



America Letter

THE DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM

An International Cultural Center

BOX 470 • ELK HORN, IOWA 51531

March / April 1999

Vol. XIII, No. 2

Growing up in an early Danish American community

S. P. (Peter) Christensen, who resides in Fargo, ND, is an active member of the Red River Danes, a Danish American heritage organization based in Fargo, ND/Moorhead, MN, but drawing upon a membership reaching well beyond the immediate area. Mr. Christensen's Danish heritage has always been important to him and, at 93, he has amassed many memories associated with this heritage. In this article, he shares with us the experience of growing up in the Cedar Falls (IA) Danish community during the first third of this century. If this article awakens related associations in our readers, we invite you to send them to the editor of the *America Letter*. The Museum is committed to the preservation of such memories.

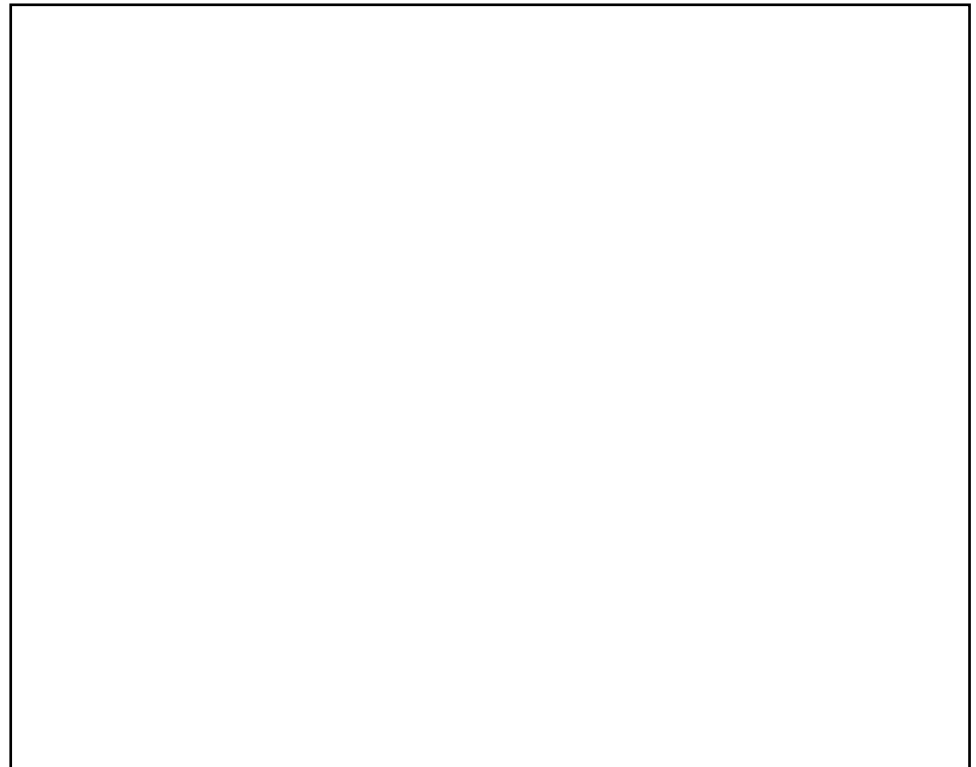
My father, Nels Christensen, came to the USA in March 1906, going directly to Ellendale, Minnesota, where others in his family had previously settled—two sisters, Karen and Maren, Maren's husband Andrew Jensen, and an older brother, Thomas P. Christensen. Mother and I came to the USA in December 1906, meeting Nels in Ellendale, which was our home for two years. A daughter Elna was born there in 1907. Our family would eventually increase to seven. I had two sisters and two brothers. I was the oldest of the five children and the only one to be born in Denmark (Aalborg, 1905).

Dad, a shoemaker by training, continued in that capacity until early in 1908 when we moved to Cedar Falls, Iowa. He had accepted a position there as shoemaker at Boysen Shoe Company, a shoe store owned and operated by George Boysen and his brother Alfred. They were two sons of an earlier immigrant, Adam Boysen, who owned farms in the area. He set up his sons in the shoe business. It was one of the large stores in Cedar Falls. Dad

opened his own shop in 1920 and operated it successfully for thirty years, after which he retired. He died in 1959. He was preceded in death by Mother, who passed away in 1936 after a long illness from cancer. We children, as well as our father, were badly shaken by her early death.

Cedar Falls was a city with a population of about 6,000 citizens. I would guess about 25% of the people were of Danish extraction. There were enough Germans to maintain a church of their own. There were Swedes and Norwegians, too, but not enough to maintain their own church, so they

— *Continued on page 2*



Family photo taken circa 1926. Front row: Nels, Keld, Kirstine; Back row: Hertha, S. Peter, Elna, Eskild.

Elna my oldest sister is retired and living in a Philadelphia retirement home after a 35 year career with the Social Security System. The younger girl Hertha (b. 11/21/11) became a registered nurse after graduation from the Swedish Hospital in Chicago. My younger brother Eskild (b. 3/37/10) farmed after high school, but lost out in the bad years. He joined the U. S. Army, fought with it in Europe in 1942-3, later transferred to Korea where he was wounded and returned to the USA. He retired near Ft. Hood in Texas, later dying from his wounds. My youngest brother Keld Høj (b. 4/12/17) entered the US Foreign Service, serving about thirty years. He retired in 1970 and died in 1985. His ashes were flown out over the Atlantic Ocean and scattered.

Growing up . . .

– continued from page one

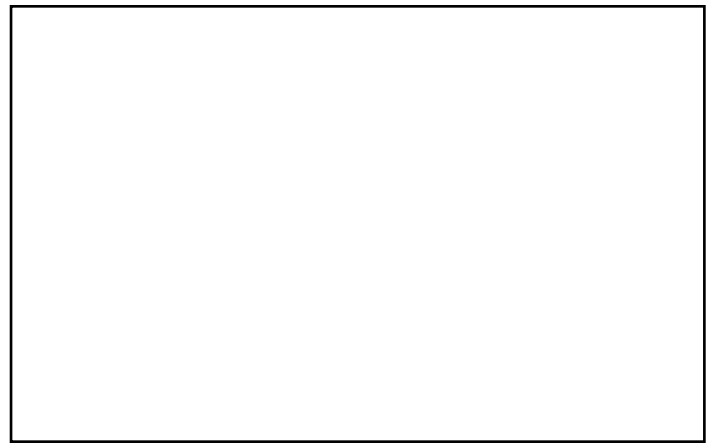
attended one of the two Danish Churches — Grundtvigian and Innermission, a highly pietistic group. Both were within walking distance of our home at 1123 Bluff Street.

Our parents took to life in the Cedar Falls Danish community and became completely absorbed in it as members of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church. We attended Sunday School as children and church after confirmation until we left for further education or jobs. I can tell many beautiful stories of life at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Our pastors during my membership were Johan Christiansen, who returned to Denmark, Aksel Kildgaard Sr. and Ottar Jorgensen. Pastors who visited my home on Confirmation Sunday were Adam Dan, A. S. Hansen, Svend Kjaer, J. C. Aaberg and V. S. Jensen. I recall several other men who were or became pastors in the Synod.

The members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church were a lively group. Sunday school and church services were all conducted “Paa Dansk” until it just seemed to slide into English completely by 1930. I always have had a warm spot in my heart for the Bethlehem Congregation. It was and is a warm church. The many dinners, festivities and Synod meetings that were held in the “Forsamlings Hus” always attracted crowds. Our parents, along with others, worked cheerfully thereby making them so very successful.

During the wonderful days of summer, church members held picnics in one of the many parks, even taking the trolley to a park outside the city. At these outdoor events, we danced some of the many Danish folk dances with lively singing. Oh what fun that was to join hands to circle and dance. The food was always good and everyone was hungry. There were picnics for the American holidays, Fourth of July and “Decoration Day” as it was called then. Looking back as I write this, it was evident to me that everyone put their heart into the preparation of activities and food. Our parents certainly did their part. It was fun to watch them making preparations.

We children attended “Dansk Ferie Skole” for a period of six weeks every summer for about six or eight years AFTER attending the full nine months of classes in the American Public School. For the summer “Ferie Skole” it seems that



The Christensen family lived in this home for 42 years. Nels purchased it in 1908 for \$1,500 and over the years made many improvements to it.

we were a very large group. Pictures prove this. As we grew older, there were Danish Gymnastics every other Thursday in “Forsamlings huset”. We sang in the church choir as regular members after confirmation.

I would like to mention that for the Christmas Holiday programs in the American Schools, those children of foreign extraction would sing one Christmas song in their native language. A group of six Danish youngsters, including myself, would sing “Silent Night” paa Dansk. Another group of youngsters with German parents would sing in German. This was followed by a chorus singing the same song in English. Just imagine that happening today!

I was active in the “Ungdoms Foreningen” and church choir until I left for Drake University in Des Moines in 1927. As class attendance and work days permitted I came home for visits. Train service was good in those days. That was the beginning of the depression of 1930. Those years were devastating to many, ...farmers, businesses and factories. I was fortunate, though the pay was low by today’s standards. We made it through. My father’s business prospered. He was a member of the church board for several years and was its president several times. He was also director of the “Ferie Skole” for two years, as I recall. And he was one of the few who personally kept the church financially solvent during the

depression years. A new and larger church was later built in a new section of the city and near the University of Northern Iowa.

I want to add that through the early years in the life of my parents, many young people from various parts of Denmark visited in my home. As a child I asked them many questions about their home towns. Since retiring I have visited almost every one of them in Denmark.

During Mr. Christensen’s teen years, he lived next door to Enoch Mortensen. His memories of that experience appeared in Church and Life (February 15, 1985) in an article titled “He Was My Neighbor”.



Bethlehem Lutheran Church Danish Summer School Class, 1912. Six year old Peter Christensen is seated in the front row, third from right. His sister, Elna, sits next to him.

The instructors were young men and women who immigrated to the USA and attended Grand View College in Des Moines. In the case of the men, some became ministers, and the ladies went on to teach both American Schools and Church related schools. ... Folk dancing and song were the delight of all of us.

Wall of Honor

These are the registered names of immigrants who have been placed on the Wall of Honor in The Danish Immigrant Museum, from December 12, 1998 to February 28, 1999. Following the registered name are the names of the family and friends who have made contributions toward this special recognition of the immigrant. Family and friends are also asked to submit the story of the immigrant and their family history, where it is then placed in the Family History and Genealogy Center. The Wall of Honor is an excellent starting point for visitors to the Museum when searching for their own name, or that of a family member.

Lauritz Frederik and Mette Marie Jacobsen Andersen - Leonard C. Andersen, Sioux City, IA

Axel Emil Algren & Sophie Magdaline Anderson, Belleville, IL - Joyce Kirchoefer, Belleville, IL

Carl Dreioe Birkholm, Solvang, CA - Peter H. Wolf, Knoxville, TN
Bernhard Marinus Stjernholm Daugbjerg, Houston, TX - Ray Daugbjerg, Houston, TX

Edward Lauritz Henriksen, Cedar Falls, IA - Kevin Henriksen, Cedar Rapids, IA

Andrew Holmes, Ames, IA - Shirley Davis, Madrid, IA

Else Margrethe Hansen Howard, Detroit, MI - Lynda Hegg, Holland, MI; Loren Howard, Holland, MI; Nancy Howard-Bryson, Harsens Island, MI

Jens Madsen and Ellen Nielsine Jensen, Ft. Atkinson, WI - Pamela Kelly, Madison, WI

Ib Jorgensen, Glenview, IL - Thursday Club (Torsdagsklubben), Chicago, IL

Lauritz and Dorothea Lauritsen, Omaha, NE - John Lauritsen, Columbus, OH

John Nelsen Miller, Ames, IA - Shirley Davis, Madrid, IA

Karen Christensen Newgard, Ellendale, MN - S. P. Christensen, Fargo, ND

Lars and Ingeborg Nielsen, Carter Lake, IA - John Lauritsen, Columbus, OH

Peder Johansen and Laura Katherine Pedersen, River Falls, WI - Ruth Anding, Hudson, WI; Ron Seekamp, Minneapolis, MN; Helen Eberhardt, Peoria, AZ; Loyd Ostness, River Falls, WI; Marilyn Feyereisen, Hudson, WI; Joan Saathoff, Hudson, WI; Karen Gear, North St. Paul, MN; Kathy Pedersen, Frederic, WI; Mary Swerkstrom, Osceola, WI; Eileen Wymer, Hudson, WI; Lee Halberg, River Falls, WI; Linda Sandstrom, River Falls, WI; Tom Pedersen, Roberts, WI

Susanne Andraesen and Andreas Petersen, Waterloo, IA - Harry and Karen Petersen, Longmont, CO; Elizabeth Vauthier, Waterloo, IA; Audrey Petersen, West Des Moines, IA; Harry Petersen, Jr., Cedar Falls, IA; Annette Madiska, Longmont, CO; Philip Petersen, Denver, CO

Bodil Marle Jensen Rasmussen, Jackson Township, IA - Eugene and Beverly Graves, Laurens, IA; Stanley and Joyce Christensen, Harlan, IA; Melvin and Dorothy Rasmussen, Harlan, IA; Corrine Jorgensen, Knoxville, IA; Sue McCullough, Knoxville, IA

Peter Todsens, Grand Island, NE - William P. Todsens, Omaha, NE

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Available through annual membership in The Danish Immigrant Museum. Contact the Museum for membership levels and benefits.

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Barbara Lund-Jones, Editor; Museum staff writers: Jo Byriell, Leo Hensley, Connie Johnson, Marilyn Kenney, Fern Kissel, Joyce Petersen; Photographers: Ronald Jones, Museum Staff

Demonstrations in Danish cross-stitch continue

Aveline Marks of Omaha, NE, who has worked extensively in Danish cross-stitch and demonstrated widely in this form of needlework, will demonstrate her craft from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 13; Saturday, April 17; Saturday, May 29.



June Board Meeting to be held in Greenwich, Connecticut

Greenwich, Connecticut will provide the setting for the Summer meeting of the Board of Directors of The Danish Immigrant Museum. The meeting dates will be June 10-12, 1999 and will mark the first time the Museum's Board has scheduled a regular board meeting in the New England area. As part of this gathering, arrangements are being made to host a reception for members of the Museum and Danish Americans in the extended region. For those living in New Jersey, New York or the New England area, we invite you to take advantage of this opportunity to meet with Museum staff and Board members. If you are interested in participating in the June reception events in Greenwich, you may contact the Museum for additional information at 1-800-759-9192.



1999 tour to Denmark



Reservations are still available for The Danish Immigrant Museum Heritage Tour of Denmark, August 9th through 19th, 1999. Co-sponsored by Four Corners Travel of Elk Horn, IA and Jensen World Travel/ATI of Wilmette, IL, the tour will give persons interested in visiting Denmark an opportunity to travel with others of similar interests. The tour includes air travel, hotel accommodations and some meals. Travelers will fly from Chicago to Copenhagen where they will transfer to a domestic flight to Aalborg. From there traveler's will have land transportation to some of Denmark's most exciting and scenic sites. A similar trip in 1997 was highly praised by participants. For more information, contact Phyllis Hoegh at Four Corners Travel at (712) 764-4111 or Tor Jensen at 1-800-T-JENSEN.

The Leadership Society

In the past issues of the America Letter, this section has grouped those contributors who have given annual cash contribution of \$2,500 and above, as well as cumulative lifetime cash contributions of \$25,000 and above. Beginning in this issue, we will separate these two levels of giving and recognize them individually.

Annual Leadership Society

Those persons who have contributed \$2500 or more in the past 12 months, from March 1, 1998 to February 28, 1999.

Mervin Bro, Scottsdale, AZ
Lydell and Barbara Christensen, Pittstown, NJ
* Laura Hansen, Irwin, IA
Gunnar Horn, Omaha, NE
Roy and Patricia Hougen, Ames, IA
Clyde and Emma Johnson, Omaha, NE
Lowell and Marilyn Kramme, Des Moines, IA
Bruce Lauritzen, Omaha, NE
Richard Ledet, Des Moines, IA
Ruth Rasmussen Nelson, St. Cloud, MN
Irene Nissen, Cedar Falls, IA
Erik and Jackie Olsen, Mesa, AZ
Rand and Mary Louise Petersen, Harlan, IA
Richard H. and Virginia Petersen, Sr., Lincoln, NE
Thelma Petersen, Harlan, IA
Halvor Strandskov, Arlington, VA
Janet Thuesen, Falls Church, VA
*deceased

Cedar Valley Danes, Cedar Falls, IA
Marne and Elk Horn Telephone Co., Elk Horn, IA

Lifetime Leadership Society

Thomas Hansen returns to Dana College

Thomas Hansen, Development Director for The Danish Immigrant Museum for the past two and a half years, resigned at the end of December 1998 to return to the Development Office at Dana College in Blair, Nebraska. The Board of Directors and the staff of The Danish Immigrant Museum want to thank Tom for his dedicated service and commitment to the mission and vision of the Museum. We wish him much success in his work at Dana College and look forward to his continued support of The Danish Immigrant Museum.

Those persons who have given a cumulative amount of \$25,000 or more.

Mervin Bro, Scottsdale, AZ
Alma O. Hartvigsen, Harlan, IA
Gunnar Horn, Omaha, NE
Roy and Patricia Hougen, Ames, IA
*Gertrude Gronbech, Washington, DC
Roland Jensen, Des Moines, IA
Clyde and Emma Johnson, Omaha, NE
*Martha Jorgensen Estate, Audubon, IA
Lowell and Marilyn Kramme, Des Moines, IA
Bruce Lauritzen, Omaha, NE
Folmer and Vera Nyby, Fountain Hills, AZ
Erik and Jackie Olsen, Mesa, AZ
*Olga Olsen, Watertown, SD
*John I. Petersen Estate, Waterloo, IA
*Archie Petersen Estate, Harlan, IA
Rand and Mary Louise Petersen, Harlan, IA
Thelma Petersen, Harlan, IA
Eugene M. Robinson, Pensacola, FL
Schultz & Schultz-Nielsen Memorial, Tustin, CA
*Ava Simonsen, Audubon, IA
*Harold L. Sorensen, Exira, IA
Wilber Williamson, Des Moines, IA
*deceased

Danish Brotherhood in America, Highlands Ranch, CO
Danish Mutual Insurance Association, Elk Horn, IA
Elk Horn Lutheran Church, Elk Horn, IA
Kulturministeriet, Copenhagen, Denmark
Lutheran Brotherhood, Minneapolis, MN
Marne and Elk Horn Telephone Co., Elk Horn, IA
Peter Kiewit Foundation, Omaha, NE
Shelby County State Bank, Harlan, IA
State of Iowa, Des Moines, IA



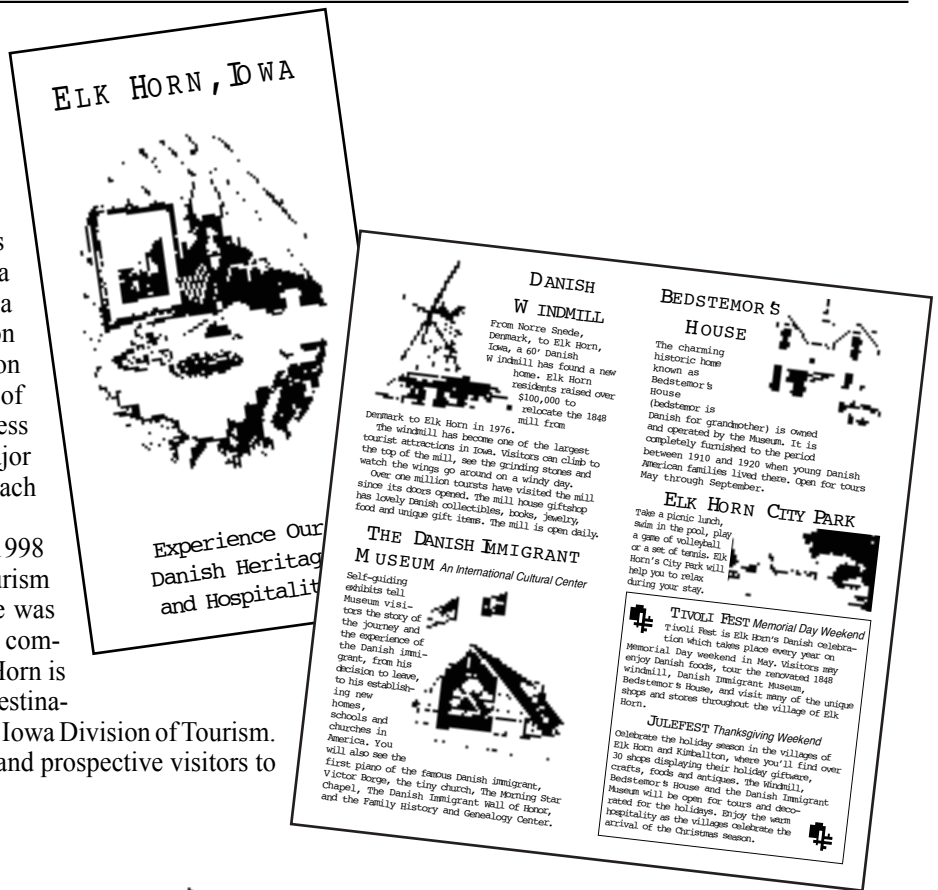
Calendar of 1999 Events for the Danish Villages of Elk Horn and Kimballton

MAY 29, 30 - TIVOLI FEST 1999 in Elk Horn. Parade, folk dancing, authentic Danish foods, craft demonstrations, etc.
JUNE 26 - SANKT HANS AFTEN (Burning of the witch) held on the grounds of The Danish Immigrant Museum
OCTOBER - STATE HAND CORN HUSKING CONTESTS in Kimballton. Parade of horses, huskers & wagons, Iowa's Best Huskers, Danish & American foods, etc.
OCTOBER 14, 15, 16 - 16th ANNUAL MEETING OF THE DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS. Meetings and events scheduled at Museum and in surrounding area
NOVEMBER 26, 27, 28 - JULEFEST 1999. Craft boutiques, Danish foods, entertainment, Father Christmas visit

Elk Horn brochure wins state tourism award

Drawing upon the cooperative spirit that has long distinguished Elk Horn's achievements, a task force of local residents was organized to plan a promotional brochure for the town. Capitalizing on the fact that, in 1997, travelers pumped \$17 million into the economy of the Elk Horn community of 700 residents, the task force talked to local business people about the town's role as one of Iowa's major travel destinations. The local merchants, in turn, each donated \$100 for the creation of a brochure.

The resulting brochure was honored as the 1998 Consumer Brochure of the Year at the Iowa Tourism Conference in Iowa City. The Elk Horn brochure was chosen from several entries in the category for communities with a population less than 5,000. "Elk Horn is quickly becoming one of Iowa's premier travel destinations," said Nancy Landness, Administrator for the Iowa Division of Tourism. "This brochure is a fantastic resource for current and prospective visitors to the Elk Horn area."



Exhibition Schedule

1999

Embracing Two Worlds: The Thorvald Muller Family of Kimballton closes May 9, 1999

The Thorvald Muller family (immigration dates: 1884, 1904) presents a rich study in the integration of two cultures. The Mullers kept Danish customs and traditions vitally alive within their family and community, while actively embracing the opportunities that presented themselves in their new life in America. This exhibition has been made possible through a rich gift of family papers, photographs and memorabilia and the loan of family heirlooms.

A Consecration of Hope: Baptismal Clothing from Immigrant Families

May 28, 1999 - November 7, 1999

The baptismal clothing worn by immigrant children was frequently passed down through families as a treasured heirloom. Many of the small gowns demonstrate intricate and beautiful needlework. This exhibition will display the range of baptismal gowns that have come into the Museum's collection, as well as some material loaned specifically for this exhibit.

Carl Nielsen, The Man and the Music

June - August, 1999

A traveling exhibition organized by the Odense City Museums in Denmark and accompanied by a special video which presents Nielsen's music in relation to the contemporary

Danish landscape. The exhibition is a multi-panel display illuminating the life and work of Carl (August) Nielsen (1865-1931), Denmark's foremost composer. He was particularly admired for his symphonies.

In Search of History: Documenting Elk Horn's Early Years

November 26, 1999 - May 7, 2000

Elk Horn, Iowa, site of the first Danish Folk School in the United States, was, and has continued to be, a key Danish American community. Yet there is little written or collected history for this town. This exhibition will parallel and complement a community history book currently underway.

2000

In Search of History: Documenting Elk Horn's Early Years

closes May 7, 2000

Danish American Cultural Life in Chicago

May 26, 2000 - November 5, 2000

Through the years, Danish American social groups and institutions in Chicago have taken many forms, ranging from homes for the young and the aged to clubs for socializing and singing. One of the more prominent of these has been the Dania Society of Chicago, considered to be the oldest Danish society in America. This exhibition will examine the richness and range of Chicago's Danish American cultural life from a historical perspective.

Lower Level Visual Storage Area is open to visitors as a “work in progress”

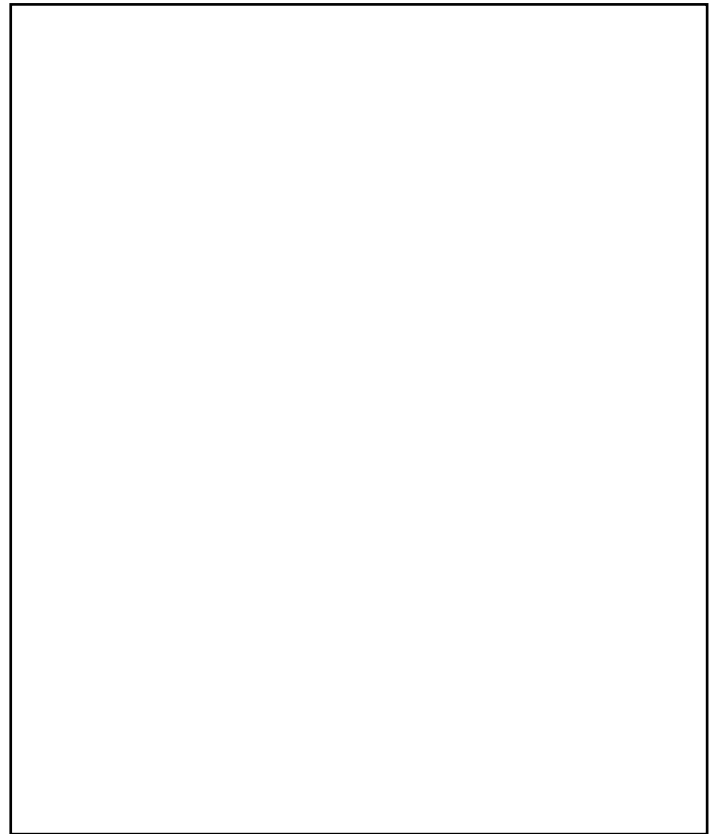
Since early fall 1998, there has been much activity in the Lower Level Visual Storage Area. Volunteers, who have received instruction in the handling of fine objects, have been diligently unpacking artifacts that were stored during construction.

The volunteers complete a condition report for each of the items unpacked, noting any changes that have occurred to the object during its life of handling. This would include any chips, mars or scratches observed on the object surface. These reports can then be compared to the records originally made for the object at the time of its intake into the Museum, so as to monitor any changes that may have occurred to the object during its time of packing, movement and off-site storage. Such condition reporting is standard procedure in the management of museum collections.

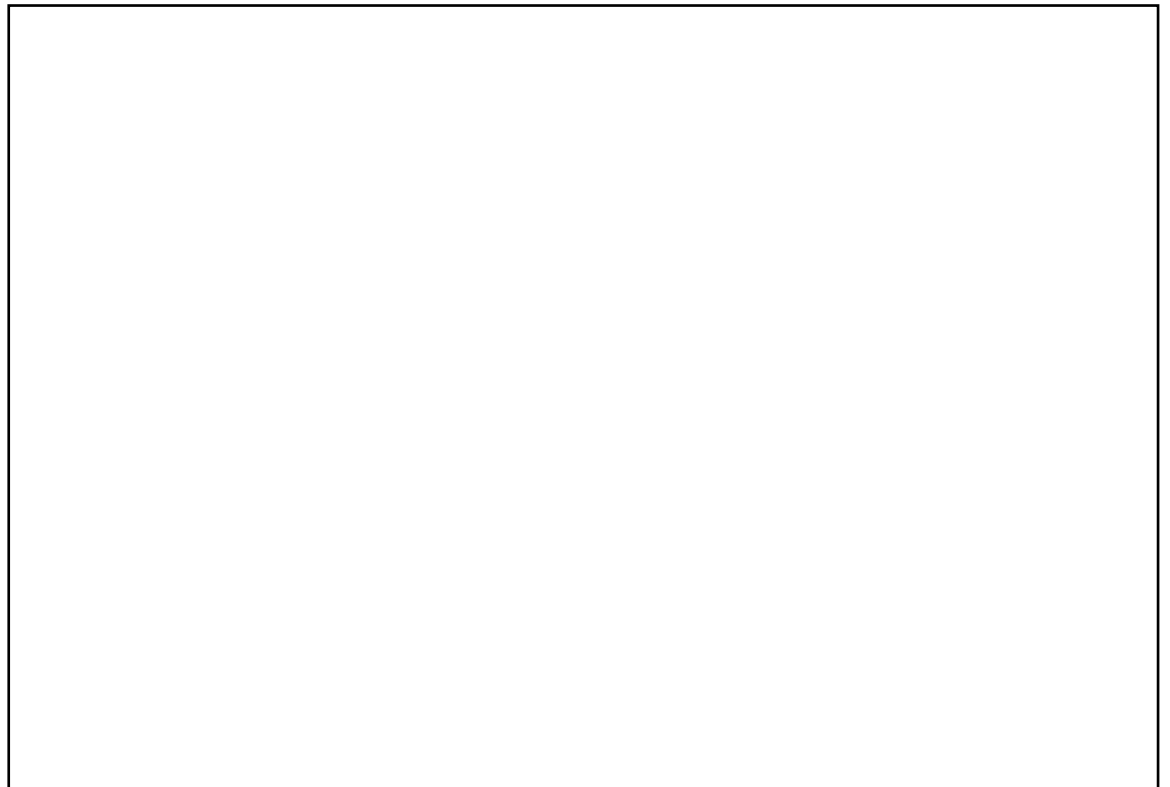
When the volunteers have completed their condition reports, the staff verifies that the object does indeed agree with its catalog description. In those cases where there is a discrepancy, the object is set aside as a problem and assigned a special tracking number until such time as there is a resolution.

The majority of the artifacts require the application of their permanent identification number. Much of the numbering is done by skilled volunteers with steady hands and good eyesight. There are many very small artifacts which require considerable attentiveness during the numbering process. Skill in this delicate procedure is highly valued. All verified and permanently numbered items, along with their conditions reports, are moved to pre-inventory shelves. The artifacts, having reached this stage, pass through a final inventory. The condition reports are pulled, the corresponding catalog entry is “ticked off” and the artifacts are integrated into their appropriate place in the visual storage area.

During this period of artifact settlement, signage in the Lower Level reflects the stages of this process. Shelving units bear the following signs: “verification pending”, “problems”, “tracking numbers”, “to be numbered”, “pre-inventory” and



Objects are accompanied by their condition reports until they pass through final inventory.



The Museum's collection contains many fine ceramic pieces.

“completed inventory”. In addition to quickly identifying the work areas for volunteers and staff, the signs are intended to make the various stages of artifact sorting and preparation clearer to the public. The visual storage area provides a glimpse of the involved and time consuming processes that comprise behind-the-scenes museum work.

The Lower Level was first opened to the public during Julefest and, since then, a considerable number of visitors have observed our volunteers and staff at work in that area. The Lower Level Visual Storage Area is referred to as a “work in progress” and will continue to be so for some time into the future.



Houston Danes enjoy dining with Museum Board members.

The Houston Danes display their Texas hospitality

Houston, Texas was the site of the Winter meeting of the Board of Directors on Thursday, February 4 through Saturday, February 6. The Board co-hosted a Friday evening reception with the Danish Club of Houston at the Four Leaf Tower that was attended by seventy-five Houston area Danes, Board members and guests. Welcoming the guests at the Four Leaf Tower were John Moyell, president of the Danish Club of Houston, and his wife Gurli, and Royal Danish Consulate and Mrs. Ray Daugbjerg of Houston.

On Saturday evening, the Board of Directors hosted a Danish celebration and dinner at the Renaissance Houston Hotel that was attended by more than 100 guests from the Danish Club of Houston and Danish Americans from Houston and the surrounding communities. Consul Ray Daugbjerg gave a

– Continued on page 11

Director's Corner

Have you received a phone call from The Danish Immigrant Museum lately? A very dedicated team of volunteers assembled each evening during late February and early March to conduct a telephone campaign reaching across the nation to many members of The Danish Immigrant Museum. The volunteers asked our members to consider a special gift in support of our badly needed computer upgrades. The proposed state-of-the-art information management system will aid visitors in identifying the many thousands of artifacts on display in the new Visual Storage Area in the Lower Level and will also improve the speed and efficiency in which we can respond to the needs of our members and donors.



We have submitted a grant request to the Iowa West Foundation for \$15,000. Contributions received as a result of the telephone campaign will be applied as matching funds for the grant in order that we might receive the highest priority consideration of the Iowa West Foundation grant committee.

The telephone campaign has been very successful on two levels. First, the members were contacted by a representative of the Museum who could answer questions, gather information and in some cases provide a service and solve a problem for the member being called. Secondly, we have been reminded that our members are very loyal to the Museum. The telephone campaign has been a big success. Our original goal was to raise matching funds to submit a grant request for \$10,000. The \$10,000 goal was reached early in the telephone campaign and because of the positive response from our members we decided to commit additional matching funds and request \$15,000 from the Iowa West Foundation.

The volunteers did an excellent job of making the calls and they far exceeded the original campaign goal. We hope you enjoyed the personalized calls from the Museum as much as we enjoyed visiting with you. Because so many of you have been part of the success of this project I thought you would like to have some idea of our progress. Figures show that as of April 1, approximately 1,500 or 75% of the planned calls were completed. The volunteers personally contacted 67% of those members who were called. Approximately 60% of those contacted made a commitment. Over \$33,000 had been received.

As a result of the successful telephone campaign and the generosity of our members, the Museum staff will be able to better serve our members and the visitors to the Museum through a much improved information management system.

Leo Hensley

Protector

Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark

Patron Members

The following members have made a membership gift of \$1,000 in the past 12 months, between March 1, 1998 and February 28, 1999.

Harold and Lois Berg, Ogden, IA
Mervin Bro, Scottsdale, AZ
Jack and Barbara Christensen, Yankton, SD
Ross Christensen, Waterloo, IA
Gordon and Janice Esbeck, Tipton, IA
Asta Forrest, Fountain Hills, AZ
Harriet Petersen Fort, DeWitt, NE
Charles and Joanne Frederiksen, Ames, IA
Earl and LaVena Fries, Des Moines, IA
Leo and Judy Hensley, Elk Horn, IA
Gunnar Horn, Omaha, NE
Vern Hunter, Fargo ND
James and Marge Iversen, Ames, IA
Clyde and Emma Johnson, Omaha, NE
Virgil Karmgard, Fargo, ND
Peter Kelly, Glastonbury, CT
Richard Ledet, Des Moines, IA
Charles Manatt, Washington, DC
John and Karen Molgaard, Atlantic, IA
Elcar and Norma Nielsen, Prairie Village, KS
Mark and Lori Nussle, Palos Park, IL
Folmer and Vera Nyby, Fountain Hills, AZ
Erik and Jackie Olsen, Mesa, AZ
Tom and Nadine Paulsen, Bellevue, WA
Rand and Mary Louise Petersen, Harlan, IA
Thelma Petersen, Harlan, IA
Richard H. and Virginia Petersen, Sr., Lincoln, NE
Tom Rosen, Fairmont, MN
Jim and Rose Grindheim Sims, Ridge Manor, FL
Halvor Strandskov, Arlington, VA
Svend and Lois Toftemark, Eugene, OR
Wilber Williamson, Des Moines, IA

Audubon State Bank Charitable Foundation, Audubon, IA
Emerald Excavating, Eugene, OR
Marne and Elk Horn Telephone Co., Elk Horn, IA
Royal Danish Embassy, Washington, DC



FAMILY HISTORY & GENEALOGY CENTER Stamtræ

Newspapers - A valuable tool

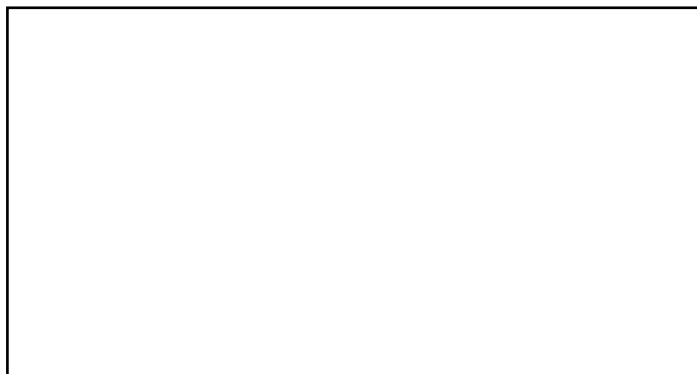
Newspapers are an important source in gathering genealogical facts. After you have determined the locale of an ancestor, a study of early issues is in order. Most commonly, obituaries are used to find a birth date, place of birth, parental names, children, brothers and sisters or a wife's maiden name, which is sometimes extremely difficult to find. If the deceased was an immigrant, you will likely find the year of his or her immigration. Death notices are less informative than obituaries but must not be overlooked for clues to an ancestor's existence. Birth notices may be found in newspapers prior to the year 1900 when birth registrations were required.

Coverage of social events, the engagements, weddings and parties reveal relationships. Would you like to know the wedding gifts great-grandmother received? Frequently a list was included in the wedding write-up. Most 50th wedding anniversaries were newsworthy. The 25th, 60th and 75th were also special items. Carefully note the out-of town guests. They were usually relatives of the couple.

Lists of immigrants were routinely published. Names of homesteaders, those who purchased land, and notices to addressees of unclaimed letters appeared in the papers. General news articles and the "gossip columns" are a repository of tidbits that offer surprising leads. Out of town Sunday dinners, marriages and funerals attended by local persons, or out-of-town guests traveling to visit in the community can be found in these columns.

By reading the microfilmed newspapers available in libraries and in archives, you may find the missing piece of your genealogical puzzle. How rewarding for this writer to find a simple item "William Arnold took the afternoon train to Hiawatha to attend the funeral of his brother, Dawson". A check of Dawson's obituary provided the name of Dawson's father, John, and thus linked a relationship sought for a number of years.

Two microfilms of the Kimballton-Elk Horn Record for the time periods of January 16, 1916 to October 31, 1918 and November 7, 1918 to December 22, 1921, have proven to be worthwhile purchases. One reader was able to establish the historical context for family treasures passed down to her from an aunt, when she found the items listed among the gifts that her grandparents received for their silver wedding anniversary in 1916. The editors of the Elk Horn history book are finding these microfilms an invaluable resource as they move progressively deeper into their project. We invite you to stop in to look through these interesting films.



The Family History and Genealogy Center's three core volunteers: Mae Petersen standing at far left, Norma Lange Nelson and Margaret Christensen.

Church microfilms

Requests are made regularly by persons seeking information about a Danish immigrant who settled in this area. The local church records are an essential source for locating them.

Realizing the importance of this resource, Jette Mackintosh of Denmark made the Elk Horn Lutheran Church records available when she presented her own microfilm copy to the Family History and Genealogy Center while visiting the Museum last fall. Another friend of the Family History and Genealogy Center has chosen to place her own personal microfilm of the Bethlehem Church records, Jacksonville, Iowa, in our library where they, too, are being used to help others. The Center is deeply appreciative of these gifts

Editorial note: The Family History and Genealogy Center is open from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. The Stamtræ article is contributed by the Center's three core volunteers: Margaret Christensen, Norma Lange Nelson and Mae Petersen.



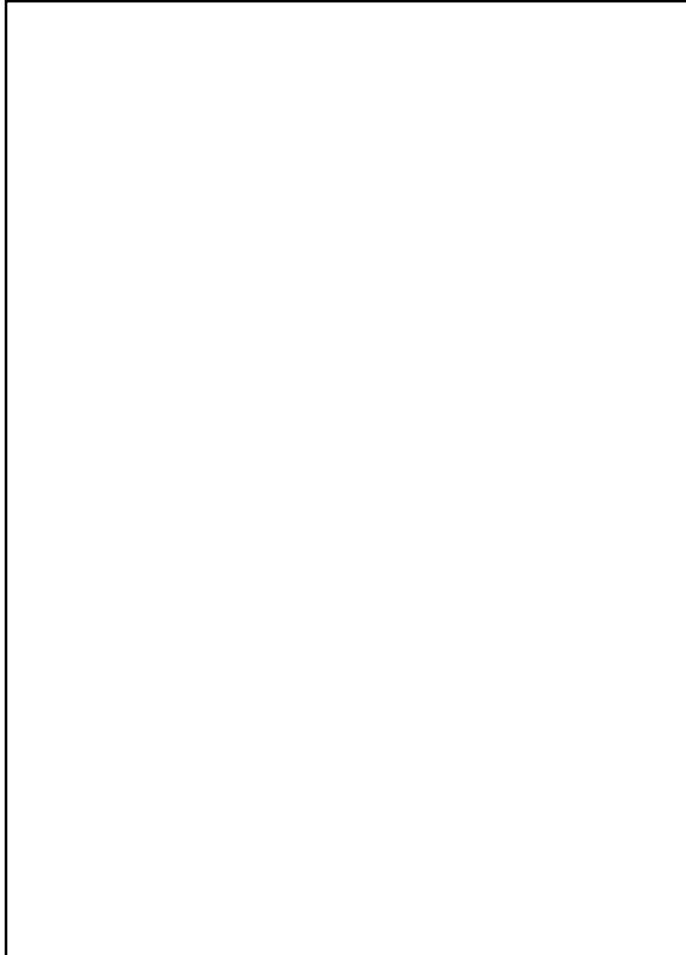
Museum to be integral part of October elderhostel on Danish culture and heritage

The Elk Horn/Kimballton area will be the destination for an educational adventure offered Sunday October 3rd through Friday October 8th by the National Elderhostel organization in Boston.

Elderhostel Coordinator Carol Brockman of Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs explains, "Elderhostel is an educational adventure for those persons 55 and over who are looking for something that is different; looking for something that will expand their horizons; and, looking for something that will allow them to meet 'like-minded' people." The Elderhostel will cover three topics: (1) Velkommen to Danish American Culture - which will include food, customs,



Volunteer spotlight



Richard (Dick) H. Nelson's involvement with The Danish Immigrant Museum goes back to its very beginnings in this area. He remembers vividly the community meeting in the early 1980's at which Iowa's Governor, Terry Branstad, encouraged the community's efforts to promote their location as site of the national museum for Danish immigrant heritage. It was soon after that The Danish Immigrant Museum was scheduled to be built in Elk Horn. Ground breaking and construction of the Museum was an exciting and interesting time for Richard, as well as for many others. Even before the Grand Opening in 1994, he was greeting visitors and showing them around the new building. Later, he took his place among those volunteers greeting visitors at the Museum's front desk.

In the Fall of 1996, at the invitation of Curator, Barbara Lund-Jones, Richard, along with retired Pastor LeVern S. Nielsen, became a founding member of the Museum's Collections Documentation Project. He and LeVern worked closely with the Curator, reviewing artifact files and pursu-

ing further documentation and needed information through correspondence and personal inquiry. Richard thought it remarkable the way an entire story would come together from bits and pieces separately acquired. In the course of his documentation work, he became involved in research for upcoming exhibitions, a challenge which he enjoyed.

In early 1998, Richard moved from documentation to direct involvement with collections work. Over a period of several months and working from a checklist, he single-handedly reviewed 12 years of artifact files for their state of completeness and for the purpose of duplicating two sets of all original Deed of Gift letters and listings. One set of duplicated listings went into a series of notebooks that are used daily in the settlement of the Visual Storage Area. The completion of this task necessarily preceded all other volunteer work in the Lower Level.

Richard is now working with the final inventory stage in the Visual Storage Area. The artifacts that he works with are ones that other volunteers have unpacked, conditioned reported and numbered. He does a final check to make sure that everything is in order and then pulls the condition report and places the object on a shelf with others of its kind, ready for visitor viewing. As he does this, he enters the object on an inventory list and marks off as completed the catalog listing for that object. The staff keeps the inventory list updated on the computer and, when the area is finally settled, donors and visitors will be able to identify objects by location.

As a child, Richard lived on a farm which his family rented near Kirkman, Iowa. At the age of 9, he moved with his parents to the farm they purchased 6 miles west of Elk Horn, a farm he still owns, although he has recently moved into a house in Elk Horn. He attended country school Clay #3 and then went on to Elk Horn High School, where he graduated in 1943.

He farmed full time until 1958, when a serious illness believed to have been induced by farm chemicals, forced a change in his life. When he was sufficiently recovered, he went to work for the Elk Horn Locker and later for G. A. Findley, Inc. (a gravel operation) in Harlan. He retired in 1984.

Richard married Norma Lange in 1949 and, together, they raised three children, Ned, Julie and Natalie. Now, Richard and Norma are actively involved in the lives and achievements of their four grandchildren. Between the two of them, they have given a great deal to The Danish Immigrant Museum through contributed time and expertise. Norma has been a core volunteer at the Museum's Family History and Genealogy Center since its founding in 1996 and, through her research, has helped many Danish American families throughout the country. Richard and Norma quietly celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary early this year.

Richard has a natural aptitude for the exacting requirements of collections work and the Museum has benefited richly from his dedicated service.

Danish Rotarians visit the Museum

Sunday evening, February 14th, The Danish Immigrant Museum hosted a group of Danish Rotarians on a special tour. The guests included nine Rotarians from Dragør, Denmark, their spouses, and, Tor Jensen, president of Aviation & Tourism, International of Wilmette, Illinois. They first had flown in to Chicago accompanied by Jorgen Von-Benzon, group leader, and then traveled via a chartered bus with James E. Breining, owner of Five Oaks Charters from Des Moines. While it is not uncommon for the Museum to have visitors from Denmark, this was the first time that Danish Rotarians had participated in a group bus tour to the Museum.

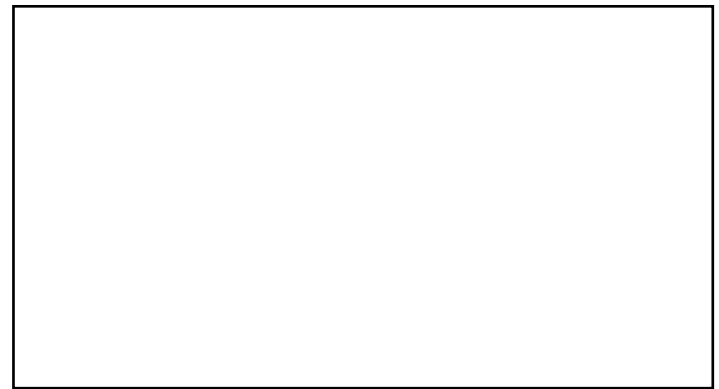
The visitors were given an extended tour of the Museum that evening, including the new Lower Level Visual Storage Area and the Family History and Genealogy Center. It was a unique opportunity for them to privately view the Museum's collections and exhibitions. A Valentine theme reception

concluded their visit. The next morning, they toured Elk Horn's Danish Windmill and then went on to the Atlantic, Iowa area where they were hosted by the Atlantic Rotarians, whose scheduled tour gave the visitors insight into agricultural developments here. The Danish Rotarians tour of southwest Iowa ended that evening with a farewell dinner sponsored by the Danish Windmill Corporation.

The collection of family histories drew considerable interest.



The group listens attentively to a discussion of the Muller exhibit.

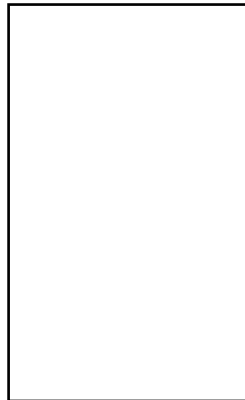


The Rotarians observe work in the Lower Level Visual Storage Area.

Houston Danes . . . – continued from page seven

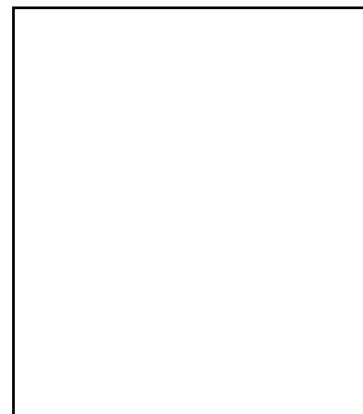
welcoming address to the guests in which he stressed the importance of the collaborative functions of Danish American organizations throughout the country and the importance of the mission of The Danish Immigrant Museum. Executive Director Leo Hensley gave a slide presentation on The Danish Immigrant Museum and Curator Barbara Lund-Jones presented an update on the recent work of the curatorial department and the future exhibits planned for the Museum. The guests were thoroughly humored by Niels Kastrup, a founding member of the Danish Club of Houston, as he spoke of the language interpretations of the Danish Americans in the great State of Texas.

The Houston experience was very rewarding for the members of the Board of Directors and the staff of The Danish Immigrant Museum. The Texas hospitality of the Houston Danes forged many new friendships that will promote future collaboration



Niels Kastrup entertains the guests.

of The Danish Immigrant Museum and the Danish American community of Houston. Consul Ray Daubjerg in his address said, "In remembering our past we create our future." His words provided an inspiring reminder of the importance of the mission of The Danish Immigrant Museum and the work of all Danish American organizations.



Board members Bent Lerno and Janet Thuesen.



Executive Director Leo Hensley and Consul Ray Daubjerg pause for a photo at the board dinner.

Elderhostel . . .

– continued from page nine

crafts, folk dancing, religion and architecture; (2) A Glimpse of Hans Christian Andersen; and, (3) Genealogy: Who Am I and Where Do I Come From? Resource people for the educational sessions include many local area authorities on Danish-American culture. Special tours of The Danish Immigrant Museum and its collections are also part of the program.

Genealogy Researcher Margaret Christensen will conduct the workshop on Genealogy here at the Museum. Ms. Christensen has served as a core volunteer in the Museum's Family History and Genealogy Center since its opening in 1996 and has played a key role in the Center's development. Partici-

pants in the Genealogy Workshop will be able to utilize the Museum's extensive holdings of place and church histories for communities across the country having predominantly Danish heritage, its family histories, and, microfiche/microfilm records.

There are two tuition schedules, depending upon whether or not the participants will require lodging (transportation to Elk Horn is not included in the price.) Those who will require accommodations at The AmericInn Motel or at one of the local Bed & Breakfast establishments, should call the National Elderhostel Office at its toll-free number 1-877-426-8056 and make reference to site # 15428. The fee for lodging, meals and all costs for tuition and materials is \$412 per person, based on double-occupancy. For those planning to commute daily the cost for meals, tuition and materials is \$206. Those not requiring lodging can contact Brockman by writing to her at Iowa Western Community College, 2700 College Road, Box 4-C, Council Bluffs, IA 51502-3004 or by calling 1-800-432-5852.

Just a Reminder –
The Museum's SPRING & SUMMER HOURS
(May 15-September 15) are:
Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Sat. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
& Sun. Noon to 6 p.m.
Admission: \$3.00, adults; \$1.50, children
Free for current members



– Harlan, IA Tribune Graphics

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