

americaletter

SUMMER 2014 | A BENEFIT OF MEMBERSHIP TO THE MUSEUM OF DANISH AMERICA

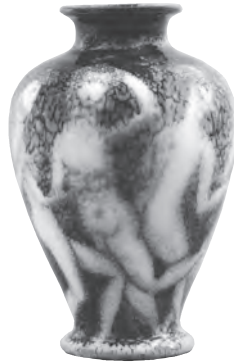


Katherine Wilson, Ann Fawver, and Dennis Fawver stand in the entryway to the woodcarving workshop that belonged to Katherine and Ann's great-grandfather, Jes Smidt. Read about this family's interesting history in "Carving a Legacy."

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Nude Vases, Cubist Faces

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director's corner

What a summer it has been thus far! Tivoli Fest, celebrated over the Memorial Day weekend, brought more Danish tourists to Elk Horn and Kimballton than in any of the past years when I've been present. On Saturday I was one of a crew making *æbleskiver*, and I spoke Danish to numerous visitors, all who were intrigued by the combination of *æbleskiver* and *medisterpølser*. Some said it wasn't too bad, but they'd probably not try the combination again!

Two films about Elk Horn and Kimballton that aired on Danish television account for the reason why we've seen an increase in Danish visitors. The first documented preparing for and celebrating last year's Tivoli Fest. That it was popular, I know. When I was in Denmark last November, I indicated that I was from the Museum of Danish America in Elk Horn, Iowa. The response was invariably, "Oh, that's the place where they eat *æbleskiver* and *medisterpølser* together!" The first film was so popular that the filmmakers returned to document other activities in the Danish Villages.

Danish visitors with whom I spoke indicated that they were interested in experiencing how

aspects of Danish culture have been preserved in the United States. The fact that *æbleskiver* and *medisterpølser* are combined is a perfect example of how immigrant groups have adapted to American customs. As Americans, we don't find the combination of pancakes and sausages at all strange. It is a folk adaptation for Danish-American communities to combine and serve two familiar Danish food items together.

Our Museum of Danish America is about exploring and documenting how Danish immigrants and their descendants have preserved elements of Danish culture. In fact, according to the recent member survey that we circulated this past spring, this is the major reason why you support our museum. It is appropriate that there are places that preserve the diverse contributions many different immigrant groups have made to the making of America. We're proud of what we Danish-Americans have contributed.

The member survey also indicated that were we to expand the *America Letter*, members would like to learn more about Danish-American history. We

have heard from many of you that you were impressed by the new look of our *America Letter*. Building on the success of the last issue and its focus on the tensions between Denmark and the Duchies of Slesvig (I'm using the Danish spelling here.) and Holstein, we have focused on another aspect of Danish-American history, the split in the Danish Lutheran Church in America that fostered the terms "Happy Danes" and "Holy Danes."

In early June, our Board of Directors met in Luck and West Denmark, Wisconsin, just an hour and a half north of the Twin Cities. This area experienced heavy Danish settlement between 1870 and 1900, and the Danish heritage is evident even today. This area was home to Jes Smidt, a noted Danish immigrant woodcarver, who carved numerous altars and pulpits for Danish Lutheran churches across the Midwest and West. Between 1887 and 1892, West Denmark was also home to a seminary training young men to serve the Danish Lutheran churches scattered across the United States. Because of differing theological understandings, division occurred. The stories in this issue of the *America Letter*



Article by
John Mark Nielsen



explore important contributions coming out of this area in western Wisconsin.

In future issues we look forward to exploring other past and contemporary stories about the Danish-American experience. We hope you will find these interesting and informative. We hope that it will affirm your reasons to continue supporting our work here at the Museum of Danish America.

We invite you to share these issues with younger members in your families. As I wrote in my recent summer appeal letter, social researchers are learning what we've long known – the importance of sharing our family stories with younger generations. Children who know about their family's history have a greater sense of control over their own lives and a higher self-esteem. Knowing family stories spanning several generations provides

children with the knowledge that they are a part of something bigger than just themselves.

We hope the stories that we tell through exhibits and in the pages of our *America Letter* will kindle an interest in the next generations. Perhaps they too will come to appreciate their Danish heritage and maybe, just maybe, they'll become members and supporters of our museum.

museum of danish america

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we asked you, our members, for feedback . . .

AND YOU RESPONDED IN RECORD NUMBERS!

Earlier this spring the museum distributed a survey to museum members in order to learn more about the people who support the museum from year to year. The response was impressive: 40% of members responded either online or by snail mail, which is a very good rate of return for a voluntary survey. This provides the museum with a good snapshot of where members are, what is most important to them about their membership, and what parts of the museum they connect with most.

Here are some of the highlights:

- ◆ Members are all over the map – literally! While 22% live within 100 miles of the museum (that includes Des Moines and Omaha), 30% live over 1,000 miles away!
- ◆ Members are loyal. Over 47% of those who responded have been members for more than 10 years!
- ◆ At the same time, the museum continues to attract new members. 28% of members have joined in the past 5 years.
- ◆ Members are . . . not young. 65% of those who responded are 70 or older. Another 22% are in their 60s.
- ◆ Some members visit the museum frequently – 10% visit multiple times every year. But even more members have NEVER visited the museum – 16% of respondents have never been to the museum,

the Genealogy Center, the Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park, or Bedstemor's House. Most members visit rarely, or just once or twice a year.

- ◆ Members care deeply about preserving Danish heritage – 99% list this as an important benefit of membership!
- ◆ Members also enjoy learning about the museum and about Danish-American experience – 98% list the *America Letter* (which you are reading now) as an important membership benefit.

The museum sent a similar survey to people who are not currently members, but who receive the E-newsletter or follow the museum's Facebook page. Hundreds of responses came in online. Here is what we learned from non-members:

- ◆ Of the people who responded, 15% have been members previously but let their memberships lapse. However, they still follow the museum online and continue to be interested.
- ◆ When asked why they were not members, 30% indicated that they lived too far away to take advantage of free admission. Another 23% indicated that they would like to be members, but economic circumstances prevent it.
- ◆ When asked how they first learned about the Museum of Danish America, the largest

number (over 25%) selected "Word of mouth referral from friend or family."

What will the museum do with this information? All of this data helps us develop plans for reaching out to members and non-members alike. It helps the museum prioritize our own activities – for example, when we know that the *America Letter* is very important to our members, we work to improve it as an interesting, engaging publication. With so many members living a long distance from Elk Horn, Iowa, we continue to find ways that membership benefits can be enjoyed from any location – this impacts our plans for new website components, outreach events in different communities, and communicating those benefits effectively.

Most importantly, these survey results confirm that nearly every member values the preservation of Danish heritage; or, in the words of the museum's mission statement, preserving "Danish roots and American dreams." This is the work the museum does every day of the year, and this is what membership supports. We all – staff, board, and members – need to continue to spread awareness that this is the core mission of the museum, and that anyone can contribute to that mission whether in Iowa or Antarctica!



Article by
Tova Brandt

carving a legacy

02



“IS IT GENETIC?” – USUALLY A QUESTION ASKED WHEN ONE HAS LEARNED OF A DISEASE OR OTHER AFFLICTION, THIS QUESTION HAS BEEN POSED A TIME OR TWO TO THE DESCENDANTS OF JES PETERSEN SMIDT REGARDING THEIR TALENT AND AFFINITY FOR THE ARTS.

We begin our story with the tale of a woodcarver and end at nearly the same place, in the same workshop, three generations down the bloodline. The life story of Jes Petersen Smidt as told here has been gleaned from pages written by his grandson Edwin Smidt Pedersen (1923-2012). **01**

Jes Petersen Smidt, the oldest of a large family, was born into a period of national conflict and question in May of 1855 in Southern Jutland in the village of Faurvraa in Tyrstrup Parish. The ethnic identity of his home changed under his feet when the Danish-German border was

drawn just a few miles north of his village. His school lessons changed from Danish to German; church services were suddenly conducted in German with German pastors. Jes’s father had served in the army and took part in the Battle of Idstedt. Comments Jes made throughout his life indicated that he was bitter over the occupation, and that he was purposeful to omit the Germanic “ch” from his name – opting to forever remain Jes Smidt rather than Schmidt.

Jes came from a long line of blacksmiths, but Jes’s father thought his eldest was too small and not hardy enough to excel

in that line of work. Instead, at his father’s suggestion, he gave shoemaking a go and worked in this trade beginning at age 16. But seeing that his spirit was not in it, nor was it helping his parents, Jes changed his focus. After training in Copenhagen he traveled around Denmark at the age of 23 teaching *husflid* – skills and crafts for making useful and decorative items for the home and small farm such as hand tools, shelves, clothes racks, wheelbarrows, etc.

In 1882, at the age of 27, he was enrolled in a Copenhagen folk school on scholarship when he decided to accompany his brother Peter to America. Two of his



Article by
Nicky Christensen

01. Immigrant Woodcarver can be ordered by contacting Katherine Wilson at kapwil@gmail.com or 715.658.1563. The cost is \$10 plus \$2 postage. **02. Smidt Farm in Denmark** A drawing made by Jes of the Smidt farm in Faurvraa, Tyrstrup Sogn, in the former Haderslev Co., Denmark. Faurvraa is very near Christiansfeld in southern Jutland. Photo courtesy of Katherine Wilson.

brothers were already in Clinton, Iowa, and they sent Peter a ticket to travel to the U.S.

During this time, Prussia had decreed that all Danish men must register for their army at age twenty. So, Jes had to receive a certificate from the Prussian rulers to allow him to emigrate. They did, citing that he was too small and weak to serve in the Prussian army. This is interesting because though Jes was too weak for the Prussian army and not stout enough to work as a drayman in America, he had a great deal of stamina and strength to hand-carve great pieces of oak into his later years.

Jes found work and friends in Clinton. Among them was Laurits Henningsen, who arrived to Clinton in the same summer as Jes, got together frequently with him and shared common interests. Henningsen was an artist and had rented a studio in Clinton. Henningsen taught Jes to paint, and Jes taught Henningsen to carve. Together they worked on a picture for the altar in the Elk Horn, Iowa church with Henningsen painting the picture and Jes carving the altar and frame. They collaborated in this way on other pictures, altars, and frames for two other churches before Henningsen moved to teach at the Ashland, Michigan folk school in 1884.

Also in 1884, Frederick Lange Grundtvig, son of N.F.S. Grundtvig, arrived in Clinton to be the pastor of the church there. Like many other Danish immigrants, Jes spent time in his home. **03**

Jes found work as a farmworker and carpenter around Clinton, Iowa. He eventually worked at the Disbrow Woodworking Factory as a woodcarver and cabinet maker and at the Curtis Brothers Factory. For a period when factory work was slow, he also held a job as a woodcarver at a shop where large altars for Catholic churches were made. Whatever his occupation, Jes was a skilled craftsman whose work was generally in demand throughout periodic depressions. He had a workshop behind his home where he made many pieces of furniture including occasional commissions from the wealthy families and lumber barons of the area.

Jes's wife, Adelheid Magdalene Raben, was born one year (and 22 days) before Jes in the same village as Jes was born. One of Adelheid's brothers was a good friend of Jes's in his youth. Jes journeyed back to Faurvraa around 1885 and visited Adelheid in Flensburg several times. After his visit home ended, Jes returned to Clinton and built a house there. The house was not complete when Adelheid came to Clinton about a year after Jes's return, so Adelheid lived with the Grundtvig family until they were married in 1888.



03. Find more information about Grundtvig in Clinton in the article, "Happy and Holy Danes," beginning on page 16. **04. Before 1906** Built by Jes with the help of his brothers in 1888 in anticipation of Adelheid's arrival from Denmark. Photo courtesy of Katherine Wilson. **05. 1938** This photo was included in the leather-bound book presented to Jes by friends and congregations. Photo courtesy of Katherine Wilson. **06. Today** The house Jes built for his bride still stands near the Mississippi river in Clinton, Iowa. Photo obtained through Google Street View. ►

They had three children: Erik Arendt Smidt (1889-1966), Eleonora “Nora” Augusta Smidt Birkholm (1891-1985), and Augusta Elise Smidt Pedersen (1894-1980). The Smidts hosted other Danes who were arriving in Clinton to work, teach in the Danish parochial school, or get a start in the new country. They even hosted schoolchildren of other Danes who lived in neighboring towns. In addition to the strong church community, Clinton had an active Danish Folk Society and Danish Brotherhood Lodge.

In 1906, at the age of 51, Jes packed up his family and headed to the near-wilderness of West Denmark, Wisconsin. Jes’s daughter Augusta wrote that her father was dissatisfied with factory work and the layoffs, strikes, and unionization that came with it. In addition, Jes’s Danish friends had left to settle other intentional Danish communities such as Askov and Tyler, Minnesota. Jes and his wife scouted out Ringsted, Iowa and Tyler, Minnesota before Jes and son Erik found a suitable farm in northern Wisconsin.

Henningsen wrote in 1925 that he believed Jes and Adelheid moved their family to give their children a sound Danish “*folkelig*” and Christian upbringing, away from city influences and to immerse them in Danish influences. They left a beautiful home, a community that held them in considerable esteem, and a long lasting and respected career.

In West Denmark they settled into the backbreaking work of farm life. Dairy cows, horses, hay, corn, oats, and chickens kept the

family busy. They sold eggs and cream and a few pigs as their only source of income.

In 1939 Jes explained that “I came here to West Denmark in 1906 and thought then that I would spend all my time as a farmer. I then received a letter from Kristian Østergaard **02** with the request to make an altar and pulpit for the church they were building in Hetland, South Dakota. I undertook that work, and Østergaard wrote something in a newspaper that led to my getting

orders from other places, so I have been able to use my time for that kind of work.”

Adelheid and Erik exhibited considerable leadership on the farm. Jes and Adelheid’s grandson Edwin dedicated *Immigrant Woodcarver* to them: “Without their commitment, sacrifice and hard work, Jes would never have been able to spend the long hours carving works of art still enjoyed by his descendants and congregations throughout the country.”



01. Smidt Family, 1902 Seated: Adelheid (Raben), Augusta, and Jes Smidt. Back: Eleonora and Erik. Taken in Clinton, Iowa about 1902. The family moved to West Denmark in 1906. Photo courtesy of Katherine Wilson. **02.** Østergaard was the first Danish teacher at the Elk Horn Højskole in Elk Horn, Iowa when it was founded in 1878. He also helped establish the Ashland Folk School at Grant, Michigan in 1882. Later he became a Lutheran pastor.

In an open letter to Jes in *Dannevirke* for Jes's 70th birthday, E.F. Madsen, a friend from their days in Clinton wrote, "I understand that you are still 'very quiet' outwardly, but that there are voices in you that speak so loudly that you forget your farm and the entire world over your work. And we say thanks to your wife and your children that they allow you to forget all and care for that work that fills your soul."

In fact, Katherine Wilson, Jes's great-granddaughter and the

enthusiastic family historian, believes that it was Erik who sacrificed most. Erik was very bright and would have been well-suited for academia. He had many friends in Clinton – Edwin writes that he was joyful and loved to tease and laugh. Adelheid was apprehensive when Erik's school teacher knocked on their Iowa home's door one evening. The teacher merely explained that "Erik was such a joy to have in school that she had decided that she must meet his parents."

In Wisconsin, Erik had to do a man's work although he was barely 16 and not fully grown. He never married and became quite lonesome after the passing of his mother Adelheid in 1930.

Jes had converted a small outbuilding on the farm into a workshop. He extended a window through the ceiling into the loft to make use of the diffused light from the north as he painted. "From this shop came altars, altar rails, pulpits, baptismal fonts, chairs and all manner of shelves, tables, and other furnishings," Edwin wrote.

Specifically, Jes listed that throughout his lifetime he had made 22 altars, 10 pulpits, 8 altar railings, 2 lecterns, 4 baptismal fonts, 4 church reading lecterns, 13 side chairs for altars, 13 altar pictures, and one picture with frame.

A list of the original locations and photos of Jes's work can be found in *Immigrant Woodcarver*. To our knowledge, Jes's work is in 35 churches across the Midwest to California and Texas.

When fire destroyed the West Denmark Lutheran Church in 1937, Jes, then 84 years old, designed the new West Denmark church in the style of old country churches in Denmark and made the altar, altar rail and pulpit. His paintings had been saved from the fire and adorned the walls of the new church in 1938.

For Christmas of 1938, a number of friends gathered pictures of Jes's works throughout the country and letters of praise and thanks and presented it to Jes in a hand-tooled leather bound book.



03



04

03. Silo-filling on the Smidt Farm c.1910 Adelheid and Augusta are on the far left. Jes is on the far right; Erik third from right. Photo courtesy of Katherine Wilson. **04. Summer 1914 or 1917** Jes painting in his workshop. The altar painting he is working on is a copy of a painting by Anton Dorph which was the altarpiece in Tyrstrup Kirke in Christiansfeld, Denmark near where Jes grew up. The painting depicts Jesus visiting Martha and Mary. Photo courtesy of Katherine Wilson.

A fellow member of the West Denmark congregation wrote, "Thank you for all your work on the new church...Let it stand here on the hill by the lake with the altar, pulpit, and lectern speaking to the coming generations."

Jes passed away in 1942 at the age of 87.

In the 1950s, a congregation in Milltown, Wisconsin remodeled the interior of their church and in the process took the carvings by Jes Smidt to the dump and burned them. Carvings in Bone Lake, Wisconsin were also discarded instead of relocated. And in 1985, the same year that Jes's last surviving child, Nora, passed away, West Denmark's Jes Smidt-designed church was lost to fire.

Jes's grandson Edwin spoke only once of the Milltown incident to his family, but his daughter Katherine doesn't doubt that these events were formative in motivating Edwin to write *Immigrant Woodcarver*, a chronicle of his grandfather and his grandfather's work. Besides documenting his personal family history and memories, Edwin wanted the churches that are struggling, merging, and changing to have the knowledge of the souls and hands that made the items.

The West Denmark church was rebuilt after the fire, in a different

design, but the new altar and lectern were made by Edwin. The altar rail was carved by Jes's grandson Erik Einar Pedersen (1931-2001), and two chairs that had been carved by Jes were acquired from a nearby church.

"Just as every carved flower or capital is the work of his own hands, one sees the artist's soul in it as well as the characteristic charm there is distributed through the whole piece of work." – Kristian Østergaard in an article he submitted to *Dannevirke newspaper* about Smidt's work.

Three generations later, Edwin's daughter Ann Fawver had this on her mind when her great-grandfather's workshop was falling into disrepair on the homestead, now owned by people outside the family. The workshop was moved to her and her husband Dennis' property near West Denmark in 2001. "Quite simply, we did not want it lost, so for sentimental reasons we moved it and restored it," Ann says.

When Jes used the building, it had a large sliding door in front and no back door. The building was not insulated, merely the studs and siding. "It seems he would have been cold," Ann said.

They added insulation, interior boards, and two other windows. Timber framer Marc Cutter from Luck, Wisconsin built a new entry. The window Jes modified to maximize the soft northern light is still there – though no longer facing north, the light is diffused by a high canopy of trees. Here, Ann works on her own woodcarving among pieces by her great-grandfather.

The Fawvers' home is also filled with handcrafted tokens from the past including study paintings by Ann and her daughter, carved wood objects including a lamp base, and even wall plaques that are said to have been a gift from Mrs. N.F.S. Grundtvig. **03** In a corner of their home sits a chest that came from Denmark with Jes. The top of the chest has a hidden compartment that is a favorite of their grandchildren. Inside, a little *nisse* village can be rearranged, which the grandchildren are eager to do at each visit. "It's all about the grandchildren," Ann gushes.

In the lower level of the Fawver's home, past many heirlooms and paintings, is a life-size figure of a young woman in a flowing dress, reclining ever so slightly and posed as if holding something that she is peering at intently.

For our visit, Ann rested the form of the book in her elegant hands and explained that her strong yet comfortable pose will be supported by a glacial

01. 1938-1985 The second West Denmark church. Photo courtesy of Katherine Wilson. **02. Altar Rail** West Denmark's altar rail, carved by Jes's grandson Erik Einar Pedersen. **03.** The four small circular plaques, "The Four Ages of Man" are by sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen.



04. Northern light Jes modified a window in his workshop to maximize the soft northern light. Ann does her woodcarving here, under the same window as her great-grandfather. **05. Heirloom Lamp Base** Carved wood lamp base in the home of Ann Fawver. ▶

rock on location. The work is for the Luck Library and Historical Society building (a venue that regularly hosts Museum of Danish America traveling exhibits for the community to experience). It will be taken to be cast soon. Ann's working name for the sculpture is "Sophie," who was her maternal grandmother. It is a reference to nurturing and love.

On the flat surfaces of the workspace are other figures and busts that Ann has created. After telling about Sophie, Ann brings out a handful of small sculpting tools which once belonged to Jes and have been passed down to her. The tools are tidy but still have a trace of the sculpting medium – a technique of tool care advised by her father. These tools aren't just for showing off to visiting museum staff members – she uses them actively in her

work. Many of Jes's tools were distributed among family members. Katherine said her father, Edwin, tried to mark tools that had belonged to Jes with an "X" – although the mark gradually became indiscernible through years of use.

At the end of our quick visit, Ann's husband, Dennis, remarked of our great timing--they had just arrived back from their art gallery, River's End Gallery, on the shores of Lake Superior in Cornucopia, Wisconsin, which they run with their daughter Hannah Wren Fawver in the summer season. Hannah earned her degree in art and now paints, does pottery, and screen prints original designs on clothing she sews. She has an extensive series of paintings of nisser that are very popular.

Ann says simply, "The roots are deep."

Though she acknowledges the family connections, **02** Ann doesn't think it's "genetic," but says that it's rather about passion and perseverance. "And patience helps, too," she says.

Upon hearing this, Katherine explained that "When you grow up in a home with things that your ancestors made, you see that you can do that--you can make that."

The heirlooms that this family possesses reflect the values and beliefs of their ancestors and reinforce and remind future generations of the things that were important to them and the way their children were raised. Heirlooms share stories and are ever-present in daily life; they are there to remind one whenever there is a need to reflect.



THE CLEARING

Jes Smidt attended the same folk school (Vinding Folk School) as famed Danish-American landscape architect Jens Jensen – although they missed each other by six or so years. Ann's woodcarving workshop at The Clearing, the folk school that Jensen created in the rustic beauty of Door County Wisconsin, will be held September 21- 27.

01. Sophie Ann and the sculpture she is creating for the Luck Library and Historical Society. **02.** As mentioned, Jes's grandsons (two of Augusta's three sons) Edwin and Erik were carvers. Jes's granddaughters (Nora's daughters), Adelheid Elise Birkholm Sorensen (1914-1971) and Doris Birkholm Hansen (1917-2011), also painted. Both of Katherine's sons have art degrees; Noah is working in Hong Kong with a major art institute and has worked at the Walker Art Center and Jonathan is teaching in Seoul. Ann's other daughters, Emily and Sarah, opened Three Sisters Studio in Luck with Hannah.

fiddling around

Jes Smidt carved two violins. One was given to Martin Holst of the *Dannevirke* newspaper for his sons, and the other, made of maple and walnut, was made for Jes's son Erik. The violin was passed to Jes's daughter Augusta and has come to be in the care of Jes's great-grandson (son of Ellis "Bud" Andrew Pedersen [1924-1999]) Mark Pedersen of Barron, Wisconsin. Another of Mark's great-grandfathers was a minister at the West Denmark Lutheran Church and his mother grew up near the folk school and parish hall there.

Mark picked up the violin at age 38 when his three daughters **03** started taking lessons. Once a month, Mark hosts the WOJB

folk radio program and devotes it to Scandinavian music. He says that listeners prefer Danish music, as it feels like "happier" music compared to that of the Norwegians and Swedes.

Mark's appreciation for Scandinavian folk music and the influence of the violin have led him to organize a few concerts for the West Denmark community with very talented musicians. One notable musician who has played at West Denmark is Harald Haugaard, a Danish fiddler, composer, and producer who began playing the violin at the age of 7 on the island of Funen.

From the very beginning, folk music was Harald's biggest

inspiration. One of his earliest and greatest influences was his grandfather Johannes, who was a wood carver and traditional accordion player. Harald's mother was highly active in the folk dance environment as a caller and teacher. The traditional Danish dance music became one of Harald's biggest musical platforms and still appears prominently in his performances. Together with the folk music lessons, Harald also took classical violin lessons, with both styles playing important roles in his life.

Outside of his many tours and recordings, Harald is known as an excellent and enthusiastic music teacher. Along with his full-time job as professor at the Carl Nielsen Academy in Odense, where he began studying in 1994, he teaches regularly as a guest at other institutions in Europe.

Harald established Haugaard's International Fiddle School in 2008, bringing together a group of the best artists and tutors from the contemporary Nordic and Anglo/Celtic music scenes. Since 2011 it has taken place at the Christian Jensen College in Breklum, Germany.

Next summer, Harald will hold a fiddle camp at West Denmark from June 21-25 on the scenic shores of Little Butternut Lake. More information and pre-registration is at www.westdenmark.net.



03. In the Smidt-family style, Mark's daughters are carrying on the family legacy in various ways – Marta plays fiddle music, Elsa studied design, and Dagny has married a "real Dane from Denmark" and they have a one-year-old son, Rasmus.

04. Harald Haugaard Danish violinist/fiddler Harald Haugaard, along with other world-class instructors, will hold the West Denmark School of Fiddling in June 2015.

the altar set

ONE OF THE FIRST ARTIFACTS ACCEPTED INTO THE PERMANENT COLLECTION AFTER THE OPENING OF THE MUSEUM BUILDING WAS A CHURCH ALTAR. THIS LARGE PIECE, WHICH STANDS ALMOST 11 FEET TALL AND MEASURES ABOUT 8 FEET LONG, ARRIVED WITH A MATCHING SET OF FORMAL ARMCHAIRS AND A LECTERN, ALL CARVED BY THE SAME MAN, JES SMIDT.



Smidt, who was trained as a carpenter in Denmark, had a bit of experience working with churches before creating this altar set. After settling in Clinton, Iowa following his immigration, he worked for a time with the local church, helping to build it. Later, after relocating to Wisconsin, he set to work on this altar. He was over 80 years old when he began the project.

Originally, the altar **01**, chairs, and lectern **02** belonged to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. The building was originally located at 22nd and 28th Avenue South, and later moved to Eden Prairie, near Minneapolis. It was carved out of oak, finished in 1936, and used by the Immanuel Lutheran Church until 1968.

At that time the Museum of Danish America did not exist, although it was the wish of the Immanuel Lutheran congregation to donate the altar set to a Danish museum. Vesterheim Norwegian American Museum in Decorah, Iowa, took the set into their collection “temporarily” until such time as their Danish counterpart could be established.



Article by
Angela Stanford

01. Altar Full altar view with candelabra and cross, as well as a display panel sharing the history of conflict among Danish-American Lutherans. The cross and candelabra are from Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Sioux City, Iowa and a gift of the family of Irving Jensen, Sr.

In 1994, the wish of the church congregation was fulfilled and the altar was brought to Elk Horn and installed on the main level as part of the core exhibition, where it has remained since.

The altar and chairs' intricate carving includes leaf-and-vine details and Gothic arches. The altar features four figures of the four Gospels: Matthew and Mark on the left, and Luke and John on the right. Just below the figures is the Bible verse: "I am the bread of life," John 6:48. The lectern is a figure of an angel with wings folded at her back. Her arms are above her head holding the platform for the Bible.

Recently, the museum has received another example of Smidt's woodworking. The family of Martin Holst, the former publisher of the Danish newspaper *Dannevirke*, has donated the carving pictured here. **03** In 1931, in recognition of Holst's 50th year as editor and publisher, Jes Smidt was commissioned to carve this piece for Holst. This carving is a wonderful complement to Smidt's larger work.



02. Smidt-carved armchairs and a lectern sit in an alcove above the Bro Dining Room. The table was donated by Merrill Grove Baptist Church in Irwin, Iowa in 1991. It was carved by Niels Peter Jensen, an immigrant who settled in the area of Merrills Grove, Iowa, who gifted the table to the church in about 1931. **03. Dannevirke** This carved picture was a gift to the editor and publisher of the *Dannevirke* newspaper. Digitized issues of *Dannevirke* can be found on danishmuseum.org under Online Media > Digital Library of Danish American Newspapers and Journals.

“happy” and “holy” danes – conflict in the north woods

The country lies in deep repose,
And peace rules hearth and home,
While silver clouds the moon inclose
And through the heaven's roam.

The lake without a ripple lies
In heaven's soft embrace
From yonder hills sweet voices rise
And thank the Lord of grace.

These are the opening verses of a much-loved hymn by the Danish novelist and poet, Bernhard Severin Ingemann (1789-1862). If Ingemann were alive today, he might very well have been inspired by the setting of the Lutheran church at West Denmark, Wisconsin. Located seventy miles northeast of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and near the communities of Luck and Milltown in Polk County, Wisconsin, the area is one of forests, lakes and fields, reminiscent of the Danish countryside.

The West Denmark Lutheran Church stands on a wooded knoll, and from the church worshippers look out over Little Butternut Lake. One can easily imagine in this pastoral setting the sounds of congregational singing drifting out over the lake.

125 years ago, the church in West Denmark was the center of a thriving Danish immigrant community, surrounded by farms and the first dairy cooperative in Wisconsin. In 1868, Danish immigrants began arriving in the



area, attracted by the low land prices. Four years later, in 1873, West Denmark Lutheran Church was founded, and within fifteen years, there were six Lutheran churches in a six-mile radius, five of them Danish!

The Danes who settled in the area had visions of creating a Danish-American community. In addition to churches, the West Denmark congregation built a folk high school in 1885. Unfortunately, the school did not succeed since after the first year there were not enough students enrolled. However, the existence of the building, the arrival of a university-trained pastor to serve the congregation, and the need for a seminary by the Danish Lutheran Church in America (founded in 1872) meant that for five years between 1887 and 1892 the West Denmark community would play a prominent role among Danish-American Lutherans.

Sadly, different understandings of Lutheranism would divide the Danish Lutheran Church in America and lead to the closing of the West Denmark Seminary. This is the story of that short-lived seminary.

Much has been written about the division between Danish-American Lutherans. In lay person's terms it has come down to us in such phrases as "Happy Danes and Holy Danes," "Dancing Danes and Praying Danes," "Smiling Danes and Sad Danes." Essentially, the difference arises from differing outlooks on the nature of faith and life. While these differences could exist, as Danish-American historian, Enok Mortensen, has described it, within the great cathedral that was the Folk Church of Denmark, here in the United States, where there was separation of church and state and where all churches had to fend for themselves, these



Article by
John Mark Nielsen

Seminary West Denmark Lutheran Church Parsonage and Folk High School overlooking Little Butternut Lake. Photograph courtesy of the Danish Immigrant Archive – Grand View University.

differences tore congregations apart and led to separation.

Theologically, the disagreement arose over the role of the Bible and the Apostle's Creed. The more conservative elements took the traditional Lutheran understanding that the Bible was the inspired and literal word of God, reflecting Luther's Trinitarian understanding: *sole fide, sole gratia, sole scriptura* (that we humans are saved by faith alone, grace alone and the word alone). In 1853, a revivalist movement in Denmark inspired the founding of an organization called the Inner Mission. The purpose was "to arouse life among those who are sleeping in sin... and if possible to lead those who have strayed back to the Father's house whence they have strayed." For those Danes influenced by the Inner Mission, "the Bible IS the truth" and life here on earth is a vale of tears, a preparation for eternal salvation which comes only through one's faith and the grace of God.

The alternative position was articulated by N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), the Danish pastor, poet and educator, who had come to feel that most important was the living church as expressed by the believer when confessing the Apostle's Creed. A scholar of Nordic mythology, Old Norse and Old English, Grundtvig had discovered the *Beowulf* manuscript in the British Library and translated it; he recognized the problems translators faced in working with long-dead languages and numerous and differing manuscripts. His position, and those of his followers, who came to be known as Grundtvigians, was that "the Bible CONTAINED

the truth." "We shall not stand on the Bible and search for the faith," he famously said, "but stand on faith and read the Bible." The Apostle's Creed was the affirmation of a living faith.

For Grundtvig, this life was a gift from God. Nature, history and cultural expression were signs of the diversity and richness of God's ongoing creation and could be celebrated. Humans had a responsibility to learn and to realize their fullest potential. Education should be available to all and not limited to the academically gifted who gained entrance to university. To provide continuing education for all, Grundtvig proposed what he called a "folk high school," where a lifetime of learning was encouraged. This idea gave rise to the creation of folk high schools throughout Denmark. These schools played an important role in reviving Danish identity after the nation's defeat in the Dano-Prussian War of 1864.

One Danish school in particular, Askov Folk High School, located just north of the new border following Denmark's defeat, played an important role in reviving the Danish spirit. Between 1872 and 1887, the school also trained ministers to work among the growing Danish immigrant communities in the United States. This program was established by the "Commission to Further the Preaching of the Gospel Among Danes in North America." Early pastors came to West Denmark, Wisconsin, and Elk Horn, Iowa, where they established congregations. In 1878 the first Danish-American folk high school was founded in Elk Horn, Iowa,

and its success contributed to the building of the school in West Denmark.

By 1886, members of the Danish Lutheran Church in America realized that they could not depend on Copenhagen University or Askov Folk High School to provide pastors to serve the growing number of Danish immigrant congregations. Moreover, there was already a model for a Danish Lutheran seminary. In 1884, Danish pastors and congregations had separated from the Dano-Norwegian Synod to more effectively minister to Danish immigrants in Western Iowa and Nebraska. Organized as the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church Association, that same year the new denomination (known as the Blair Church) established a seminary in Blair, Nebraska. The church also unsuccessfully sought support and affiliation with the Inner Mission in Denmark.

The leadership of the Danish Lutheran Church in America was divided over where its seminary should be located. At the church's convention in 1886, four communities were considered: Elk Horn and Cedar Falls in Iowa, and Neenah and West Denmark in Wisconsin. Elk Horn received one vote, Neenah, four votes, West Denmark, fourteen votes, and Cedar Falls, seventeen votes. Despite the vote, the convention decided that it would be less expensive to locate in West Denmark since the folk high school building could be used.

Contributing to the decision was the fact that the church in West Denmark had called



Pastor Thorvald Helveg to serve the congregation, and he had accepted the call. Helveg was a graduate of the University of Copenhagen and came from a long line of ordained ministers within the State Church of Denmark. Members of the larger church body felt that Helveg's academic background had prepared him to teach seminarians and it would also enhance the reputation of the new seminary.

In the fall of 1887, the West Denmark Seminary opened with five students. Assisting Helveg was Pastor Jens Pedersen, who served St. Peter's Lutheran Church located three miles north of the West Denmark Church. Also known as the North Luck Church, St. Peter's had broken away from the West Denmark Church due in part to theological issues--the breakaway congregation being more conservative--but also, in part, due to personal conflicts between church

members. The tension between the two congregations suggested disagreements evident in the larger church body.

Anticipating increased enrollment in the fall of 1888 to thirteen students, Helveg requested that the Danish Lutheran Church in America approve a second faculty member. Concerned that there be balance in the faculty, Helveg, who viewed himself as a Grundtvigian, desired a colleague who had Inner Mission leanings. This, he felt, would provide seminarians with a more balanced theological outlook. It would also better prepare them for serving in local congregations where they might have to deal with conflicts on a local level.

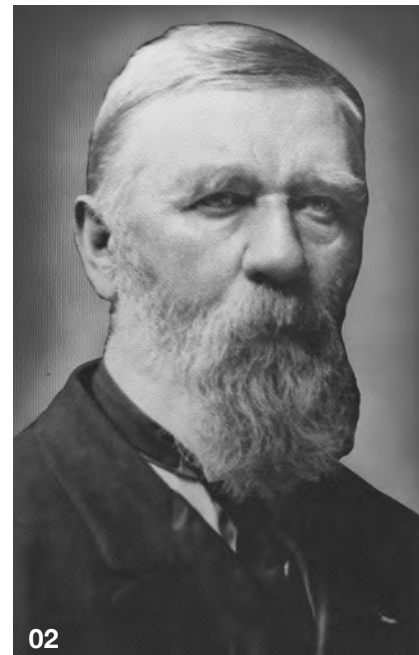
At its convention in 1888, the Church approved the hiring of Peter Sørensen Vig, who also received a call to St. Peter's Lutheran Church in North Luck. P.S. Vig was in many ways Helveg's opposite. The oldest of

twelve children, he had grown up on a small, poor farmstead in western Denmark. His only opportunity early in life for further education had been at Askov Folk High School. Following three years in the United States, he returned to Askov in 1879 as he had been admitted to the program to train pastors for the ministry in America. Completing the Commission's theological examinations, he returned to the U.S. in 1884 to teach at the folk high school in Elk Horn, and following his ordination into the Danish Lutheran Church, served a rural parish between Elk Horn and Harlan. During this period he had engaged in spirited debate, both in print and in speech, with local Danish Baptists and Adventists. A prolific writer, he would later go on to both write and edit *Danske i Amerika*, a comprehensive history of the Danish immigration prior to 1920.

Initially, the two men worked well together, but soon divisions arose.



01



02

01. Thorvald Helveg Mr. and Mrs. Helveg and their young children. Helveg was one of only a few immigrant pastors who had received their formal education at the University of Copenhagen. Photograph courtesy of the Danish Immigrant Archive – Grand View University. **02. Peter Sørensen Vig** Trained at Askov Folk High School in Denmark, he became the spokesperson for Danish immigrants with Inner Mission leanings. Photograph courtesy of the Danish American Archive and Library.

Later Vig would write:

Some of the causes of trouble between us were these: He was a minister's son from Denmark, a graduate of the University of Copenhagen; I was a farmer's son who had merely sniffed at the phial of learning in the authorized pharmacy. He was a Grundtvigian; I, half Inner Mission. He was a Danish Dane; I, a Danish American. He was a member of the Danish Folk Society, of which I was a decided opponent. And more disturbing than either of these was the inspiration Helveg received from Clinton, Iowa.

The influence in Clinton, Iowa, was none other than Frederik Lange Grundtvig, the youngest child of N.F.S. Grundtvig. F.L. Grundtvig had come to the United States to study ornithology, but comprehending the need for pastors in this country, was ordained and served the Danish Lutheran Church in Clinton, Iowa. Inspired by his father's advocacy of celebrating the Danish cultural heritage, in 1887 he was instrumental in founding the Dansk Folkesamfund, or Danish People's Society. Vig and those with Inner Mission leanings saw the society as being a sect more interested in worldly culture and

questioned whether members were genuine Lutherans.

Given their differences and the influence of F.L. Grundtvig, soon Helveg and Vig were in open conflict. This was reflected in and divided the student body at the West Denmark seminary. According to Theodore Beck, Vig's biographer, the thirteen students at the school soon became divided--six on each side and one in the middle. "All had to attend classes under both professors; but on Sundays, one group followed Vig to his service three miles away, and the others attended Helveg's church."

Not only was the seminary divided, but so too was the Danish Lutheran Church in America. Congregations, depending on the leanings of the pastor or congregational leadership, were pulled in one direction or the other. Ultimately, the division came to a head at the church's annual convention in 1891, as luck or misfortune would have it, in Clinton, Iowa. During that convention, after resolutions and counter resolutions, both Vig and Helveg agreed to resign. Since the seminary had no teachers, the convention resolved

that the school should close following the next academic year, and that the two, Helveg and Vig, continue to teach through that last year. This they did, but one wonders what the academic climate was like.

The close of the West Denmark Seminary in 1892 presaged the split of the Danish Lutheran Church in America that was to occur in 1894. In that year, representatives from a majority of the church's congregations met in Elk Horn to form the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America (known as the North Church). One of those congregations was St. Peter's in North Lusk. The West Denmark Lutheran Church remained a part of the Danish Lutheran Church in America. Two years later, in 1896, representatives from the North Church and the Blair Church met in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and agreed to merge, forming the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church.

It is easy to conclude that the intransigence of a few men like Thorvald Helveg, P.S. Vig or F.L. Grundtvig was responsible for the conflict. As both Enok Mortensen and Thorvald Hansen have



03. Grundlovsdagfest A Grundlovsdagfest (Danish Constitution Day Festival) held on June 5, 1896 in West Denmark. Many of the attendees would have experienced the turmoil that led to the West Denmark Seminary's close in 1892. Photograph courtesy of Katherine Wilson, Wheeler, Wisconsin. ►

pointed out in various works, the conflict was more complicated. Socio-economic differences in the Danish immigrant population, as well as the nature of Protestantism in the United States in the 19th century have to be considered. Differences were often heightened or exaggerated by articles and letters published in the Danish-American Lutheran newspapers, *Dannevirke* and *Danskeren*. (Issues of these newspapers, along with *Bien* and *Den Danske Pioneer*, are available on the museum's website under "Online Resources.") Indeed, many Danish immigrants arriving in the United States, observing this conflict, resolved not to join this debate that, from their perspective, had been brought from Denmark. They joined other denominations or affiliated with no church. Of the approximately 350,000 Danes who immigrated between 1870 and 1920, an

estimated 15% to 18% became members of one of the Danish-American Lutheran synods.

The seminary at West Denmark closed, but the legacy of the Danes who settled Polk County lives on. It can still be experienced in the annual family camp, now in its 37th year, held on the grounds of the West Denmark Lutheran Church at the end of June, and one can learn about it in the informative, community museum found in Luck. And in the long light of a summer sunset over Little Butternut Lake, one can still be filled with wonder at nature's beauty.

If you are interested in learning more about the divisions in Danish-American Lutheranism and the seminary in West Denmark, you may wish to read the following, from which information for this article was taken:

Beck, Theodore P. *The Professor: Peder Sorensen Vig*. Blair, NE: Lutheran Publishing House, 1946.

Jensen, John M. *The United Evangelical Lutheran Church: An Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964.

Hansen, Thorvald. *School in the Woods: The Story of an Immigrant Seminary*. Askov, MN: American Publishing Co., 1977.

Hansen, Thorvald. "Church Divided: Lutheranism Among Danish Immigrants in America," in *On Distant Shores*. Aalborg, Denmark: Udvandrerhistoriske Studier Nr. 5, 1993.

Mortensen, Enok. *The Danish Lutheran Church in America*. Philadelphia: Board of Publications, Lutheran Church in America, 1967.

Petersen, Peter L. and John Mark Nielsen. "Peter Sorensen Vig – Danish-American Historian," in *Danish Emigration to the United States*. Aalborg, Denmark: Udvandrerhistoriske Studier Nr. 4, 1992.



Congregation today The West Denmark Lutheran Church's congregation today. Photograph courtesy of Katherine Wilson, Wheeler, Wisconsin.

board meets in luck / west denmark

Luck and West Denmark, Wisconsin hosted the most recent Board of Directors meeting, June 12 – 14. This small rural community nestled between Big Butternut and Little Butternut Lakes, was chosen as the site for the board's 97th meeting because of its rich Danish history. West Denmark is where the division in the Danish Lutheran Church occurred in 1893 (Happy Danes / Holy Danes).

Located on the historic grounds is the West Denmark Lutheran Church, founded in 1873. All meeting and social events were held in the Gym Hall, built in 1914. There is also a "Dane School" on

the site, built in 1917 and currently undergoing renovation.

The highlight of the meeting was a Friday evening "Dinner and a Movie" with almost 60 people in attendance. After a catered dinner by a local organic farmer, the group viewed the award-winning documentary "Jens Jensen – The Living Green." Jensen, born in Denmark (1860-1951), rose from street sweeper to "dean of landscape architecture" to pioneering conservationist. The museum's 30-acre restoration park is named in his honor.

The Board of Directors meets three times annually - February

and June meetings are held in various locations around the country. The annual meeting in October is held in Elk Horn. The 25-member Board of Directors is a volunteer board. All expenses incurred during the course of the board meetings are paid for by the board members themselves. They contribute their time, expertise and leadership to carry out the mission of the museum and for that we are grateful.

Board members not present: Ron Bro, Dan Christensen, Bill Jensen, Craig Molgaard, Henrik Rasmussen, and Mark Strandkov.



Article by
Terri Johnson

Front row, L-R: Cynthia McKeen, Bente Ellis, Dorothy Feisel, Brent Norlem, Mitte Ostergaard, Cindy Adams, Linda Steffensen. **Back row, L-R:** Kristi Planck Johnson, Tim Burchill, Dennis Larson, Eric Smitsdorff, Garey Knudsen, Carolyn Larson, Jerry Schrader, Dagmar Muthamia, Erik Andersen, Kenneth Larsen, and John Mark Nielsen. **Present, but not pictured:** Anna Thomsen Holliday.

introducing our new board members

FOUR NOMINEES WILL JOIN THE MUSEUM OF DANISH AMERICA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN OCTOBER 2014.

At the June meeting, the museum's Board of Directors elected four people to serve a three-year term. A board member may serve two consecutive terms and is not eligible for election to the board for three years. New board members will participate in a day-long orientation at the museum before the October board meeting and officially assume their positions following the annual meeting on Saturday, October 18 in Elk Horn, Iowa.

Beth Bro-Roof lives in Cedar Rapids, Iowa where she has been the Special Event Coordinator for the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art since 2007. She has a BS in Business Administration – Marketing from Iowa State University. Beth has also been an active volunteer with the Linn County Master Gardeners, PTA, Linn County Medic Alliance and Westminster Presbyterian Church.

David Hendee was born at Camp Pendleton, California and grew up in Sidney, Nebraska. A graduate of Midland Lutheran College with a BA in Journalism, David has been a staff writer at the Omaha World Herald since 1976. He currently covers news in the central Great Plains. Assignments have taken him to the White House, the Lewis and Clark Trail from Washington, D.C., the Pacific Northwest, rural Mississippi, the Canadian Rockies and the DMZ between North and South Korea.

Glenn Henriksen was born in Emmet County, Iowa, and has resided there all his life. After three years at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, he began farming his grandparent's farm and continues to farm today. His music career includes accompanying an 80-member community chorus for 10 years, piano/organ concerts around

the US, and playing weddings, funerals and nursing homes. He has a renovated home in Spirit Lake in which he performs weekly "house concerts," a four-piece rock & roll band, and has been the organist in his church. Glenn has performed at many Museum of Danish America events and recorded a CD of popular tunes on the Victor Borge piano after its restoration in 2008.

Karen Suchomel lives in West Branch, Iowa, and has a B.A. in Business from Central College in Pella, Iowa, with extensive experience in banking and customer service. Her volunteer service includes the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Foundation, Board of Trustees, West Branch Chamber of Commerce, West Branch Industrial Development, among others. Her interests include reading, golf and genealogy.



Article by
Terri Johnson

we love our volunteers



01

The annual Volunteer Banquet was held on May 5 at the Danish Inn restaurant to recognize volunteers for their outstanding work in 2013. All volunteers who receive recognition also receive selected items from the Museum Shop. Following are the volunteers and the hours donated in 2013:

Genealogy Center:

Nancy Sand, 119
Lene Sepstrup, 187
June Haas, 865
Suzanne Rasmussen, 1,264

Genealogy Center and Museum:

Jeanette Lillehoj, 2,000
Rosa Clemesen, 2,121

Museum:

Elva Rasmussen, 1,000

The Volunteer Recognition Plaque, located in the lobby of the museum, recognizes those volunteers reaching 1,000+ hours. For each subsequent 1,000 hours, a star is engraved on the plaque. *Mange tak* to our many dedicated volunteers!



02



Article by
Terri Johnson

01. Honored, L-R: Jeanette Lillehoj, Rosa Clemesen, Nancy Sand, Suzanne Rasmussen, June Haas, and Elva Rasmussen. **02. Volunteers** and their significant others were treated to dinner and a program. *We are always looking for more volunteers to help with our many projects. Contact us today if you are interested in helping the museum, Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park, or Genealogy Center!*

interns in the heartland

TWO DANISH GRADUATE STUDENTS COMPLETED THEIR INTERNSHIPS THIS SUMMER, AND TWO AMERICAN INTERNS HAVE JOINED THE MUSEUM TEAM TO ASSIST IN RELOCATING ARTIFACTS TO THE CURATORIAL CENTER ONCE IT IS COMPLETED.

SOFIE KRØGH NIELSEN

A late Friday night in October, I was scrolling through the job bank at my university's website and came across a poster that told about the internship at the Museum of Danish America. However, the application needed to be turned in that night at the latest so I immediately started to write it. This quick decision has turned out to be one of the best I have made during my time as a student!

I took my bachelor's degree in History with a minor in Event Culture at Aarhus University and I am currently enrolled in the master's program of Experience Economy, also at Aarhus University. Experience Economy has nothing to do with actual economics, but is about learning how to create an engaging experience and has focus on aspects like tourism, branding and marketing.

By being an intern at the Museum of Danish America, I have gotten to use the skills that I have learned by studying in a practical context. I have worked in the exhibit department under the supervision of the Albert Ravenholt Curator of Danish-American Culture Tova Brandt. During my internship I have helped put up exhibits and researched for upcoming

exhibits. I have also helped refine and generate new ideas for the museum's school program, and I have given a presentation about daily life in 1864, which was based on my experience from working in the open air museum *Den Gamle By* (The Old Town) in Aarhus. Finally, I have also done research for my final thesis, for which the overall theme will be "Danishness in the Elk Horn-Kimballton Area," and I will begin writing upon my return to Denmark.

On July 26 I will return to Denmark full of experiences. By being here I have developed both professionally and personally, and I really have enjoyed my time at the museum. Actually, I have enjoyed it so much that I will be back to do more research for my thesis in November, thanks to a Bodtker Grant (Danish American Heritage Society) that I have received.

HELLE SKOVSGAARD CHRISTENSEN

I have been an intern at the Museum of Danish America for about four months now, working at the Genealogy Center, and it has been a really great experience.

A little bit about me: I was born and raised in the city of Silkeborg (central Jutland), which is a beautiful area of woods and lakes.

I went to school there until the gymnasium level (a little above High School), only interrupted (before gymnasium) by a year as an exchange student in Dearborn (and Canton), Michigan in 2003-04, where I got to experience life as a Junior in an American High School. After that I had three years at Silkeborg Gymnasium and then I moved on to the city of Århus to study at the University of Århus. I have a Bachelor's Degree in English and Visual Culture from there, and am now doing my Master's in Copenhagen for an MA in Information Science and Cultural Dissemination. My parents still live in Silkeborg – my dad is originally from Northern Jutland and my mom is from Djursland (the 'nose' of Jutland) – but my brother lives in Copenhagen as well and works at the Ministry of City, Housing, and Rural Districts (he has an MA Economy from the University of Århus).

My internship at the Genealogy Center has mostly consisted of cataloging, but doing Special Collections, like Family Collections, I have been able to learn about and do genealogy research, which has been really interesting - sometimes it's almost like detective work, finding the right people and where they came from, which can be a lot of fun. I have learned of some really interesting stories, as the



Sofie Krøgh Nielsen, left
Helle Skovsgaard Christensen, right

choice to emigrate often meant embarking on a great adventure, and it has made me want to look more into my own family history – I don't have any relatives in the U.S., but my great-grandfather's brothers emigrated to Argentina and my great-grandmother immigrated to Denmark from Poland.

Besides cataloging, I have also gotten the opportunity to work with the photo exhibits at the Genealogy Center for Tivoli Fest – both the current one on display at the Genealogy Center and also uploading and translating last year's exhibit to the museum's website (*Viewed Through the Lens*) – which has been a lot of fun. I've also done a bit of translating, and my final assignment consisted of making a guest board for the museum's Pinterest page about my favorite Danish music – so go check that out, if you're curious about contemporary Danish music or just want to hear singing in Danish. (www.pinterest.com/danishmuseum)

My last week here was actually spent in Seattle and at a conference near Portland with the other Danish intern, Sofie. We got to experience a lot of interesting sights in Seattle and meet our sponsors from the scan | design foundation, and we did a presentation about the

museum at the Danish Cultural Conference in Menucha, which was well received. We met a lot of interesting people and learned some more about Danishness in America – which is also what I take away with me from my entire stay over here; learning about Danish-American culture.

Now I'm leaving to travel westward with my family. We'll get to see Yellowstone, Yosemite, the Redwoods, San Francisco, and much more, which I'm really looking forward to.

CHELSEA JACOBSEN

I grew up here in the Danish Villages of Elk Horn and Kimballton, and it is very good to be back living and working in my home community. I recently graduated from the University of Iowa with a Bachelor of Science degree in Anthropology, a History Minor, and a Museum Studies certificate. I have done previous internships at the Museum of Natural History in Iowa City, Iowa, and at the Golden Hinde Trust in London, England, and spent a year and a half working at the Old Capitol Museum in Iowa City as a docent and student supervisor.

While at the museum I will be assisting with the move of large portions of the collection into the new curatorial center. While waiting for the completion of the building, I have been working

on cataloging new accessions and, of course, preparing for the move! In my free time you can usually find me reading or doing something outdoors--or both!

KATE EHRIG-PAGE

I am the library intern at the museum's Genealogy Center, where I will be until the end of January 2015. During that time I will help to accession material into the library and special collections, whilst also learning about other aspects of the museum through such things as attending outreach events.

My educational background for the job starts with an MA in Archives and Records Management from University College Dublin in Ireland; a BA in American Studies, obtained from the University of Hull in England; a Public History certificate from the University of Northern Iowa and completion of a Genealogy course with the University of Strathclyde, Scotland. In addition to this, I have nearly four years practical experience working with archives/ special collections.

I come from north east England but now live in Atlantic and have recently married someone from Iowa. In my spare time I like to read, bake, eat and play my cello, which I am very bad at but have fun with anyway.



Chelsea Jacobsen, *left*
Kate Ehrig-Page, *right*

01



work continues on the curatorial center

In mid-April, we were able to check off a huge task on the construction schedule for the new addition – the concrete roof deck! On April 18, a crew of about 17 men assisted with the single continuous pour which involved 26 concrete trucks. After a week, the forms were removed from underneath and interior work began.

Metal framing divided the space into separate rooms, drywall was added, and windows and doors are in. HVAC units, sprinklers, and light fixtures are up and running, and carpet now lines the hallways and offices. Compact storage units are installed and will soon hold the artifact collection being moved into the two vaults. The ground in front of the building has been finished with a large concrete slab which will make deliveries much cleaner!

The green roof has also seen dramatic changes. The yellow waterproofing membrane, two layers of blue foam insulation, and a black drainage layer were laid to help keep the interior of the building dry and insulated. The growing medium, which consists of sand, small pebbles, dirt, and compost, is already green and

dotted with many plants. The sidewalk has been added, and soon signage will be installed telling visitors about the many plants found on the roof.

With the help of interns, collections will be moved into the building and settled by late fall.



02



03



Article by
Angela Stanford

01. Pouring the roof The pump truck arm stretches across the rooftop to reach the east end near the existing building. **02. Framing and insulation** Foam insulation is installed along the walls, and metal framing begins to divide the interior into rooms. **03. Green roof** The first of the plants are in place, along with the rock border along the outer walls.



outdoor fitness equipment in the jens jensen prairie landscape park

Nine pieces of Danish outdoor fitness equipment were installed in the Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park late last fall. The powder-coated steel stations are designed in the Scandinavian style – that is, simple and attractive while having excellent functionality.

The equipment is intuitive and can be used by people of all ages and fitness levels. The different types of equipment in the park provide the public with a complete way to train and maintain the body. Stations cover endurance, strength, flexibility, and balance. Funding for this project was made possible by grants from Iowa Great Places, Shelby County

Community Foundation and the Shelby County Health Foundation.

The equipment was purchased from motionUSA, a company that has served the park and recreation industry since 2006 when they began a partnership with Norwell, the Danish manufacturer of the equipment.

A free iPhone app called “Norwell” is available that helps people find the park and shows them what pieces of equipment we have. It also has videos that demonstrate ways to use each piece of equipment and has an activity tracker to help the person train effectively. After the person has completed their workout

(it can hardly be called “work” when it is this fun!), he or she can share on social media with their friends! Apps for other platforms are being developed.

So, why place fitness equipment in a prairie restoration park? Jens Jensen, a Danish immigrant, was one of America’s greatest landscape designers in the early 20th century. Best known for his designs for the Chicago Park System, Jensen was also an advocate for all people to have access to natural environments and outdoor recreation. He disliked straight lines in park design, and there are no straight lines in the Danish-designed fitness stations!



**Article by
Nicky Christensen**

Naming Opportunities Honor your family or a loved one with a lasting contribution to a project listed here:
Shrubs\$500
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Bench or Picnic Table (metal) ..\$2,500
Exercise Equipment Sign.....\$5,000
Park Interpretative Sign.....\$10,000
East Council Ring.....\$25,000

nude vases, cubist faces: modernism at rookwood pottery

ON VIEW NOW UNTIL NOVEMBER 9 AT THE MUSEUM OF DANISH AMERICA, THIS EXHIBITION SHOWCASES MODERN ART FROM ROOKWOOD POTTERY IN CINCINNATI, OHIO BY FOCUSING ON THE WORK OF ITS MOST FLAMBOYANT ARTISTS.

The works presented, from the collection of Riley Humler and Annie Bauer, are by some of Rookwood's best-known decorators—Elizabeth Barrett, Lorinda Epply, Jens Jensen, Wilhelmine Rehm, Sara Sax, and Harriet E. Wilcox.

The Dubuque Museum of Art in Dubuque, Iowa will host the exhibit from December 13, 2014 to March 1, 2015. This exhibit was funded in part with a grant from the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Situated atop Mount Adams, Rookwood was arguably the most successful American art pottery this country has ever seen because of its experimental designs and exceptionally fine glazes. **01** Founded in 1880 by Maria Longworth Nichols, Rookwood received awards at the most prestigious international exhibitions during the late 1800s and through the turn of the last century. The company was integral to the development of Arts & Crafts in America and set the standard for excellence in many areas of pottery design and production. When Rookwood shifted production from ceramic to porcelain in 1915, it inaugurated a new era in art pottery. The company's advertising promoted this innovation as a "new" discovery: "It represents, as usual, years of chemical research and kiln trials, and the study of old porcelain, particularly certain varieties of old Chinese [porcelain]." **02** Since both soft- and hard-paste



Essay by Annemarie Sawkins, Ph.D.
Guest Exhibition Curator

01. Rookwood Pottery *Courtesy of the Cincinnati Museum Center*

Rookwood opened in its new headquarters on January 16, 1892. The Tudor Revival style building designed by Henry Neill Wilson with its garden intentionally resembles an over-sized house, or as described by Anita J. Ellis "a quaint, inviting cottage industry rather than an industrial factory." This and the company motto "an artist's studio, not a factory" was part of the marketing of Rookwood.

02. Soft Porcelain (Cincinnati: Rookwood Pottery Company, 1915), n.p.



porcelain are fired at a higher temperature than stoneware, it became possible to introduce an array of colorful porcelain-compatible glazes having novel surface effects. The soft-paste porcelain adopted at Rookwood “engendered new technical and aesthetic possibilities for decoration” **03** that allowed the company to grow.

By the 1920s, Rookwood employed around two hundred artisans and had become a destination for several thousand visitors a year. While some visitors came to buy art pottery from the showroom, others, including many school groups, toured the facilities. As tastes changed from Victorian to modern, Rookwood had to be innovative and respond to trends in the art market. To meet the increased demand for variety, the artists at Rookwood created unique designs “more diverse and eclectic during the 1920s than at any other time in Rookwood’s history.” **04** This is also true of the

thirties and early 1940s because of the company’s designers.

There was enormous talent and individuality among the decorators at Rookwood. **05** The Japanese artist Kataro Shirayamadani joined the company in 1887. Lorinda Epply, a noted textile artist, worked at Rookwood from 1905 until 1948. In 1927, the decorating department hired the Danish artist Jens Jensen. These artists, among others, brought fresh perspectives to the company. Jens Jensen, in particular, was less conservative than his colleagues when it came to new designs. According to the scholar Kenneth R. Trapp, author of *Toward the Modern Style: Rookwood Pottery, the Later Years: 1915–1950*: “Jensen, an artist of considerable talent, inspired Rookwood with the modernism of European painting. Above all other decorators at Rookwood in the Modern Period, Jensen’s art is unique; no effort is needed to identify his hand [or style].” **06** While this was

largely due to his character, it is also perhaps because of his Scandinavian background and education.

Jens Jacob Herring Krog Jensen was born in Assens, Denmark, in 1898. He was the first of seven children and educated at two of the oldest *folkehøjskoler*, or folk high schools, in Denmark. Between 1913 and 1918, Jensen attended Ryslinge and Askov Højskole, founded in 1851 and 1865, respectively. At these schools, where the emphasis was on the arts, music, philosophy, and personal enlightenment along with *gymnastik*, or sports, Jensen was able to pursue his interest in painting and drawing.

Uninspired by the state of the arts in Denmark, Jensen immigrated to New York in 1927 and then moved to Cincinnati because he had heard that there was a large population of Danes there, which turned out not to be the case. Many of the decorators at Rookwood trained locally at the Art Academy of Cincinnati, the school of the Cincinnati Art Museum. Jensen, on the other hand, was unique. Raised in Denmark, his perspective on the world, and on art, was naturally different. He brought a passion for European Modernism to Rookwood, admired the work of Matisse, Rouault, and Picasso along with the German Expressionists and was influenced by contemporary ceramicists, such as André Metthey and René Buthaud. Jensen, who had no trouble with the English language, had his own collection of books on various subjects including science, philosophy, and, of course, art history.

03. Nancy E. Owens. *Rookwood Pottery at the Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Gerald and Virginia Gordon Collection* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2003), 82. **04.** *Ibid.* **05. Decorating staff** The Rookwood decorating staff reassembled in 1943 with Director John D. Wareham (seated). Standing from l to r: Loretta Holtkamp, Wilhelmine Rehm, Edward T. Hurley, Lorinda Epply, Kataro Shirayamadani, Margaret Helen McDonald, Jens Jensen, and Elizabeth Barrett Jensen. *Courtesy of the Cincinnati Museum Center* **06.** Kenneth R. Trapp. *Toward the Modern Style: Rookwood Pottery, the Later Years: 1915–1950* (New York: By-Art Lithographers, 1983), 20.

Like Jensen, Rookwood artists made a point of being aware of new directions in art. They took advantage of the company's library of international publications, and regularly visited the Cincinnati Art Museum. As a group, they were interested in the work of their overseas colleagues, and followed contemporary ceramics. After World War I, Rookwood artists began exploiting the decorative potential of natural forms, rather than staying true to nature as they had earlier in the company's history. They were not only curious and aware of current and historical styles of art, they were avant-garde artists crafting a new Rookwood style. As a matter of fact, Barrett, Epply, and Sax produced some of the company's finest and earliest Art Deco motifs even before the Paris Exposition of 1925. Jens Jensen reintroduced the nude as a theme on Rookwood pottery and created some of the company's more distinctive wares. He described himself as the "only [art] potter at

Rookwood" because others "saw surface, not form," **01** while he liked to relate his designs to the contour of each vessel.

Given the opportunity at Rookwood, top decorators explored novel techniques. Sara Sax mastered the art of combining mat and gloss glazes in 1921, and continued to create exquisite designs until she left in 1931. Lorinda Epply and Wilhelmine Rehm excelled at using the distinct glaze line known as Butterfat, which added a curdled, greasy, or semi-translucent appearance to each vessel. Jens Jensen and Elizabeth Barrett, who married in 1931, also experimented with the heavy slips, or glazes, referred to as Wax Mat and Butterfat. They varied the thickness of these using squeeze bags with different-sized openings, which resulted in more three-dimensional finishes.

Though defined by its artists, Rookwood could be a demanding place to work. Despite this, or

perhaps because of it, there was camaraderie and a sense of accomplishment when some lots were fired. Decorators shared ideas and supported one another in their efforts. The slogan used by management describing Rookwood as an "artist's studio and not a factory," however, was an idea not always shared by employees. While individualism was touted, Jensen's depictions of nudes were not always well received by management, which focused on the salability of the company's wares. Jensen's advantage was being prolific, sometimes painting over fifteen pieces a day, **02** a fact that made him valuable particularly when production was slowed because of the economy.

Nude Vases, Cubist Faces: Modernism at Rookwood Pottery presents Rookwood porcelain produced between 1927 and 1944. These were difficult years. Changing tastes meant that the company was searching



01. Jens Jensen as quoted in Owen Findsen's "From Denmark to Closson's," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12 April 1970. **02.** Lisa M. Wienckzkowski. *Jens Jensen and the Creative Realm Beyond Rookwood: The Transition from Pottery decoration to Painting*. MA Thesis. (University of Cincinnati, 1998): 1. **03.** Elizabeth Barrett (American, 1903–1987) *Vase with Women and Birds*, 1934. Porcelain with wax mat glaze, 4 3/4 x 4 1/2 in. Collection of Riley Humler and Annie Bauer. **04.** Jens Jensen (Danish-American, 1898–1978) *Vase with Seven Nudes*, 1933. Decorated porcelain 6 3/8 x 4 in. Collection of Riley Humler and Annie Bauer.

continually for the right designs and styles. Though Cincinnati fared better than other cities, the economy was depressed after the stock market crash of 1929, and Rookwood was forced to lay off the majority of its decorators starting in 1931. Though the staff was reduced, design opportunities still existed. Artists Jensen and Barrett revived and redefined the art of painting faces and figures on porcelain bodies. **03** In the 1930s, Jensen painted vases with dancing nudes and Rubenesque figures in what became his signature style. **04 - 05**

As evidenced in the exhibition, Rookwood decorators broadened their repertoire through the 1940s, creating modern pieces distinctly different from anything produced at Rookwood before or afterward, not to mention works of art which cannot be replicated today because of the toxicity of the materials used to create them. Despite their best efforts, the faltering economy, the public's

waning interest in art pottery, and the lack of sales led to the eventual closure of Rookwood in 1967.

After leaving Rookwood in 1948, the Jensens moved to a 136-year-old stone house in Ripley, Ohio, where they opened a small pottery called *Gamtofte*, which may come from the Danish words *gammel* or *gamle* meaning old, and *toft*, meaning an enclosure or field for horses. Gamtofte is also the name of "a small and picturesque village on Fyn (Denmark), not far from where Jensen was born."

06 It was here that Jens Jensen produced the majority of his paintings, shown in this exhibition courtesy of the Phyllis Weston Gallery, Cincinnati. According to the artist's great nephew Peter Murnaghan, Jensen, who was "a tall, lean, quick moving and intense individual with rugged features and darting eyes . . . became compulsive." **07** In fact, Jensen's paintings continued to explore the same themes he had incorporated in his work at

Rookwood – portraits, nudes, and animals.

As he aged, Jens Jensen became an even greater master of color and abstraction. When working on paper with paint thinned by turpentine, he did not have to wait for his creations to be fired to see the rich colors and bold shapes he had chosen. His portraits, most often of women, are the work of a true Modernist, interested in capturing traditional subjects in the most progressive ways possible. **08** According to gallery director Daniel Couturier, "The strength of Jensen's painting comes from a keen sense of creating shapes with an economy of line (which he perfected during his years at Rookwood), the use of very bold and balanced colors, and subject matter that [is] both familiar in form and captivating in expression." **09** His paintings, like his art pottery, reveal a creative intuition and confidence, which is why his work continues to be admired.



05



08

05. Jens Jensen *Vase with Three Nudes*, 1931. Decorated porcelain, 7 3/8 x 6 1/2 in. Collection of Riley Humler and Annie Bauer. **06.** Lisa M.W. Eldred. *Jens Jensen: A Rookwood Modernist Paints* (Muskegon, MI.: Muskegon Museum of Art, 2004) n.p. **07.** Peter P. Murnaghan. "Jens Jensen: An Artist Remembered 1898–1978" in *Modernist Visions: Jens Jensen (1898–1978)*, (Cincinnati: A.B. Closson Jr., Co., 1993), n.p. **08. Jens Jensen** *Untitled*. Oil and mixed media on paper, 26 x 20 in. Phyllis Weston Gallery, Cincinnati. **09.** Daniel Couturier. "Introduction," *The Paintings of Jens Jensen*, (Los Angeles: Couturier Gallery, 1988), n.p.

summer festival fun

Sixteen contestants ages 4-12 tried their luck and skill at the Museum of Danish America's *ringridning* bicycle competition during Tivoli Fest on Saturday, May 24, and six were rewarded for their impressive displays of accuracy.

Ringridning is a traditional Danish sport most alive in Sønderborg in Southern Denmark. Sønderborg is home to Sønderborg Castle, which likely began as a fortified tower constructed by Valdemar the Great in 1158. Like knights in medieval times, ringridning lets competitors participate in a jousting-like activity where riders (on bicycles, in this instance, but usually on horseback) charge down an alley through the "gallows" and aim to spear a small metal ring on a lance. Riders are given four tries, with the ring becoming progressively smaller. Each ring is worth a certain amount of points, and the rider with the most points wins.

Also part of the competition was a prize for the Best Decorated Bicycle, as determined by a panel of judges. All participants enjoyed ice cream cones afterward.

An "unofficial" competition was reprised during Sankt Hans Aften, open to both children and adults. Let it be known that our Executive Director, John Mark Nielsen, is a force to be reckoned with.

OTHER TIVOLI FEST ACTIVITIES

Attendance was over-the-top for all aspects of Tivoli Fest. We saw our highest numbers since 2002.

Free admission at the museum, Genealogy Center, and Bedstemor's House was well received. The interns participated in the parade and placed second in the Tivoli Feud competition. Previous Danish intern Anne Mette Ravn Nielsen even made it back to the U.S. with her family to help with all of the fun!

SANKT HANS AFTEN was also well-attended. Thanks to the event's co-sponsors, Danish Brotherhood in America Lodge #15 (Des Moines, Iowa), Marne Elk Horn Telephone Company, Shelby County State Bank, and the Heartland Chapter of the Rebild National Park Society, we were able to have several activities during the evening.

Hot dog roasting was done in the large council ring with Danish-style toppings. Local old-time country music artists brought their instruments and families to provide a folksy musical backdrop, and the new, award-winning documentary by Carey Lundin, "Jens Jensen—The Living Green," was shown in the Bro Dining Room. The large bonfire was lit around sundown, but was outlasted by the council ring fire which was enjoyed late into the night with music and s'mores.



Article by
Nicky Christensen

01. Ringridning With many festive touches including red and white paper streamers interwoven between the spokes of her tires and along the bicycle's frame, several Danish flags, and red and white playing cards on the spokes, Mollie Rasmussen received this award for her spirited efforts. **02. Sankt Hans Aften** Local musicians and their families stayed late to enjoy the *hyggeligt* atmosphere.

upcoming events

Labor Day and the final day to view “Schleswig-Holstein: Turmoil on the Danish-German Border” at the Museum of Danish America

September 1
Open Noon to 5 pm
This exhibit will be at the German American Heritage Center in Davenport, Iowa from October 5, 2014

Brown Bag Lunch: It Takes a Village to Raise a Hausbarn by Freda Dammann
September 18, Noon
Bro Dining Room

Brown Bag Lunch: Hans Christian Andersen by Tom Lundskær-Nielsen
September 25, Noon
Bro Dining Room

“Danish Children Growing up American”
September 27, 2014 -
April 14, 2015
The Kramme Gallery
(Mezzanine Level)

Brown Bag Lunch: Dr. Panum and Measles in the Faroe Islands
by Craig Molgaard
October 16, Noon
Bro Dining Room

Museum of Danish America Board Meeting and Annual Meeting

October 16-18
Elk Horn, Iowa

Final day to view “Nude Vases, Cubist Faces: Modernism at Rookwood Pottery” at the Museum of Danish America

November 9
This exhibit will be at the Dubuque Museum of Art in Dubuque, Iowa December 13, 2014-March 1, 2015

Brown Bag Lunch: Comparing Danish-American and Navajo Childhood
by Wanda Sornson
November 13, Noon
Bro Dining Room

Museum closed for Thanksgiving
November 27

“Photography by Diana Velasco: Two Nationalities”
November 28, 2014 -
March 15, 2015
Main Floor Gallery

Julefest
November 28-29

Brown Bag Lunch: Christmas Hygge
December 11, Noon
Bro Dining Room

MUSEUM VISITOR HOURS

Monday-Friday 9 am – 5 pm
Saturday 10 am – 5 pm
Sunday Noon – 5 pm

Business hours are
Monday-Friday 8 am – 5 pm

GENEALOGY CENTER

4210 Main Street, PO Box 249

May-October

Tuesday-Friday 9 am – 5 pm
Saturdays 10 am – 5 pm

November-April

Tuesday-Friday 10 am – 4 pm

Research assistance appointments welcomed to 712.764.7008.

BEDSTEMOR’S HOUSE

2105 College Street
Memorial Day – Labor Day
1 pm – 4 pm

ADMISSION

Museum members FREE
with membership card
Non-member Adults \$5
Children (ages 8-17) \$2

Price includes one-day admission to Jens Dixen Cabin, Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park, Genealogy Center, and Bedstemor’s House.

All facilities are closed on New Years, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

ENMITY DID NOT ALWAYS EXIST BETWEEN DANES AND GERMANS IN THE 19TH CENTURY. MANY FAMILIES WERE OF MIXED HERITAGE, AS WAS THE CASE WITH THE NIEMANN FAMILY OF DENMARK AND BENTON COUNTY, IOWA.

immigration and integration: a tale of three countries

Several months ago, museum supporter Molly Van Austen of Wilsonville, Oregon, submitted a photograph **01** of her ancestor for possible inclusion in this summer's Genealogy Center photograph exhibit about Danish immigrants who served in, or were affected by, the 1864 Dano-Prussian War. The photograph was taken in Helsingør at an unknown date in the studio of photographer Chr. Wismer. According to family stories, Carl Frederik Christian "Fritz" Niemann served in the Corps of Engineers during the conflict. Around 1878 he immigrated with his wife and

family to the Keystone area of Benton County, Iowa, where he worked as a railroad contractor. While many family photographs are in the possession of descendants, very little was known about the family's history prior to its immigration to the U.S. Research was undertaken to learn more about this history and to ascertain Niemann's participation in the war. Piecing together the story involved historians, genealogists, and museum and historical society researchers in three countries, and in the process, shed light on a bi-cultural family that lived during the eventful and tumultuous period of mid-19th-century Denmark.

For centuries, men from German-speaking countries had relocated to Denmark for longer or shorter periods of time. Some were itinerant peddlers, some skilled journeymen *på valsen* who came north as part of their wandering to various localities to pick up experience in their trades; others were among the many who had signed up as mercenary soldiers serving in the Danish army prior to the advent of national military conscription. Not infrequently, such a migrant might meet a comely Danish woman and decide to settle down in Denmark to pursue a trade or after retiring

from military service. This is one reason for the large number of German surnames found in Denmark.

In 1847 Denmark's first railroad line was opened, running from Copenhagen to Roskilde. In the mid-1850s the rail network of the "Roskilde line" was extended outwards to the west Zealand coastal town of Korsør. This endeavor drew both skilled and unskilled workers from other countries to the project and their presence may be seen in contemporary church and census records in the area. Sometime prior to 1855, Mecklenburg-born Carl Frederik Christian (CFC) Niemann, along with his brother, Johann Friederich Heinrich Niemann, joined the flow to Denmark to work on the railroad, which reached Korsør in 1856. Their experience was apparently not all work and no play, however, for on May 11, 1855 "work crew foreman" [CFC] Niemann wed 19-year-old Christiane Hansen in Vemmelev parish, just outside Slagelse. **02** This record, which stated that he was born in Garlitz, Lubtheen district in Mecklenburg-Schwerin on September 27, 1825, is currently the first known record of his presence in Denmark. **03** Following their marriage the couple settled in Slagelse, where



Article by
Michele McNabb

01. Carl Friederich Christian Niemann Photograph purportedly taken during his military service in the 1864 Dano-Prussian War. **02.** Eighteen months later, CFC's brother, railroad worker Johan Friederich Heinrich Niemann (born in Garlitz, Mecklenburg, on October 28, 1832), wed another Vemmelev girl, Kirstine Olsen, with his brother as bondsman. JFH Niemann settled down as a farmer, raised a family, and remained a parish resident for the rest of his life.

their first two children were born in 1856 and 1857. The following year the family moved to Korsør, where two more children were born and the household was enumerated in the 1860 census.

Based on the birth-places of the next children, the family moved frequently, residing in Aarslev parish in Aarhus County in 1861 and the town of Kolding from 1863 to 1865 before setting up housekeeping in the large market town of Vejle in 1866. The birth and baptismal entries for all of the children give CFC Niemann's occupation as a railroad contractor (*jernbane entrepreneur*) or foreman (*sjakmester*). The Jutland rail line south to Vejle was completed in 1868 on its way to Fredericia, and it appears likely that CFC Niemann was involved in its construction. For nearly a decade the Niemanns led a settled life in Vejle, renting an apartment in the front building of Søndergade 121. There Christiane and her children, along with two maidservants, were enumerated in the 1870 census; the absence of her contractor husband, reported as having been in Siebenbürgen in present-day Romania for a period of time, was noted.

By 1875 Christiane had given birth at least fifteen times within

a span of eighteen years. **04** The family consisted of the following children:

1. Hedevig Sofie Victoria Niemann, born St. Peder's parish, Slagelse, Sorø Co., 21 April 1856
2. Hans Carl Fritz Niemann, born St. Mikkel's parish, Slagelse, Sorø Co., 12 June 1857
3. Christine Marie Victoria Niemann, born St. Poul's parish, Korsør, Sorø Co., 17 November 1858
4. Carl Robert Niemann, born St. Poul's parish, Korsør, Sorø Co., 15 December 1859
5. Rosa Niemann, born Aarslev parish, Aarhus Co., 14 January 1861
6. Alfred Niemann, born St. Nikolai parish, Kolding, Vejle Co., 7 July 1863, d. there 8 August 1863
7. Helga Camilla Alexandra Niemann, St. Nikolai parish, Kolding, Vejle Co., 25 June 1864
8. Alfred Waldemar Niemann, born St. Nikolai parish, Kolding, Vejle Co., 18 August 1865

9. Viggo Christian Niemann, born Vejle, Vejle Co., 26 December 1866
10. Dagmar Marie Niemann¹, born Vejle, Vejle Co., 26 December 1867, d. there 6 May 1868
11. Vilhelm Victor Niemann, born Vejle, Vejle Co., 4 May 1869
12. Dagmar Marie Niemann, born Vejle, Vejle Co., 18 September 1870
13. Adolph Einar Carl Niemann, born Vejle, Vejle Co., 23 October 1871
14. Hans Oluf Edvard Niemann, born Vejle, Vejle Co. 15 December 1872, d. there 2 December 1873
15. Olga Stella Niemann, born Vejle, Vejle Co., 6 February 1874

Did CFC Niemann participate in the 1864 Dano-Prussian War? Given his marriage to a Danish woman and his continued residence in Denmark after the war, it is highly unlikely that he would have been on the German side. Family stories indicated that he served in the Danish army as an engineer and his railroad-building background would support a technical

03. The two brothers were the sons of Carl Dethleff Niemann and wife, Catherine Ham(m)an, who were living in Garlitz in the 1819 Mecklenburg census. **04.** In the 1900 Benton Co. Iowa census Christiane reported having had 17 children, 12 of whom were still living. ▶

CFC and Christiane Niemann remained in Benton County, but must have been fairly well off, since they and a large number of relatives visited Salt Lake City around 1900. Two months after the couple celebrated their golden wedding anniversary, CFC Niemann passed away on July 3, 1905. Christiane later moved to live with her son Carl in Chicago, where she died on January 18, 1913. Descendants at the time of her death included 11 living children, 34 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

Judging from appearances, this immigrant family from Denmark identified themselves as German. They were likely surrounded by relatives and others from Mecklenburg, they attended the German Lutheran Church in Keystone, and their tombstone

inscription in the Keystone Cemetery is in German. Most of the Niemann children married into German immigrant families such as Holst, Wullstein and Lodtz, and left Iowa for western locations. And yet, CFC Niemann could not have functioned in Denmark for so many years without learning Danish, and it's likely that all of the Niemann children were bi-lingual. Inscriptions on some family photographs are written in Danish. Additional proof that their Danish roots were not completely absorbed by their German-American surroundings is evidenced by an advertisement placed in the *Vinton Semi-Weekly Eagle* on April 20, 1883: "Situation Wanted: As salesman in a store, by a young man who has several years experience in the general mercantile business, well educated; can speak English,

German and Danish... Good recommendations can be given. Further information given by F. Niemann, Keystone, Iowa."

Were the Niemanns German-Americans, Danish-Americans or both? Like the question of whether CFC Niemann was a military veteran or not, the question remains open to debate!

Thanks should be extended to the following individuals for kind assistance in piecing together the Niemann family history: Molly Van Austen; Erik Østergaard, researcher extraordinaire; various respondents to the Slægtogdata.dk query page; Erik Dam, Niemann family genealogist in Denmark; professional genealogists Jørgen Green, Copenhagen, and Heiko Klatt, Berlin; Martha Long of the Benton County Historical Society; and numerous archivists and museum staff or volunteers in Denmark.



03. Arrival 1878 Christiane "Newmann" and seven of her children emigrated to Iowa via Liverpool and Quebec. **04.** The family's eldest son, Hans Carl Fritz Niemann, appears to have made a trip to the US in 1887. Whether it was for a visit or permanent stay is currently unexplored. **05. The Niemann family in Benton Co., Iowa** Back row: Adolph Einar, Wilhelm Victor, Alfred, Dagmar Marie, Carl Robert, Rosa. Front row: Olga Stella, Fred Jr., Hedwig or Victoria, CFC and Christiane, Viggo Christian, Victoria or Hedwig.

peder pedersen kjeldgaard

(1839 - AFTER 1893)

Peder Pedersen Kjeldgaard, *pictured left*, was the third generation carrying the same name. He was born in one of several localities named Bonderup in northern Jutland. The family name was originally the patronymic “Christensen,” but Peder’s paternal grandfather lived on a farm with a spring (*kilde*) and adopted the descriptive name of the farm as his family’s surname. According to a

descendant’s compilation, Peder Pedersen Kjeldgaard served in the 1864 War. He and his wife, Anna Kathrine Jensen Busk, had at least nine children. The family immigrated to western Iowa in 1887 and left numerous descendants using various spellings of the family’s adopted surname: Kelgor, Keldgard, and Kjeldgaard. (*Kjeldgaard family from Denmark and Kelgors from Iowa, Genealogy Center collection*)



veterans of 1864

The Genealogy Center’s summer photo exhibit, **Veterans of ’64**, will be on display in the lobby through the end of October. In addition to photographs and account of soldiers who served in the war or whose families were affected by the conflict and its aftermath, the display has a listing of the names of nearly 1,400 immigrants who were veterans and still living 50 years afterwards. If you would like to add a veteran or additional information to our files, a form may be downloaded from the museum website. See Library & Genealogy > Photo Gallery.

genealogy center wish list

We are always looking for additions to the Genealogy Center Collection. Our listing of “most wanted” titles in both Danish and English may be found on the museum website under Library & Genealogy > Donations and Wish List. We welcome donations of or toward these materials, but since this list changes frequently, please contact us at librarian@danishmuseum.org before purchasing or sending items so that we may avoid duplicate donations.

of genealogical interest

Interested in unique genealogy resources, curated by a professional genealogist? See Library & Genealogy > Genealogy Links to find this summer’s compilation of interesting and helpful links, notes, and more.

News by
Michele McNabb

new additions to the wall of honor

FEBRUARY 15, 2014 – JUNE 23, 2014

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. The information below includes

the immigrant names, year of immigration, location where they settled and the name and city of the donor.

PEDER (BRODERSEN) BROTHERSON (1869) Tahiti, French Polynesia – Richard, Aldo, and Rexford Brotherson, Tahiti, French Polynesia

JENNIE DAGMAR NIELSEN (1905) Shafer, Minnesota – Michael W. Garey, Hovland, MN

JOHN PETER PETERSON (1890) Bismarck, North Dakota – Larry Peterson, Grove City, OH; Marilyn Score, Boyceville, WI

LARS PETER PETERSON (1890) Milltown, Wisconsin – Larry Peterson, Grove City, OH; Marilyn Score, Boyceville, WI

ANNA JENSINE PETERSON JENSEN (1890) Milltown, Wisconsin – Larry Peterson, Grove City, OH; Marilyn Score, Boyceville, WI

in honor

FEBRUARY 15, 2014 – JUNE 23, 2014

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

Andersen Family
Irena Svendsen Christensen
Elk Horn-Kimballton High School
Class of 1964

Dorothy Stads vold Feisel's
Birthday
Isabel Hoegh
Laursen Family
Dr. John Mark Nielsen
Alice Lauritzen Sittler's 70th
Birthday
Knud & Lucia Westergaard



By
Debra Christensen Larsen

You, too, can memorialize your name or an ancestor's on the Danish Immigrant Wall of Honor. Contact us to request information, or print a form from www.danishmuseum.org/wall-of-honor.cfm and submit with a contribution of \$250 per name.

memorials

FEBRUARY 15, 2014 – JUNE 23, 2014

Through various funds, gifts have been received in memory of

Lorrayne K. Andersen
Maynard F. Andersen
A. P. Andersen, Great Falls, MT
Ingeborg Beyer, Aurora, NE
Astrid Andersen Van Nordstrand
Brewer
Axel & Marie Christensen
Kjer Christensen
my father George Clausen bn.
2-26-1897
Glen Clemesen
Ralph Doonan
Elk Horn-Kimballton High School
Class of 1964
Deceased Graduates of the Elk
Horn-Kimballton Class of 1964
Orville & Amber Esbeck
Millie Eskov
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Betty Hansen
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Clarence Klein, Elk Horn, Iowa
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Christen Moeller Sweningsen
Edna Swihart
Paul Thuesen
Neils (Nels) Peterson Toft
Dolores Walker
Chris, Godfrey, Niels, and Nina
Werner
Mary (Mert) Yackle

new members

FEBRUARY 15, 2014 – JUNE 23, 2014

The Museum of Danish America is pleased to identify the following 59 individuals and organizations as its newest members:

Ron & Diane Andersen, Council Bluffs, IA
Bruce & Joyce Arant, Omaha, NE
Peterson Brink, Omaha, NE
Aldo, Richard & Odette Brotherson, Tahiti, French Polynesia
Marcia Buboltz, Lewis, IA
James Burke, Tigard, OR
Ronald & Margaret Carlson, Sauk Centre, MN
Jens & Nyla Christensen, Rapid City, SD
Paul & Gloria Christensen, Columbia Heights, MN
Joe & Susan Dale, Red Oak, TX
Larry & Janis Fajen, Elk Horn, IA
Anne Fege, San Diego, CA
Marian Froker, Exira, IA
James & Sareta Brix Gregory, Las Cruces, NM
Usama Hajj, San Francisco, CA
Linda Hansen, Exira, IA
Mark & Joann Hendrickson, Wausau, WI
Shawn & Rebecca Hunt, Des Moines, IA
Robert Jennings, Muskegon, MI

Gary & Lizbeth Johnson, Bemidji, MN
Jim & Elaine Hansen-Kinchen, Volcano, CA
Danish Crown USA (Stig Kjaeroe), Cranford, NJ
Glenn Larsen, Solway, MN
Rodney Larsen, Kingaroy, Queensland, Australia
Steven & Linda Marquesen, Bakersfield, CA
John Vogt Masengarb, West St. Paul, MN
Philip Mohr, Mt Prospect, IL
Gitte Mortensen, Vordingborg, Denmark
Charles Palmer, Jefferson City, MO
David & Ruth Petersen, Colorado Springs, CO
Larry & Marilyn Peterson, Grove City, OH
Ove Rasmussen, Kyle, TX
David & Peggy Ross, Omaha, NE
Janet Schroeder, Cedar Rapids, IA
Nola Schroeder, Cedar Rapids, IA
Marilyn Score, Boyceville, WI
Robert & Nerita Sorensen, Walnut, IA
Judith Stalnaker, Denver, CO
Agnete Temali, Shoreview, MN
Nick Temali, Mahtomedi, MN

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thank you, organizations

FEBRUARY 14, 2014 – JUNE 23, 2014

These organizations have received “complimentary” memberships or contributed gift-in-kind or 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
BIEN Publishing Inc. (René Gross Kærskov, Publisher), Pacific Palisades, CA
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
The Danish American Archive and Library, Blair, NE
Danish American Club in Orange County, Huntington Beach, CA area
Danish American Club of Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI area
Danish American Heritage Society, Decorah, IA
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #1, Omaha, NE
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #14, Kenosha, WI
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #15, Des Moines, IA

Danish Brotherhood Lodge #16, Minden, NE
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #56, Lenexa, KS
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #84, Lincoln, NE
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #268, Junction City, OR
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #283, Dagmar, MT
DBIA, Centennial Lodge #348, Eugene, OR
Danish Crown USA (Stig Kjæroe), Cranford, NJ
The Danish Home, Chicago, IL
Danish Home for the Aged, Croton-On-Hudson, NY
Danish Ladies Relief Society of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA area
Danish Mutual Insurance Association, Elk Horn, IA
Danish Sisterhood Ellen Lodge #21, Denver, CO
Danish Sisterhood Lodge #102, Des Moines, IA
Den Danske Pioneer (Elsa Steffensen & Linda Steffensen), Hoffman Estates, IL
Elk Horn Lutheran Church, Elk Horn, IA
Elk Horn-Kimballton Optimist Club, Elk Horn, IA
Exira-Elk Horn-Kimballton Community School District, Elk Horn, IA
Faith, Family, Freedom Foundation (Kenneth & Marlene Larsen), Calistoga, CA
Fajen Construction (Larry Fajen), Elk Horn, IA
Furniture from Scandinavia, Washington, DC
Hall Hudson, P.C. (Robert Hall), Attorneys at Law, Harlan, IA

Hansen Interiors (Torben & Bridget Ovesen), Mount Pleasant, WI
Harlan Newspapers (Steve Mores & Alan Mores), Harlan, IA
Heartland District of the DBIA, Des Moines, IA area
Heartland District of the Danish Sisterhood, Des Moines, IA area
Henningsen Construction, Inc., Atlantic, IA
House of Denmark, San Diego, CA
Kirsten’s Danish Bakery (Paul & Kirsten Jepsen), Burr Ridge, IL
Knudsen Old Timers, Yorba Linda, CA
Leman USA (Steen Sanderhoff), Sturtevant, WI
Los Angeles Naver Club, Los Angeles, CA area
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
Pacific NW District Lodges D.B.I.A., Eugene, OR area
Proongily (Cynthia McKeen), St. Paul, MN
The Rasmussen Group, Inc., Des Moines, IA
Raymond James (Consul John Larsen & Jillian Larsen), Scottsdale, AZ
Rebild National Park Society, Southern California Chapter, Los Angeles, CA area
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
Symra Literary Society, Decorah, IA
Story Construction Co., Ames, IA
The Vault Antiques (David & Roshelle Thompson), Walnut, IA
TK Petersen (Thorvald K. Petersen), Santa Monica, CA

Did you know? Families, groups, clubs, or businesses can sponsor exhibits, events, free admission days, our website, Brown Bag Lunch programs, or the whole Brown Bag Lunch series! Contact us to discuss the possibilities that await you.

do you know a danish immigrant
or long-term resident?

Many Danes have immigrated to the US since WWII, participated in exchange student or internship programs or resided in this country for prolonged periods of time. We would like to have some information in our files on these more recent immigrants and shorter- or long-term residents.

A downloadable Immigrant Information Form may be found on the museum webpage under Library & Genealogy > Research & Translations > Danish Immigrants. Please feel free to distribute it to friends or at meetings of your local Danish-American organizations.

membership
expiration

Please note the date of your membership renewal appearing on the mailing label, near your name. All future America Letters **01** will include this information as a gentle reminder to our members.



Contributed
by Katrina
Schroeder

viking fiskesuppe

Serves 6-8

This recipe comes from the newly published book *Eat Smart in Denmark* (Ginkgo Press, 2014) written by Carol and Katrina Schroeder. **02** It dates back a thousand years and is courtesy of the Ribe VikingCenter, on the west coast of Jutland. Although the ingredient list specifies trout, the Vikings would sometimes have used cod, mackerel, or flat fish such as plaice, flounder, or dab.

DIRECTIONS

1. Melt the butter in a large pot. Add the onions and carrots and sauté for 2–3 minutes.
2. Add the water and bring to a boil. Leave to simmer until the vegetables are cooked al dente, then add the chervil, cress, spring onion, and cream.
3. Add the fish to the soup. Simmer over low heat until the fish is cooked and tender, approximately 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and serve with bread.

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons butter
5 onions, diced
5 carrots, diced
10 cups water
1 handful (about 1 cup) chopped chervil*
1 handful (about 1 cup) chopped garden cress
1 cup finely chopped spring onion (scallion)
1 cup heavy cream
2 pounds trout or other whitefish, cut into bite-sized pieces
Salt to taste

*Parsley may be substituted.

01. Want to receive this publication online instead of through the mail? E-mail media@danishmuseum.org to sign up to receive a link to future *America Letters* on Issuu.com. **02.** Read more about the book and this mother-daughter team in a recent column in the *Wisconsin State Journal*, available at <http://bit.ly/EatSmartWSJ>.



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