

# America Letter

Celebrating 30 Years Winter 2013



museum of  
danish america



# Director's Corner

by John Mark Nielsen

**Change is occurring here at the Museum of Danish America.** Even these words reflect one of the changes. At the museum's 30<sup>th</sup> annual meeting held in Elk Horn on Friday, October 11, the Board of Directors ratified adding the new name. It is more inclusive, embracing the descendants of immigrants as well as the places where Danes and Danish Americans are active today.

We will legally always be The Danish Immigrant Museum, but we have also legally adopted the name of the Museum of Danish America. **This is important as it means members who have provided for our museum in the name of The Danish Immigrant Museum do not need to make any changes in their estate plans.** It also reminds us that our story is rooted in the experience of the immigrant generation who took the dramatic step to immigrate to these shores.

Change is also occurring in the physical structure of our museum. In September work began on the construction of our curatorial center addition. This is an exciting step as we conclude our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. The sounds of bulldozers and excavators and the commotion of construction workers bring an added level of vitality to our museum. **Funding the construction, however, has been a learning experience for me.**

**As a college professor, I did not give much thought to estate planning.** This was an issue to be considered in later years. Yes, Dawn and I did see to it that we had "Last Will and Testaments" and we participated in the retirement programs of each of the institutions where we taught. But I would often skip over any articles encouraging estate planning as likely to be self serving (**in fact, seeing "estate planning" in bold above would lead me to stop reading!**). The events of the last months have led me to think differently.

I had always said that we would not begin construction until we raised \$3 million in gifts and pledges – \$2 million for construction and \$1 million for investment in our endowment, the earnings of which are to help fund the additional cost of operating the expanded museum. **On August 14<sup>th</sup>, I assured our Board of Directors that we had reached our goal;** board members voted unanimously that I sign the contracts and that we move forward with construction.

**Five days later, I received gut-wrenching news from the attorney representing the donor's trust. A major bequest gift was not as large as the donor had believed or assured me that the museum would receive.** This he had stated in numerous conversations. His hope was to leave our museum \$1 million, so that the new curatorial center could be named in honor of his immigrant parents. (\$1 million is the benchmark we have for naming a building or an endowed position.)

**What the donor had forgotten or not fully understood was that he had entered into an irrevocable, charitable remainder trust on behalf of another institution.** Part of what he thought was to come to the museum, in fact, was no longer directly a part of his estate. He could receive monthly annuity payments from this trust, but at the time of his death, the balance became the asset of and payable to the institution named in that charitable remainder trust – unfortunately for us, it was not our museum!

Luckily, I was conservative in estimating what the proceeds of the estate would be, but this did mean that the museum was suddenly a half million short of what I had projected! Immediately, I contacted Dagmar Muthamia, the president of our Board of Directors, and I wrote a three-page, single-spaced letter to our board members. In my letter, I laid out an alternative strategy to achieve our goal. Did they, however, want to halt construction until we had raised the additional funds?

What I have learned is that discussing the finances of couples or individuals is very difficult and sensitive. Most of us are very private about our individual finances and our estate planning. I understand this. I have also learned

COVER PHOTO: René Gross Kærskov with the "South Pole" on December 14, 2010 on the 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Norwegian Roald Amundsen's arrival. See page 4 for our *Across Oceans, Across Time, Across Generations* story.

# America Letter

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that I must find the language to explore in respectful and confidential ways the potential donor's intent, seeing to it that the appropriate legal work has been done.

**Most importantly, however, I encourage each of you to discuss with trusted legal consul your intentions for your estate.** It can be complicated – that's why we avoid it – but it can also provide you with the assurance that your desires will be fully realized. Of course, I hope, after providing for loved ones, you will consider including the museum in your estate plans. **The important**

**issue is that you have a plan and understand it as well as possible.**

We are moving forward with construction of our curatorial center. We can do so because there are major donors who have stepped forward with pledges and gifts. We also do so because we have received important and generous bequests, including the one from the donor I've described. As a museum, we continue to move forward because you support us through your membership and gifts. For this, I am always and very grateful.

## Unique Gift that Keeps on Giving

Christmas is coming! Membership to the Museum of Danish America makes a meaningful gift for any occasion. Give the gift that keeps giving all year round. Make shopping easy while supporting the Museum – Remember, we 'gift-wrap' and ship, too!

\$25.00 gift for a new member\*

\$30.00 gift for a member renewal

As a Member, your friend or relative will enjoy year-round admission, *America Letter* newsletter (three times a year), 10% discount in our unique Museum Shop, and reduced translation and research fees at our Genealogy Center.

To order visit [www.danishmuseum.org](http://www.danishmuseum.org)  
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Or e-mail: [Development@danishmuseum.org](mailto:Development@danishmuseum.org)

*\*Never been a member, or membership has been lapsed for three+ years.*

*Please allow 2–3 weeks from the date of your order for delivery of the Gift Membership packet. You may choose to have the packet sent to you or directly to your recipient.*

## Admission & Hours

### ADMISSION

(Includes Bedstemor's House)

Current Museum Members:

FREE with Membership Card

Non-Members: Adults, \$5

Children (ages 8-17), \$2

### MUSEUM HOURS:

Monday-Friday, 9:00 am-5:00 pm

Saturday, 10:00 am-5:00 pm

Sunday, 12:00 noon-5:00 pm

### BUSINESS HOURS

Monday-Friday

8:00 am to 5:00 pm

### GENEALOGY CENTER HOURS

May-October:

Tuesday-Friday, 9:00 am-5:00 pm

Saturday, 10:00 am-5:00 pm

November-April:

Tuesday-Friday,

9:00 am-5:00 pm

**All facilities are closed on**

**New Year's Day;**

**Easter Sunday; Thanksgiving;**

**Christmas**

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

# Across Oceans, Across Time, Across Generations: **New man in the newsroom**

*...But it's certainly not his first adventure*

By Nicky Christensen

**He claims to be the first Dane to have stood on both the North and South poles. He also wants to be the first Dane in space. But one of this 47-year-old's latest adventures is breathing new life into a Danish newspaper in the U.S.**

Between feats of endurance, a sharp eye on the finances of an international interior design firm, and a passion for seeing the world, Los Angeles-based René Gross Kærskov keeps in touch with his roots with his latest endeavor that helps others do the same.

Kærskov grew up in North Denmark, in Frederikshavn, Vendsyssel. "The windiest place in Europe and the coldest place in Denmark," he says. On his father's side, Kærskov traces his roots back to the 1650s from around the same 50 kilometer radius in Vendsyssel. The name comes from the family farm *Kærskov*. "My parents didn't have much money and moved to a town where they could afford to start a business. They bought their first clothing store in Frederikshavn and within a few years, they had five stores around Vendsyssel."

Kærskov fondly remembers a worry-free and safe childhood with his sister in contrast to the busy Los Angeles environment his two children are growing up in. "In one way we seemed much more 'free' than my own children in urban America, who are driven everywhere and watched 24/7." He says that growing up in Denmark, he and his peers were somehow still very safe, "even though nobody knew where we were half the time."



*René Gross Kærskov is co-CEO of Hirsch Bedner Associates, an international interior design firm.*

## **DAY JOB**

Today, Kærskov is co-CEO of Hirsch Bedner Associates, an interior design firm founded in 1965 that works primarily with clients in the hospitality industry. HBA has completed over 1,000 projects spanning more than 80 countries. Recent projects-of-pride include the new Four Seasons Guangzhou in China (complete with Danish "starchitect" Arne Jacobsen's egg chairs in the lobby) and the restoration of the 1929 Moorish-style Hotel Alfonso XIII in Spain. HBA's design focus is always creative



*Kærskov and family in 1966.*



*Kærskov doing weightlessness training in an airplane above Florida's Kennedy Space Center in 2011.*

spaces with a sense of place for people to use. Kærskov says, "Too many times designers believe that a project is theirs. [HBA's] projects are being created for the end user – not for the designer's personal dreams."

Kærskov's first job was in Copenhagen with Rigsrevisionen (The Auditor of the Government). "I wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed in school, so big accounting firms and banks weren't exactly standing in line to hire me," he commented. So, he had to travel to find his first job. "Vendsysselsk stubbornness and work ethics (similar to the Midwest, I assume) have always been my driving force."

Kærskov started with HBA in London circa 1991 while he was a graduate student. He eventually worked his way to CFO and is now co-CEO with Singapore-based designer Ian Carr. The company has 16 offices in 13 countries and has experienced considerable growth in the last few years. In 2010 they had \$55 million in revenue with 500 employees, in 2012 sales grew to \$91 million and they now employ over 1,200 throughout the world.

Kærskov was featured with Carr in *Entrepreneur's* October 2013 cover story, "Top CEOs on what it takes to make it big." Kærskov's comment in the story highlights his strong work ethic and dedication to the firm: "We have a roll-up-your-sleeves meritocracy, and we dive in and do the work so everyone can see we are in the trenches, there in the late evenings and in all the major client meetings. And we aren't afraid of competition; competition pushes you to be better. The guy next to you, the other firm – you've got to do better than he can."

## OUTER SPACE AND MARATHONS

But Kærskov isn't facing competition only in his career, his successes have opened up a new race—to space. An early investment in Virgin Galactic's space tourism program entered him into the race to become the first Dane in space. Virgin Galactic is still in the testing phase of its program.

Including Kærskov, four Danes are in line for the title: Per Wimmer, Andreas Mogensen, and Peter Madsen. The clock is ticking, as Mogensen was recently slated for a September 30, 2015, trip to the International Space Station with the European Space Agency on a Russian spacecraft. Although Kærskov is in Virgin Galactic's Founder group, comprised of the first 100 people who will fly, dates have not been assigned for the flights.

It was his self-prescribed space training that led Kærskov to take up running in 2006. Running his first marathon in

Australia in 2008, he has finished seven marathons on seven continents and an eighth on the North Pole for good measure. Proving that competitiveness doesn't dominate his outlook on life, Kærskov says, "I'm not running to win, I just want to finish."

With so many accomplishments, adventures and responsibilities, one wonders how Kærskov does it. Kærskov chalks it up to a healthy lifestyle and time management, sleeping 5-6 hours per day and remaining active. "I naturally look for things to do if my mind is not working," he says. From daily ping pong matches (ping pong tables are at all of the 16 HBA offices) to morning strength training workouts with his nine-year-old daughter as the weight, Kærskov finds creative ways to keep his mind and body sharp.

Discipline is also a factor in Kærskov's health. Rene says he abstains from smoking, drinking alcohol other than red wine, and overindulging in fatty meats, sweets, and desserts, commenting in a March "What's your workout" article for *The Wall Street Journal*, "I believe good health is as much about what you don't do as it is about what you do do."

## WORLD TRAVELER

Kærskov travels frequently for business, explaining in a separate, July *Wall Street Journal* article, that he

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travels on one domestic trip and one long-haul trip each month for about 10 days every month. He says of traveling: "It makes you a more interesting, open and well-rounded person. As my ancestors, the Vikings, said, 'foreign places yield more to one who is himself worth meeting.'"

Kærskov's upbringing in Denmark may have triggered his fondness for traveling, commenting in *Hotel Business Design's* March/April 2013 cover story, "Growing up in Denmark, it doesn't take much more than a 20-minute flight or even a couple of hours' drive to cross into a neighboring country," he said, "So it was a natural part of growing up there."

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## Bering Time

Kærskov is one of the founders behind the Danish watch brand Bering. Inspired by Kærskov's photographs and descriptions of the arctic landscape after his parachuted leap from a helicopter at the North Pole, his captivated Danish business partners turned his experience into a watch brand that launched in 2010 and now has 3,700 points of sale in 25 markets.

The brand is named after Danish sailor Vitus Bering who set sail in 1728 for an almost unknown area of the Arctic Ocean. Bering was the first European to discover Alaska, and it is there that a time zone and strait bear his name. Bering watches are characterized by durable materials like ceramic and sapphire crystal and extremely flat designs in a modest price range. "A watch brand which would be as pure, clear and breathtakingly beautiful as the Arctic itself," says their website.

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*The main street in Frederikshavn in 1981 where Kærskov was born. His parents owned the clothing store "Lissi" and originally lived upstairs.*

Considering Denmark's size, it doesn't take a far journey to cross into another country with a different language and culture. Danes learn at a young age that they are not alone in the world. "I think growing up in Denmark gives you a good understanding of the rest of the world early on. I do find us Danes to be humble in one way, but in another way we like to think we are the world's best as well (but we mostly only tell ourselves that among ourselves)," he continues, "I think we make good global citizens."

Having been to the North and South poles and North Korea, his next goal is to travel to the highest volcanoes on each of the seven continents. He says, "I'm looking for the top-of-the-line, ultimate adventure."

## SETTLING IN THE U.S.

It was while working as an office assistant with HBA in London during the Gulf War that Kærskov was given an ultimatum - move to the Los Angeles office or be laid off. He moved, and citing his success, he certainly doesn't regret his decision: "I moved to the Los Angeles office and later became the CEO and majority shareholder of the company."

He and his wife, Alicia, who is from the Bay Area in Northern California, have two children, Thorbjørn, 11, and Amalie, 9. Kærskov says his children are globalized Danish Americans. They go to French school and are fluent in Danish, English and French. They recently started learning Chinese as well. "They do like to refer to themselves as being Danish, but English is their first language," he says, "I have always spoken 95% Danish to them and 'forced' them to talk to me in Danish as well. It never bothered me to speak Danish to them in front of non-Danish people."

Kærskov became more involved with the Danish community in California when he realized that he might never reside again in Denmark, and that he wanted his children to remain Danish. "That was the wake-up call for me -- scared of not being Danish," Kærskov commented. "I am still a Danish citizen and will remain so." The Kærskovs return to Denmark every summer and spend it at their summerhouse in Lønstrup in Vendsyssel.

Enchanted by the beauty of the Santa Ynez Valley, the Kærskovs have also bought a farm near Solvang, California where they grow organic



The Kærskov family in Lønstrup in Vendsyssel where they spend every summer.

vegetables. There are also plans to grow grapes for Danish wine. Of Solvang Kærskov says, “We understood what the first Danes were thinking when they arrived there in the early 1900s. We like the peace away from busy Los Angeles, and the fact that I can get *rundstykker, leverpostej og wienerbrød* while the sun is shining year round doesn’t make it any worse.”

Before his Solvang farm’s crop is planted and ready, Kærskov is working on importing H.R.H. Prince Consort Henrik of Denmark’s wine into America with a first shipment to arrive this winter. In discussions with the Prince, the two agreed

that it was a shame that the Danes in Solvang and elsewhere cannot enjoy the wines of Chateau de Cayx. Kærskov works under H.R.H. the Prince of Denmark as a member of the Presidium and fundraiser for the World Wildlife Foundation in Denmark.

### THE PAPER

A few years ago, the then-owner and editor of *Bien*, Jytte Madsen, hit a rocky road with the death of her husband and health problems of her own. Learning of this, Kærskov offered to step in to save *Bien* if need-be. Thankfully, Madsen recovered but agreed to sell the

newspaper to Kærskov earlier this year. He did so, but only on the condition that Madsen remain on as Editor. “To me, *Bien* is an important treasure of the Danish-American culture and history that needs to be preserved. I don’t have any specific newspaper experience, and all indicators tell me that nobody with common sense should buy a newspaper.”

Kærskov says he is inspired by the Danish publishers who came before him in the last 131 years and feels he has a duty not to waste their contributions to the paper. In fact, instead of the title of “publisher,” he feels “protector” is a more appropriate title. While Madsen is focusing on the printed operation of *Bien*, Kærskov has invested in many new things within the newspaper operation such as fundraising, launching a website ([www.biennews.com](http://www.biennews.com)), a social media presence, and cooperation with Danish news agencies. While not his most lucrative endeavor, he remains optimistic that things will turn around for the paper soon. “This year every newspaper is costing me \$5 per subscriber, but that is okay—that is my contribution to the Danish-American community. Hopefully, we can turn that around in the next couple of years.”

The news industry is facing major struggles as newspapers try to find their place and prosperity in the digital age. “However, so far we have more than 1,500 loyal subscribers in 47 states in America. We appreciate them and will be delivering them a newspaper as long as they enjoy it. I have many ideas for *Bien* that could include everything from the publishing of Danish-American materials to some more exciting stuff that I cannot reveal yet.”

Given his fondness for thrills, we cannot wait to see what “exciting stuff” Kærskov is plotting.

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## ***Bien, The Bee***

- The only weekly Danish-language newspaper in the U.S.
- Founded in 1882
- Paid circulation 1,500+ in 47 states

Staffed by Editor and former Publisher Jytte Madsen and eight local editors across the country, *Bien* was printed via linotype until 2001, when it was sold by former *LA Times* printer Poul Andersen, who had purchased it in 1975. It was the last newspaper in California to be printed by linotype.

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# Digital Library of Danish-American Newspapers and Journals Launches

**Did you know that in the 1880s and 90s, the Levi Strauss Company advertised in the West Coast's Danish-American newspaper, *Bien (The Bee)*? Or that on November 17, 1887, *Den Danske Pioneer (The Danish Pioneer)* informed readers that they could buy 4 pounds of roasted coffee from P. Olsen, The Cash Grocer on Cuming Street in Omaha?**

Or perhaps, you're interested in news from one of the many Danish-American communities scattered across the country – obituaries and accounts of social gatherings, lodge meetings, anniversaries and parties. Maybe you want to learn how Danish Americans were lobbying President Woodrow Wilson to advocate for a vote to return the Duchy of Slesvig to Denmark at the close of World War I.

This and much, much more is now available on the museum's website at [www.danishmuseum.org](http://www.danishmuseum.org). Click on the "Online Media" drop-down menu; next on the term, "Digital Library of Danish-American Newspapers and Journals" at the bottom of the drop-down list. You'll find yourself at the landing page of this new resource. Now you along with scholars, researchers and readers all over the world, can access the Danish-American newspapers that were slowly deteriorating in archival collections.

The newspapers you'll find are *Den Danske Pioneer*, founded in 1872 in Omaha and today published in Chicago; *Bien*, which was first published in 1882 in San Francisco and today in Los Angeles;

*Dannevirke*, founded in Elk Horn but soon moved to Cedar Falls, Iowa, and published between 1880 and 1951; and *Danskeren*, first printed in Neenah, Wisconsin in 1892 but moved to Blair, Nebraska, in 1899 and published there until 1921. In addition, the library includes over forty scrapbooks put together by the great 20th-century Danish heroic tenor Lauritz Melchior.

The museum, working with the Danish American Archive and Library in Blair, Nebraska, and the Danish Immigrant Archive – Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa, has created and is maintaining this digital library. Digitization and hosting is through Northern Micrographics Corporation of La Crosse, Wisconsin. Funding for the first phase of the project has been provided by the A.P. Møller and Chastine Mc-Kinney Møller Foundation in Copenhagen. Two additional phases are anticipated in this project to digitize and make searchable important Danish-American archival collections.

You are invited to play with this resource since it is possible to highlight selected passages and then copy these passages into Google Translate. Note the "Help" tab which provides information on using the software that has been developed by ResCarta. You'll also quickly learn that searching is not like using "Google" or one of the other search engines. Work to improve the usability, particularly of the optical character recognition (OCR) of the Gothic script, is on-going. But it's exciting that these newspapers and the scrapbooks of Lauritz Melchior have now been preserved.

## Social Media Connection

**Stay in touch with the museum and its interests by interacting with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr and YouTube. We go by "DanishMuseum" most places, so we are easy to find.**

NEW! The museum and interns are now blogging on Tumblr. From our travels across the U.S. to the daily oddities of museum life, we are eager to share with you! Follow us at [danishmuseum.tumblr.com](http://danishmuseum.tumblr.com) and [danishmuseuminterns.tumblr.com](http://danishmuseuminterns.tumblr.com).



## Six Members Join Museum's Board of Directors

The museum held its 95th regular board meeting and 30th annual meeting in October, coinciding with the Danish American Heritage Society conference, "Innovation: The Danish Way," at the Des Moines Embassy Suites. The meetings were structured so that board members and staff could attend both engagements, including a bus tour to Elk Horn.

Following a group tour of the Danish Windmill and dinner at the Danish Inn, board members held their annual meeting in Elk Horn while conference attendees toured the museum.

The new members include Bill Jensen, Bente Ellis, Carolyn Larson, Craig Molgaard, Brent Norlem, and Dan Christensen.

## Curatorial Center Construction Underway

In mid-September, the museum grounds came alive with the rumble of excavator and dump trucks. Earth was removed from the west side of the present museum building to prepare for construction of an 8,200-square foot-curatorial center.

In August, the Board of Directors accepted the bid of Meco-Henne Contracting, Inc. of Omaha, Nebraska and authorized construction of the \$2 million building. Carroll Control Systems, Inc. of Carroll, Iowa, was also contracted to provide the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems (HVAC). The firm, the original HVAC contractor, has been a generous business member and provided services since the original building was completed in 1993.

The curatorial center addition will provide our museum with expanded climate controlled artifact storage, an exhibit preparation area, curatorial offices, a quarantine room, and a loading dock. There will be an intimate exhibit space where the addition connects to the present building. The roof will be "green," featuring a mix of prairie grasses and forbs. This will serve as an outdoor exhibit area, identifying and describing many of the plants visitors will find throughout the Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park.

Planning for this first major addition to our museum building has stretched over several years. From the beginning, our Executive Director, Dr. John Mark Nielsen, and the Board have been committed to raising all the funds necessary before beginning construction. They

were concerned that an appeal to our entire membership would affect the annual giving that supports daily operational needs.

In September 2012, the museum received an anonymous gift of \$1 million. This gift, which was unrestricted, led to a plan to raise \$3 million – \$2 million for construction and \$1 million to be invested in the museum's endowment, the earnings to support the increased operational costs for the expanded space. By the time the Board voted in August to proceed, over \$2.5 million had been raised from major donors and bequest gifts with the final amount expected in pledges. This meant the museum could self-finance the construction, even as funds were being invested in the endowment.

"Growing our museum involves all," Nielsen said. "We're grateful for those who have the ability to give major gifts, but we are equally thankful for the support of each and every member. There's a Danish saying," he continued, "*Mange bække små, gør en stor å*" (many small streams make a great river); it takes the support of everyone, each in his or her own way, to realize the success our museum has enjoyed over the past thirty years." Curatorial center construction is visible evidence of the museum's growth.

# The **C**ollection Connection

By Angela Stanford, Curator of Collections and Registrar

**One of the most unique – and contemporary – stories found in the collection of the Museum of Danish America is illustrated by a bicycle. Made by Danish manufacturer Principia around 2005, this bike provided the means by which the donor, Lars Toft Rasmussen, undertook his latest adventure.**

In August of 2012, Rasmussen began his six-week, 3,124 mile trip across the United States – on this bicycle. Rasmussen, a 58-year-old reporter for TV2 in Denmark, decided to make the trek from Mill Valley, California, where he had been an exchange student between 1970 and 1971, all the way to Washington, D.C. As he put it, “I was headed for the same goal as that of Obama, Romney and all the candidates for Congress: The capital of the United States.”

Rasmussen limited his luggage to a few essentials – credit card, tooth brush and a few other items – which he carried in a small backpack. In order to secure an adequate power supply for his iPhone and iPad on the lonely stretches of the Western part of United States, the backpack was equipped with solar panels. He also mounted a small rack with a bag on the bike in order to be able to store enough water for the desert. “All in all, I was able to carry about 1½ gallons in this way. At 90 degrees F and 10 percent humidity, this turned out to be sufficient for about 70 miles, which was the maximum distance between



*Lars Toft Rasmussen on the bike he donated to the museum about to embark on the six-week journey.*

towns.” Navigation was done by relevant pages of a road atlas and occasionally the GPS on his iPhone.

TV2 ultimately funded much of the trip in exchange for Rasmussen reporting along the way. He wrote articles for TV2’s website and did television news reports upon his return.

One of Rasmussen’s many stops along the way was the Museum of Danish America in Elk Horn, Iowa. Executive Director John Mark Nielsen visited with Rasmussen as he toured and suggested that the museum would be interested in obtaining the bike for its collection once the trip was over. Rasmussen said he would consider it if Principia, the Danish manufacturer of his bicycle, would help provide him with a new ride. Principia agreed. The bike that carried Rasmussen across the U.S. arrived back in Elk Horn in July of this year. It was just in time to be displayed as a segment of RAGBRAI, the Des Moines Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, passed through Elk Horn bringing with it about 4,000 cyclists.



*Finding Denmark in the U.S. makes Rasmussen feel at home.*

Rasmussen's career as a journalist has taken him around the world, including the United States. He spent 18 months in New York City working at the Danish Consulate General and earning a Master's



*A carriage, a bike, and a truck pull into a bar. . . the start of a good story.*

Degree in journalism at Columbia University. He later interned in Los Angeles at *Bien*, one of two Danish-language newspapers printed in the U.S. As travels included the Nordic countries, he spent four years with a Greenlandic newspaper and became the press secretary of an international Eskimo organization, Inuit Circumpolar Conference. In 1993, Rasmussen became an international correspondent with TV2 in Denmark.

He has covered a range of topics and situations, such as wars and natural disasters.

Growing up in southern Jutland, bicycling was the primary means of getting around for the young Rasmussen. Speaking about his interest in cycling, he said, "Like almost all Danes, I was introduced to bicycling at an early age. I just never stopped riding."

## In the Galleries . . .

### Closing soon - *Danish Modern: Design for Living*

Visitors to Elk Horn can enjoy this celebration of mid-twentieth-century Danish design until January 5, 2014. After that, the Egg, Ant and Peacock (chairs) get packed up and start to tour the country! In the Twin Cities, *Danish Modern* will be on view at the Goldstein Museum of Design on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota, February 1 through April 27. For the summer months, the exhibit will be at the Nordic Heritage Museum in Seattle from May 16 through August 31. Stay tuned for other opportunities to view this exhibit as it visits other museums.

### Opening February 1

#### *Søren Kierkegaard: The Global Dane*

As a theologian, philosopher and author, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is one of the most influential figures of the 19th century, and his influence continues to be felt around the globe. This exhibition, prepared for the bicentennial of Kierkegaard's birth, explores his life and work. English-language text is by Kierkegaard scholar Joakim Garff.



*King Christian X crosses the border into re-unified North Schleswig in 1920.*

### Opening February 22

#### *Schleswig-Holstein: Turmoil on the Danish-German Border*

Developed by the Museum of Danish America and the German-American Heritage Center (Davenport, Iowa), this exhibition explores the dual identity of the region of Schleswig-Holstein. Long controlled by the Danish crown, fought over in 1848 and 1864, and finally reconciled to its current border in the 20th century, the history of this border region has a long reach.

# Traveling Exhibition Program Continues to Grow

The Museum of Danish America serves a national audience – but not everyone can travel to Elk Horn to see the collections and exhibitions in person. To address that challenge, the museum has a large menu of traveling exhibitions that can visit communities all across the United States. Maybe you've laughed along with the Victor Borge exhibit? Perhaps you read about Danish Gymnastics while attending a performance by the National Danish Performance Team? Maybe you were among the 20,000 visitors to Mount Rushmore this past September who learned about the dramatic rescue of Danish Jews from Nazi-occupied Denmark in 1943? These exhibits and others have traveled far and wide to share Danish-American stories with thousands of people.

As your organization makes plans for 2014, you might consider borrowing one of the following exhibits for a special program or event:



## ***Victor Borge: A Smile is the Shortest Distance***

Known sometimes as the “Clown Prince of Music” and sometimes as the “Great Dane,” Victor Borge was one of the most innovative entertainers of the 20th century. This exhibition celebrates his life, artistry, and legacy through photos, text, and archival performances.

## ***Denmark October 1943***

The story of the rescue of the Danish Jews through the efforts of Danish citizens who ferried Danish Jews by boat to safety in Sweden.

## ***Danish Gymnastics in America***

Danish-style gymnastics is a unique, non-competitive sport that combines acrobatics, dance, and choreography. In the U.S., some Danish-American communities continue this tradition, while touring Danish teams introduce new generations to the artistry of Danish gymnastics.



## ***Jens Jensen: Celebrating the Native Prairie***

Jens Jensen (1860-1951) is celebrated as a pioneer of the “prairie school” of landscape architecture. He was an early advocate of using native plants in parks and garden design, and conserving natural spaces for human recreation and reflection.



## ***The Danish Pioneer***

Since 1872, *Den Danske Pioneer* (The Danish Pioneer) has been a leading newspaper serving a national Danish-American readership. Founded in Omaha and originally printed entirely in the Danish language, the newspaper is now a bi-lingual publication based in the Chicago area. Its writers and editors have represented the changing political and cultural experiences of Danish immigrants for over 140 years.



## ***Church Basements and Children's Homes***

Danish-American churches have both organized and supported efforts to serve people in need in the United States and across the world. This exhibition shares the stories of church-sponsored children's homes, hospitals, mission schools, and homes for the elderly that provided critical support for the most vulnerable members of society.

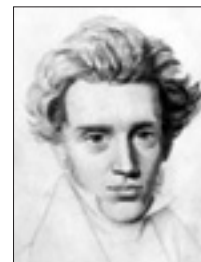
## NEW traveling exhibitions available in 2014

### **Schleswig-Holstein: Turmoil on the Danish-German Border Available April 2014**

Developed by the Museum of Danish America and the German-American Heritage Center (Davenport, Iowa), this exhibition explores the dual identity of the region of Schleswig-Holstein. Long controlled by the Danish Crown, fought over in 1848 and 1864, and finally reconciled to its current border in the 20th century, the history of this border region has a long reach.

### **Søren Kierkegaard: The Global Dane Available May 2014**

As a theologian, philosopher and author, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is one of the most influential figures of the 19th century, and his influence continues to be felt around the globe. This exhibition, prepared for the bicentennial of Kierkegaard's birth, explores his life and work. English-language text is by Kierkegaard scholar Joakim Garff.



The list of available exhibitions continues to grow every year. All of them have a rental fee of \$200 for up to one month, plus the cost of insured shipping. Organizational members of the Museum of Danish America pay a reduced exhibit fee of \$100 for up to one month, plus the cost of insured shipping. Longer rentals may be negotiated. Contact Tova Brandt for more details or to make a reservation: [curator@danishmuseum.org](mailto:curator@danishmuseum.org), or 712-764-7001.

## Many Opportunities Available to Support the Museum of Danish America

The Museum of Danish America very much welcomes your generosity! We rely on the contributions of individuals, corporations and foundations to support our mission. Corporate sponsorships, grants, and individual gifts are instrumental in helping to defray the cost of our exhibitions, programming and general operating expenses.

In addition to supporting the Museum of Danish America through membership, many individuals choose to provide additional funds to ensure the museum remains a vibrant and sustainable institution. The museum's Board of Directors and staff have recently worked together to create a list of sample giving opportunities that are available and include public recognition of your gift. Recognition may also be given "in memory of" or "in honor of" a loved one.

### **Naming Opportunities:**

Heritage Path Pavers .....	\$110, \$250, \$500
Shrubs .....	\$500
Trees .....	\$1,000
Bench (concrete) .....	\$2,500
Bench or Picnic Table (metal) .....	\$2,500
Website Sponsor – Annual .....	\$2,500
Exercise Equipment Sign .....	\$5,000
Park Interpretative Sign .....	\$10,000
East Council Ring .....	\$25,000
Galleries .....	\$100,000
Endowed Position.....	\$1,000,000

Museum of Danish America accepts gifts to the museum in the form of either cash or marketable securities. All gifts to Museum of Danish America are tax deductible. Individuals and parties seeking to make recognized gifts are strongly encouraged to contact John Mark Nielsen at [director@danishmuseum.org](mailto:director@danishmuseum.org) or Debra Christensen Larsen at [development@danishmuseum.org](mailto:development@danishmuseum.org) for assistance in the process.

All contributions, no matter the amount, are welcomed.

# Danish Interns Join Museum Team

**Two new interns joined the team this fall as part of an ongoing program made possible by the scan|design foundation BY INGER AND JENS BRUUN.**

For information about American intern Madeline Mongar, see the Summer 2013 edition of the *America Letter*.

## **Anne Mette Ravn Nielsen, Exhibits Intern**

Anne Mette Ravn Nielsen arrived in the United States in early August. Before coming to the museum she traveled for three weeks with her sister in New York and road tripping to Washington D.C., the Blue Ridge Mountains, Charleston, SC, Savannah, GA, and Florida. After many great experiences on the East Coast, she arrived at the museum on August 27.

Anne Mette is getting her master's degree in Cross Cultural Studies at the University of Copenhagen. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Aarhus University. While studying history she focused on cultural encounters and wrote her final thesis on the Danish conception of Afro-Caribbeans in the Danish West. Last summer she participated in an international program in Copenhagen and Singapore focusing on anthropological and sociological theories and methods applied to Southeast Asian studies.

In her master's program she is specializing in food and how cultural understanding and identity is played out in various versions of Danish food culture. Before leaving Denmark she worked as a student assistant at the Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle, giving guided tours and preparing activities for visitors.

Anne Mette is working with



*Current interns at the Museum of Danish America include Lotte Hansen, Anne Mette Ravn Nielsen and Madeline Mongar (American intern).*

the Albert Ravenholt Curator of Danish-American Culture, Tova Brandt, to prepare next year's exhibition of *Schleswig-Holstein: Turmoil on the Danish-German Border*. Anne Mette is also working on a smaller display in the museum's core exhibit on the lower level, highlighting families and individuals who immigrated to the U.S. from Schleswig-Holstein, showing some of the motivations people had in emigrating from the area.

## **Lotte Hansen, Genealogy Center Intern**

Lotte Hansen was born in South Jutland in a small town called Broager close to Sønderborg (and only a 20-minute drive from Germany), but for the past four years has lived in Aalborg, where she got her bachelor's degree in Library and Information Science. She is now in her second year of her master's program, also in Library and Information Science.

In 2004, Lotte was an exchange student at a high school near Memphis, Tennessee. Even with her previous experience living in the U.S. Lotte says it was interesting for her to live in a northern state and in such a small town as Elk Horn. The main thing that has brought her to the museum was the job description. She says it is not easy finding a library science internship abroad, and the museum's posting especially encouraged library science students to apply.

So far, Lotte says it has been a very interesting learning experience at the Genealogy Center. Though her job is to catalog the backlog of materials into the museum's database, she has started doing her own genealogy research in her spare time. She has also found time to travel to Kansas City, San Francisco, Chicago, Niagara Falls and Boston and has plans to visit Minneapolis, Washington D.C. and Tempe, Arizona. She will be at the Genealogy Center until the middle of January and is hoping the winter won't be as bad as everybody is telling her it can be (at least not before she leaves).

# Genealogy Wish List

Thanks to a very generous donor from Omaha who purchased nearly every title on our last English-language wish list! Now we've added some new titles. If you would like to donate or purchase one of the following books as an outright gift or in recognition of someone it's a good idea to contact Michele at 712.764.7008 or [librarian@danishmuseum.org](mailto:librarian@danishmuseum.org) to make sure it has not already been donated by someone else.

## ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MATERIALS:

*A History of Ida County* [Iowa], edited by Bruce L. Godbersen (1977). This was a limited edition, so if anyone has a copy they no longer want it would find a good home with us.

*St. Louis Family History Research Guide*, by Ann Fleming (2008; \$25 + \$5 s/h).

*Norsewood: The Centennial Story. A History of the District of Norsewood*, by A. L. Andersen (1972, 1997; available from [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com))

*Forest Homes: the Story of the Scandinavian Settlements in the Forty Mile Bush, New Zealand*, by Conrad Petersen (1956; available from [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com))

*With a Brush and Muslin Bag: the Life of Niels Ebbesen Hansen* (2003), by Helen H. Loen.

*Scandinavians in America: Literary Life* (1985), edited by J. R. Christianson (\$12 + shipping from [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com))

Dana College yearbooks: anything before 1927, 1928-1930, 1933-1936, 1939-1940, 1944, 1954, 1957, 1968-1972, 1974-1985, 1987-2010

Grand View College yearbooks: anything before 1920, 1928-1929, 1933, 1935, 1940, 1950, 1953, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1972, 1977 to the present

*Kirke og Folk/Church and Life*: early issues (prior to 1973); contact librarian for desired later issues.

## DANISH-LANGUAGE MATERIALS:

*Jorden rundt efter guld: mine rejser og oplevelser som guldgraver* (Around the World After Gold: My Travels and Adventures as a Gold-Miner), ved Robert Andersen (1938).

*Find din slægt -- og gør den levende*, ved Jytte Skaaning og Bente Klercke Rasmussen.

*Ordbog for slægtsforskere*, by Heini Madsen. 2nd ed.

*Danske børnehjem i billeder og tekst* (Danish Orphanages in Picture and Text; 1900), various authors.

*Den slesvig-holstenske hærs uniformering 1848-51: Die Uniformierung der Schleswig--Holsteinischen Armé von 1848-51*, ved Gerd Stolz. Out of print.

*De drog ud og kæmpede for friheden: to udvandrerskæbner fra depressionen, den spanske borgerkrig og 2. verdenskrig* (2005), ved Grethe Jæger og Søren Manøe.

*Min tid i Canada: erindringer*, ved Samuel Olsen (1994)

*New Denmark: New Brunswick, Canada: udviklingen i en dansk udvandrerkoloni 1872-1914* (1992), ved Palle Bo Bojesen.

*Fra marsken til prærien: Niels Gørdings erindringer fra Allerup i Vestjylland og Regina i Saskatchewan* (1986), ved Jens Kusk og Jørgen Dieckmann Rasmussen.

*"Over There": dansk i Amerika* (1991), ved Anne-Grethe L. Routley.

*Nyboder: et københavnsk miljø, med en gennemgang af dets afspejling i litteratur*, ved Hanne Andersen (1981).

*Dansk adelsleksikon* (Encyclopedia of Danish Nobility). There are numerous editions of this title and accompanying volumes available from online antiquarian book dealers for a wide range of prices. We would like to obtain at least one set.

## Are You a Danish Immigrant or Long-term Resident?

Many Danes who 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 Genealogy Center for copies.

# Stamtræ

News from the Genealogy Center

By Michele McNabb

**Our summer photo exhibit this year was *Coming of Age in Denmark and the US*, emphasizing the confirmation experience. In this issue recent Danish intern Jesper Jacobsen has written an overview of Danish confirmation practices past and present, and we've also shown some examples of the information one can find in confirmation entries. We hope you will find these articles informative.**

## ACTIVITIES & COLLECTION NEWS

The Genealogy Center is now on **winter hours** -- Tuesdays-Fridays, 9 am to 5 pm – until the end of April. Drop-in patrons are always welcome, but we can serve you better if you make an advance appointment if you would like us to help you with your research.

Do you have immigrant ancestors who were **veterans of the 1864 Dano-Prussian War**? Our 2014 photo exhibit will concentrate on these individuals and their stories. We are looking for photographs and accounts of these veterans, some 1400 or so of which came to the United States. The charter members of Lodge #1 of the Danish Brotherhood in America in Omaha were members of several different *vaabenbrødre* (brothers-in-arms) societies, veterans of both the 1848-50 and 1864 conflicts. If you have material you would care to share with the Genealogy Center please contact Michele by email or phone. Further information about the project will appear on our webpage after the holidays.

## OF GENEALOGICAL INTEREST

*(See the Library & Genealogy section of the museum webpage for a large listing of websites we find particularly useful for Danish and Danish-American research.)*

- The Copenhagen City Archives ([www.ksa.kk.dk](http://www.ksa.kk.dk)) has added searchable images of around one half million Danes who received public assistance for shorter or longer periods of time between 1799 and 1933. Look for Fattigvæsnets hovedregistrant on the right-hand margin to search for names. The records do have some gaps, for example, as a result of the British bombardment of Copenhagen in 1808, but much useful data still exists. Since the webpage is in Danish, it's a bit tricky to work with, and we may have to call on "our man in Copenhagen," Erik Østergaard, for assistance locating the actual records, but here is what part of one index page looks like:

Olsen	Ohlson	Olsdatter	Olsen	Olson	Olsson
Olsen	Adolf	Thorvald	7		Indb. Kl. O. 11
	Theodor	Malerlærling	01, Naastved		H 18 11
	Arldine Lovise	Skomagersv.	07, Klbyen		Indb. Kl. O. 11
	Agnes Johanne	Malerlærling	11, 51, Klbyen		Indb. Sj. O. 11
	Albert Theodor	Skomagersv.	11, 00, Helsingør		Indb. Sj. O. 11
	Thorvald	Malerlærling	04, Klbyen		Indb. Sj. O. 11
	Vilhelm	Skomagersv.	07, Klbyen		A 27 11
	Alexander Emilius	Malerlærling	02, Skiftelev		Indb. Sj. O. 11
	Alfred	Skomagersv.	11, 53, Skiftelev		Indb. Sj. O. 11
	Ferdinand	Fabrikarb.	07, Klbyen		Indb. Sj. O. 11
	Martin Sophus	Malerlærling	07, Klbyen		I. Intr. 11
	Valdemar	Tjenerkarl.	11, 01, Klbyen		A 1 11

The entry for Alexander Emilius Olsen above states that he was an apprentice mason born at the Royal Maternity Hospital in Copenhagen on Feb. 1, 1862 and then cites the record collection in which information on him may be found.

- If you would like to know what was happening on a certain date, such as when you or ancestors were born, try [www.dmarie.com/timecap/step1.asp0](http://www.dmarie.com/timecap/step1.asp0). Entering a date will give you a summary of that day in history.
- Many states have free downloadable maps in PDF format available for free or a nominal charge. You can find them at [www.nebraskatransportation.org/maps/#county](http://www.nebraskatransportation.org/maps/#county) for Nebraska and [www.iowadot.gov/maps/lmsp/pdfview/counties.html](http://www.iowadot.gov/maps/lmsp/pdfview/counties.html) for Iowa.
- Among Ancestry's recent additions to its Immigration & Travel section are "UK Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960," which will include those Danish immigrants who

- traveled indirectly from Denmark via ports in the UK to North America.
- New additions at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) include 8.6 million images of New York State probate records, 1629-1971 (most are pre-1920); some 852,000 veteran's pension payment cards from 1907-1933 (not completely indexed yet); a browsable image collection of images of Missouri marriage records from 1819 to 1969; and nearly 1 million images of Ohio County birth records.
  - Library and Archives Canada ([www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/index-e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/index-e.html)) has released an indexed version of the 1911 Canadian census, searchable by family name, given name, age, and province. The 1921 Canadian census was to be released on June 1 this year.
  - Marriages for a large number of western states may be searched at <http://abish.byui.edu/specialCollections/westernStates/search.cfm>
  - The English-language results of an ongoing project to photograph Danish tombstones may be found at [www.dk-gravsten.dk/viewpage.php?page\\_id=5](http://www.dk-gravsten.dk/viewpage.php?page_id=5).
  - Don't have a clue on what the date the 22nd Sunday after Trinity fell in 1845? Bauer's calendar, available at [www.morchslaegt.dk/bauers/bauer.htm](http://www.morchslaegt.dk/bauers/bauer.htm) will give you dates between the 7th [!] and the present century.
  - At [www.kirkebog.dk/index/php?Task=Om](http://www.kirkebog.dk/index/php?Task=Om) you will find an index to pre-1814 Bornholm church registers.
  - The coats-of-arms of Danish counties, districts, towns, municipalities, and religious institutions may be found at [www.ngw.nl/heraldrywiki/index.php?title=Denmark](http://www.ngw.nl/heraldrywiki/index.php?title=Denmark).
  - A number of soldiers, both enlisted men and officers, were awarded the Order of the Dannebrog for valiant deeds during the 1864 war. A listing of names, rank or profession and date of the award may be found at <http://ddd.dda.dk/dannebrog/dm1864.html>.
  - For those with relatives who were merchant seaman two websites may be of interest: The Society for Marine and Naval History (<http://marinehist.dk>) and the image archives of the Museum for Sea-faring (<http://billedarkiv.maritime-museum.dk/fotoweb/>).
  - A listing of Copenhagen-area archives is at [www.landsarkivetkbh.dk/hovedst/index.htm](http://www.landsarkivetkbh.dk/hovedst/index.htm); the webpage for the Greater Copenhagen Genealogical Society is at [www.genealogi-kbh.dk](http://www.genealogi-kbh.dk). Both of these sites are in Danish.
  - A source for other Danish archives may be found at [www.ssf.dk](http://www.ssf.dk), the home page of the Association of [Danish] Genealogical Societies (SSF). Click on 'Foreninger' to get into the listing pages.
  - An updated listing of Online Searchable Naturalization Records and Indexes is available at [www.germanroots.com/naturalization.html](http://www.germanroots.com/naturalization.html).
  - A worthwhile free downloadable book is a guide to the holdings of the Allen County Public Library in Indiana, the largest public library genealogy collection in the country. A link may be found at <http://www.legalgenealogist.com/blog/2013/04/02/free-guide-to-the-acpl/>.
  - The Missouri State Archives is working on an online database that will include over 3 million Missouri marriages through 1969. As the records are completed they will be searchable free through a state website. Google "Missouri State Archives" to see the progress of this project.
  - For information about individuals living in Kolding or surrounding area, the Kolding *Stadsarkiv* (City Archive) may be useful. There is an overview of the archive's holdings in English at [www.kolding.dk/stadsarkiv/0031889.asp?sid=31889](http://www.kolding.dk/stadsarkiv/0031889.asp?sid=31889).
  - The Danish State Archives (SA) has announced that a Beta version of *Arkivalieronline* that does not require Java is available for viewing Danish censuses on PCs, Macs, iPads and tablets.
  - The SA has also announced that they have begun digitizing Danish military records to add to *Arkivalieronline*. They hope to have a significant number of conscription districts completed by the end of the year. The initial ones being processed cover parts of Zealand, Funen, and Møn up to about the mid-19th century.
  - A relatively new website for searchable Danish death notices beginning around 2004 may be found at [www.afdoede.dk](http://www.afdoede.dk).
  - If you are researching ancestors in Jutland, especially earlier, you may find useful information at *Nygårds Sedler Vedrørende Jyske Slægter* (Nygård's Notes on Jutland Families), which now has been moved to <http://ddd.dda.dk/nygaard.sogeseide.asp>. Nygård was a Danish archivist who created a card file on families he researched over several decades.
  - Documents about men who were awarded the *Dannebrogorden* between 1693 and 1883 were destroyed in an 1884 fire at Christiansborg. However, the agency in charge of the order, *Ordenskapitlet*, may still have information on these recipients from other sources at [ordenskapitlet@kongehuset.dk](mailto:ordenskapitlet@kongehuset.dk).

# A History of Confirmation in Denmark

by Jesper Ø. Jacobsen, former Genealogy Center intern

**In 1736 Danish king Christian VI passed a law making it a legal requirement that young people confirm their baptismal promise as a way of strengthening their relationship with Christianity and the Church. Confirmation came to be viewed as a kind of “entrance exam” for participation in religious and social life.**

An examination of a person's knowledge of Christianity was required in order to be confirmed, and from 1810 on, proof of vaccination against smallpox or of having had natural smallpox was also required. Without a vaccination certificate one could not be confirmed, and without being confirmed one could not marry, attend school, begin an apprenticeship, serve in the military, be a godparent or vote. While the 1849 Danish Constitution gave the right to religious freedom, the Lutheran Church remained the State church into which all citizens were born and stayed unless they formally opted out. This tight connection between Church and State means that Danish Lutheran pastors are civil servants, paid by the Government.

Confirmation was tied to the end of mandatory schooling around age 14 and entry into the labor force, so thus was a stepping-stone to adulthood. Individuals from poor families who were unlucky enough to have to begin working before being confirmed had to accept a lower wage than those who were confirmed. If one wanted to be confirmed prior to the age of 14, so as not to be a financial burden on one's family, for example, a special Bishop's dispensation had to be granted.

Traditionally, confirmations were held once or twice a year, usually at Easter and Michaelmas (in October), depending on the size of the parish. Young people would take their places on chairs placed at the end of pews ranked according to the grades they were given for their knowledge of Christianity and deportment.

Being placed toward the back of the church could be an embarrassment for the family, so rumors sometimes flew about a wealthy farmer or tradesman “buying” a better place for his child. The examination requirement was abolished in 1909.

Following confirmation, only a few lucky young people had additional schooling or were able to find apprenticeships. The vast majority were given a *skudsmalsbog*, or employment character reference book in which all future employment was to be recorded, and left home to work, often as farm hands and domestic servants. Without proof of confirmation one could not find work and would have to beg for a living, which was illegal. As mandatory education was extended to eight, and later, nine years, this requirement was gradually abolished.

## CLOTHING

As part of the transition to adulthood young people were given new clothing for confirmation. What they wore for the ceremony would usually be their first “grown-up apparel” and was often their best outfit for many years in the future. The 1736 law decreed that girls were to wear a dress of black or white taffeta or other fabric. The dress had to be simple and undecorated unless the decoration was of the same fabric as the dress itself. The neck had to be covered. This high-necked black confirmation dress was especially worn by rural women and served as their ‘best’ dress for future solemn or festive occasions. Some women were married and buried in the same dress they had worn for confirmation. Girls might also have their hair put up into an “adult” style for the first time. Far up into the 20th century confirmation was also when a boy got his first suit or dress outfit of trousers, vest and jacket.

It was a matter of family prestige and honor that their children wore decent and correct clothes for their confirmation. Shoes too were considered important. If a confirmand had to wear wooden clogs instead of leather footwear this was embarrassing for the family. Obtaining the proper clothing and shoes was often a huge problem for the families of poorer smallholders and laborers. Various organizations, such as a “confirmation insurance society,” existed in some areas to assist those in need or a family might start a “confirmation fund” in anticipation of the future day.

White dresses for girls were introduced in the first decades of the 20th century. Since these dresses had more limited usability, the concept of *andendagstøj* (second-day clothes) came into vogue. This set of clothes might include an adult-style coat and hat as well as a good dress or suit.

The custom of new clothing also reinforced the symbolism of leaving behind one's former life and beginning one's life anew as an adult.

## MODERN TIMES

One of the first confirmation parties was held when the future King Frederik IV was confirmed in 1784. Gradually, the idea of holding a festive dinner or party spread through the various levels of society, although even as late as the 1930s it was not at all uncommon for poor families not to do anything special – perhaps preparing a somewhat better dinner and giving a few modest presents to the confirmand. The modern way of celebrating confirmations in Denmark began after the austere years that followed World War II. Before then, gifts were usually “durable goods.” Boys might receive watches, bikes or camera, and girls, jewelry or silverware. Another custom that arose was *Blå Mandag* (Blue Monday), a tradition adopted from Germany, when new confirmands skip

school or work to spend the day after their confirmation going downtown or to special parks or places of entertainment to show off their new apparel.

Confirmation as a rite of passage has changed considerably in recent decades. Lengthier education requirements and changes in social structure and mores have diluted its original meaning. When young people get confirmed in Denmark today, it does not mark an end to their education. The religious sense of the occasion has also become diluted as Danes have become less religious. The actual confirmation event has changed very little, however, with a certain number of mandatory hours of preparation classes and church attendance designated by each parish pastor and basically the same ceremony as in centuries past.

Confirmation is now viewed by many young people as a more or less secular event, an occasion for receiving gifts and a good deal of money. Some youth choose to forego confirmation itself in favor of a “non-firmation” – the party without the church event. On the other hand, the celebration of “golden confirmations,” when those who were confirmed together get together to commemorate the 50th anniversary of their confirmation, has also become a new custom.

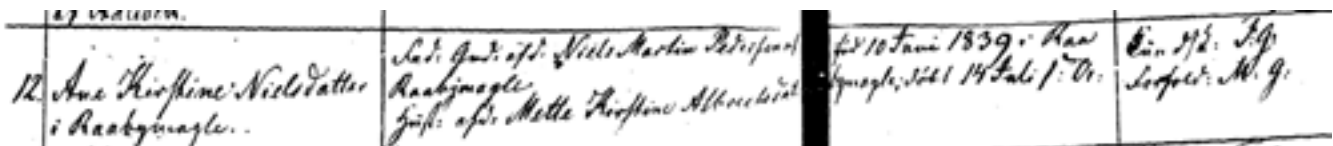
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# Confirmation Records as a Genealogical Source

by Michele McNabb

**When an immigrant is said to be “from” a certain locality, we usually assume that this is where the person in question was born. However, such a statement can be misleading and should not be taken as proof until verified through church and census records. When a birth/baptismal record is not found in the cited location, a confirmation record is one of the next places to look. Many individuals were born in one location and then moved to another, which became the area they were “from” when immigrating or in recollections many years later.**

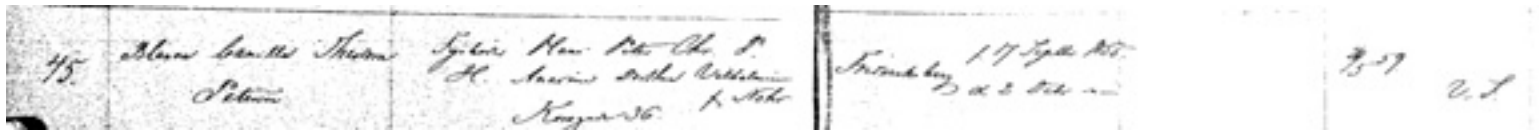
Why are confirmation records helpful in this case? Besides the fact of a person being confirmed in a given place, they state where and when the individual was born and thus are helpful in finding the birth/baptismal record. They also give other information that might be useful, such as whether the confirmand is living at home or working out, whether one or both parents are deceased, grades for knowledge of Christianity and behavior, and other information, such as when and where the individual was vaccinated against smallpox, all of which can be clues for finding other data.



## 1854 CONFIRMATION ENTRY FOR ANE KIRSTINE NIELSDATTER, BORRE PARISH, PRÆSTØ COUNTY

In addition to birth information Ane Kirstine's confirmation record indicates that both of her parents, Niels Martin Pedersen and Mette Kirstine Albrechtsdatter, were deceased. Her knowledge of Christianity was “fairly good” and her behavior “very good.”

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**1869 CONFIRMATION ENTRY FOR BLANCA CAMILLA THEODORA PETERSEN, SKT. JOHANNES PARISH, COPENHAGEN.**

This confirmation entry illustrates the tendency in the latter 19th century for town-dwellers to give their children more numerous and more exotic given names. Blanca's record also provides her exact street address in Copenhagen, Korsgade 36, indicates that she was born in Frederiksberg parish on September 7, 1855, and tells

when she was vaccinated against smallpox.

In this country, confirmation records are helpful in establishing the movements of families from one location to another or provide information about when they settled in a locality.

ANNO 1914		Konfirmerede		(ELK HORN IA Lutheran Church)		Euthylica Konfirmerede Fødsels
Child	Birth Date	Parents	Parents	Parents	Parents	
1	Blance Arndt	28 Sept 02	Fred Nielsen, Lauric Nielsen			Audubon, Ia.
2	Grete Thae. Nielsen	4 Sept 03	Anton Nielsen, Nielsen			
3	Darry A. Rothborg	2 July 04	Christ Rothborg, Gudrun			Atlantic, Ia.
4	Arnold Peter Woth	28 June	Karsten W. Woth, Kristina			Fremont, Neb.
5	Karna Victor Fredericson	Aug. 03	Hans Fredericson, Christiane			Elk Horn, Ia.
6	Jean Arthur Jensen	17 Sept 03	Lars Jensen, Marie Jensen			Elk Horn, Ia.
7	Eller Eide	9 May 03	Fred Eide, Laura Eide			Elk Horn, Ia.
8	Henry Clausen	1 Dec 03	Niels Clausen, Nina			Elk Horn, Ia.
9	Daniel Christensen	6 Sept 03	Johan Christensen, Hanna			Elk Horn, Ia.
10	Lucydia Sophie Mathen	9 Jan 04	Johan Mathen, Marie			Elk Horn, Ia.
11	Ede Christensen	5 June 02	Christ Christensen, Marie			Atlantic, Ia.
12	Era Christensen	5 June 02	Christ Christensen, Marie			Atlantic, Ia.
13	Marie Hoegh	11 March 03	Peter Hoegh, Anna			Brayton, Ia.
14	Anna Ludla Johnson	30 March 03	Johan P. Johnson, Anna			Elk Horn, Ia.
15	Dezmar Hansen	31 Oct 03	Christ Hansen, Marcell			Elk Horn, Ia.
16	Silva Marg. Johnson	15 March 03	Yvonne Johnson, Rosa			Elk Horn, Ia.
17	Adel Ulara Mathen	15 June 03	Theo Mathen, Sophie			Elk Horn, Ia.
18	Leona Dagmar Christensen	10 Oct 03	Soren Christensen, Sophie			Marion, Ia.
19	Edgar Johannes Margensen	29 Dec 03	Hans Margensen, Laura			Sioux, Ia.
20	Ragna Helene Hansen	15 Dec 03	Rasmus Hansen, Karen			Elk Horn, Ia.
21	Gertrude Kathrine Rose	30 July 03	Hans Rose, Helene			Sioux Falls, Ia.
22	Bernice Marie Paulsen	24 Oct 03	P. H. Paulsen, P. H.			

**1914 CONFIRMANTS, ELK HORN LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELK HORN, IOWA**

This listing of confirmants gives the place of birth of each, showing that most families had been living in Elk Horn or the surrounding area for at least a dozen years. Exceptions included individuals who were born in Fremont, Nebraska, and the island of Als in what was then Schleswig, Germany around the year 1900, providing clues to their families' movements between that date and the current year. Note that in contrast to

the Danish records only the given name of the mothers is recorded.

Unfortunately, most genealogical programs do not include confirmations as part of their default template, so a confirmation 'fact' or a new template that includes the event has to be created in order to record information from this source. In the case of Danish immigrant families and their ancestors, most of whom were confirmed in the Lutheran Church, this effort is well worth making.

## A Brief History of Non-Lutheran Denominations in Denmark

**CATHOLICS:** Following the Reformation it was forbidden to be Catholic unless one was a representative of another government. Sankt Ansgar church is Copenhagen's oldest Catholic congregation, dating from 1685. The church books are written partly in Latin, partly in German or French. There is a name index to the 2 oldest books, which are copies of the original volume. In Copenhagen there are also French Reformed and German Reformed congregations dating from 1685 and 1686, respectively, with records listed in the respective languages.

**JEWS:** Jews also had their own congregations. There was a synagogue in Copenhagen as early as 1766 (in Læderstræde), but it burned in 1795 and a new building

was erected in Krystalgade and dedicated in 1833. There are birth records dating from 1810, and reconstructed records as far back as 1762, written in Danish. Burials may date somewhat earlier. The first Jewish cemetery in Copenhagen was founded in 1694.

**OTHER DENOMINATIONS:** The Constitution adopted on June 5, 1849 introduced religious freedom into Denmark. This meant that a number of denominations, such as Methodists, Baptists and Mormons, could now function legally in the country and missionaries from these denominations soon arrived in the country. The Methodists were the first of these to receive status as a recognized denomination, in November of 1865. Baptists were first recognized in 1952.

## Thank You Businesses and Organizations

June 15, 2013 – October 15, 2013

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

A & A Framing (Annette Andersen), Kimballton, IA  
Andersen Windows (Sarah Andersen), Bayport, MN  
Answers (Frank R. Tighe), Atlantic, IA  
Atlantic Friends of The Danish Immigrant Museum, Atlantic, IA  
Boose Building Construction (Marty & Connie Boose), Atlantic, IA  
Carroll Control Systems, Inc. (Todd Wanninger), Carroll, IA  
Cedar Valley Danes, Cedar Falls, IA area  
Country Landscapes, Inc. (Rhett Faaborg), Ames, IA  
Danebod Lutheran Church, Tyler, MN  
Dania Ladies Society, Chicago, IL  
Danish American Club in Orange County, Huntington Beach, CA  
Danish American Club of Milwaukee, West Bend, WI  
Danish American Heritage Society, Decorah, IA  
Danish Brotherhood Heartland District, Des Moines, IA  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #1, Omaha, NE  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #14, Kenosha, WI  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #15, Des Moines, IA  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #16, Minden, NE  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #56, Lenexa, KS  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #84, Lincoln, NE  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #144, Dike, IA  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #227, Detroit, MI  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #268, Junction City, OR  
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #283, Dagmar, MT  
Danish Brotherhood Centennial Lodge #348, Eugene, OR  
Danish Home for the Aged, Croton-on-Hudson, NY  
Danish Ladies Relief Society of San Francisco, CA  
Danish Mutual Insurance Association, Elk Horn, IA  
Danish Sisterhood Ellen Lodge #21, Denver, CO  
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #102, Des Moines, IA  
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #176, Dike, IA  
Danish Sisterhood Heartland District, Johnston, IA  
Danish Sisterhood Midwest District, Chicago, IL  
Den Danske Pioneer (Elsa Steffensen & Linda Steffensen), Hoffman Estates, IL

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

## **New Members** June 15, 2013 – October 15, 2013

**Museum of Danish America is pleased to identify the following 53 individuals, businesses and organizations as its newest members:**

Ruth Andersen, Fresno, CA	James & Paulette Fisher, Le Claire, IA	Eric & Ruth Nielsen, Antioch, IL
Tage Andersen, Herning, Denmark	Bo Røbb Hansen, Holstebro, DENMARK	Merete Nieto, Los Alamos, NM
Todd & Nicky Bauerkemper, Anita, IA	Connie Hansen, Audubon, IA	Dwight & Barbara Olsen, Lincoln, NE
Michael & Lisa Boesen, Bellaire, TX	Jorgen & Mary Jo Hansen, Lakewood Ranch, FL	Kathy Ploger, Sunriver, OR
Robert & Gail Burton, Dallas, OR	Keli Hansen, Ackworth, IA	Roscoe Porch, Iowa City, IA
David & Joelene Carper, Clarinda, IA	Russell & Margo Hanson, Cushing, WI	Sharon Redfern, Helena, MT
Bryce & Elizabeth Christensen, Maricopa, AZ	Erik & Mary Jensen, Franktown, CO	Jerry & Barbara Schipper, Ankeny, IA
Donald & Lou Christensen, Sun City West, AZ	James & Marjorie Jensen, Ankeny, IA	Constance Schneider, Lincoln, NE
Tom & Ann Christensen, Colorado Springs, CO	Robert Johnson, Sioux Falls, SD	Elvin & Helen Shew, Cedar Creek, NE
Katharine Cross, Plantation, FL	Milton & Jean Jorgensen, Winchester, KS	J. Christina Smith, Malden, MA
Bill & Dawn Cundiff, Harlan, IA	Edith Kahl, Denison, IA	Robert Smith, Pleasant Prairie, WI
David Dahle, North Liberty, IA	Lise Kildegaard, Decorah, IA	Violet Smith, Garland, TX
Danish Home for the Aged, Croton-On-Hudson, NY	LeaAnne Koppen, Mesa, AZ	Jason Swalve, Rancho Mirage, CA
Gladys Drey, Creston, IA	Mads Ledet, Gresham, OR	Norris & Cynthia Tidwell, Corrales, NM
Ruth Ehlen, Colorado Springs, CO	Bill Lindborg, Long Beach, CA	Gloria Treinen, Remsen, IA
Roger & Judy Elliot, Silver City, IA	Rich & LaDonna Matthes, Naples, FL	Lynn Utter, Devon, PA
	Steward & Carol Melvin, Ames, IA	Donald Wegener, Bolingbrook, IL
	Esther Miller, Spring Valley, CA	Rex & Hope Wilhelm, Stuart, IA
	Ronae Monahan, Harlan, IA	Jonathan & Mindy Wuebker, Polk City, IA

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## **Memorials** June 15, 2013 – October 15, 2013

**Through various funds, gifts have been received in memory of**

Loraine Nielsen Amos	Mardell Hansen	Inga Larsen	Conrad Jens Pedersen
Andy Andersen	Clara Hassel	Kurt Klarskov Larsen	Mildred and James Peterson
Howard E. Andersen	Inga M. Hermansen	Paul M. and Johanne Larsen	Alma & Niels Pilgaard, Fjerritslev, Denmark
Niels and Laura Bro	Hanne Friberg Hoepfner	Nola Jane Lund	Kurt and Ruth Ploger
Clarice Christensen	Warren and Gudrun Jacobsen	H.C. Mathison	Joan Camery Prather
Glen Clemson	Niels Alfred and Edith Andrea Jensen	RuthAnn Jacobsen McKinstry	Delbert Rasmussen
Elvin and Robina Elmquist	Raymond C. Jespersen	Judy Meehan	Ruth Jensen Roberts
Hans and Mathilde Farstrup	Stuart Karr	John Peter Nelson	John C. Scott
Esther Freund	John Kobe	Anna Kirstine Nielsen	Rev. Forest Strnad
Mary Nelson Glihsmann	John W. Kofoed	Marilyn Holm Nielsen	Kristina Sandahl Swanson
Selma U. Henriksen Grumstrup	Jens Hans Christian Krog and Thora Krog	Kay North	Arthur Thompson
Letha Cleone Grutzik (Sorenson)	Clyde Larsen	Ole and Marie Olsen	Thomas B. and Nettie (Jorgensen) Thomsen
		Nadjeschda Overgaard	

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## **In Honor** June 15, 2013 – October 15, 2013

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

Annette Andersen, Danish Friend	Merete Nieto's Birthday
Robert Warren Brown	Conrad J. Pedersen, loving father going through difficult times
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #102	Evelyn L. Richards' 80th Birthday
Bill & Marilyn Gift's 50th Wedding Anniversary	Paul & Sharlene Roge's 50th Anniversary (August 17, 2013)
Leo Kirchhoff's Birthday	The Danish Immigrant Museum's 30th Anniversary
The Grandchildren of Garey & Sherry Knudsen - Jack, Collin, Elise, Ethan, Caleb, Luke, & Kyler	Eiler Thomsen & Hanee Marie Thomsen
Karen Lux	
Harald Madsen	

# New Additions to the Wall of Honor

June 15, 2013 – October 15, 2013

The Museum of Danish America's Immigrant Wall of Honor provides families and friends with a means of preserving the memory of or honoring those who emigrated from Denmark to America. Over 4,500 immigrants are currently recognized on the Wall. Their stories and the stories of their families contribute to the growing repository of family histories at the museum's Genealogy Center.

**PETER JOHNSON & ANE KATHRINE BIRK (1870) (1895) Benton Twp., Cass County, Iowa** – Ronald & Joyce Johnson of Raleigh, NC, Linda, Cindy & Kathy Johnson of Ashburn, VA

**LARS PETER JENSEN & MARTENA NIELSEN JENSEN, Plainview, NE (1881) (1881) Plainview, Nebraska** – James & Marjorie Jensen of Ankeny, IA

**CHRISTIAN MORTENSEN & MAREN PEDERSEN (1870) (1870) Crystal Lake, Iowa** – Jason Swalve of Rancho Mirage CA, Alison Treleaven of Santiago, Chile

**JENS POULSEN & EMILIE ANTOINE BOGH (1871) (1871) Winnebago County Iowa** – Jason Swalve of Rancho Mirage CA, Alison Treleaven of Santiago, Chile

**BERTEL BUNDGAARD SCHOU (1907) Cedar Falls, Iowa** – John Bertel Schou of Cedar Falls, IA

**JOHANNES BUNDGAARD SCHOU (1912) Kenmare, North Dakota** – John Bertel Schou of Cedar Falls IA

**ASGER ROBERT SEPSTRUP-SØRENSEN (1992) Sac City, Iowa** – Mindy & Jonathan Wuebker of Polk City IA, Niels Sørensen and Scott & Rachel Sørensen

**HANS PETER & CATHERINE MADSON SORENSON (1878) Crystal Lake, Iowa** – David Dahle of North Liberty, IA

**ERNEST A. WESTERGAARD & HELGA WESTERGAARD CHRISTENSEN (1915) (1915) Audubon County, Iowa** – Donald & Lou Christensen of Sun City West, AZ

**NELS NIELSEN WESTERGAARD & MANNA CHRISTENSEN WESTERGAARD (1910) (1915) Audubon County, Iowa** – Donald & Lou Christensen of Sun City West, AZ



This recipe is from the mother of Danish intern, Anne Mette Ravn Nielsen. Inge-Lise served the kringle at Anne Mette's Brown Bag Lunch presentation on October 17, 2013.

## Danish kringle by Inge-Lise Ravn Nielsen

### Dough

2-2 ½ cups (ca. 300 g) plain flour  
¼ teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
½ teaspoon cardamom  
2 tablespoons sugar  
1 egg

0.25 oz. (2 ¼ teaspoon or 7 g) dried yeast  
2/3 cup (1 ½ dl) milk  
2 ½ stick (250 g) room temperature butter

½ cup (100 g) sugar  
½ teaspoon cinnamon  
½ cup (60 g) almonds (chopped)  
1/3 cup (50 g) raisins

### Filling

1 stick (100 g) butter

### Topping

1 egg  
Sugar

### HOW TO DO IT:

**Dough:** Warm up the milk and ½ stick (50 g) of butter to 100° F. Dissolve the yeast and sugar in the lukewarm milk and butter. Add cinnamon, cardamom, and salt to the mixture. Whip up the egg and add it to the mixture. Add 2 cups of flour. If the dough is too soft add the last ½ cup of flour or as much as necessary. Knead the dough until its smooth. Let the dough rise in a bowl until double in size.

**Filling:** Mix butter, sugar, and cinnamon. Add chopped almonds and raisins.

**Assembling the kringle:** Roll out the dough into a long rectangular shape approx. 6x12 inches. Cover 2/3 of the dough with very thin slices of butter (about ½ stick butter). Fold the non-buttery part of the dough – it will cover half of the buttery dough. Fold it again. Now there are three layers. Roll out the pastry again; cover 1/3 with butter; fold the pastry as before. Repeat a total of 4 times or until all the butter is used. Roll out the final rectangle until it is approx. 10x18 inches.

Spread the prepared filling down the center of the rolled-out dough rectangle in a 2-inch strip. Fold sides of dough over filling; pinch edges to seal.

Place the kringle on a baking sheet. Let it rest for 15 min. Brush the dough with a beaten egg and sprinkle with sugar.

Bake the kringle for 15-20 minutes at 430°F (or until it is golden). Let it cool and then eat it!

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