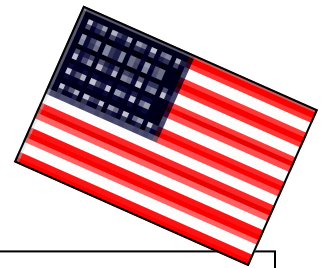


JOTTINGS



A publication of the Danish American Archive and Library

May – Dec. 2017

Identity and Community in the New World: The Genealogy of the Bondo Family

By Timothy A. Jensen, PhD



Elaine Hoyer of Blair, Nebraska, shows just part of her decades-long effort at collecting Bondo family history.

A new archival collection, quite unlike anything that the DAAL has seen before, now graces its shelves. It consists of thirty-eight large three-ring binders covering five shelves. These volumes are a genealogist's dream, tracing the identities, the histories, and the relationships of the Bondo family in Denmark and the USA from the 14th century right up to the present.

At the center of this genealogical encyclopedia is Elaine Hoyer. Over the past decades she has compiled, organized, and annotated information about the extended Bondo family. Since she herself is a Bondo and since it is curiosity about her own lineage that led her to this task, she stands at the center of the collection. One of the notebooks contains a document listing every person mentioned in this collection and describing their relationship to Elaine. Even in-laws are included. Thus, the inventory includes references such as "husband of the 2nd cousin once removed." She began gathering information in 1978 in preparation for one of the Bondo family's periodic reunions. Her work continues even today, although the emphasis now is on adding birth and death dates to existing records.

From another perspective the central narrative of this collection is expressed in the lives of Laurits Christian "L.C." Fog Bondo and Karen "Carrie" Henriksen Bondo. Their lives stand at the threshold between Denmark and the U.S., marking the end of one phase in the Bondo story and the beginning of another. In page after page there are genealogical charts and supporting documentation for L.C.'s Danish ancestors. Most of them lived and died in and around the small city of Svendborg. They tended to be

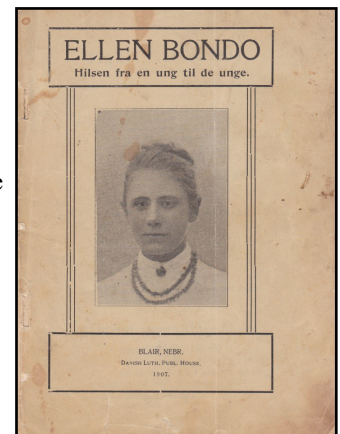
merchants, government employees, and, occasionally, clergy. L.C. and Carrie had ten children—five girls and five boys. Three of the boys, Henry, Willie and Sherman, became Lutheran ministers.

For L.C. and his seven siblings this pattern broke down in the middle of the 19th century, a time when Denmark was struggling with rapid change from absolute monarchy to liberal democracy. Some siblings moved to other places in Denmark, but L.C. and his brother Oluf Christian Simon took the larger step of immigrating to the U.S., settling initially in New York state and eventually moving to Pottawattamie County, Iowa. Not long thereafter Poul Bondo (nephew of L.C. and Oluf and son of Caspar Vilhelm Bondo) immigrated to the Pacific northwest. Oluf became a businessman in Council Bluffs, Iowa, and married a woman from Wales. This genealogical thread soon disappeared from the Bondo genealogy. The same is true for Poul and his descendants. For L.C., Carrie, and their descendants, however, the story was just beginning.

L.C. found work in Pottawattamie County as a hired hand for a prospering Danish American farmer, while at the same time Carrie Henriksen, a recent immigrant from northern Jutland, also found work there. The result was prophetic. L.C. and Carrie married, bought a little land and became farmers in their own right. L.C., it seems, had long dreamed of becoming a farmer, a yearning that may have been his primary motivation for coming to America. In Denmark he had attended the University of Copenhagen for two years as a possible prelude to becoming a pastor, but that had not satisfied him. L.C. had also studied at an agricultural school in Denmark, so his plans to become a farmer were not as quixotic as they might have seemed.

Carrie had her own remarkable story of coming to America. When her widowed mother and other members of her family converted to Mormonism and made plans to immigrate to Utah (a common experience in late 19th century Denmark), Carrie and her brother refused to accompany them. Six years later she was able to accompany other immigrants to the U.S., where ultimately she found her way to Pottawattamie County and to her future husband. Her adventures are recounted in a booklet entitled "Karen: A Forsaken Little Girl" that is among the many supporting documents that Elaine has located and included.

In America Carrie and L.C. were able to make that dream come true. Their prosperity as Iowa farmers became the stuff of legend, but it did not come quickly or easily. For their first Christmas together they could not afford a tree, so they had to be content with a



The collection contains booklets such as this one about Ellen Bondo.

(Continued on Page 8)

Victor Borge and Dana College, Part 1

by Ann (Harms) George

[This article, with a few minor changes, is reprinted from the Winter 2009 Dana Review, the college's alumni magazine.]

Victor Borge had played two benefit concerts for Dana College -- in 1976 and 1989 -- when President Myrvin Christopherson, his wife, Anne, special projects coordinator, and Phil Pagel, vice president for institutional advancement, visited him, in 1993, at his home in Greenwich, Connecticut.

At the end of Borge's 1989 performance, Christopherson had named him a "Great Dane of Dana College," a designation that honored the achievements and contributions of distinguished Danes and Danish-Americans. Instead of a plaque, recipients were given a replica of a Viking helmet -- and Borge immediately put his on.

He was in his music room rehearsing for a concert in his native Denmark when the Dana visitors arrived, and he greeted them at his grand piano wearing the helmet. When Christopherson said they were honored that he would wear it especially for them, Borge replied, "I never practice without it."

The three had a gift for Borge, a painting titled "Rescue of the Danish Jews," by Dana art professor Milt Heinrich.* He'd painted it after attending a conference with the same name held at Dana in 1990. "Borge was genuinely pleased to accept the painting and said it would be given a place of prominence in his study," Pagel recalled. He described the visit that followed as "one of the most enjoyable hours of my life -- we had a ball."

This warm relationship, which included a shared Danish heritage, had developed over more than two decades.

When Pagel was director of public relations (his first position at Dana), he proposed that the college give honorary doctor of music degrees to this country's best-known "Great Danes," Borge and heroic tenor Lauritz Melchior, with the stipulation that they visit the campus to receive them. In 1968 the faculty and regents approved the degrees for both men, and Melchior, who was retired, received his honorary doctorate that spring at Commencement.

With Borge it took longer. Although he was receptive when Pagel wrote to him, he had a full performance schedule, and finding a time for a campus visit was difficult. Years of letters and contact "by whatever means I could," followed, Pagel said.

Then in 1975 Borge called him at home, saying he'd just arrived in Des Moines, Iowa, for a concert. He invited Pagel to see the show as his guest and to have a late supper with him afterwards to talk about the possibility of a Dana appearance. "Naturally, I went," Pagel said.

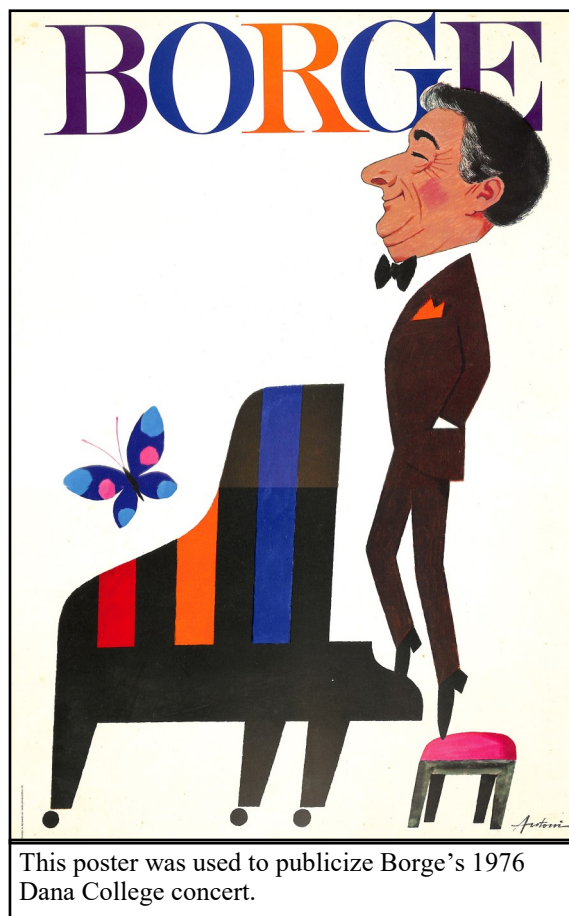
More phone calls and letters followed this meeting, and they agreed on a date in the fall of 1976 -- Sunday, October 17, a Homecoming weekend -- when Borge would receive an honorary doctorate and give a benefit concert, with the proceeds used to establish the Victor Borge Scholarship Fund. Scholarships from this fund would assist Danish students wanting to study at Dana, Dana students wanting to study in Denmark, and students who demonstrated special abilities and/or financial need.

A large audience, estimated at 3,000, attended the concert, which Borge called "Something Special for Dana," in the college's Borup Coliseum.

"The thing that struck me about that first appearance here was Borge's genuine interest in Dana and what kind of work we were doing," Pagel said, "and he gladly attended a luncheon in the Presidents Room for the regents, administration and faculty senate." His introduction to Dana also included a performance by the college's Folk Dancers in traditional Danish costumes, a campus tour with then President Earl Mezoff, and a visit to the library and its Danish Heritage Room.

After this concert, Pagel related, "our relationship continued and became more personal; we exchanged letters and greetings, he called occasionally when on tour in this area, and in every way kept the door open for future possibilities." **(To be continued in the next issue of Jottings.)**

**Because Borge was Jewish and because, as a young performer in Denmark, he directed satirical barbs at Hitler and the Nazis, he was threatened by members of a local Nazi organization. Although he was frightened, in a defiant response he worked up and performed even more anti-Nazi sketches. In 1940 he was performing in Sweden when Germany invaded Denmark, and he escaped to the U.S. from Finland on the last passenger ship to leave northern Europe during World War II.*



This poster was used to publicize Borge's 1976 Dana College concert.

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VISITORS: 267 visitors from Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont, Wisconsin, Denmark, France and Germany.

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The 50/100 Club was inspired by the idea that if 100 members give \$50 per month, most of our operating expenses would be met. Members give a minimum of \$600 per year (given monthly, quarterly, or yearly according to the donor's preference). Those at the Founder's Level give at least \$2,000 per year. 50/100 club members receive one donation acknowledgement for tax purposes in January reflecting a yearly total of all donations, rather than getting a separate acknowledgment for each financial contribution. These donations are part of the General Fund.

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AROUND THE ARCHIVE



Hans Christian Skeleton

◆ Every October the Chamber of Commerce in Blair holds a competition among local businesses for best scarecrow display. The DAAL created a typically Danish one this year—a skeleton stylishly attired in a Dana College sweatshirt and authentic Danish clogs. His knit cap mimics a Viking helmet with attached blonde braids. We dubbed him “Hans Christian Skeleton.” Sadly he didn’t win the prize, though.

◆ Cheyenne Jansdatter, the archival collections coordinator at the Museum of Danish America visited the DAAL on December 1. Cheyenne is a Dana College grad who is Danish on her father’s side. She grew up alternating between Denmark and New Mexico. She not only speaks fluent Danish, but also has an extensive background in several areas of library science. She says she is “excited to return to the Midwest and join a team of people who are so passionate about preserving Danish American history and culture.” It was a pleasure to host Cheyenne, and we look forward to working with her in the future.

◆ Last June, a group of volunteers from the DAAL visited the Oaks Indian Mission, located in Oaks, Oklahoma,

where they were celebrating the 125th anniversary of the date when members of the Danish Lutheran Church first supported the mission. As part of the festivities Mission alumni presented a beautiful commemorative blanket and other gifts to longtime Oaks volunteers Phil and Florence Hansen of Blair in gratitude for their more than 50 years of financial, spiritual and physical support, including Phil’s time serving on the mission’s board of directors.



Phil and Florence Larsen received a commemorative blanket in gratitude for their years of service to the Oaks Indian Mission.

- ◆ In light of changing tax laws in 2018, keep in mind that there are alternative ways to donate and still save on your taxes, such as (1) direct donations of IRA required minimum distributions and (2) gifts of stock. See your tax advisor for more information.
- ◆ The DAAL has donated 101 books to the University of Nebraska at Omaha library. Most of these books were published by the Danish Lutheran Publishing House which operated in Blair from the late 1800s to 1960. The donated books are duplicates of ones the DAAL already has in its library. This is part of our ongoing effort to eliminate multiple copies or materials that have no relation to Danish American history in order to free up shelf space and make searching for books and material more efficient. The UNO library intends to catalog the books and house them in the library’s special collections section. ■

Please accept our profound thanks for all of your support. Your contributions ensure that Danish American history is preserved for future generations.

Bondo (continued)

branch. It was so cold that first Christmas Eve that they huddled in bed rather than freeze beside that forlorn limb. Some years later L.C. and eight of their ten children contracted typhus (not to be confused with typhoid), making working around the farm next to impossible.

Even so, by the time of L.C.’s death in 1907 they farmed over 1,000 acres and were financially secure. L.C. had specified that a large endowment be given to Dana College to provide a home for Dana’s president or for other Dana faculty. Perhaps this gift reflected L.C.’s lifelong passion for learning, as exemplified in his student days at the University of Copenhagen. Curiously the documents describing this “Bondo Memorial,” as it came to be known, did not mention Dana College by name. Instead, the college was identified as the “Blair school” or the “United Danish Lutheran Church’s college.” Perhaps the name Dana, even though it was the official designation, had not yet entered common usage.

While this rags to riches saga is the centerpiece of the genealogy that Elaine Hoyer has compiled, she extends this narrative to include additional family lines. Elaine’s Bondo collection connects to no less than 28 other family collections housed at the DAAL. If you are descended from a Danish family, you probably don’t even need the “Six Degrees of Separation” to find a connection. It could be right here in the Hoyer Collection. ■

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE



*Executive Director
Jill Hennick*

It is my great pleasure to report that at 9:40 a.m. on October 3, 2017, your Archive became debt-free! Our thanks go out to Alf and Lili Gregerson for the matching grant of \$25,000 which made this possible. We raised \$21,600 towards the match, which enabled us to pay off the balance of the mortgage plus retain over \$6,500 for long-term building upkeep.

Normally, an organization has a “mortgage burning” celebration and actually sets fire to the mortgage. As archivists, however, we can’t bear to destroy a document, so we took it through the multi-step process of accessioning, coding, cataloging and filing it to join the thousands of other documents we preserve. Since we do this same process with nearly every item that comes in our door, you can imagine why we will never run out of work for volunteers. This gives me the perfect opportunity to

thank our dedicated volunteers—thank you all very much!

We have certainly hit a milestone in the life of our independent archive. We have slowly been able to build our endowment from \$0 to more than \$100,000 within seven years, and we created a financial buffer to prevent having to close overnight as happened in 2010. The question of a secure home for our materials has been answered.

Now it is time to start asking new questions: where are we heading from here, and what do we want to accomplish?

The subtitle of the DAAL is “Center for Research and Education.” Because we are self-supporting, we have to work harder to make students and teachers aware of our resources. On the other hand, because we are self-supporting, we can welcome researchers, educators and students from any country, state or school, and we are doing everything we can to assist them.

For researchers, we are working to enhance our finding aids. We might have the most amazing item in one of our acid-free boxes, but unless it has been noted in the library online catalog or in our internal database, no one will know about its existence. To this end, we are digitizing more of the collection (such as documents, oral history cassettes, 16mm film and videos) and creating an internal database that will help us search all of the different lists where a name may be found.

For educators and students, we have presented an “Introduction to Archives” course for Midland University history classes two years in a row, and are planning to expand it to more area schools. In addition, we are offering internship opportunities to the educational institutions we already have relationships with—the University of Nebraska at Omaha and at Kearney, Midland University and Grand View University—and plan to reach out to additional universities that offer Scandinavian Studies.

Now that we have secured a safe place to work and house our materials, we are turning our attention to how to make this space better by increasing shelf space, floor space and work space, as well as increasing our endowment to the point that we can finance more paid staff. You, as donors and volunteers, have helped us reach this milestone in our history. We look forward to accomplishing even more in the future. ■

THE MORTGAGE BURNING PARTY

On October 12, 2017, we threw a party to celebrate paying off our mortgage, and it was a huge success by any measure. Approximately 150 people from Blair and the surrounding communities enjoyed a Danish-style buffet, a gift bag from the DAAL, and best of all a chance to visit with old friends and make new acquaintances. ■

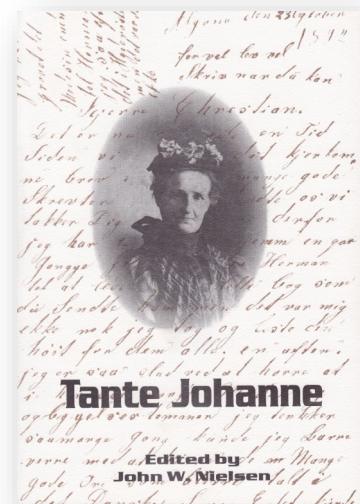
Old friends and Dana classmates Jody Sorensen and Dody Johnson stand with the traditional Kransekage that Jody brought all the way from Texas.



GOOD NEWS!

The members of the DAAL Board of Directors are delighted to announce that Executive Director Jill Hennick will be working at the Archive full time beginning March 1. This represents a significant stride forward for the DAAL. Watch for more details in the April issue of *Jottings*.

Tante Johanne
Edited by John W. Nielsen



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MORE DEVELOPMENTS AT DANA COLLEGE



Durham Center and Trinity Chapel

has led to some organizations being offered space in buildings that make better, more efficient and meaningful sense,” he said.

He cited Christ Lutheran Church being offered the first floor of the former Durham Classroom Center and Trinity Chapel as an example. The congregation gave its overwhelming approval to pursue that venue over space in the former C.A. Dana-LIFE Library.

The initial work on campus buildings will focus on issues that must be met to have them occupied, including mold mitigation, security, sprinkler systems, electrical, and heating and ventilation. The current boiler system that feeds multiple buildings is not viable at this point. An engineering firm is currently evaluating the most efficient stand-alone systems for each building according to its potential purpose. No specific timelines have been set, but certain buildings may be open for occupancy relatively soon, Shada said.

In a later development, the city of Blair has agreed to purchase the baseball and softball fields from Angels Share. As part of the agreement, Angels Share has agreed to sell the two tax lots and, in turn, the city will pay for the cost of the preliminary platting of the entire campus and the final platting of the main campus area, including dedication of roads and two areas for new housing. The fields will continue to be used by community softball and baseball teams. ■

After more than seven years of sitting vacant, the Dana College campus now has a real possibility of being occupied again. Omaha developer Frank Krejci, who had owned the campus since 2013, donated the entire campus to Angels Share at the end of December. Angels Share is a charitable, non-profit corporation dedicated to breaking the cycle of homelessness and lifting up and caring for society’s most vulnerable people. “This is an incredible, multi-million-dollar gift,” said Angels Share President Ed Shada, “and it sets the stage to begin the physical work on revitalizing the campus into a

community within the community of Blair. Frank Krejci is a generous and caring man, and this affirms his belief that our plan is the most viable solution.”

Grace University, a Christian college located in Omaha, was considering moving to the Dana campus, but has since closed. Mr. Shada explained that the plan for the campus has always been to have multiple tenants so that it would not be totally dependent on a single major organization. So the University’s departure opened opportunities to utilize numerous buildings that would have been occupied by Grace. “This

DANISH CHILDREN PHOTO EXHIBIT COMES TO BLAIR

The DAAL’s popular *Danish Children Growing Up American* photo exhibit is now on display at the Blair Public Library and Technology Center. This exhibit, consisting of twenty panels measuring four feet wide by eight feet tall, has traveled to several venues from Denver to Des Moines. And now, since the City of Blair built a new library building with excellent display space, the DAAL can finally show this wonderful exhibit in our home town.

“We are so proud to be able to show *Danish Children Growing Up American* at our library,” says Blair’s Library Director Gayle Roberts. “This is a prime example of how the Blair Library and the DAAL can collaborate, and we already have plans to work together on future exhibits.”

The twenty panels are printed on both sides and feature roughly 50 photos of Danish immigrant children in many aspects of their lives at the turn of the 20th century. The exhibit

opened on Saturday, January 6, 2018, and will run through February 2. In addition to the panels themselves, several display cases contain Danish and Danish American children’s books, as well as early twentieth century artifacts, such as toys and books from the personal collections of some of our volunteers.

Roughly 50 people attended a reception at the exhibit on Sunday, January 21, featuring an entertaining talk by Dr. John Mark Nielsen, a former English professor at Dana

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College and former director of the Museum of Danish America. Dr. Nielsen presented an overview of the immigration movement from Denmark to the United States, the reasons for it and why the immigrants settled where they did.

Attendees included Blair Mayor Jim Realph and Dave Richards, Dean of the University of Nebraska at Omaha library, and Amy Schindler, Director of the Archives at UNO. It was a cooperative effort between UNO and the DAAL that first made the *Danish Children Growing up American* exhibit come to life. ■



Photo by Joe Burns



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IN THE STACKS

ONE BOOK AT A TIME

By Michael Hennick, Library Assistant

The DAAL has roughly 13,000 books in its library, of which around 10,000 came with us when we left the Dana College library. More than ninety percent of these volumes are in Danish. In the last seven years since Dana closed, the book collection has expanded by about one third.

Books may come in one or two at a time when a local person brings in perhaps a Danish hymnal, an old school book or a novel printed by a Danish publisher. At other times an offer of books via e-mail allows us to pick and choose which ones we want. On average this can provide us with up to fifty works. Occasionally we are offered entire libraries that belonged to a pastor or teacher who worked with Danish Americans or taught subjects dealing with Denmark. These collections can have as many as five hundred books!

We then evaluate the books by condition, whether or not we have better copies, and if they are relevant to the mission of the DAAL. We preserve books and periodicals that were used by Danish Americans, especially those who were still speaking Danish. Each volume must then wait to be officially cataloged. This can be a long process, because we must determine what the book is about and where it belongs on the library shelves,

At this time the DAAL has nearly two thousand books and periodicals waiting to be entered into the collection. It must be done right, and it must be done one book at a time. But not to worry, we will eventually catch up. In the meantime we welcome any offers of works written in Danish, or books in either Danish or English that deal with Denmark or Danish America. Thanks to all of you who have contributed to our growing library. ■



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