

America Letter

Winter 2006

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An International
Cultural Center



THE DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM

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

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

A New Website!

Past on-line visitors to our website www.danishmuseum.org are in for a pleasant surprise. We have unveiled a new website, one with a fresh look and more information. In addition to valuable information about the Danish-American experience, visitors will learn about contemporary Danish culture and discover links to Danish companies and websites.

Encouragement to update our site came from former board member Birgit Andersen, who believed we needed to present a contemporary look to the over 50,000 monthly visitors to our site. She backed up her encouragement with a generous gift that allowed us to proceed with the redesign.

Former board member, Curt Pedersen, assisted by placing us in contact with Kriss Pearson, whose company Art of Computers in Tucson, completed the work. Curt was also insistent that our website contain such useful information as a timeline of Danish and Danish-American history and a focus on contemporary Denmark. In the near future, we are also looking forward to offering a Danish translation for all the pages; this will be coming soon.

Upgrading comes at a price. To keep pace with current web technologies, the site is designed for high-speed Internet service. This allows for fast delivery of the many pictures and slide shows. It may mean, however, that members who are tied to the Internet through telephone modems will experience delays as it takes time to transfer the many pictures.

Bringing on-line any new product will result in some errors and glitches. We know they are there and ask your forbearance as we work to correct errors and address technical problems. In the meantime, we hope you will enjoy the site and will find that it is another reason for valuing what we do here at The Danish Immigrant Museum.





Director's Corner *By John Mark Nielsen*

"Vision without action is day-dreaming; action without vision is a nightmare."

-Japanese Proverb

Recently I was visiting Lowell and Marilyn

Kramme, who are members of the museum's Lifetime Leadership Society. Lowell is the Royal Danish Consul for Iowa and also a former museum board member. As we discussed visions for The Danish Immigrant Museum, Marilyn shared this Japanese proverb. It resonated with me.

I was privileged to be a part of the original committee that envisioned a museum. Through the actions of many over the past twenty-two years, what could have been daydreams has become a reality. Over the years, however, the expectations and nature of the Danish-American community have evolved. At our founding, there was a desire to insure that artifacts that told the Danish immigrant story were preserved. This remains an important responsibility, but it does not engage or attract younger audiences. Consequently, we must be about more.

My vision for The Danish Immigrant Museum is that it be an active institution, one known for inviting visitors to consider the past, but also challenging them to think about how it impacts the present and shapes the future. For example, what advantages did my grandparents enjoy that immigrants today from other countries may not? How has the world changed since they came in the early 20th century? In what ways do easy communication and travel affect and even impede assimilation? How does American popular culture affect the lives of Danish young people? Why might young Danes choose to live in the United States but not become American citizens? Challenging people to think should be evident in the programming, displays, and exhibits we provide to members across the country.

The museum, I believe, has a responsibility to tell the Danish immigrant story to a wider audience, raising important questions about the opportunities, challenges and conflicts that arise from the

migration of peoples. I would hope that visitors leave our museum having considered the implications of immigration and how the movement of peoples contributes to the reshaping of culture. At this point, I'm afraid they do not.

Our permanent exhibit, "Across Oceans, Across Time®," tells a story, but it really ends in a pre-World War II era. Yes, there is a brief acknowledgement of the role some Danes played in rescuing their fellow Jewish citizens, and we have Victor Borge's first piano, but do we help visitors to understand what motivated some to leave a changing, post World War II Denmark? Or do we explain why immigration from Denmark today has dwindled to a trickle? Danes continue to migrate to countries around the world, but now the destinations are often other countries within the European Union or dramatically, Asia, as business opportunities beckon.

My vision is that The Danish Immigrant Museum be an educational institution as well. Preserving and explaining the past is part of that vision, but I hope we are an institution that will ask questions too. Yes, we should preserve and explain the past, but we should also help visitors understand the relationship between that past and the present world in which we live.

Actions that are needed to make this happen can be challenging because of our relatively small population and the scattered nature of our settlement. Where we can begin to have an immediate impact is on our website. Because of the support of two former board members, Birgit Andersen and Curt Pedersen, we have been able to upgrade our website. I believe you will find it more informative than the old. I am particularly pleased that it conveys a wider scope of activity than was evident on our earlier site.

We can also enhance our permanent exhibit. The present exhibit "Across Oceans, Across Time®" has been up for eleven years. Not only has exhibit technology changed, the way we look at the Danish immigrant story has evolved. A new permanent exhibit gallery is also needed, containing the space that can be used creatively and dramatically to spotlight the many artifacts we have in

our collection. Over the past years, we have made a good effort to collect, but now we need to be about interpreting the experience. To take such action needs resources.

Resources will only be made available to us if the actions are meaningful and reveal a vision. In the past several years we have been reaching out in an attempt to connect with and engage a wider audience in our programming. My hope is that these programs to preserve and celebrate our Danish heritage and our relations with Denmark are valuable.

I do invite your continued support and your investment in our future. We are grateful for the many supporters we have; we are particularly grateful for those of you who have shared with us that you have provided for the museum in your estate planning or who are willing to make commitments over several years. Knowing that there are the resources to support our actions is critical as we plan the future; actions and visions without resources also inspire nightmares!



Museum Board Holds 72nd Meeting

The Board of Directors of The Danish Immigrant Museum will hold its 72nd regular meeting February 9-11, 2006 in Tampa, Florida. The Executive Committee will arrive on the 8th and meet on Thursday the 9th. Individual committee meetings will take place all day on Friday, February 10 and on Saturday the board will meet as a whole to discuss committee recommendations and to receive a report from Executive Director, John Mark Nielsen. Board members will also hear a report from representatives of Hartsook Companies, Inc. of Wichita, Kansas, on a feasibility study that will help the Board determine future museum plans. Members from the local Danish-American clubs are invited to attend a luncheon on Saturday where they will be given a presentation on the progress the Museum has been making and plans for the future. Museum members living in Florida who would like to participate in the luncheon are invited to call The Danish Immigrant Museum at 800-759-9192 for details and to make reservations.

Nadjeschda Overgaard, National Heritage Fellow 1998: A Retrospective

The exhibition “Nadjeschda Overgaard, National Heritage Fellow, 1998” opened at Julefest and will remain on display through the spring of 2006. The exhibition offers a wide-ranging view of Nadjeschda Overgaard’s work over the span of many years. The exhibition

includes paintings, drawings and several different forms of needlework, including Nadjeschda’s hardanger needlework, which won her the designation of Master Artist during the 1998 National Heritage Fellowship awards.

Nadjeschda Overgaard, daughter of Danish parents, Carl and Anna Schjødt Lyngge, was born in Siberia in 1905. Her father was working there to help establish creameries. The family returned to Denmark in 1910 so Nadjeschda could be educated in their home country. In 1916, the Lyngge family immigrated to the United States, settling in southwest Iowa.

Nadjeschda learned the

art of hardanger as a young girl from her mother, Anna Lyngge. The art was also taught in Danish schools at the time. The exhibition features a couple of Nadjeschda’s school projects, but the majority of the work that is on view reflects the achievements of her mature years.

Nadjeschda Overgaard acquired an

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The Russian samovar seen in the foreground was purchased by Nadjeschda’s father, Carl Lyngge, in Tara, Siberia as a wedding gift for his bride, Anna, in 1904. Around 1910, Carl, Anna and their young daughter, Nadjeschda, returned to Denmark so that Nadjeschda could go to a Danish school. The Lynges took the samovar with them. In 1915, the Lyngge family immigrated to the United States, traveling directly to southwest Iowa and the large Danish settlement in the Elk Horn/Kimballton area. The samovar crossed the ocean with them. In 1947, Anna Lyngge gave the samovar to her daughter, Nadjeschda; it was a centerpiece in the Overgaard home for years.



Nadjeschda made a number of things for family and friends. The pieces are delightfully imaginative and “homey” at the same time. All of the items shown here reflect her own free-hand design. Through her dolls and finger puppets, Nadjeschda encouraged imaginative play.



Nadjeschda made the baptismal dress for her oldest daughter, Annette. The small linen garment is handmade in all aspects. Nadjeschda designed the embroidery pattern used on the dress and knit the lace, which trims the slip. All seven of her children, many of her grandchildren, and some of her great-grandchildren have worn the dress at their baptisms.

One of Nadjeschda’s tatted doilies can be seen in a frame at the right. Nadjeschda learned the art of tating as a young girl sometime after her immigration to America in 1916. She learned the art from her aunt, Anna Scott, who was also born in Denmark. Over the years, she tatted with a shuttle which Anna gave to her. Many years later, Nadjeschda gave the shuttle and some of her tatted lace to The Danish Immigrant Museum.



Nadjeschda learned the art of hardanger as a young girl from her mother, Anna Lyngge. The art was also taught in Danish schools at the time. Later, in America, when she had her own family, Nadjeschda taught her daughters, Annette, Karma and Ebba, to do hardanger. Several of her granddaughters have also learned this art. Over the years, she made countless hardanger pieces as gifts for her family and friends.



Nadjeschda loved the Christmas season. It allowed her a wide imaginative range in the things she could make. She especially loved Nisser in all their forms. When she was invited to design The Danish Immigrant Museum's annual Christmas card for the year 2000, Nadjeschda chose the Nisse motif. She routinely made and gave nisser as gifts to family and friends.

Overgaard . . .

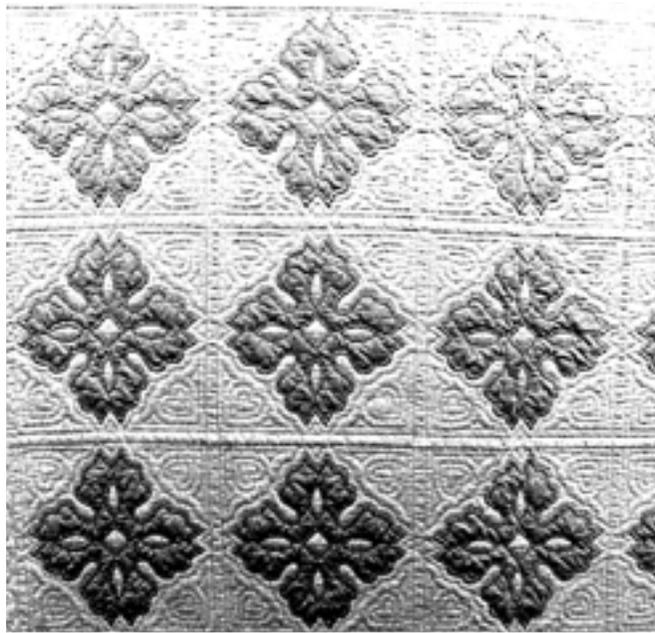
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extensive working knowledge of the various needlework arts. She continued to work in several forms throughout her life. She freely re-imagined traditional patterns and designs. The larger body of her needlework reflects this re-imagining process, resulting in a number of original designs. The exhibit offers a select number of these pieces for viewing.

Also on display are a number of fun things Nadjeschda made for family and friends. Among these pieces are Christmas nisse in various sizes and interpretations, Christmas tree ornaments made from egg shells with little scenes tucked inside, finger puppets of several different descriptions, little cloth dolls, a teddy bear and cloth ball.

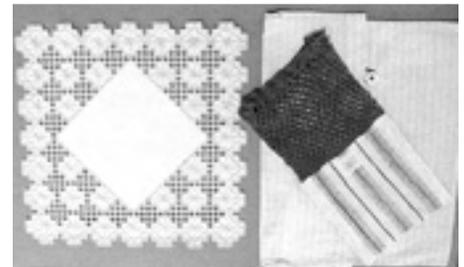
Nadjeschda was intrigued by flowers. They were a favorite subject for exploration in her paintings and pastels, a number of which are displayed in the current exhibition. Nadjeschda was particularly fascinated by the interplay of colors among the flowers. Their shapes and forms absorbed her as well. In her later years, during the 1990s, when she herself was also in her 90s, Nadjeschda devoted several works to the study of iris flowers. Two pieces from this period are included in the exhibition.

In 1990, Nadjeschda received the Iowa Cultural Heritage Fellowship Award and in 1998 she was awarded the National Heritage Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts.



This photo detail depicts a hand-quilted appliqué quilt Nadjeschda began in the 1930's, prior to her marriage to Niels Overgaard in 1933. The appliqué pattern is her original design. She did not finish the quilt until several years later, however; raising children and managing a household delayed the project. A friend, Myrtle Hansen, helped her with the hand quilting. Nadjeschda gave the quilt to the Museum in 2003.

Nadjeschda made the knitting and laundry bags as a schoolgirl in Denmark. At that time, girls were frequently taught sewing in school. Lessons often began with a study of the different kinds of stitches. The girls would then make a sewing project using some of the stitches learned. Additionally, there were a number of private sewing schools where young girls were taught the details of fine needlework and the textile arts generally. The hardanger doily dates from Nadjeschda's mature years.



Still life by Clint Hansen, see the story and more artwork on page 6 of this issue.

From A Curatorial Perspective . . .

by Barbara Lund-Jones

The year 2005 saw the establishment of two very important committees in the curatorial department: the collections committee and the exhibitions committee. The collections committee was implemented in March and is comprised of four full-time staff members, including the executive director, and one long term collections volunteer. The exhibitions committee was implemented in August; it, too, includes the executive director, as well as six other full-time staff members representing several different areas within the museum. Both committees are open to current interns.

It is the purpose of this article to succinctly detail the work of each committee so that our members and supporters will have a better idea of some of the deci-

sion processes underlying the ongoing development of our artifact collection and our evolving exhibition program.

Collections Committee

While the collections committee addresses all issues related to the museum's collections, the larger portion of its time is devoted to the development of the collection through a review of specific offerings. Each year, several hundred objects are offered to the collection. The committee convenes on the first Monday of every month to review the objects offered during the previous weeks.

The committee's first consideration is whether an individual object fits the museum's mission, which is to tell the Danish immigrant story and the story of subsequent generations of Danish

Americans and the ways in which Danish heritage expresses itself in homes and various organizations throughout the country. From this starting point, the committee moves on to a number of other considerations:

- Does the object contribute to the stories we tell?
- Does it duplicate other objects in our collection?
- Is it documented? What is the quality and scope of its documentation?
- Can we care for it properly or does it have special conservation needs, which we are unable to provide on an ongoing basis?
- Do we have room to store it and keep it safely through time?

All of these questions and more are addressed as the committee decides which objects it will take into the collection and which it will decline.

Exhibitions Committee

The exhibitions committee addresses all issues related to the museum's exhibition programs. It was created to more effectively plan future exhibits, develop appropriate budgets, and coordinate marketing. An important dimension of the committee's work is to brainstorm exhibition ideas through development and tentative testing within the framework of both actual and possible resources. Committee members also brainstorm interpretative directions and manners of representation within an exhibit. In addition to consideration of exhibition subject and content, the exhibitions committee addresses funding, marketing and programming strategies for individual exhibits. The organization and implementation of these two committees gives a collaborative voice to the development of both the museum's collections and exhibitions.

The gymnastics exhibit, which is scheduled to open in April of 2006, will be among the first of the museum's exhibits to reflect the collaborative approach of multiple staff members. We warmly invite you to share in this new venture.



Exhibits of Danish-American Artists Planned

The museum is committing its lower level gallery space to the exhibition of Danish-American artists or artists who work with Danish-American themes or materials, such as Rick Marzullo, who works extensively with *papirklip*. The gallery space is scheduled through 2007 featuring the artists listed below along with the dates of their exhibitions:

Clint Hansen, Audubon, IowaJanuary 19, 2006 – July 5, 2006
Rick Marzullo, Solvang, CaliforniaJuly 20, 2006 – January 3, 2007
Elmer Petersen, Galesburg, Wisconsin.....January 18, 2007 – July 5, 2007
Cynthia McKeen, St. Paul, MinnesotaJuly 29, 2007 – January 2, 2008

The museum wishes to make available to our visitors exhibitions of Danish-American artists who work throughout the country. We would like to draw in artists from both the east and west coasts, as well as from the south and points in-between. We invite our members and supporters to submit names of Danish-American artists that they know and whose work would lend itself to a museum exhibition.

Please send your suggestions to our curator, Barbara Lund-Jones, by either postal mail or e-mail [curator@danishmuseum.org]. She will gather available information regarding the artists and prepare the submissions for review by the museum's exhibition committee. We would like to be able to schedule the artist exhibitions three to five years in the future.

Clint Hansen Exhibit



A Sticky Situation or Our Weeping Trolls

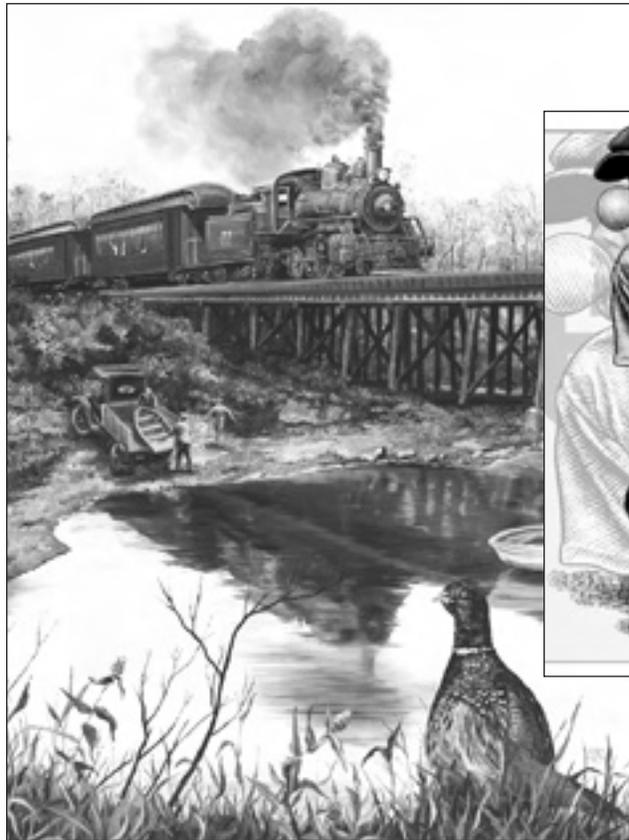
While working in Visual Storage in mid-November, Collections intern Katie Keil discovered two plastic dolls that are visibly deteriorating. These dolls are small trolls produced in Denmark, 1960s versions of the ones that were popular in the United States in the 1980s and early 1990s. Both trolls have simple, brightly colored dresses and white fuzzy hair on the tops of their heads. The exposed plastic arms, legs, and faces are oozing a clear, sticky liquid, obvious signs of deterioration.

Most plastics begin deteriorating to some degree even when brand new. Plastics have in them chemicals that are called plasticizers. These chemicals cause plastics to degrade. The more plasticizers there are in a piece of plastic, the more quickly it will deteriorate. Soft, malleable plastics like Barbie legs have more plasticizers in them than do harder plastics like hair combs. These trolls have soft bodies and are most likely made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), a standard plastic used in soft, flexible, inflatable toys. As this type of plastic deteriorates, it creates this clear liquid. This process is called weeping. That liquid emits fumes that are not only unpleasant to the nose, but also toxic. The odor noted when the dolls were found and removed came from this liquid.

Clint Hansen is a Danish-American artist, who works for a wide range of commercial and private clients. Among those companies commissioning his art are IBM, The Smithsonian Institute, Disney, Kellogg's, Coca-Cola, Kodak, McDonald's, Focus on the Family, Reader's Digest, Cracker Barrel, Banana Republic, Zondervan, Heinz, Anheiser Busch, Zebco and the Iowa National Air Guard. Hansen also created 1995 and 1996 commemorative Olympic coins for the U.S. mint (50 cent denomination).

Clint Hansen lives and works in southwestern Iowa. He practices his art in several different mediums, including scratchboard, oils, mosaic and stained glass. He has also created a number of paper sculptures as part of his work as an illustrator of children's books. Some of these sculptures will be on display, as will the books he has illustrated.

The exhibition of Clint Hansen's work opens January 19 and runs through July 5, 2006.



Katie and Collections Manager Angela Stanford immediately removed the trolls from storage, as well as the thin foam shelf lining (called Ethafoam) they were resting on. Contact between the liquid the trolls are producing and other plastic artifacts could accelerate the deterioration of those pieces, so removal from storage was necessary. Also, the fumes are a health risk for any staff member working in Visual Storage. They were temporarily stored in another room where



staff does not work.

Both Angela and Katie attended the

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2005 Julestue



for the weekend, and when you stepped through the door you could smell Christmas. This special smell of Christmas came from the kitchen, which was turned into the Jule Café, where there were decorated tables and one huge table filled with goodies – *gløgg*, coffee, cider, cookies and a huge tray of *æbleskiver*.

At the café some volunteers mixed dough for *æbleskiver*, fried *æbleskiver* and baked *pebernødder*. The event could not have been possible without the volunteers.

Therefore, we would like to thank you, every one, who helped out during Julestue whether it was frying *æbleskiver*, baking cookies or reading Christmas stories to the children.

Speaking of children, Julestue at the museum is an event for the whole family and especially for the children. This year like last year, people could make different crafts at the tables in the dining room – crafts like paper cutting, making a nisse of yarn, and Christmas decorations. Besides different crafts, this year we had a couple of storytellers. One of the volunteers, Phyllis Kosky read Hans

Christian Andersen's "The Little Match Girl" which the children enjoyed.

As a Dane I enjoyed being part of this year's Julestue, because it was like a real Danish Julestue filled with *hyggelige* hours among friends, and when watching everybody, whether it was the volunteers, the staff or the guests, you could see everyone had a good time. That is exactly what Christmas is to me, having a good time with family and friends.

I hope next year's Julestue will also be a great success, and I will already now invite you to join us. *Vi ses!*



by Helene Christensen

During my childhood I have been at several *julestue'er*, therefore, I can say with certainty that this year was very special – to spend a couple of days dedicated to Christmas at The Danish Immigrant Museum, among fellow Danes and Danish-Americans.

Each year Elk Horn hosts Julefest during Thanksgiving weekend. In 2004 the museum initiated *julestue* (literally, the Christmas room) as one of its contributions to Julefest. As in 2004, the museum was decorated for the occasion with Christmas lights and Christmas trees. The whole museum glowed and sparkled



Julemanden handing out treats to the children.



Volunteer Clara Pedersen making pebernødder in the kitchen with her granddaughter, Holly.

Sticky Situation . . . continued from page 6

Iowa Museum Association Annual Conference in Des Moines in October. One of the sessions they enrolled in discussed plastics and was led by Christina Kastell from the Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science in Davenport, Iowa. They learned about how to identify certain types of plastics based on appearance, age, and even the deterioration process.

After the discovery of these trolls, Angela contacted Christina Kastell, who said she and others at the Putnam are currently experimenting with pieces that have been removed from their collection due to advanced deterioration. She recommended cleaning one troll with Q-tips and distilled water and then storing it in very cold storage, while

leaving the other troll alone. After time, any changes can be noted and it will be clear if this treatment has any effect on prolonging the life of plastics already in the deterioration process.

Angela and Katie have begun this treatment process, and will monitor the dolls closely over the next several months. Any and all changes will be noted, and this information will be shared with Ms. Kastell at the Putnam as a part of on-going research.

This experience underscores the importance for staff to attend professional workshops and to work collaboratively with the staffs of other museums. Watch for updates on the status of our weeping trolls in a future issue of the America Letter.

Friis Newly Appointed Danish Ambassador to the United States

Ambassador Friis Arne Petersen, the newly appointed Danish Ambassador to the United States, is shown with Frida Burling, a Washingtonian and museum member whose great-grandfather, Johan Cornelius, was a member of the Danish Legation in Washington, D.C., until his death in 1874. His family stayed on in Washington, and his daughter, Frida's grandmother, maintained her ties to the Kondrups in Copenhagen.

Within days of presenting his credentials to President George W. Bush, Ambassador Petersen was the banquet speaker in Des Moines for the conference



“Danish Culture Past and Present: The Last Two Hundred Years.” The Danish Immigrant Museum co-sponsored the conference, which attracted over 400 participants.

Frida Burling recently wrote a book about her family, including the Danish relatives, which she entitled, *Finally Frida*. A copy she donated is available in the library of the museum's Family History and Genealogy Center.



From Our Development Director...

“We are proud to support The Danish Immigrant Museum” a member couple recently shared with me. As I have traveled around the country visiting with donors and supporters during the fall months, it was really wonderful to hear these words. It gives all of us on staff added motivation and inspiration to give that extra effort daily in making our museum even better.

On behalf of the Museum Board of Directors and staff, I want to especially thank you for your generous and loyal giving in 2005 in support of our mission to share the legacy and continuing influence of Danish culture as realized in the experiences and contributions of Danish immigrants, their descendents, and Danes living in America. Your membership and contributions have provided us with the opportunity to showcase exciting exhibits, continue on-going educational outreach programs, and carry on the museum's daily activities. We are also grateful to the many donors who

have assisted us in completing several important improvement projects, such as adding ultra-violet filters for museum windows, installing exhibit lighting for the Mezzanine Gallery, and replacing the shingled roof with a beautiful new, red, tile-look roof.

Just as you have committed yourselves to support us financially through your membership and contributions this past year, I believe it is noteworthy to mention that every single member of the museum's Board of Directors and staff have also made sizeable contributions as well.

To make The Danish Immigrant Museum even better, there is a lot of work ahead of us in 2006 and beyond. Our



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America Letter

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Not good bye, but see you again...

(Written December 16th 2005)

"*At rejse er at leve*" are the famous words from Hans Christian Andersen, and I must agree with him – "to travel is to live."

I started my internship at the museum August 1, 2005, and now it is time to return home. I do so with many memories that I will treasure forever. The entire experience as an intern at The Danish Immigrant Museum has been incredible. The job has consisted of various assignments, and I can honestly say that there has not been a day where I did not want to come into work.

My major assignment was to survey three different groups – members, visitors and a potential new audience for the museum. This meant writing the instruments, conducting the surveys and analyzing the data. In that regard I would like to thank those who participated in the survey.

Along with the surveys, I have taken part in different tasks like designing a new display board for traveling promotion, translating text into Danish, and designing a brochure. What I have really enjoyed is traveling and promoting the museum, meeting and visiting with people, who either are friends of the museum or have never heard anything of it.



Development . . .

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Board of Directors have, through its strategic planning process, established an ambitious and exciting vision for our future. Deb Larsen, Development Associate, and I, are fully committed to the challenge of this year's fundraising goals. With your continued support, we believe we can be successful.

I want to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a prosperous and plentiful New Year. We hope your plans this year include visiting "your Museum in the Heart of the Continent" and the Danish Villages of Elk Horn and Kimballton. If you cannot come in person, we hope you'll visit us at our new website. We look forward to seeing you!

Thomas Hansen

Besides working on assignments directly related to the museum, I have also joined Terri Johnson for various tourism meetings and exhibitions, and it has been really interesting to see how the tourism industry is doing in Iowa.

What has made the greatest impression on me during my time in the United States are the people. I must admit that you Americans really amaze me. To me Americans are so friendly, open hearted and welcoming. And I have to say that the Elk Horn area has become like a second home to me. So, I am sure it will be tough to say "good bye" December 22 especially to all the new friends that I have made while being here.

I would like to thank the board members of The Danish Immigrant Museum,

the American-Scandinavian Foundation in New York, the Danmark-AmerikaFondet in Copenhagen and the staff at

the International Office at Aalborg University for giving me the opportunity to do my internship at the museum in Elk Horn. Further, I would also like to say thanks to the volunteers at the museum, it has been great to meet you all. Last but not least, I would also like to say thank you to my colleagues; *you have made the last five months insightful, fantastic, exciting and fun.*

Helene Christensen



Jan Paulsen Elected President of Iowa Group Travel Association

Museum Shop Manager, Jan Paulsen has been elected to serve as President of the Iowa Group Travel Association. This non-profit organization is made up of many diverse members from across Iowa – destination marketing organizations, tourism attractions, businesses, and services – all dedicated to promoting group travel and developing Iowa's capacity to serve groups.

The association's purpose is to promote Iowa and its various tourism entities to the group tour market, to serve as a vehicle for the exchange of information and ideas pertinent to the group travel industry, exerting its collective influence in matters which may impact the state, national or international group travel industry and improving the marketing of Iowa tour companies by working with and through all entities involved with Iowa tourism.

Jan is excited about the 2006 goals for the association. Her agenda includes expanding the membership base, increasing tradeshow opportunities, enhancing the ability to bring tour operators and prospec-

tive groups to Iowa and launching a new web site. This should be a great year for Iowa tourism! If anyone would like more information on the association please contact Jan at 800-759-9192 or email her at giftshop@danishmuseum.org.



A Design for the 2006 Christmas Card

"*Glædelig Jul og godt nytår*" Christmas for 2005 has ended, and we are already thinking about the 2006 Christmas season. The Danish Immigrant Museum is looking for that special Christmas card design that will portray the warm and special feelings of a Danish Christmas for the 18th annual Christmas card and the 7th annual ornament. If you know of any artist or graphic designer who would be willing to submit a design, please have them contact Jan Paulsen, Museum Shop Manager at 712-764-7001 or giftshop@danishmuseum.org.

Announcing the 2006 “Tribute to the Rescuers” Essay Contest for Museum Members’ Children and Grandchildren

Following a successful pilot project in 2005, The Danish Immigrant Museum is pleased to announce the second annual “Tribute to the Rescuers” essay contest. The purpose of the contest is to introduce young people to issues of moral courage through the experience of the rescue of Danish Jews during World War II. Students are challenged to recognize that this was not an isolated event and are encouraged to discover and write about other individuals or groups who have come to the assistance of their fellow humans and have thus demonstrated moral courage and civic responsibility.

This year the contest is open to the children and grandchildren of all museum members. Participants must be in grades nine (9) through twelve (12) during the contest period. Students can participate if they are attending a public, home, private or parochial high school. Essays must be a minimum of 750 words and not more than 1,000 words. Only one entry per student will be accepted. **The deadline to receive essays is Friday, March 31st. Students must contact The Danish Immigrant Museum for instructions and an official entry form**

that must accompany their essay.

This essay contest is an outgrowth of a partnership between the museum and the Institute for Holocaust Education in Omaha and Dana College in Blair. Since organizers want to encourage the best work possible, awards are generous. Because writing matures over the high school years, there are two contest categories, one for students in 9th and 10th grade and the other for students in 11th and 12th grade. Awards in each category are: First Prize, \$750; Second Prize, \$500, and Third Prize, \$250. **For more details, instructions and an official entry form, please contact Terri Johnson, Executive Assistant, at 712-764-7001 or secretary@danishmuseum.org.**

The museum is able to offer this important educational opportunity through a generous gift from the Eric and Joan Norgaard Charitable Trust of Northbrook, Illinois. The Norgaards were business owners in Chicago, who before their deaths set up a charitable trust to support young people and to celebrate Eric’s Danish heritage and Joan’s Norwegian heritage.

In Memory...

Friends and members of the Museum mourn the loss of long-time supporter

Merv Bro of Fountain Hills, Arizona, who passed away October 28, 2005. Merv was born to Niels and Laura Bork Bro, both Danish immigrants, on the family farm near Exira, Iowa. He founded the Bro Oil Company in Audubon, and later expanded the business to many other locations. Merv was very proud of his Danish heritage and served on the Board of Directors from 1996 – 1999. Merv’s brother, Dr. Ronald Bro of Cedar Falls, Iowa is a current member of the Board of Directors. Merv was a generous and long-time member of the Lifetime Leadership Society and the Heritage Builders. His many contributions made possible the Bro Dining Room, the installation of quality lighting for the exhibit gallery on the mezzanine level, and the completion of many other projects. We were so glad to have had the opportunity to host a dinner for Merv when he was back for a visit late last summer. Merv was a wonderful friend to the Museum and he will be greatly missed.



Hats Off to Elk Horn’s Danish Windmill

At the 2005 State Tourism Conference held in Council Bluffs, Iowa, the Danish Windmill was awarded “Tourism Attraction of the Year – Population Less than 10,000” (the Museum received this same award in 1994). This award is especially timely, since the mill will celebrate its 30th anniversary this year.

The authentic Danish windmill was built in Nørre Snede, Denmark in 1848 and was brought to Elk Horn 30 years ago and rebuilt by community volunteers as a tribute to the strong Danish heritage in the area. The Danish Villages of Elk Horn and Kimballton are in the middle of the largest rural Danish settlement in the U.S. - two of the reasons for building The Danish Immigrant Museum in Elk

Horn as well.

The staffs at the windmill and museum often work together to schedule group tours, sharing booths at tourism and marketing events, and various other venues in a collaborative effort to promote their own attractions as well as the towns of Elk Horn and Kimballton. Lisa Riggs, manager of the mill, has also served as treasurer of the museum’s Board of Directors.

All of us associated with the museum offer congratulations to Lisa and her staff. This award acknowledges the work they have done to make Elk Horn not only a place to stop along I-80, but a *destination*, and that is a benefit to all of us in the community and surrounding area.





Volunteer spotlight:



In this edition of the *America Letter* we spotlight and thank the many volunteers who have helped with the various mailings we do. In the past several months there have been bulk mailings for special appeals and membership, the *America Letter* and a number of Christmas cards and letters.

We are very fortunate to have such a willing group of people to speed the project along. It's not always just a simple task of putting a letter in an envelope – sometimes there are many pieces that must be kept in a specific order and also the mailing envelopes are stamped in such a way that care must be given to keep them in order as well. Many of the volunteers called to help with the mailings are getting to be quite “professional” at this job!

Volunteers helped with sending out over 2,300 packets containing the fall issue of the *America Letter* (approximately that same number for this edition of the *America Letter*) and the *Museum Shop's Christmas Catalog*. In December, they assisted in sending out 2,567 End-of-the-Year Christmas letters. They also helped with Christmas greetings sent to 120 of our volunteers.

We also want to say a special thank you to Alice Petersen of Kimballton, who for the past year has devoted many hours to keeping up the Museum's scrapbook. Alice is “retiring” from volunteering and we do appreciate the help she has given.

All of us at the Museum are most grateful for each and every one of our valuable volunteers.



Museum Shop to Feature Books Illustrated by Audubon Artist Clint Hansen

In conjunction with the Clint Hansen exhibit, which begins January 19, the Museum Shop is happy to announce that we will be carrying three books illustrated by Clint. The books will feature reproductions of his oil paintings and paper sculptures.

The Christmas Flower, written by Gwen Ellis will help your children learn that when we offer Him the best we have, God is pleased. In this heartwarming book, siblings Sara and Mark discover the story behind the poinsettia plant, the Christmas flower, which helps their family have the best Christmas ever. It is a very moving story that all ages will enjoy.

Clint Hansen's paper sculpture wonderland finds a perfect home in the warm childhood memories of Martin Nelson Burton's, *Fooling the Tooth Fairy*. The sequence of wordless pages - where the Tooth Fairy flies to the boy's house, reacts passionately to finding out that the boy has tried to trick her with a paper tooth, then devises her own strategy to “get even” - make for a wonderful prediction exercise for young readers.

“The first friend I ever had was a leprechaun. We used to write to each other. I would leave notes for him at bedtime. In the morning, I would find his answer.” So begins Martin Nelson Burton's true account of an enchanting correspondence that would last for seven years, and a friendship that would last a lifetime. The original childhood notes of Martin Nelson Burton and the warm, fatherly replies of “Mr. Leprechaun” spring to life in Clint Hansen's breathtaking paper sculpture world.

Make sure to add these timeless books to your collection. Call Jan at the Museum Shop 800-759-9192 or email her at giftshop@danishmuseum.org to place your order.



Staff member Angela Stanford and volunteer Annette Andersen helping children fold Danish stars in the Julestue.





organized by DGI, the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations and the DGI, the Danish Shooting Organization, in cooperation with a local town. In concert with the festival of Sport and Culture week, the local town is Frederiks in Southern Jutland.



JULESTUE

Happenings



Above, staff member Angela Stanford shows the children how to make traditional Danish Christmas tree decorations.



Right, Herb Christensen demonstrates to visitors how to "turn" æbleskiver.

*Below, volunteer Phyllis Kosky reads *The Little Match Girl* to young listeners.*

2006 Exhibit Schedule

“Fitness, Form, and Rhythm in Motion: The Danish Gymnastic Tradition in the United States” will be the major exhibit for 2006. This is the result of a partnership between the museum and the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association. In addition to the exhibit, visitors will be introduced to and have opportunity to play “Krolf,” a game blending golf and croquet! As a part of this partnership, The Danish Immigrant Museum will create a special traveling exhibit that will be featured at the 2006 summer festival of the Association to be held in Haderslev, Denmark from June 29 through July 2.

Mezzanine Gallery

- “Hans Hansen: A Study in Danish-American Ingenuity” through March 27, 2006
- “Fitness, Form and Rhythm in Motion” April 20, 2006-March 6, 2007

Main Floor Gallery

- “Nadjeschda Overgaard: National Heritage Fellow, 1998: A Retrospective” through June 5, 2006

Lower Level Gallery

- The Art of Clint Hansen, January 19, 2006-July 5, 2006
- The *Papirklip* of Rick Marzullo, July 20, 2006-January 3, 2007





News from the Family History & Genealogy Center



The following items are currently at the top of the FHGC Wish List. If you wish to discuss making a donation of the following or contribute money toward their purchase, contact Michele McNabb at 877-764-7008 or

librarian@danishmuseum.org.

- *Siftings*, by Jens Jensen (1939; reprinted. From \$11.95 used on Amazon.com). Thoughts and writings from the long career of Jensen, who was the father of the prairie style of landscape architecture.
- Vols. 1-15 (1916-1939) of the *Danish Brotherhood Magazine*.
- Microfilm of 1928/29 Chicago city directory (\$149).
- *Strangers in Hollywood: the history of Scandinavian actors in American films from 1910 to World War II*, by Hans J. Wollstein (1994; \$59.50 new on amazon.com)
- *But you can feel it*, by Emil B. Fries (1980; \$9.95 and up used on abebooks.com)
- Back issues of The Danish Sisterhood magazine.
- Pre-2000 issues of *Bien*, the weekly Danish-language newspaper published in California.

Thanks go to Kai & Starr Nyby and Kimberli Jacobsen Petty, whose donations for map purchases completed our collection of large-scale Danish maps. Kimberli also contributed funding for purchasing back issues of *Saga of the Sandpitch*, which have many stories of Danes who settled in Sanpete County, Utah.

Our next big goal is to fill in gaps in our newspaper collection, including back issues of local Elk Horn-Kimballton newspapers and Danish-language newspapers published in various parts of the country. We would like to start with the following papers:

- *Elk Horn Kimballton Review* (8 reels from 5/1986-12/1996; \$588)
- *Danish Villages Voice* (1 reel from 7/2002-12/2003; \$73.50)

We have also a listing of newspapers from Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin and Illinois on our wish list. These will be published in the next issue of the *America Letter*.



Activities and News from the Family History & Genealogy Center

- **FHGC Volunteers**, both local and long-distance, contributed over 3700 hours of work in 2005. That represents a lot of hard work – and is much appreciated!
- **Our collection** continues to grow, with the addition of over 500 new books and other items to the collection this past year. We hope you will like the new additions of the FHGC section of the Museum webpage; we've got exciting plans for future material, including a number of databases that are currently only available in-house, and hope it won't be too long before we can share those with you.
- **On the Road:** The FHGC plans to attend the Nebraska State Genealogical Society annual conference in Beatrice on May 5-6. Please stop by our table to say hello if you plan to attend this event.
- **Danes & Other Visitors:** Frank Esmann of Danmarks Radio spent two weeks in Elk Horn in October researching material for a series of ten short programs on Danish immigrant destinies and a half-hour program on the Museum and Elk Horn, which were aired in Denmark in December. He has kindly given the Museum copies of the programs. The half-hour program featuring John Mark Nielsen and Michele McNabb was aired on December 26, and the Museum has received favorable reviews from listeners in Denmark. And Wartburg College student Jeremy A. Pedersen researched and completed a project on the language transition from Danish to English around World War I. We hope to add his contribution to the Museum webpage in the near future.



Frank Esmann of Danmarks Radio

- **For the TivoliFest 2006** display our theme is "There's No Place like

Activities & News . . . – continued from page 13

Home.” We are looking for photographs of your immigrant ancestors’ homes from both Denmark and the U.S. If you have images you would be willing to share please send them as .jpg files to librarian@danishmuseum.org or send a clear copy to us no later than May 1st, 2006. Be sure to include the following information:

- name of family
- location of home (for Denmark, town/parish and county would be appreciated; for the US/Canada the location, county and state/province and year of settlement)
- your name and address and contact information.

We’d like to get a wide variety of photographs, so, once again, we will be awarding (modest) prizes for the most interesting images.



Researching Ancestors

To be successful, family historians must make use of both traditional resources and those available via electronic technology, supplemented by family recollections and local experts, common sense and ‘thinking outside the box.’ Here, one researcher, Beverly Maas, gives an account of her search during the summer of 2005, showing how the pieces can fit together.

“The use of computers has made genealogical research faster and so much easier. It has always been a great way to organize one’s data but now it is also a convenient way to do research. I had found all the major records in America about my grandfather Peter Lauritsen, such as census records, his death record, Audubon County warranty deed records for his farms, naturalization papers, and the courthouse record of his marriage to Carrie Nielsen. Birth, marriage, and death records for all twelve of their children had also been found. But then it was as if I had hit a brick wall: I was not able to find anything about his immigration or family in Denmark.

“We remembered Grandpa Peter had said that his mother’s name was Maren and his stepfather was Hans Pedersen. From about age 14 until he emigrated from Ærøskøbing, on the island of Ærø at 17, Peter worked as a “house boy” or servant for a widow who once lived in the Danish Virgin Islands. Peter’s youngest son Victor remembered that his father

had traveled to California in the early 1900s to see other relatives who had emigrated from Ærø. Peter returned from California with a 4-foot long picture of a huge chicken house. With just these few bits of information I started my search.

“I first wrote to a researcher on Ærø to see if he could help. He suggested I write to Astrid Pedersen, a distant relative, who was still living on the island. He also told me I was barking up the wrong family tree – Peter’s birth record was in Rise Parish, not Ærøskøbing! At last, a crack in the wall had appeared. The Danish Immigrant Museum at Elk Horn was my next stop.

“In May, Michele, the librarian at the research center, showed me how to search online for spelling variations of names in the Danish Emigration Archives and the Immigrant Ships’ List by using a “%” symbol. Success was achieved at both sites. The Danish Archives site listed Peter’s year of emigration as 1889, along with his age, last place of residence, occupation, and destination. It also told when and why these police records were established. The Ships’ List stated that he arrived in New York with 2 pieces of luggage, and gave his occupation and the location of the compartment he occupied on board the *Thingvalla*. Next I was taught to search for relatives at the www.familysearch.org site. Searching

– continued on page 15

Are You a Danish Immigrant or Long-term Resident?

Many Danes have immigrated to the US since WWII, have been exchange students or resided in this country for longer periods of time. We would like to have some information in our library on more recent immigrants or long-term residents from Denmark. If you would be willing to fill out an Immigrant Information Form or distribute it at meetings of your local Danish-American organization, contact Michele at the FHGC for copies.

Database Updates

Over 225 Museum members now have access to HeritageQuest Online™ in their homes. This is available to members at the annual giving level of \$100 and above. Anyone interested in signing up should contact Development Associate Deb Larsen at 1-800-759-9192, or fill out and return the HQO request form sent out with the annual renewal letter. To access HQO from the new Museum webpage just click on the HQO logo on the upper left-hand corner of the home page.

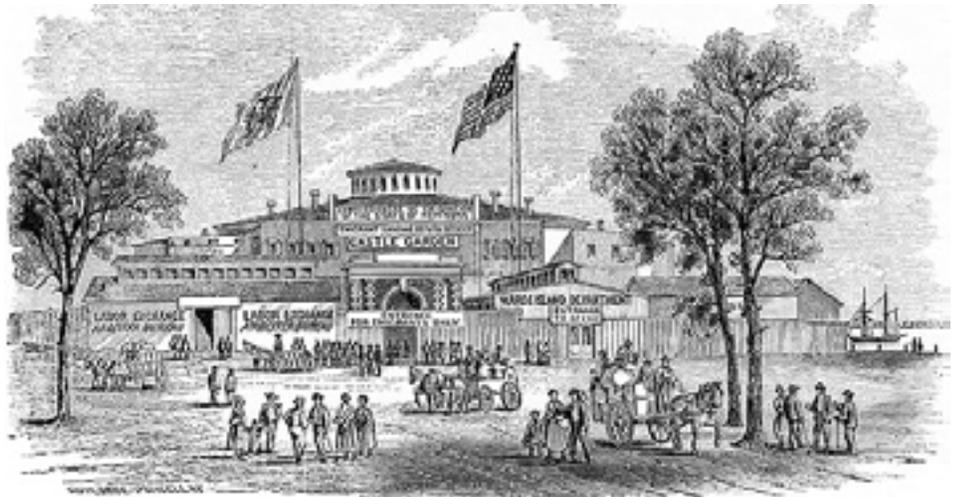
There are several other new resources available for searchers at the FHGC. We now have a subscription to the other major online genealogical resource, FamilySearch™ Library Edition, which provides staff and visitors with access to a large number of databases and greatly enhances the chances of finding missing family members. Other new resources include two extensive obituary databases. One contains over 6000 obituaries and death notices from *The Audubon County Journal* from 1897 to 1970, the other consists of several thousand obituaries submitted by Museum members from throughout the country. More of these databases are in the pipeline. If you would like to contribute obituaries (Danish immigrants or Danish-Americans) to the collection, please send them to us, and if possible, indicate which newspaper they come from and the date. Anyone submitting a Danish-language obituary will receive a complimentary translation of the article.

Researching Ancestors . . . – continued from page 14

by 'Place' in the Family History Library Catalog gave the film numbers I needed to order for birth/baptism, confirmation, marriage, and death/burial records in Rise Parish. Before leaving that day, I ordered a microfilm for Rise Parish from the Family History Library and picked up the FHGC list of **Useful Websites for Genealogical Research**.

"One of the Danish webpages, www.sa.dk/lak/brugarkivet/famhist/, gave the years Danish censuses were taken and the information found on them as well as what is listed on Danish emigration records. A listing of many of the words found in Danish records was translated into English and there were examples of the older Gothic handwriting. A photograph of a parish register showed what data is listed in each column. The explanation of the use of patronymics instead of surnames prior to 1870 and the traditions of assigning a Christian name were extremely helpful for searching the microfilm of Rise Parish.

"When it arrived the Rise Parish record gave me Grandpa's date of baptism and birth (24 January 1872) as well as the names of his parents and sponsors. I now had the name of his natural father, mother, and stepfather. According to the Danish calendars on www.rmadsen.dk/ka/ Grandpa was born on Wednesday, 24 January 1872. A second film for Rise



State Emigrant Landing Depot, Castle Garden, New York, from Immigration and the Commissioners of Emigration, by Fredrich Kapp (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969 [originals ca. early 1880's]). Note the sign marking the entrance to the Ward's Island Department.

Parish on file in Elk Horn listed Maren's birth/baptism record, the names of both parents, and her sponsors.

Then a photograph of Rise Parish church was found in the alphabetical listing for Danish churches at <http://dis-danmark.dk/kirkeimg/>. This church dates back to 1150-1200 and is the oldest church on the little island of Ærø.

The English version of <http://ddd.dda.dk> is a great place to find older Danish census records. The site has a map of all the counties in Denmark. It also gives a list of what's in the database by simply typing in the name of the county and

parish you wish to search. In the 1845 census for Rise Parish, I found Maren, age 6, living with her parents and three older sisters. Now the brick wall was really beginning to crumble!

"Ever wonder what it was like to immigrate to America in the 1800s? Peter's immigration records stated he sailed on the *Thingvalla* and entered at Castle Garden in 1889. www.theshipslist.com has detailed descriptions and actual photographs of immigrant ships and etchings of ships' rigging. In 1888, the year before Peter sailed, the *Thingvalla* collided with and sank another ship of the same line, the *Geiser*, with the loss of 105 lives. This site has an interesting account of the accident by the captain of the *Geiser*.

"In 1890 the *Thingvalla* collided with an iceberg but the ship was only slightly damaged. I think I would have booked passage on another ship! The "Image Gallery" on www.norwayheritage.com also had photos of Castle Garden and of the *Thingvalla* after the 1888 collision as well as some photos of immigrant quarters. Grandpa most likely read 1889 newspaper advertisements and promotional pamphlets for this ship just like the ones shown at this site. www.castlegarden.org and www.ellislandrecords.org are places to search for immigrant records. They also give a



Admission & Hours

ADMISSION (Includes Bedstemor's House)

Current Museum Members: FREE with Membership Card

Non-Members: Adults, \$5 • Children (ages 8-17), \$2

MUSEUM HOURS: Mon.-Fri.: 9:00 am-5:00 pm;

Sat.: 10:00 am-5:00 pm ; Sun.: 12:00 noon-5:00 pm

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

FAMILY HISTORY & GENEALOGY CENTER HOURS

May-Oct.: Tues., Wed., Fri., 9:00 am-5:00 pm

1st & 3rd Saturday: 9:00 am-5:00 pm

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

Other Times By Appointment

All facilities are closed on New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving & Christmas.
(Local weather conditions may cause occasional closures.)

Researching Ancestors . . . continued from page 15

short history of the processing centers, a detailed description of what immigrants experienced there, and have wonderful old photographs.

“A nice letter from my new-found Danish relative Astrid added the names of Grandpa’s parents, all four grandparents, his half-sister and a list of descendants of his half- brother Hans. This letter was followed by a surprise email from Astrid’s nephew Leo. He emailed photographs of Hans, his wife, and all of their children. There was also a photo of Leo and his three brothers and an awesome old picture of Grandpa’s stepfather and brother standing with a team of horses and a wagon in front of the farmhouse where Grandpa lived as a child. He said the house is still in the family – Leo’s brother lives there now. The last photo showed how the house looks today. What a thrill it was to open that email!

“<http://home13.inet.tele.dk/ibcung/> was the dynamite that blew the wall down. This is a Danish site about the island of Ærø. Parts of it are in English, such as the short history of the island. The most complete list of emigrants from Ærø is also in English. Both Grandpa Peter and my uncle Lars were on this list! One of the few photographs of Ærø was the home of A. H. Riise, Councilor of State to St. Thomas in the Danish Virgin Islands. I now had a photograph of the place where grandpa worked as a teenager and the name of the family he worked for. Through this website I contacted webmaster Ib Christensen to see if he had any information about Peter Lauritsen. After sending what little information I had, I anxiously waited his reply.

“About a week later Ib replied with a “Dear Cousin” letter. He said we had the same great- great-grandparents, Christen Jensen and Johanne Pedersdatter, and that he would be sending me a great deal of information. I was expecting a simple list of names and statistics for a few more generations back. What he actually sent was a report about our ancestors going seven generations back from Grandpa Peter. Besides the usual statistics, Ib included occupations, where they lived, land register numbers and names of farms, number of acres and who inherited the land. But best of all, he

included many wonderful stories about many of our family members, such as a five-page detailed account of Christen and Johanne’s rural wedding in 1829.

“During World War II, the Germans tried to intern Danish Jews and policemen. Grandpa’s cousin Christen hid a local policeman from September 1944 until the end of the war. It was very risky and nobody in the village knew about it until afterwards. According to probate records, Grandpa’s great-great-grandfather left the family farm to his son on the condition he was to have use of the room west of the living room as living quarters, have storage space in the attic, that his bed was kept in clean sheets, and that he and his wife cook, clean and assist him when needed when he was old or sick. There was also an annual fee of pork fat, butter, wood and peat for burning, free grazing for ½ a cow and 1 sheep, 1 apple tree, rye grain, barley grain, malt, and free brewing.

“It was also a surprise to find this site had two of Grandpa’s children and their descendants listed from Audubon County. Two of Peter’s uncles immigrated to California, but only one was listed with his descendants. It turns out that Peter’s cousin Lois Nelson was a stuntwoman who played the first Peter Pan in the silent movies. She married Arthur Stanley Jefferson, better known as Stan Laurel, who just teamed up with Oliver Hardy. Her daughter Lois married Rand Brooks, who played Scarlet O’Hara’s first husband, Charles Hamil-

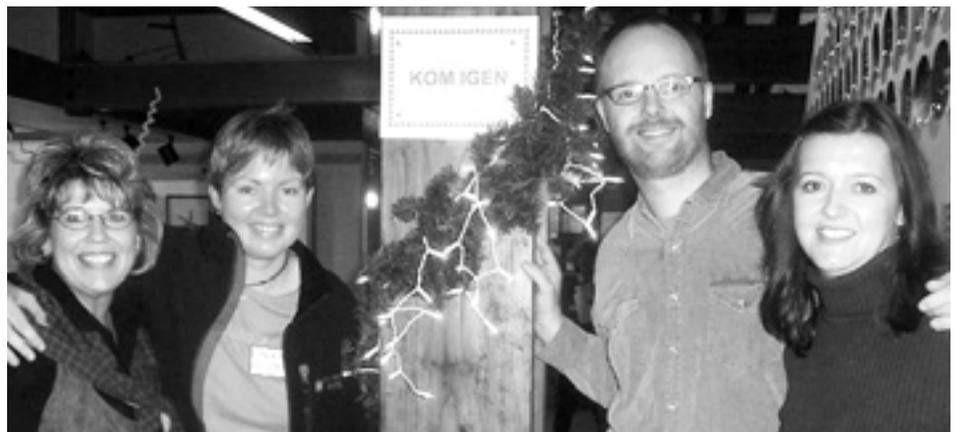


Steerage

ton, in *Gone with the Wind*. He also was Marilyn Monroe’s first leading man in *Gentleman Prefer Blondes*. However, not all our relatives turned out to be heroic or famous. One distant cousin obviously did not manage money very well. The night before the bank was to take possession of his farm, a mysterious fire burnt the buildings down. To this day no one knows for sure how the fire started.

“As for the mysterious picture of the chicken house, Ib knew that answer too. Christen Hansen had a large chicken farm in California. His brother was married to a cousin of Grandpa Peter. Christen and Grandpa most certainly knew each other quite well, as they grew up in the same neighborhood in Voderup, on Ærø. Both immigrating uncles stayed with Christen when they first came to America. Grandpa most likely went to California to see all three men.

“By the end of summer, my “brick wall” had become a “book” with the usual data, many great photographs and wonderful stories about many ancestors. Genealogy truly is a jigsaw puzzle without an edge and what a joy to find the missing pieces!”



Staff Member Deb Larsen (left) and Danish Intern Helene Christensen welcome Chicago area guests Marco and Anita Nielsen to the Julestue