If this letter had not been documented in the local newspaper at the time, its contents may have been lost to history.

GETTING ACCESS
There are a number of ways to access newspaper archives. The most popular websites are Newspapers.com and NewspapersArchive. These databases require paid memberships to access millions of newspapers from around the world.

State and local libraries and genealogical societies are good places to find access to physical or digitized archives for free. They also tend to have library accounts for the online databases which require paid memberships, but you likely have to be physically inside the library or genealogy center to gain access with their account.

For unpaid access at home, check with your local library. Many have worked with local and state organizations to digitize newspaper archives. One company called Advantage Archives, based out of Iowa, specializes in this work. There is a directory on their website which allows you to find locations that have had their archives digitized through them. If a newspaper cannot be found in one of the bigger databases, such as Newspapers.com or NewspapersArchive, check to see if they’ve been digitized through Advantage Archives.
An act of kindness can change a life. It can be small. It can be big. No matter the size, it requires someone willing to give, and there is no shortage of “someones” in the MoDA family. Meet Erick Carl and Dagmar Eriksen, two of those “someones.” Their names are inscribed on The Danish Immigrant Wall of Honor at the Museum of Danish America. Many were inspired by the Eriksens, everyday “someones” that made a difference in peoples’ lives with their acts of kindness.

Danish immigrants Erick Carl Eriksen (1883-1966) and Dagmar Mathilde Hansen (1893-1968) were married in 1919. In 1924 the young couple immigrated to Askov, MN, from where they later moved to Des Moines, IA. He was the custodian and groundskeeper at Grand View College, and she the cook. They both contributed much to the life of the College from 1943 until their deaths.

ACTS OF KINDNESS DO NOT GO UNNOTICED

It was a cultivation of kindness for others that unfolded over many years - sublime acts of kindness and generosity toward others. That’s the Eriksen story told by a generation of Grand View College students, alumni, and friends. Handwritten notes tucked inside the Eriksen’s Wall of Honor file share plenty of kind and good gestures and fond memories:

“I worked with Mrs. Eriksen in the kitchen while at G.V.C. My second year, 46-47, I roomed at their home.”

“I have very fond memories of both of them. ‘Karl’ put up with me overhauling my motorcycle in his tiny shop in the basement of Old Main.”

“My fondest memory is when 3-4 of us students happened to meet them coming out of a downtown movie theatre. They generously invited us to have ice cream with them. Knowing how little they were paid at the college, their kindness made a lasting impression on me.”

Uplifted by the acts of kindness shown to them, friends and alumni set up a memorial fund in the Eriksens’ names 30 years after their deaths. The fund supported the Eriksens’ inscription on the museum’s Wall of Honor. “As immigrants they should surely be listed on the Wall of Honor at the Danish Immigrant Museum,” (Museum of Danish America) wrote the organizers in 1994. “They had no children or others to ensure their listing, therefore it is up to their many friends to attend to this matter.”

The response was indicative of the esteem in which Carl and Dagmar were held by all who came into contact with them. Many paid tribute to this couple by joining in the Wall of Honor effort, where according to organizers, “they surely belong.”

A minor problem arose, however. Unknown to sponsors of the appeal, the names of the Eriksens had already been placed on the museum’s Wall of Honor by someone whose life had also been touched by theirs. While the appeal wasn’t used for its originally stated purpose, the funds were donated to the museum in memory of the Eriksens. “The result is that we are, in effect, doubly honoring ‘Karl’ and Dagmar whom we were all proud to call friends,” organizers said.

This is a couple who went above and beyond, and along the way, inspired others to
do the same. The Eriksen’s Wall of Honor file includes a newspaper clipping which tells of the planting of some 60 trees and bushes by students and friends at Grand View College in honor of the Eriksens. Grand View Vice President Harry C. Jensen recalled in 1971 how Eriksen “used his Danish training as ‘forester in residence,’” and “singlehandedly kept the campus manicured.”

**KINDNESS IS LASTING**

I hope this article gladdens the heart of anyone who has ever wondered whether tiny acts of kindness have lasting consequences, whether goodness spurs goodness, or whether a single act can influence dozens more.

Wall of Honor Plaque, Column 42 Row 6, names “Erick Carl and Dagmar Mathilde Eriksen,” will serve as a reminder that kindness is no small thing. Kindness can, and does, make a difference.

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**DANISH IMMIGRANT WALL OF HONOR**
Column 42 Row 6
Erick Carl and Dagmar Mathilde Eriksen
1924 Askov, MN 1924

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_Erick Carl and Dagmar Mathilde Eriksen_
Taken in front of their home in Des Moines, IA in 1946.
Our initial interest in the Museum of Danish America was piqued by a desire to gain knowledge about how our ancestors came to America. At that time, the museum was called The Danish Immigrant Museum. We love to travel, but travel which involves moving your entire family, or in some cases, coming alone and likely never returning to your “home,” puts a whole new spin on it. We find it both interesting and fun to learn more about who our relatives were and why they came to this country.

At one time, at least three-quarters of both Kurt’s and my ancestors traveled here from Denmark. An interesting bit of our heritage trivia is that both our fathers grew up in rural South Dakota, were two years apart in age, lived in Danish communities 25 miles from each other, and often shared the same Danish Lutheran Pastor. My family moved around quite a bit before arriving in Iowa (Washington DC, Alaska, Texas, and California). When we finally moved here, we joined a Danish Lutheran Church where Kurt was also a member. Our fathers soon discovered that they had grown up in neighboring, South Dakota towns all those years ago. Kurt and I sometimes joke that we are in an arranged marriage, one that has worked well for almost 32 years.

Along with increased knowledge about our heritage came opportunities to serve, which also provided us with front row seats to the ways in which an organization is run. Ultimately, we ended up following a bit of philanthropy advice offered by my father-in-law, “Know where your money is going or know (the) people who serve on the boards you support.”

I served on the Museum of Danish America’s board first, when John Mark Nielsen was the executive director. Kurt is serving now, and the current executive director is Tova Brandt. Kurt and I agree that these two unique leaders, with different styles and gifts, have both lead with skill, professionalism, and grace. That is one of the primary reasons we continue to support the museum. The staff and leadership display professionalism in their assigned roles, work well together, and keep the mission of the museum in the forefront.

When we give financially to the museum, we generally earmark it for the General Fund. This practice stems from advice I received from my mother years ago: “If you really believe in an organization, give to their General Fund. They know where and how to spend or invest it best.”
The Danish Immigrant Wall of Honor provides families and friends with a means of preserving the memories of those who emigrated from Denmark to America. More than 4,600 immigrants are currently recognized on the Wall. Their stories and the stories of their families contribute to the growing repository of personal histories at the museum’s Genealogy Center. You may find a list of the immigrants on the Wall of Honor at www.danishmuseum.org.

The information below includes the immigrant’s name, year of immigration, location where they settled, and the donor’s name and location.

ESPER ANDERSEN PETERSEN
(1921) Chicago, Illinois – Esper A. Petersen, Somis, CA

The Jens Jensen Heritage Path is a place to celebrate an occasion or achievement, recognize an individual or organization, or honor the memory of a loved one. Twice a year the pavers will be engraved and placed within the Flag Plaza: May and October.

These individuals have contributed a paver in the sizes of small or medium.

Paul Anderson
Kirsten Bellur, Bakersfield, CA
Tricia Byrne, Williamsburg, VA
Dania Ladies Society, Elk Grove Village, IL
Suzanna Dumke
Steve & Sherry Fletcher, Atlantic, IA
Kenneth Gregersen, Ankeny, IA
Lynn & Inga Grove, Wilmington, OH
Louis Nielsen & Marcia Jante, New Berlin, WI
Douglas & Ingrid Neale, Decatur, GA

Roxane Nowling
Ronald & Rosemary Raschke, Athens, GA
Caroline Rebodos, Cincinnati, OH
Frances Simmons, Chico, CA
Theresa Sorenson, Thornton, CO

By Deb Christensen Larsen
memorials
SEPTEMBER 15, 2020 – FEBRUARY 18, 2021

Through various funds, donors have provided gifts in memory of:

Shirley Acker
Dorothea Pederson Adams-Haring, my grandmother
Charles Andersen
Mona Sachau Andersen
Richard L. Andersen
Lois Andersen, my sister
Ardys Askelson, in recognition of our shared Danish heritage
Gay Banister
The life of Gay J. Bannister
Ruth (Larsen) Randall Benson
Robert (Bob) Brown, my father
Cecily Castenskiold
John (Jack) Christensen, our uncle
Joyce Christensen
T.K. Christensen
Virgil & Joyce Christensen, my loving parents
Lillian Irene Eggerss
Paul Emanuelsen
Albert, Millie, Melvin & Wilfred Eskov
Hans & Mathilde Farstrup
Howard Peter Fauerby
Harriet Foster
Harriet Foster, member of Sisterhood Lodge 15, Milwaukee
Nels Peter Frandsen, Emigrated to U.S. 1892
Charles Frederiksen
Charles Faaborg Frederiksen
Chuck Frederiksen
Herman & Marie Friis
Marcelia Gaines
The Georgeson Family
Erling Grumstrup
Erling J. Grumstrup
Bent & Lydia Hansen
Paul Hansen
Paul K. Hansen
Thorvald & Johanne Hansen
Hans Christian Have
Frank Heilesen Jr.
Doris Henriksen
Harry C. & Jeannine A. Henriksen
Emery & Izzy Hoegh
The George Hoegh Family
Marj Holland
Marjory Holland
Inge R. Jacobson
Anna Matilda Jensen
Gladys Rasmussen Jensen & Andrew Jensen
Jens C. & Christine Jensen
Oskar & Ellen Jensen
Roland & Anita Jensen
Grace Johnson
Floyd W. Jorgensen
Nels Jorgensen, Hendricks, MN
Nels Jorgensen, my brother
Tage Ketelsen
Aase Vibeke Kiehn
Esther Elizabeth Knudsen, Dean Larsen’s cousin
Richard Kramme, my husband
John Kristensen
Hans & William Larsen
Helen & Paul Larsen
Kurt Klaskov Larsen
Kurt Klarstedt Larsen, my husband
Robert Laursen
Arlene & Alvin Madsen
Margaret Magnus, a member of the Red River Danes for many years
Valborg Henriksen McKinzie
Marilyn Meyer’s four Danish grandparents
Laina Molbak
John & Karen Molgaard
Karen Molgaard
Gertrude Mork
Tage & Else Mortensen
Frederick W. Nielsen
Harry Charles Nielsen
LeVern & Marilyn Nielsen
Eric & Joan Norgaard
Brent Norlem
James Brent Norlem
J. Brent Norlem, legendary professor at SCSU
J. Brent Norlem, my friend and to honor his wish
James Brent Norlem, my undergraduate university advisor and mentor
G. Wayne Olsen & Phyllis (Henriksen) Olsen
Ole & Marie Olsen
Christian August Olsen, my Great-Grandfather
Edith Riita Paulsen
Virginia Paulsen
Lone Hindsaul Paxton
Anna M. Pedersen
Flemming V. Pedersen
Martin Pedersen
Martin A. Pedersen
Niels M. Pedersen
Paul & Lily Pedersen
A. Stenvald & Ida Pedersen, my parents
Walter Nielsen & Else Pedersen, my parents
Hans & Ivy Peitersen
Everett Petersen
Helen Petersen
Jens Holm Petersen - Grandfather
Helen Petersen, my aunt
Harry & Frances Petersen, my parents
Jean K. Prinds
John & Marjorie Quist
in honor

SEPTEMBER 15, 2020 – FEBRUARY 18, 2021

Through various funds, donors have provided gifts in honor of people or special events.

Major General John B. Anderson, USMA ’14, Parkersburg, IA
Tova Brandt
Bruce Bro
Bruce Bro, my cousin, who successfully completed his “Hike for Danish America”
Rosa Clemsen
The Danish Sisterhood Archive Project
Dania Society of Chicago’s long history
All health care workers
Phyllis Hoegh
Jim and Marge Iversen
Marius Andreas Jorensen
Joyce Larson Madison
Ann Madsen
Museum of Danish America’s continuation
Museum of Danish America’s volunteers, past & present
Museum of Danish America’s volunteers and staff
Niels M. Pedersen
Anders Leroy Carlson Sand
David Seymour
Wanda Sornson

Christian Jessen Refshauge & Anna Marie Andreasen Refshauge
Ragna Yeilegaard Reid
Andrew & Rosa Rosenkild
Albert Martin Jensen Schjodt, Annette’s grandfather, who came to the U.S. from Denmark in 1915
Brent Schou
Darrell Schroeter
Darrell D. Schroeter
Darrell Schroeter, my husband
Orin Simon
Axel & Rose Skelbeck
Marie Louise Sorensen
Marie Louise Sørensen
Elmer & Eleanor Sornson
Mrs. Karen Struckman
Charles Anton Sweningsen
Emery & Val Thomsen, my parents
Ruth Anderson Turney
new members

SEPTEMBER 15, 2020 – FEBRUARY 18, 2021

The Museum of Danish America is pleased to identify the following 138 individuals as its newest members:

Barbara Andersen, Crystal, MN
Dennis Andersen, Richmond, VA
William & Angela Baker, Omak, WA
Monica Bayles, Omaha, NE
Christine Bess, Tacoma, WA
Greg & Dawn Biba, Waupaca, WI
Thoralyn Jensen Bogli, Manchester, CT
Nancy Bourne, Sonoma, CA
Soren & Birgit Jepsen Brandt, Store Merløse, Denmark
Howard Pinhasik & Judith Bro, Weehawken, NJ
Curtis & Cherie Brown, Belle Plaine, IA
Earl & Thurid Campbell, Perrysburg, OH
Clark & Fernanda Christensen, Goose Creek, SC
R. Christensen, Stevensville, MI
William Christiansen, Philadelphia, PA
P V & Meena Damodaran, Alpharetta, GA
Jon K. & Penny Davis, Ames, IA
Helen L. Dickson, Bath, NY
Marilyn Edgington, Saint Ansgar, IA
Steve & Sherry Fletcher, Atlantic, IA
Annie Gammel, Saratoga Springs, NY
Cheryl Gaughan, Omaha, NE
Nika George & Sam Roof, Omaha, NE
Milbern & Kathryn Goetz, Greeley, CO
Maria Christiansen Goodman, Tallahassee, FL
Judith Green, West Des Moines, IA
Matthew Gunlund, Clovis, CA
Ben Hansen, Nuremberg, Germany
Melodee Helfrich, Orchard Park, NY
Kirsten Hensley, Ann Arbor, MI
Gail Hickenbottom, West Des Moines, IA
Paul & Karin Holm, Esbjerg V, Denmark
Audrey & Tony Horacek, Holmen, WI
Eric & Lois Hyde, Eden Prairie, MN
Karen Jacobson, Monticello, MN
Alan & Pat Jensen, Cedar Rapids, IA
Christina Jensen, Golden, CO
Cynthia Jensen, Washington, DC
Susan Jensen Hales, Corners, WI
Gail Jensen & Judy Gail, Omaha, NE
Mike & Dona Johnson, Sedona, AZ
Yvonne Johnson, Webster City, IA
Cynthia Jones, Forrest Lake, MN
Keith Jorgensen, Greenfield, IA
Bernard Kaltoft, Kimballton, IA
Steve & Linda Kladstrup, Rochester, NY
Karen Kollar, Southington, CT
Amy Kraenzlein, Midland, MI
Jack & Nancy Krogstad, Elk Horn, IA
Elizabeth Larson, Ames, IA
Eric Laursen, Charlemon, MA
Sandra Lee, Morgan Hill, CA
Patricia Ligibel, Lambertville, MI
Kevin & Tove Lockie, Riceville, IA
Phillip Magnus & Anita Delafield, Des Moines, IA
David Magnus & Susan Delafield, Fishers, IN
Michael & Margaret Meede, Norton, MA
Paul West & Ivrina Mitchell, Mossyrock, WA
Janie Moody, Corvallis, OR
Dennis & Marcia Morton, Bondurant, IA
Nagaraj Sivasubramaniam & Sujata Nagaraj, Pittsburgh, PA
Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cedar Falls, IA
Heather Nelsen, New Hope, MN
Margaret Ness, Le Roy, MN
Thomas E. Nielsen, Audubon, IA
Erik Nielsen Family, Seattle, WA
Daniel & Lorrie Pearson, Seward, NE
Esper Petersen, Somis, CA
Gaige Petersen, Harlan, IA
Lisa Christensen Petersen, West Hartford, CT
Rick & Judi Petersen, Atlantic, IA
Esper A. Petersen Foundation, Grayslake, IL
Gordon & Eunice Peterson, Sheridan, WY
Bill & Dianna Plantan, Rochester, MN
Jan Reicks,  
West Des Moines, IA  
Nicole Rice, Naperville, IL  
Inger Russell, Taylorsville, UT  
Annabel Saunders,  
Westcliffe, CO  
Amanda Sewell, Casper, WY  
Rachel Shargal,  
Kew Gardens, NY  
Frances Simmons, Chico, CA  
Aksel Soee, Læsøe, Denmark  
Flemming & Lexie Sorensen,  
Seattle, WA  
Halvor Sornson, Omaha, NE  
Ethel Spry, Sonoma, CA  
Chris Stratton, Lakewood, CO  
Carol Olsen Swenson,  
Burnsville, MN  
Mike & Katherine E. Toms,  
Madrid, IA  
Flavia Vang, Metairie, LA  
Douglas & Kathryn Veltre,  
Anchorage, AK  
Susan Wall, Christiansted,  
Virgin Islands  
Sasha Walley, Minnetonka, MN  
Michael & Janet Walsted,  
Fort Worth, TX  
Ethelene Whitmire,  
Madison, WI  
Hannah Browning & Blake  
Willadsen, Des Moines, IA  
Eli Winkler, Pawtucket, RI  
Edward Wissing, Kirkland, WA  
Connie Benton Wolfe,  
Fort Wayne, IN  
Patrick & Lindsay Wombles,  
Salem, IL  
Larry & Debbie Wright,  
New Port Richey, FL  

MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP MAKES A GREAT GIFT

For lives that are already stuffed full of “stuff,” a museum membership gives back while also giving access. A membership is easy to arrange, thoughtful, and rewarding. Contact us any time for gift-giving throughout the year.
These 82 organizations have contributed memberships or gifts-in-kind of $100 or greater or have received complimentary or reciprocal memberships in recognition of exemplary service to the museum. We acknowledge their generosity in each edition of the America Letter during their membership.

Aalborg and Linie Aquavits, Arcus AS, Hagan, Norway
American Swedish Historical Museum, Philadelphia, PA
Atlantic Friends of The Danish Immigrant Museum, Atlantic, IA
Audubon Family Chiropractic (Douglas & Nichole Olsen), Audubon, IA
Carroll Control Systems, Inc. (Todd & Jalynn Wanninger), Carroll, IA
Christopher Ranch, LLC (Donald & Karen Christopher), Gilroy, CA
Country Landscapes, Inc. (Rhett Faaborg), Ames, IA
Danebod Lutheran Church, Tyler, MN
Danes Hall of Waupaca, LLC, Waupaca, WI
Danish American Athletic Club of 1922, Chicago, IL
The Danish American Archive and Library, Blair, NE
Danish American Club in Orange County, Huntington Beach, CA area
Danish Archive North East (DANE), Edison, NJ
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 #35, Homewood, IL
Danish Brotherhood Gimle Lodge #95, Eureka, CA
Danish Brotherhood Polarstjernen Lodge #283, Dagmar, MT
Danish Brotherhood Lodges, Heartland District, Iowa-Minnesota
Danish Brotherhood Centennial Lodge #348, Eugene, OR
The Danish Canadian National Museum, Spruce View, Alberta, Canada
Danish Club of Tucson, Tucson, AZ
Danish Cultural Center of Greenville, Greenville, MI
The Danish Home, Croton-On-Hudson, NY
The Danish Home Foundation, Chicago, IL
Danish Mutual Insurance Association, Elk Horn, IA
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #3, Davenport, IA
Danish Sisterhood Dagmar Lodge #4, Chicago, IL
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #6, Omaha, NE
Danish Sisterhood Dronning Margrethe Lodge #15, Wauwatosa, WI
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #19, Tacoma/Olympia, WA
Danish Sisterhood Ellen Lodge #21, Denver, CO
Danish Sisterhood Princess Marie Lodge #68, Burbank, CA
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #102, Des Moines, IA
Danish Sisterhood Frihed Lodge #153, Hartford, CT
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #168, Bakersfield, CA
Danish Sisterhood Flora Danica Lodge #177, Solvang, CA
Danish Sisterhood Danske Damer Lodge #185, Cleveland, OH
Danish Sisterhood Amber Lodge #186, Brainerd, MN
Danish Sisterhood Hygge Lodge #188, Enumclaw, WA
Danish Sisterhood NE/CO District Lodges, Lincoln, NE & Denver CO
DenDanske Pioneer (Elsa Steffensen & Linda Steffensen), Hoffman Estates, IL
Elk Horn Lutheran Church, Elk Horn, IA
Elk Horn-Kimballton Optimist Club, Elk Horn & Kimballton, IA
Elverhoj Museum of History and Art, Solvang, CA
Exira-Elk Horn-Kimballton Community School District, Elk Horn, IA
Faith, Family, Freedom Foundation (Kenneth & Marlene Larsen), Harlan, IA
Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, Gloucester, Canada
Greater Omaha Genealogical Society, Omaha, NE
Hacways (Helene & Nanna Christensen), Hals, Denmark
Wayne Hansen Real Estate, LLC, Elk Horn, IA
Harlan Tribune Newspapers, Inc. (Joshua Byers, Publisher), Harlan, IA
Henningsen Construction, Inc. (Brad Henningsen, Vice President), Atlantic, IA
House of Denmark, San Diego, CA
Independent Order of Svithiod, Verdandi Lodge #3, Chicago, IL
Kirsten’s Danish Bakery (Kirsten & Paul Jepsen), Hinsdale, IL
Knudsen Old Timers, Glendale, CA
Landmands Bank (Jeff Petersen, President), Audubon, IA
Main Street Market (Tracey Kenkel), Panama, IA
Marne Elk Horn, Elk Horn, IA
Midwest Groundcovers LLC (Craig Keller & Christa Orum-Keller, Vice President), Illinois
Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cedar Falls, IA
Nelsen and Nelsen, Attorneys at Law, Cozad, NE
Northwest Danish Association, Seattle, WA
Olsen, Muhlbauer & Co., L.L.P., Carroll, IA
Oxen Technology, Harlan, IA
Petersen Family Foundation, Inc. (H. Rand & Mary Louise Petersen), Fort Dodge, IA
Esper A. Petersen Foundation, Grayslake, IL
Proongily (Cyndi McKeen), St. Paul, MN

The Rasmussen Group, Inc. (Sandra Rasmussen and Kurt & Lynette Rasmussen), Des Moines, IA
Rebild National Park Society, Southern California Chapter, Los Angeles, CA area
Red River Danes, Fargo, ND
Ringsted Danish American Fellowship, Ringsted, IA
Royal Danish Guard Society, Chicago, IL
Scan Design Foundation, Seattle, WA
Shelby County Historical Society & Museum, Harlan, IA
Shelby County State Bank, Harlan, IA & Elk Horn, IA
Supreme Lodge of the Danish Sisterhood of America
Symra Literary Society, Decorah, IA
Upward Mobility (Susan Vitek), Hinesburg, VT

MUTUAL BENEFITS
Sponsorships of exhibits and programs support the museum’s mission while simultaneously increasing visibility for the sponsoring organization. Contact us for ideas on how your business or organization can reach out and make an impact!
I’m honored and humbled to be writing to you as the President of the Board of Directors. I have thoroughly enjoyed my two years on the board, even with the unprecedented issues that the pandemic created for the museum in 2020. I’m delighted to say that the museum came through the year very well. I think this is the case for several reasons: its staff, its board, and its members and volunteers.

The staff has been taking care of business for years. I’ve come to know them as a talented and motivated group. This past year they have, led by Executive Director Tova Brandt, rolled up their sleeves and figured out new ways of doing things in a very unusual environment. That has been a key factor in the year’s successes.

Over the years the board has provided sound guidance to the museum’s executive directors. The board consists of ordinary people like you and me. They are from all around the country and bring a wide variety of expertise and experience. Pride in their common Danish-American heritage binds them together in a special way. They share the desire to tell the story of Danes in America, past, present and future.

And you, our members, have consistently provided outstanding financial support, even in the challenging year of 2020. For example, the response to the Museum’s letter this fall, appealing for donations, was the largest on record.

Like many non-essential entities, the museum closed to the public in March. With the appropriate adjustments, it reopened three days per week in July. Then it made the hard decision to close again, just before the Elk Horn and Kimballton celebration of Julefest in late November in order to protect staff, visitors, and the community at a time when infection rates were very high, locally and throughout Iowa.

But the business of the museum did not stop. It continued to open exhibits and found new ways for its constituents to enjoy them. It continued its online messaging and publication of the America Letter. It began producing a major monthly online program for its members and internet visitors, which is no small effort. And behind-the-scenes work, such as the ongoing cataloging and care of our collections of objects, books, printed material, and photographs, continued. It also made adjustments, such as increasing the pace of Design Store e-blasts to partially offset the loss of foot traffic due to the closing and the cancellation of on-site events. As a result, online sales have been strong.

None of the staff was furloughed or laid off. The museum even filled several open positions. Quick action by Board Member Randy Ruggaard, Tova, and Shelby County State Bank resulted in the receipt of a Payroll Protection Plan loan before that program’s initial funding was exhausted. The loan has become a grant, since the museum met the terms of the program. The museum has also sought and received a generous Iowa Arts & Culture Recovery Program grant.

Looking to the future, the board in October approved a new Strategic Plan for the years 2021 through 2023. We realize that the descendants of the immigrant generation are aging and that new generations may have different interests. We will seek to discover which of our local, regional, and national audiences offer the best opportunities for engagement, visitation, and membership, and what programs would appeal to identified audiences. The plan seeks to answer those questions by trying new approaches and measuring their impact. By the end of 2023, we believe we will have a clearer idea of the actions that the museum needs to take to create a sustainable future.

An example of a new approach to attracting a different demographic is the MoDA-produced YouTube channel established to provide a continuing series of videos that add content to our New Nordic Cuisine exhibit, which is now on tour at other museums. Seventy-six percent of the viewers of our channel are between the ages of 25 and 34. Now that’s different!

While 2021 will present ongoing challenges as the country and the world move toward a more normal state of affairs, the museum is in a good position. It will continue to explore the Danish-American experience of the past, present, and future while creating ways to remain relevant in a changing world.

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board of directors

The 2020-2021 Board of Directors is a special group of men and women who have unselfishly dedicated themselves to the preservation of their Danish American heritage and the mission of the museum. They join an elite group of individuals who, over the past 37 years, have worked to build and maintain a museum of which all Danes, Danish Americans, and the American public can be proud.

Participating at their own expense, board members come together three times a year to share their skills and experience in providing oversight to the administration of the museum and to develop ideas and plans that will contribute to its continuing vitality. It is the practice of the board to meet each February and June in different locations around the United States, so that they may share and celebrate heritage and culture with those Danish Americans who may not otherwise be able to link directly with the museum.

In pandemic 2020, the board was fortunate to hold its February meeting in Solvang, California. Then in response to the Covid-19 crisis, the board held its June meeting virtually, with election of new board members. In October the board meeting was once again held virtually via Zoom. The museum’s annual meeting was also held virtually with new board members assuming their office; outgoing members present and participating.

Without the dedication, energy, and support of a strong, team-oriented board of directors, the museum staff would not be able to work effectively in managing the day-to-day operations of the Museum of Danish America.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS SERVING IN 2020

Erik Andersen, Croton-on-Hudson, NY
Carol Bassoni, Gilroy, CA
Beth Bro-Roof, Cedar Rapids, IA
Joy Clemensen Gajda, Lindenhurst, IL
David Esbeck, San Diego, CA
Dennis Gray, Winston-Salem, NC
Peder Hansen, Omaha, NE
Connie Hanson, Glendora, CA
David Hendee, Northfield, MN
Gerry Henningsen, Monument, CO
Glenn Henriksen, Armstrong, IA
Marcia Janke, New Berlin, WI
Daniel Jensen, Columbus, OH
Marnie Jensen, Nebraska City, NE
Elly Jorgensen, Prairie Village, KS
Merlyn Knudsen, Elk Horn, IA
Chris Kofoid, West Branch, IA
Lars Matthiesen, Edmonds, WA
Toni McLeod, Mesa, AZ
Honorable Consul Karen Nielsen, Overland, KS
Mike Nielsen, Altoona, IA

Eric Olsen, Racine, WI
Kurt Rasmussen, Johnston, IA
Randy Ruggaard, Hudson, OH
Anders Sand, Kansas City, MO
Carl Steffensen, Houston, TX
Karen Suchomel, West Branch, IA
Carol Svendsen, Denver, CO
Pete West, Denver, CO

Ex-Officio

Nils Jensen, Portland, OR
Dennis Larson, Decorah, IA
Dr. John Mark Nielsen, Blair, NE, Executive Director Emeritus

Tova Brandt, Decorah, IA, Executive Director
who we are

MISSION STATEMENT

The Museum of Danish America explores the Danish-American experience, the historic and modern influences of Denmark on the United States, and the continuing story of how a nation of immigrants shape American identity.

VISION

- To be the foremost Danish-American museum and cultural center in the nation.
- To be a model for ethnic heritage museums in how to remain relevant in a changing world.
- To be a showplace for Danish innovation and its importance to American progress.
- To be engaging and relevant to people both with and without Danish ancestry.
- To help visitors connect past Danish immigrants’ experience with the experience of today’s Danish and non-Danish immigrants to the United States.

VALUES

We are:

Inspirational: We honor the contributions of Danish-Americans to the complex fabric of American history and culture.

Innovative: We present visitors with experiences that challenge and enlighten. We experiment with new ways of engaging audiences locally, regionally, and nationally.

Authentic: Using primary sources, we tell the story of Danish immigration in all its complexity, including success and failure, accomplishment and discouragement, longing for what was left behind and hope for a new life.

Visitor-centered: We educate and entertain visitors of all backgrounds and engage them in a dialogue about American identity through the lens of the Danish immigrant experience and the influences of modern Danish society and culture.

Promoting tolerance and respect: We build appreciation for the United States as a nation of immigrants, past and present.

Focused on preservation: We collect and preserve artifacts, documents, and stories for current and future education and scholarship.

Stewards: We focus on responsible management of human, financial, and facility resources, sustaining the museum and its mission for future generations.
Executive Director
Tova Brandt, M.A.

Executive Director Emeritus
John Mark Nielsen, Ph.D.

Administrative Manager
Terri Johnson

Administrative Assistant
Terri Amaral, B.A.
Cindy Pash

Albert Ravenholt Curator of Danish-American Culture
Tova Brandt, M.A.

Associate Curator of Exhibitions
Diya Nagaraj, M.Litt.

Curator of Collections & Registrar
Angela Stanford, M.A.

Archival Collections Manager
Cheyenne Jansdatter, M.A.

Genealogy Center Manager & Librarian
Amanda Skellenger, M.A., M.L.I.S.

Genealogy Researcher
Wanda Sornson, M.S.

Development Manager, Annual Report Editor
Deb Christensen Larsen

Development Associate
Shelli Larson, B.S., B.A.

Communications Specialist
Nicky Christensen, B.S.

Design Store Manager
Nan Dreher

Accounting Manager
Jennifer Winters

Building & Grounds Manager
Tim Fredericksen

Prairie Maintenance Assistant
Kiara Rodriguez, B.S.

Weekend Visitor Services
Jennifer Agnew
Justice Doherty
Beth Rasmussen
Rodger Rasmussen

Bedstemor’s House Staff
Season Closed due to pandemic
Covid-19 precautions

Danish Intern
Christina Damgaard Andersen, M.A., University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark (Exhibitions)
Internships for Danes are funded through a generous grant from Scan | Design Foundation, Seattle, WA

American Interns
Hannah Bernhard, B.S., Loras College, Dubuque, IA (Collections)
Internship funded by the Danish Club of Tucson, AZ
Julia Jessen, M.S. Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY (Collections)
Internship funded by the Danish Club of Tucson, AZ
Heather Olsen, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (Genealogy)
Virtual Internship funded by the Danish Club of Tucson, AZ
Kelsey Wilcoxen, B.S. & M.L.I.S., Dominican University, River Forest, IL (Archival & Special Collections)
Internship funded by Diane Skov, Lacey, WA
former board members

City and state indicate where board members resided at the time of their service; the 13 original board members are in bold print; deceased members are indicated with asterisks*. Every effort has been made to ensure that all the following information is accurate. Please contact Administrative Manager Terri Johnson with any questions or corrections.

Cindy Larsen Adams, Littleton, CO 2012-2018
Birgit Andersen, Ithaca, NY 2002-2005
Dennis J. Andersen, Atlanta, GA 1999-2002 & 2007-2013, Secretary
Ed Andersen*, Rochester, MN 1990-1996, Vice President & President
Erik Andersen, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 2011-2014
Judy Andersen*, Los Angeles, CA 1986-1989
Ragna Bak, Alexandria, VA 1997
Norman Bansen*, Blair, NE 1983-1989
Ed Andersen*, Rochester, MN 1990-1996, Vice President & President
Erik Andersen, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 2011-2014
Judy Andersen*, Los Angeles, CA 1986-1989
Ragna Bak, Alexandria, VA 1997
Norman Bansen*, Blair, NE 1983-1989
Egon Bodtker, Salem, OR 2000-2006, President
Arvid Bollesen*, Tustin, CA 1990-1996
Jon Borgman, Harlan, IA 2010-2013
Bruce Bro, Phoenix, AZ 2018-2019
Mervin Bro*, Scottsdale, AZ 1996-1999, Vice President
Timothy Burchill, Jamestown, ND 2012-2018, Vice President & President
Jens Busch*, Austin, TX 1990-1996
Borge M. Christensen, Tucson, AZ 2003-2006
Carlo Christensen, Glendale, CA 2004-2010
Dan Christensen, West Des Moines, IA 2013-2015
Jack Christensen*, Yankton, SD 1991-1997, Treasurer
Lois Christensen, Elk Horn, IA 2001-2007
Lone Christensen, Brown Deer, WI 2007-2013
Ross Christensen*, Waterloo, IA 1992-1993
Thomas Christensen*, Bettendorf, IA 1999-2005
Victor Christensen*, Washington, DC 1983-?
Marie Meilandt Dahlman*, Loma Rica, CA 1998-?
Ane-Grethe Delaney, Wayzata, MN 2006-2012
Pam Doreau* 1985-1989
Anne-Marie Douglas, Chicago, IL 1999-2005
Diane Doyle, Papillion, NE 1983-1985
Jan Eakins, Des Moines, IA 2003-2004
Bente Ellis, San Jose, CA 2013-2019
Nick Ericksen, Omaha, NE 1991-1997
Gordon R. Esbeck, Tipton, IA 2001-2007
Cora Fagre*, Loveland, CO 1985-1991
Dorothy Stadsold Feisel, St. Michaels, MD 2012-2018
Lis Frederiksen, Washington, DC 2001-2003
Mark Frederiksen, Falcon, CO 2006-2012, President
Marilyn Andersen Gift, Des Moines, IA 1995-2001, Secretary
Kenneth Gregersen, Ankeny, IA 2006-2008
Howard Hansen* 1988-1988
Janell Hansen, Elk Horn, IA 2007-2009
Kurt Hansen, Rosemount, MN 2008-2014
Mia Hansen, Tucson, AZ 2008-2010
Stewart Hansen, West Des Moines, IA 2011-2013
Thomas Hansen, Blair, NE 2003-2005
Thorvald Hansen*, Des Moines, IA 1983-1988
Ernst Harboe*, Northfield, IL 1991-1994
Otto Hoiberg*, Lincoln, NE 1983-1987
Anna Thomsen Holliday, Houston, TX 2008-2010 & 2012-2018
Gail G. Holmes, Omaha, NE 1983-1987, Secretary
William Holmquist, Long Lake, MN 2000-2003
Henrik Holmskov*, Brookfield, WI 1993-1995
Vern E. Hunter, Fargo, ND, 1999-2005, President
Joy M. Ibsen, Trout Creek, MI, 1999-2005, President
Robert E. Ibsen, Kenosha, WI 1990-1991
James Iversen, Ames, IA 1985-1991, President
Ellen Westergaard Jackson*, Whiting, IA 1999-2002
Kenneth Jacobsen, Seattle, WA 2011-2013
Bill Jensen*, Urbandale, IA 2013-2014
Bridget Jensen, Houston, TX 2005-2008
Erna Jensen, Des Moines, IA 2003-2009
Harold R. Jensen*, St. Paul, MN 1983-1990, Vice President
Harold M. Jensen, Ames, IA 2002-2008
Lee Jensen, Pleasant Grove, UT 2000-2003
Nils Jensen, Portland, OR 2001-2004
Roland Jensen*, Des Moines, IA 1985-1993
Tor Jensen, Willmette, IL 1992-1995
Torben Jeppesen, Odense, Denmark 1998-2003
Kristi Planck Johnson, Bethesda, MD 2009-2015
Margaret Johnson, Santa Clara, CA 2000-2003
Carol Jorgensen*, Dike, IA 1996-2002
Julie Jorgensen, Wayzata, MN 2002-2007, Secretary
Lis Jorgensen, Gilroy, CA 1990-1998
Howard Juel*, Kimballton, IA 1983-1987
Orville Juhler*, Harlan, IA 2002-2005
Katrine Vange Keller, Wilmette, IL 1995-2001, Secretary
Peter G. Kelly, Glastonbury, CT 1998-2001
Peder Kirkegaard*, Lake Geneva, WI 2006-2007
Karen Klopf* 1990-1993
Svend Koch*, Cedar Falls, IA 1993-1999
Christopher Kramme, San Francisco, CA 2006
Lowell Kramme, Des Moines, IA 1993-1999
Garey Knudsen, Hutchinson, MN 2012-2018, Vice President, President
Hugh Larsen*, Ontario, Canada 1985-1986
Kenneth Larsen, Calistoga, CA 2009-2015, Treasurer
Kurt Klarskov Larsen*, Oneonta, NY 2009-2012, Treasurer
Carolyn Larson, St. Paul, MN 2013-2019, Secretary
Dennis Larson, Decorah, IA 1985-Ex-officio
Bent Lerno*, Simi Valley, CA 1995-2001
Eivind Lillehoj*, Kimballton, IA 1995-2000
Steven Lund, Yuma, AZ 2008-2011
Marion Marzolf, Ann Arbor, MI 1985-1987
Clark Mathisen*, Omaha, NE 1999-2005 & 2009-2011, Treasurer
Cynthia McKeen, St. Paul, MN 2008-2014
Carol Mills, Dubuque, IA 2009-2012
Craig Molgaard, Little Rock, AR 2013-2019
Dagmar Muthamia, Long Beach, CA 2002-2008 & 2012-2018, Secretary & President
Norma Lange Nelson*, Elk Horn, IA 1996-2002
Clayton Nielsen*, Racine, WI 1991-?
Peter Nielsen, Naples, FL 2015-2016
Ruth Herman Nielsen*, Omaha, NE 1992-1998, Secretary
Virginia Nielsen*, Elk Horn, IA 1989-1995
J. Brent Norlem*, Monticello, MN 2013-2016
Kay Esbeck North*, Ames, IA 2007-2012, Vice President
Mark Nussle, Palos Park, IL 2005-2011, Vice President
Benedikte Ehlers Olesen, Eugene, OR 2004-2012
Erik Olsen, Mesa, AZ 1995-1999
Marian “Mittie” Ostergaard, Mission Viejo, CA 2010-2016
Tom Paulsen*, Bellevue, WA 1994-2000
Curt Pedersen, Tucson, AZ 2001-2005
Edwin Pedersen*, Luck, WI 1993-1996
Jesper Packert Pedersen, Washington, DC 2011
Leroy Pedersen*, Elk Horn, IA 1993-1999
Marc Petersen, Omaha, NE 2003-2009, President
Peter Petersen*, Canyon, TX 1985-1993, Secretary
Melvin Pihl*, Canby, OR 1987-1993
Henrik Fogh Rasmussen, Springfield, IL 2010-2015
Lynette Skow Rasmussen, Johnston, IA 2006-2012
Lisa Rigg*, Elk Horn, IA 1983-1990, Treasurer
Eva Robinson, Butler, PA 2008-2010
Tom Rosen, Fairmont, MN 1998-2001
Anelise Sawkins, Minneapolis, MN 2002-2008
Jerry Schrader, Elk Horn, IA 2011-2017
Rose Grindheim Sims*, Ridge Manor, FL 1997-1999
Linda Sloth-Gibbs, Yuma, AZ 2003-2009
Flemming “Eric” Smitsdorff, Racine, WI 2010-2015, Secretary
Ole Sonnichsen, Bjert, Denmark 2015-2018
Bob Sorensen* 1987-?
Howard Sorensen, Elk Horn, IA 1990-1996, Treasurer
Harriet Albertsen Spanel*, Bellingham, WA 2005-2011, President
Chris Steffensen*, Hoffman Estates, IL 1985-?
Linda Steffensen, Hoffman Estates, IL 2012-2018
Poul Steffensen*, Omaha, NE 1986-?
Mark Strandskov, Mt. Pleasant, MI 2009-2015
Helen Stub, Minneapolis, MN, 1991-2000, Secretary
Janet Thuesen, Sausalito, CA 1996-2002 & 2006-2012, Vice President
Svend Toftemark, Eugene, OR 1994-2000
Robert J. Wallace*, Kansas City, MO 1988-1992
Daniel Warren, Fairmont, MN 2015-2016
Donald Watkins*, Lawrence, KS 1983-1987
Wilber Williamson*, Des Moines, IA 1988-1995
Lorraine Mattson Zembinski*, Elm Grove, WI 1993-1994
### Condensed Financial Statements

**Years Ended August 31, 2020 and 2019**

**Condensed Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Assets - Modified Cash Basis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash and Investments</td>
<td>6,184,033</td>
<td>5,878,221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory</td>
<td>57,413</td>
<td>85,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property and Equipment (Net)</td>
<td>4,521,051</td>
<td>4,599,445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td>10,762,497</td>
<td>10,563,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liabilities and Net Assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accrued Payroll Taxes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes Payable</td>
<td>124,100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Liabilities</strong></td>
<td>124,100</td>
<td>2,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Assets</strong></td>
<td>10,638,397</td>
<td>10,560,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</strong></td>
<td>10,762,497</td>
<td>10,563,210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Condensed Statement of Revenue and Support, Expenses, and Changes in Net Assets - Modified Cash Basis for Years ended August 31,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support and Revenue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions and Support</td>
<td>841,698</td>
<td>1,530,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions and Program Fees</td>
<td>6,230</td>
<td>15,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift Shop Revenue (Net)</td>
<td>47,248</td>
<td>59,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment and Other Income</td>
<td>606,784</td>
<td>190,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Support and Revenue</strong></td>
<td>1,501,960</td>
<td>1,795,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expenses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Services</td>
<td>911,048</td>
<td>903,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Activities</td>
<td>513,173</td>
<td>477,361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td>1,424,221</td>
<td>1,380,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change in Net Assets</strong></td>
<td>77,739</td>
<td>414,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Assets - Beginning of Year</strong></td>
<td>10,560,658</td>
<td>10,145,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Assets - End of Year</strong></td>
<td>10,638,397</td>
<td>10,560,658</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
endowment

The Museum of Danish America’s endowments provide the opportunity for members to perpetuate their contributions and, at the same time, help guarantee the museum’s long-term financial stability. Current market value as of December 31, 2020, was $5,563,676.87.

bequests

In 2020 the museum received $256,080.82 in bequests, $31,460.05 (less than 12%) has been invested in the museum’s endowment funds and the balance $224,619.97 (88%) has been or is being used for operations, special projects and programming. The Museum of Danish America gratefully acknowledges the following estates, trusts and individuals:

Erik & Anna Andersen Trust, Parkville, MO
Rita Neergaard Hansen Charitable Trust, Kenosha, WI
W. Clayton Nielsen Estate, Solvang, CA
Glenn Olsen Revocable Trust, Atlantic, IA
Irma Orum Estate, Saint Charles, IL

ARE YOU GETTING OUR EMAILS?

Let us know if you are not receiving our monthly e-newsletter. We want to be sure that we have your correct and preferred address on file.
a year of challenges and achievements

The year 2020 challenged all of us – individuals, institutions, and societies – in ways we could not have anticipated as the new year dawned. We want to acknowledge the impact that 2020 has had on the Museum of Danish America and the lessons that we will carry into the future.

**CHALLENGES**

- In March the museum closed its doors to the public. Staff remained working either onsite or from home, whichever fit their needs best.
- With staff working from several different locations, we had to adopt new communication tools and become Zoom experts.
- Board meetings also moved online, ensuring that the business of the museum could still be conducted.
- Before reopening in July, the museum needed to put new resources and procedures in place for social distancing, sanitizing surfaces, and adjusting visitor areas to minimize hands-on actions.
- Due to increased public health risks, the museum closed again to the public in November. As before, staff members remained fully active in keeping the museum operations and programs going.

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The Board of Directors approved a new Strategic Plan to guide the museum’s priorities from 2021 through 2023.
- Most scheduled programs successfully shifted to online formats. Brown Bag Lunch programs have been seen by hundreds of viewers and remain available on the museum’s YouTube channel.
- Museum members have continued to provide generous support, keeping the museum active and resilient as we navigated these uncertain times.
- New staff joined the museum team, even in the midst of this atypical year. The museum has a robust and dedicated staff team in all departments.
- Improvements to the facilities and grounds include a resurfaced entry driveway, new concrete slabs for benches in the Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park, and a major upgrade to the museum’s HVAC system.
- The museum earned support from several publicly-funded grant programs, many funded through the federal CARES Act, which help maintain a full staff and active programs through the year.

By Tova Brandt
One of the many challenges for museum staff this past year was closing our buildings to the public, which also meant not allowing volunteers on-site, at least for a time. The few volunteers that were able to work remotely continued to do so. When the museum reopened in early July, Genealogy Center volunteers were allowed to return to the center, as long as the health and safety protocols we had in place were followed. It was a different story for front desk volunteers at the museum as they greet visitors from across the country and the world. In consideration of their health and welfare, we asked our volunteers to stay home beginning in March. That being said, volunteers still logged a total of 1,334 hours in 2020.

In this annual report, I usually list all current volunteers – Genealogy Center, Museum and Atlantic Friends of The Danish Immigrant Museum. But it occurred to me that all volunteers through the years have had a part in bringing this museum to where it is today and we should recognize them as well. ALL volunteers are, and have been, important to the history AND future of the Museum of Danish America, whether they’ve given one hour or thousands of hours (some have!). Their gifts of time, energy, labor, and more have been an important contribution to the success of our accredited, national Museum of Danish America.

Following are the names of volunteers for whom we have documented hours of time, beginning in 1992. Volunteers active in 2020 are in bold.

Andy Andersen
Annette Andersen
Bertha Andersen
Delbert Andersen
Dennis Andersen
Diane Allen
Elenor Andersen
Harvey Andersen
Marilyn Andersen
Mary Ann Andersen
Milo Andersen
Norma Andersen
Ramona Andersen
Richard Andersen
Rosalie Andersen
Ruth Anderson
Harriet Becker
Jack Bell
Delia A. Benton
Shirley Bierbaum
Emily Biles
Maxine Bladt
Connie Booze
Irene Booze
Marty Booze
Mel Booze
Janet Bornholdt
Velma Boysen
Mary Bro
Ronald Bro
Ruthe Brocker
Claire Bruce
David Buellers
Roger Buhr
David Burkett
Norma Burkett
Frank Burnett
Osa Nyby Burnett
Ben Burns
Brent Camery
Colleen Campbell
Harriet Campbell
Jim Chambers
Hilda Chester
Bent Christensen
Cliff Christensen
Herb Christensen
Howard Christensen
Joyce Christensen
Lamont Christensen
Lois Jean
Christensen
Margaret
Christensen
Mary Ann
Christensen
Oda Christensen
Orvie Christensen
Shirley Christensen
Virgil Christensen
Alice Christiansen
Bud Clausen
Glen Clemsen
Rosa Clemsen
Virginia Conklin
Dolores Connelly
Jim Cummings
Judy Cummings
Marie Dalham
Peter Dam-Hein
Eileen Denne
Jack Denne
Anne-Marie Douglas
Ellen Dreher
Sam Dreher
Clayton Ellingson
Dean Esbeck
Jeanene Esbeck
Ray Esbeck
Shirley Esbeck
Verna Esbeck
Martha Eskov
Millie Eskov
Kathleen Eyeborg
William (Gene)
Eyeberg
Jan Fajen
Cloid Farley
Faye Farley
Cindy Fredricksen
Lenore Fredriksen
Ileen Furne
Marcella Gaines
Esther Gearhardt
Bill Gift
Marilyn Andersen
Gift
Doris Greve
Evelyn Gross
June Haas
Andrea Hansen
Barb Hansen
Bety Hansen
Connie Hansen
Dallas Hansen
Doris Hansen
Eleanor Hansen
Fred “Fritz” Hansen
Harvey Hansen
Howard Hansen
Jacqueline Hansen
Laverne Hansen
Libby Hansen
Linda Hansen
Lyle Hansen
Margery Hansen
Marie Hansen
Marlene Hansen
Paul Hansen
Peggy Hansen
Priscilla Hansen
Roland (Rollie)
Hansen
Rosie Hansen
Tom Hansen  
Virgil Hansen  
Eileen Harris  
Cecelia Haynes  
Joy Heckman  
Esther Sand  
Henderson  
Beverly Henningssen  
Dorothy Henriksen  
Sue Hjelle  
Calvin Hoegh  
Izy Hoegh  
Janet Hoegh  
Ken Hoegh  
Mary Lou Hoegh  
Monte Hoegh  
Phyllis Hoegh  
Inga Hoifeldt  
Ralf Hoifeldt  
Chet Holland  
Marj Holland  
Gert Hunt  
Allan Jacobsen  
Barbara Jacobsen  
Dean Jacobsen  
Deb Jacobsen  
Gudran Jacobsen  
Janice Jacobsen  
Nadine Jacobsen  
Warren Jacobsen  
Audrey Jensen  
Barbara Jensen  
Beulah Jensen  
Don Jensen  
Doris Jensen  
Evelyn Jensen  
E.H. Jensen  
Helga Jensen  
Jackie Jensen  
Jackie Jensen  
Eland Jensen  
Leonard Jensen  
Marcella Jensen  
Elna Johansen  
Bernice Johnson  
Connie Johnson  
Lillie Johnson  
Lynn Johnson  
Verlee Johnson  
Virginia Johnson  
H. John Jones  
Ron Jones  
Doris Jones  
Dorothy Kelgor  
Jimmie Kelgor  
Anne Keller  
Rhoda Kelloway  
Mary Lowene  
Kempf  
Andy Kissel  
Fern Kissel  
Clarence Klein  
Frances Klein  
Carole Knaub  
Jeanette Knudsen  
Merlyn Knudsen  
Svend Koch  
Karen Korsgaard  
Ivar Kristoffersen  
Arlene Krom  
Evelyn Kuiken  
Bevery Ler  
Ed Larsen  
Edith Larsen  
Irene Larsen  
Joan Larsen  
Lyle Larsen  
Reta Larsen  
Wendell Larsen  
Diane Lawson  
Steve Lawson  
Arlene Leistad  
Betty Lillard  
Eivind Lillehoj  
Jeanette Lillehoj  
Fern Lindvall  
Beverly Maas  
Annabelle Madsen  
Bob Madsen  
Earl Madsen  
Mabel Madsen  
Signe Madsen  
Darrell Mardensen  
Lavonne Marcussen  
Avaline Marks  
Leslie Marks  
Grace Martens  
Dana McClain  
Martha McCord  
Gladys McRory  
Wayne McFadden  
Julie McKeever  
Michele McNabb  
Judy Meehan  
Elaine Michaelson  
Lavon Mikkelsen  
Merlin Mikkelsen  
Sonya Mikkelsen  
Mardell Miller  
Marlene Miller  
John Molgaard  
Merlyn Molgaard  
Arlene Morgan  
Bevery Nelson  
Bob Nelson  
Dale Nelson  
Delores Nelson  
Dick Nelson  
Don Nelson  
Fern Nelson  
Fran Nelson  
Frances Nelson  
Linda Nelson  
Martin Nelson  
Norma Lange  
Nelson  
Shirley Nelson  
Beulah Nielsen  
Clayton Nielsen  
Colleen Nichols  
Dawn Nielsen  
Helen Nielsen  
John Mark Nielsen  
Larry Nielsen  
LeVon Nielsen  
Lisa Nielsen  
Ruth Nielsen  
Virginia Nielsen  
Evelyn Nissen  
Fred Nissen  
Jill Nissen  
Folmer Nyby  
Kai Nyby  
Starr Nyby  
Vera Nyby  
Glenn Olsen  
Mary Ellen Olsen  
Phyllis Olsen  
Duane Oertges  
Karolyn Oertges  
Erik Høgsbro  
Østergaard  
Bev Paulsen  
Elvie Paulsen  
Jane Paulsen  
Mark Paulsen  
Wayne Paulsen  
Clara Pedersen  
Leroy Pedersen  
Marion Pedersen  
Alice Petersen  
Annabelle Petersen  
Andis Petersen  
Evel Petersen  
Helen J. Petersen  
Helen M. Petersen  
Joy Petersen  
Joyce Petersen  
Larry Petersen  
Lyle Petersen  
Lynn G. Petersen  
Mae Petersen  
Rosemary Petersen  
Wava Petersen  
Sheerie Planck  
Evelyn Plumb  
Ann Podrava  
Joanne Potts  
Ken Potts  
Tom Potts  
Bill Rafferty  
Karen Rafferty  
Doris Rasmussen  
Elva Rasmussen  
Ida Rasmussen  
Norma Rasmussen  
Suzanne Rasmussen  
Virginia Rasmussen  
Everett Rechtenbach  
Evelyn Rechtenbach  
Anna Redsand  
Mike Rigs  
Lisa Rigs  
Bill Rollins  
Merle Rounds  
Esther Rutherford  
Carolyn Sand  
Leroy Sand  
Kenneth Sand  
Nancy Sand  
Judy Schroder  
Bertha Schroeter  
Darrell Schroeter  
Lori Schultz  
Roger Schwery  
Adeline Scott  
Preben Sepstrup  
Betty Sievers  
Clara Simonds  
Harlan Simonds  
Alice Simonsen  
Egon Simonsen  
Joyce Smith  
LaVerne Smith  
Verdella Smith  
Kandy Snider  
Dick Soll  
Charlotte Sorensen  
Dorothy Sorensen  
Eileen Sorensen  
Elmer Sorensen  
Erik Sorensen  
Howard Sorensen  
Jens Sorensen  
Karma Sorensen  
Norma Jean  
Sothman  
Adrienne Spyridakos  
Gary Stamp  
Neoma Steen  
Clark Steen  
Elie Steffensen  
Halvors Strandskov  
Gayle Stuart  
Helen Stub  
Barbara Sullivan
In these uncertain times, please call ahead when planning a visit:

712.764.7001

ELK HORN, IOWA

Don Taylor
Janice Taylor
Neva Theede
JoAnn Thielen
Donna Christensen
Thomas
Irene Thomas
Rick Tighe
David Todd
Dorothy (Dusty) Turner
Steve Turner
Jessie Vithem
Henry Walter
Mardell Walter
Paul Walther
Alene Weaver
Linda Weaver
Rachel Weber
Mildred Weddum
Caryl West
Pam Whitmore
Lucille Wiges
Nadine Williamson
Sharon Winchell
Leah Wolf
This year, exhibitions at the Museum of Danish America have looked a little different from previous years, but nonetheless, with the generosity and support of our partners, we opened three new exhibits this year. In addition, by expanding our digital programs, we have found new and creative ways of bringing the museum to people in their homes across the globe.

*Migrant* was the result of a partnership with the Immigration Museum in Farum, Denmark and includes photographs by contemporary photographer Diana Velasco. It traces the history of immigrants to and from Denmark, looking at stories both past and present.

The series of works by Susanne Thea, *Snapshots: Traveling with the Poet Hans Christian Andersen*, showcased a lesser-known publication by Andersen, his travelogue from his journey across Europe and into Asia. Especially in this time when travel is severely limited, Susanne Thea’s work resonated, as she herself used Google to “travel” with the poet while depicting various places, people, and events from his narrative. Support for a pending 2021 visit by the artist to Elk Horn has been provided by the Kofoed Foundation.

Perhaps the biggest opening this year was *Art Nouveau Innovation: Danish Porcelain from an American Collector*. Support for the exhibit came from The Danish Home in Croton-on-Hudson, NY, and The Albert Victor Ravenholt Fund in Seattle, WA. In addition, Renze Display in Omaha, NE was responsible for fabricating the large panels that told the story of Danish porcelain in the Art Nouveau period. The collector in question, Dr. Todd Reiser, was exceptionally generous with his time and expertise. He traveled to Elk Horn for a socially-distanced open house, where members of the community were invited to see the exhibit, take tours of the museum and the prairie, and purchase freshly made barbeque from A-Town Smokeshack of Atlantic, IA. Although the museum had to close to the public prior to the completion of the show, a virtual tour, sponsored by The Danish Home in Croton-on-Hudson, NY, was made available for free to the public on the museum website and offered a way for our audiences across the country to enjoy the artistry and technical innovation showcased in the exhibit.

Once COVID forced the museum to close to the public, staff had to find new ways to engage with our audience by adapting our existing programs to virtual formats. One of the primary ways in which we saw our programs shift was the Brown Bag Lunch program, supported by a generous gift from the Kofoed Foundation. In years past, this has been held in person; however, with the museum closed due to the pandemic, these were instead shared on YouTube and Facebook, thus reaching the wider global community. In addition, the new formats offered the possibility of bringing in speakers who might not have otherwise been able to travel to Elk Horn through videoconferencing tools.

A major virtual offering this year was a “Collecting 101” video and live Q&A session with Dr. Todd Reiser, the collector behind *Art Nouveau Innovation*. After filming an introduction to collecting video during his visit to Elk Horn, he generously shared not only his time for a live video chat with museum members and supporters, he also offered two pieces from his personal collection as part of a raffle for those who had signed up. The first one was held in December, with 30 attendees, with a second one to be held in the new year.
ON-SITE EXHIBITIONS IN 2020

_Dannebrog 800_
January 2019 – May 2020

_New Nordic Cuisine_
June 22, 2019 – January 5, 2020

_Kings, Queens, and Commoners: Portraits from the Museum’s Permanent Collection_
September 21, 2019 – September 13, 2020

_Migrant_
February 21, 2020 – May 2, 2021

_Snapshots: Traveling with the Poet Hans Christian Andersen: Works by Danish Artist Susanne Thea_
June 2020 – June 12, 2021

_Art Nouveau Innovation: Danish Porcelain from an American Collector_
October 2, 2020 – January 3, 2021

TRAVELING EXHIBITIONS

_New Nordic Cuisine_
American Swedish Historical Museum, Philadelphia, PA
Vesterheim: The National Norwegian-American Museum & Folk Art School, Decorah, IA

_Dannebrog 800_
Luck Public Library and Historical Museum

SPECIAL DIGITAL EVENTS

_Brown Bag Lunch Series_
April: Edible Plants of Iowa with Rich & Marion Patterson
May: Islam and Immigration in Denmark with Dr. Todd Green
July: Prairie Walk with Kiara Rodriguez
September: Technical Art History with Diya Nagaraj
October: Gallery Talk | Art Nouveau Innovation: Danish Porcelain from an American Collector with Dr. Todd Reiser
November: Paper Cuttings with Annette Andersen
December: Caring for the Textile Collection and the Inventory Process with Julia Jessen

“Collecting 101”:
An Introduction to Collecting Danish Porcelain
December 10, 2020: Live Q&A with Dr. Todd Reiser
January 13, 2021: Live Q&A with Dr. Todd Reiser
collections

Even though reduced travelling in 2020 resulted in lower numbers of artifact donations, the museum still made some important additions to the collections. From wedding clothing for both bride and groom to military uniforms from World War II, a conducting baton used by Victor Borge and cruets used at the 1964-65 New York World’s Fair 01, smoking pipes commemorating military service 02, and a large model of an area barn built by a Danish immigrant 03, the collection continues to be an important component in meeting the museum’s mission.

As always, we thank our donors for their generosity and support in growing our collection, and for helping to fund its ongoing care and preservation.

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The purpose of our museum, among other things, is to tell the continuing story of the Danish immigrant experience and influence. As a way of paying tribute, the Wall of Honor was established, listing the name of the immigrant, year of entering the United States, and primary place of settlement. Their stories and family histories, if available, are part of a growing repository connected with the Museum of Danish America’s Genealogy Center. Listed below are the names of the immigrants placed on the museum’s Wall of Honor in the year 2020:

PEDER CHRISTIAN & JACOBINA CHRISTIANSEN (1882) (1892) Viborg, SD – Gloria Richelieu Fiedler, Davenport, IA

CHRISTIAN C. CLAUSEN (1907) Exira, Iowa – Nina Clausen, Exira, IA

DAGMAR KATRINA RUNGE CLAUSEN (1920) Exira, Iowa – Nina Clausen, Exira, IA

HANS CHRISTIAN HANSEN & BODIL MARIE ANDERSEN HANSEN (1922, 1922) Montezuma, IA – Steve Ferguson, Grimes, IA

MARINUS JENSEN & OLENA SORENSEN JENSEN (1889, 1889) Verdon, SD – Douglas Jensen, Aberdeen, SD

PETER KNUDSEN (1913) Jacksonville, IA – Garey & Sherry Knudsen, Hutchinson, MN, Tom & Phyllis Tucker, Corydon, IN, and Dennis & Sharon Littlejohn, Des Moines, IA

TAGE ANDREAS LAURSEN (1915) Omaha, NE – Eric Laursen and Thomas Laursen Charlemont, MA

AXEL THEODOR SKELBECK (1923) Omaha, NE – Bradley R. Sauter, Sheridan IN

PEDER NIELSEN PEDERSEN VIXO & ANNA KATRINE FRANDSEN VIXO (1907, 1907) Powers Lake, North Dakota – Sharon Vixo, Jamestown, ND
Due to the restrictions COVID-19 caused, year 2020 was a rather slow one for the Genealogy Center. We were closed for the majority of the year, so we only welcomed 72 visitors, mainly from Iowa and the Midwest, though we did have a few from Florida and a couple from New York.

The small backlog of research projects that were carried over from 2019 were worked on. Genealogy staff completed 24 research projects, which were received from all over the country. These research projects were complex and in-depth, so they did take quite a bit of effort and time and resulted in some very interesting family histories. There were also 25 translation projects completed for the year. The number of overall projects was low and we believe it’s another side effect of the strains COVID-19 has put on people and finances.

Because the number of projects to be completed was low, everyone has been working on updating the existing immigrant files. The genealogy staff and volunteers added 48 new files to our immigrant database, and updated or augmented 249 files. For the already established files, this includes finding birth and death documents as well as ensuring there are documents in the file verifying the identity of the immigrant and his/her family members.

Genealogy Center volunteers have donated over 1,027 hours to improve the Genealogy Center’s resources, update files, and assist with projects. The number of hours they contributed are pretty impressive considering they couldn’t come for half of the year, so we are very thankful for what they accomplished.

We are starting to explore more outreach and services through digital means, which is also a focus of our new strategic plan. In 2020, a remote summer internship program was developed, opening up the possibilities of having more interns in the future. In fall, a genealogy Facebook group was created to interact with those interested in Danish genealogy and what we do. Finally, we took part in the National Nordic Museum’s inaugural Virtual Nordic Genealogy Conference by creating an informational session that focused on our Genealogy Center and how we research. Last check, on January 14, there were 43 views on the video.

In these first few weeks of January, we’ve already had an inquiry to do a collaborative research session via Zoom, which will be the first remote session we’ve done. I think it’s a great first step into exploring our options for offering digital services like this and working towards the new strategic plan goal.

Finally, a very special thank you to Wanda Sornson, for training me in the duties of Genealogy Center Manager and Cheyenne Jansdatter for helping teach how to complete the accessioning and cataloging of materials for the collection.

We look forward to what this 2021 will bring to our Genealogy Center. We know we couldn’t do it without the generous support of patrons, donors, and volunteers.

By Amanda Skellenger
In 2020 we received and/or processed donations from the following individuals and institutions:

Andy Andersen, St. Johns, FL
Elaine K. Bakke, Savage, MN
Rikke Borge, South Egremont, MA
Robin Borglum Carter, Corpus Christi, TX
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Danish American Archive & Library, Blair, NE
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #6, Omaha, NE
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THE MUSEUM OF DANISH AMERICA PERMANENTLY RECOGNIZES TWO GROUPS OF FRIENDS AND MEMBERS WHO HAVE DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES THROUGH OUTSTANDING SUPPORT, BOTH WHILE LIVING AND IN THEIR ESTATE PLANS. THESE GROUPS ARE KNOWN AS LIFETIME LEGACY GIVING AND HERITAGE BUILDERS.

Recognition includes five categories of giving. In alphabetical order, this reflects cumulative giving of $25,000 and more from individuals or their estates, foundations, trusts, and organizations. These names are inscribed on a large plaque at the entrance of the museum.

During the calendar year of 2020, the Board of Directors was pleased to add the names of
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And in addition, we acknowledge this donor having achieved a new level of lifetime giving:
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Over the past 37 years, the Museum of Danish America has accomplished much because of special friends and members who have provided for the museum in their estate plans. During 2020 one new Heritage Builder plaque was added to the recognition board, and the couple’s names are indicated in bold. With their permission while living or with the permission of their estate’s executor, the 119 names of Heritage Builders are permanently inscribed on a plaque at the entrance to the museum. An asterisk* marks Heritage Builders who are deceased.

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Anonymous (3)*
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Please contact them by calling (712) 764-7001 or emailing deb.larsen@danishmuseum.org. Your inquiry will be treated confidentially.
special appeals

During the course of each year, the Museum of Danish America invites its supporters to make contributions to special projects and restricted funds. The individuals, organizations, or foundations listed below contributed to these appeals in 2020 (and reflected in the Honor Roll of Contributors). *Donors to the Summer Appeal and End-of-Year Appeal are included in the Honor Roll of Contributors.*

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**Hiking for Danish America-Bruce Bro**

Danish Sisterhood Lodge #4, Chicago, IL  
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Elsa Steffensen, Elizabeth Steffensen & Linda Steffensen, Hoffman Estates, IL

**Curatorial**

**The Main Floor Gallery**

Lowell & Marilyn Kramme, Des Moines, IA

**Traveling Exhibits:**

**Art Nouveau Innovation**

The Danish Home, Croton-On-Hudson, NY  
Albert Victor Ravenholt Fund, Hanlonton, IA

**New Nordic Cuisine**

Kenny Bogus & Marnie Jensen, Nebraska City, NE  
Albert Victor Ravenholt Fund, Hanlonton, IA

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The Museum of Danish America is the grateful recipient of gifts made in memory of deceased friends and relatives.

Shirley Acker
Dorothea Pederson Adams-Haring, my grandmother
Anton & Kristine Andersen
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Richard L. Andersen
Lois Andersen, my sister
John B. Andersen
Rev. Virgil Anderson, my father, and Tim V. Anderson, my brother
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Niels Baade, whose parents emigrated to USA
Gay Bannister
The life of Gay J. Bannister
Ruth (Larsen) Randall Benson
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Charles E. R. Boye
Charlie Brehm, my husband
Astrid Andersen Brewer
Robert W. Brown
Robert (Bob) Brown, my father
Cecily Castenskold
Jimmy Christensen
Joyce Christensen
Joyce Christensen, a very sweet lady with a wicked sense of humor
Joyce Christensen, my loving mother always with a smile
Joyce LaVonne Christensen
Nels Madsen Christensen
T. K. Christensen
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Lotte Christensen, my wife

John (Jack) Christensen, our uncle
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Tova Brandt’s Hygge presentation
Bruce Bro’s Hiking for Danish America
Bruce Bro, my cousin who successfully completed his “Hike for Danish America”
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Marilyn Meyer’s four Danish grandparents who came to Brayton 10 miles east of Elk Horn
Museum of Danish America’s successful continuation
Museum Staff and the Board of the Museum of Danish America
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Additionally, we are pleased to include on the Honor Roll, our Organization Associate members who contribute $100 or more to the museum. The Organization Associates are listed according to their giving level.

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Constance Schneider, Lincoln, NE
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Brian & Denise Schoening, Shelby, IA
Every effort has been made to ensure that all information contained in the 2020 Annual Report of Contributions is accurate. We respectfully regret and apologize for any omissions, misspellings, or misplacements. Please contact the Development Department with any questions or corrections.
victor borge’s favorite recipe

Salt and pepper to taste
6 whole Cornish hens
about 1 1/2 lbs each
1/4 lb butter
1 1/4 cups water

Gravy:
3 tsp flour + enough water to make a paste
1/2 cup light cream
Browning sauce as desired
1/2 tsp sugar

As the recipe appears on 1950s ViBo Rock Cornish Hen packaging:
Rub insides of 6 ViBo Rock Cornish hens with salt and pepper. Sear in 1/4 pound butter in Dutch Oven until golden brown — 10 to 12 min. — (If a clock is not available, play the “Minute Waltz” ten to twelve times.) Add 1 1/4 cups water and let simmer, covered, until tender — approx. 35 min. — (Here the “Dance of the Hour,” played half through, will come in handy, if dragged slightly.) Remove birds. Stir like crazy into drippings a paste made of cold water and 3 teaspoons flour. Add 1/2 cup light cream, salt, tasteless sauce coloring, and 1/2 teaspoon sugar. Serves six.

You can thank Victor Borge for Cornish hens, too.

In the early 1950s, Borge purchased and ran a 400-acre farm in Connecticut, ViBo Farm, raising pheasants and guinea hens. In the middle of that decade, fellow Connecticut poultry farmers Jacques and Therese Makowsky crossbred chickens to produce single-serving birds. Borge was an early investor and the most prominent promoter, selling “Rock Cornish Game Hens” and other food items as ViBo Products – even appearing on a 1959 episode of the popular panel game show What’s My Line? with the occupation of “Poultry Farmer,” not pianist. In 1964 he donated the property to the University of Connecticut.

01. Did Borge catch flack for his flock?
Our collection includes this piece, by Canadian artist Ole Jonassen (1897-1978), which suggests so. 2020.011.003, gift of the Family of Victor Borge
01. *The New Camp Cookbook* #6080, $27.  
03. *Camp Cocktails* #6079, $27.  
06. Rosendahl Grand Cru Hot Drink Glass, Set of 2 #5345, $30.  
Members receive a 10% discount! More to see online: www.danishmuseum.org/shop. Orders by phone to 712.764.7001. Curbside pickup is available.