

JOTTINGS



A publication of the Danish American Archive and Library

Jan.-May 2018

THE DANISH AMERICAN ARCHIVE AND LIBRARY SAYS “OSIYO” TO THE CHEROKEE NATION

The Cherokee Nation paid a visit to the DAAL last month. On April 28, a delegation of alumni and family members from the Oaks Indian Mission, located in Oaks, Oklahoma, visited Blair, Nebraska.

Their visit began at the DAAL where they were treated, of course, to Danish kringle and coffee. Oaks Board Member Sol Bird Mockicin introduced the ten attendees from Oaks, all members of the Cherokee Nation. Mockicin graduated from Dana College in 1964, and has been instrumental in keeping the strong ties between Oaks and the Dana College/Blair community ever since. Archive board member Tim Jensen presented a short history of the relationship between Oaks and the Danes, and Pastor Don Marshall, Executive Director of the Oaks Indian Mission expressed appreciation for the event.

Approximately 40 vintage photos and documents from the DAAL’s Oaks collection filled the main corridor of the Archive, and the delegation enjoyed looking at the photos and picking out ancestors or acquaintances in the photos. At the end of the visit, Mockicin presented a traditional Cherokee blanket to Dr. John W. Nielsen and Elizabeth Solevad Nielsen in gratitude for their many years of service to the Oaks Indian Mission.

From the Archive the group went for lunch and a worship service at First Lutheran Church in Blair, after which they left for Elk Horn, Iowa, to visit the Museum of Danish America, worship at the Lutheran church and visit the grave of N.L. Nielsen, the first Danish pastor at Oaks. The Oaks photo exhibit will remain on display at the DAAL throughout the month of May.

The following essay by Dr. Tim Jensen appears as an introduction to a booklet illustrating the Oaks photo exhibit:

Cherokees and Danes Traveling Together: The Story of the Oaks Indian Mission

Danish immigration to North America was one ripple in the wave of Europeans fleeing economic, political, and religious tribulation. By the late 19th century Danes could be found in every American state, although they were concentrated in a Midwestern belt extending from Michigan to Nebraska.

The wave of dislocated Europeans all too often coincided with the tragic dislocation of America’s indigenous peoples. One of the most severe disruptions was visited upon the Cherokee people in the southeastern United States. Through the orders of President Andrew Jackson and despite a ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court, the Cherokee were forced to leave the land that had been their home for centuries and walk to the unfamiliar “Indian Territory” of Oklahoma. Several thousand Cherokee died in a forced march still remembered as the Trail of Tears.

Dane and Cherokee thus had decidedly different immigrant experiences that led them to different parts of North America. It was not often that the immigrant Danes and Cherokee met, but when those meetings did occur, the results could be transformative. This is the story of one of those places, the Oaks Indian Mission.

In the late 19th century Detlev Leerskov, a recent Danish immigrant, met and married a Cherokee woman. Hoping that there might be Danes who could bring Christianity to the Cherokee he wrote a letter in 1893 to the branch of Danish American Lutheranism known as the Blair Church, urging Danes to minister to the Cherokee. The Blair Church was the branch of Danish American Lutheranism that founded Dana College and Trinity Seminary and had its headquarters in Blair, Nebraska.



Presentation of a traditional Cherokee blanket to John W. and Elizabeth Solevad Nielsen. L-R: Eliza Spade Deere, Sol Bird Mockicin, Terry Rattling Gourd, John and Elizabeth Nielsen.

(Continued Page 7)

Victor Borge and Dana, Part 2

by Ann (Harms) George

[Part 1 of this article, which appeared in the last Jottings, can be read at danishamericanarchive.com. It describes Victor Borge's first benefit concert for Dana College, in 1976, and a visit to Borge's Greenwich, Connecticut, home by Dana President and Mrs. Myrvin Christopherson and Phil Pagel, vice president for institutional advancement, in 1993. This article is reprinted, with minor changes, from the Winter 2009 issue of the Dana Review, the college's alumni magazine.]



On August 25, 1988, Dana College's historic Old Main burned to the ground, and Borge sent a letter: "I couldn't get there in time to help put out the fire," he wrote, "but I would like to return at a point to help with the rebuilding of Old Main."

Dana was happy to accept his offer, and on October 25, 1989, a Wednesday evening, Borge played in Omaha to a full house in Joslyn Art Museum's Witherspoon Hall. He'd said that he would donate his fees to the college if it could sell \$50,000 in tickets. Dana met that goal, and \$50,000 was added to funds for the Old Main replacement.

Borge invited Pagel and the Christophersons to join him and his son, Ron, his stage manager, for breakfast in Omaha the next morning. "We had a rollicking good time," Pagel recalled. "Then I drove the two Borges to the airport. Mr. B. -- he preferred to be called that -- shook my hand warmly and said to be sure and stay in touch, and if my travels ever brought me to Greenwich, to be sure and stop in. I took it as an open invitation.

"After that," he said, "our friendship continued and strengthened, with more letters, occasional postcards and miscellaneous greetings from both the U.S. and Denmark." Then he received a note from Borge's personal assistant, "suggesting that if we had thought about the possibility of another Borge benefit, it might be smart if we discussed it with Borge and finalized a date. And that's how we decided that Myrv, Anne, and I should make a personal visit to his home in Greenwich."

In the course of their conversation that day, Borge agreed to return to Dana for a third benefit concert if the college could raise \$100,000 to support student scholarships. Thanks to generous patrons, the college raised \$175,000, with \$100,000 benefiting the Borge Scholarship Fund

and \$75,000, the general scholarship fund.

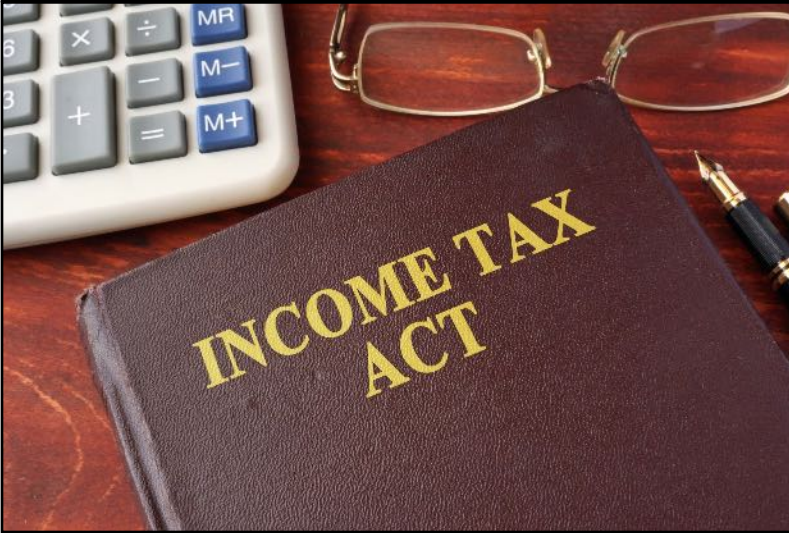
This time Borge again performed on the campus, on November 14, 1994, a Monday evening, in the Lauritzen Theater of the Madsen Fine Arts Center, but the event wasn't announced publicly. Instead, the concert patrons and their guests were invited to a performance called "An Evening with Victor Borge" that was especially for them.

In the afternoon before the concert Pagel showed Borge the college's new building (later named the Margre Henningson Durham Classroom Center) that replaced Old Main. When Pagel drove Borge and son Ron to their Omaha hotel after the concert, Borge told him that this would probably be his last visit, but he asked him to stay in touch and to keep him informed about what was happening at Dana.

Asked what he remembered most about Borge, Pagel said, "I'm sure it was his genuineness.* He loved to make people laugh and he loved to poke fun at the seriousness surrounding classical music. He was most happy when he was on the stage, and to him, all of life was his stage." ■

*In 1999, the year before his death, the 91-year-old Borge was honored by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, an award that's considered the artistic equivalent of the Presidential and Congressional Medals of Honor. He'd arrived in this country in 1940 as an almost penniless immigrant unable to speak English, and he set about learning it by going to the movies. A year after his arrival he became a regular on Bing Crosby's radio show, the Kraft Music Hall, and that was the start of his success and fame in this country.

THE NEW TAX LAW AND THE DAAL



The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which was signed into law by President Donald Trump December 22, 2017, profoundly affects nonprofits like the Danish American Archive and Library. An article on *Forbes.com* claims that the new law will shrink the number of households claiming an itemized deduction for their gifts to non-profits from about \$37 million to about \$16 million in 2018, according to new Tax Policy Center estimates. The article goes on to say that at the same time, the new law will reduce the federal income tax subsidy for charitable giving by one-third, from about \$63 billion to roughly \$42 billion.

Luckily for the DAAL, the majority of our donors believe so much in what we do that they continue to give regardless of their ability to

deduct their gifts from their income taxes. However, there still are ways to receive a tax break through charitable giving:

Stock that Has Gone Up in Value

There are very favorable tax rules for donors who want to donate long-term stock (stock they have owned for more than one year) that has appreciated in value. Basically, the donor never has to pay capital gains on the appreciated stock. This can be a tremendous tax benefit and great incentive for donors to give stock to nonprofits.

Here's how it works:

If someone owns stock for more than one year that has gone up in value, that person can donate the stock to a nonprofit, get a deduction equal to the fair market value of the stock at the time of the transfer (its increased value), and never pay capital gains tax on the appreciated value of the stock. The nonprofit will never owe that capital gains tax either. It can take the stock and either sell it right away and not pay any tax, or it can hold on to it—but it will never owe capital gains tax on the appreciated value the donor realized.

For example, a person owns 1,000 shares of stock that is traded on the New York Stock Exchange. He paid \$1,000 for the shares back in 2005 and they are worth \$10,000 today. He gives the stock to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit such as the DAAL, and deducts its \$10,000 fair market value as a charitable contribution. The person need not pay the 15% capital gains tax on the \$9,000 gain in the value of his stock. The DAAL sells the stock and pays no taxes on the \$10,000 it receives. Had the person sold the stock he would have had to pay a \$1,350 long-term capital gains tax on his \$9,000 profit (15% x \$9,000 = \$1,350). This would have left him only \$8,650 from the stock sale to donate to a nonprofit. [*Paraphrased from an article on Nolo.com*]

Qualified Charitable Distributions

Qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) are a unique tax strategy that allow individuals who are at least age 70½ and have Traditional and/or Inherited IRAs to distribute up to \$100,000 per year directly from their IRA to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with no federal income tax consequences.

Key considerations:

- QCDs are IRA distributions that would otherwise be taxable.
- QCDs are not included in your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), so using this strategy can lower your income and may possibly decrease the tax you pay on your Social Security income. This may also have a positive effect on your taxes with regard to deductions, exemptions and tax credits.
- Although you cannot take a charitable deduction for a QCD, reducing your AGI may provide a better tax benefit. If you normally made donations to charities anyway, you may want to consider making those donations from your IRA. [*From The Regan Group, Inc., Omaha, NE*]

Remember that the financial institution that manages your IRA will need to make the check payable directly from your IRA to a qualifying charity to have this strategy work for you. Please contact your financial advisor for help in taking advantage of either of these tax strategies. This article is meant to only to point out your options—not to provide financial advice.

Thanks to all our supporters who have helped bring us to our current level of success. By utilizing these strategies you may be able to continue that support and still earn a tax benefit. ■

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



*Executive Director
Jill Hennick*

It was so nice to welcome the visitors from Oaks Indian Mission in April. Many thanks go out to Tim and Sharon Jensen and Sandra Wigdahl for the exhibit and booklet of photographs showing “Cherokees and Danes Traveling Together.” The preparations for the visit highlighted two things for me. The first is the universal appeal of photographs for introducing the public to the Archive. The second is the importance of digitizing both the materials themselves and the descriptions about them.

Back in 2013, our colleagues at the University of Nebraska-Omaha (UNO) encouraged us to develop our “Danish Children Growing Up American” traveling exhibit. The panels of photographs continue to attract viewers of all ages and nationalities. The exhibit was well received this past January at the Blair Public Library and Technology Center and will travel to the Washington County Historical Museum in Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, in June.

In addition to our current display of Oaks photographs here at the Archive, we recently enhanced the Blair Library’s display of Western American Art with original photographs of Native Americans from the 1920’s and 1930’s found in our Elna Nielsen Smith Melvin collection.

We have plans to display Dana College exhibits at both the Archive

and the Blair Public Library and Technology Center during the Dana Alumni and Friends’ annual Homecoming event in October. As many as five Dana graduates from the 1970s have been sorting nine bankers boxes of photographs into decades, after which we will work to identify the people in them. Would you like to help with this project? Volunteer hours are 8am-noon, Monday-Friday. Coffee is served at 10am. The next volunteer week is June 18 to 22, during which the hours are expanded to 5 p.m.

We are currently developing ways to digitally point to all of the collections in which a particular subject appears. For example, you might think that all of the documents and photos used for the Oaks display came from the Oaks collection. However, references to Oaks can be found in our library, obituary files, Dana College yearbooks, church & mission collections and reports; collections of UELC church dignitaries such as N.C. Carlsen, P.C. Jensen, C.C. Mengers, and Edward Hansen; collections of Oaks workers such as C.B. and Abelone Larsen, Helen Sagen and Rev. John Romer, Rev. Soren Kahdahl, Detlov Leerskov, and Dorthea Jensen; and others who were interested enough in Oaks to keep brochures or anniversary booklets such as John and Meta Nielsen, F.W. Thomsen and Knud Heiborg and Maren Nielsen.

Our ability to organize our materials has expanded since March 1st when the Board of Directors increased my position to full-time. We don’t just want to protect and preserve our materials, but we also want to make them more accessible. Last month, a graduate student from UNO was able to research a paper using digital scans of translations of over 100 Hansen-Mengers letters dating from the late 1800’s. Look to the next *Jottings* for an update on our database and digitizing efforts.

Thank you for your continued

support. Together, we continue to respect our ancestors and their accomplishments by preserving their history for future generations. ■

DAAL

**Danish American
Archive and Library**

**Dedication to our Ancestors,
Appreciation of their Labors**

***DANES IN AMERICA:
Kansas and Nebraska
ON SALE!***

Danes in America

Kansas and Nebraska

Translated by
Ninna Engskow

Edited by
John W. Nielsen



From John Nielsen the gold miner, to Jacob Nielsen the cowboy, an array of Danish settlers in Kansas and Nebraska appears in this book. Their occupations range from pastor and banker to saloon keeper and ice cream vendor, but collectively their activities provide an insight into early Danish settlements in these states.

Originally priced at \$16.50, the price is now just \$5.00 plus \$4.00 shipping.

(Nebraska residents add 7% sales tax.)

A complete list of Lur books is found on our website at:

www.danishamericanarchive.com.

VOLUNTEERS: 2,027 hours by 48 volunteers from Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, and Texas.

VISITORS: 62 visitors from Maine, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wisconsin.

USERS: 40 users from California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Utah, Virginia, Wisconsin, Denmark, and email.

ACQUISITIONS

Materials:

The following are the donations of materials we have received from January through April. The Archive could not continue to document the history of Danish Americans without these wonderful materials including complete family collections, photos, books, periodicals, music and obituaries. We appreciate your financial donations to support the processing and storage of your materials.

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FINANCIAL REPORT

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All donations are placed in the General Fund unless otherwise specified. Those who give through the 50/100 Club are listed in each Issue of Jottings.

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50/100 Club:

The name of the 50/100 Club was inspired by the idea that if 100 members gave \$50 per month, most of our operating expenses would be met. Members sustain DAAL by giving 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. An added benefit of being part of the 50/100 club is receiving 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.

50/100 FOUNDER LEVEL

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FINANCIAL REPORT

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Legacy Builders:
These donors have named DAAL in their estates (* indicates deceased). If you are not on this list but should be, please contact Jill Hennick at 402-426-7910.

Erna Berthelsen
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 Ronald D. Johnson* and Bodil Strom Muller
 John W. & Elizabeth Nielsen
 LeVern* & Marilyn* Nielsen
 W. Clayton Nielsen
 Larry & Palma Plume
 Joan Sorensen ■

AROUND THE ARCHIVE

- ◆ The collaboration between the Blair Public Library and Technology Center continues. Since our *Danish Children Growing Up American* exhibit appeared there in January, the DAAL has provided vintage photos from the early 1900s to the 1930s, such as the ones below, of members of several Native American tribes to enhance a collection of western art on loan to the Blair library from a local collector. Another exhibit at the Blair library featured items from our collections for a Black Elk—Neihardt display, and next October we will work with the Dana College Alumni and Friends on a Homecoming exhibit.
- ◆ From June 19th to mid July, the *Danish Children Growing Up American* exhibit will be on display in the Washington County Historical Museum in the neighboring town of Fort Calhoun,

Nebraska. Scandinavian food, music and dance also will be featured on June 19th to enhance the exhibit.

- ◆ Correction: In the December issue of *Jottings*, a donation in the \$100—\$249 category was listed as being from the Danish Brotherhood Lodge #21. The donation actually came from Ellen Lodge #21 of the Danish Sisterhood of America of Denver, Colorado. We apologize for the error.
- ◆ Volunteer weeks for the remainder of 2018 have been scheduled. Summer: June 18 - 22 and Fall: October 8 - 12. As Jill mentions in her Director's Report, we would love to have more Dana grads join us to sort and identify photos from the Dana collection so we can put together an impressive exhibit for the Dana Homecoming in October. You can come in any weekday between 8 a.m. and noon. You may hook up with old friends, and we will ply you with coffee and treats as payment. ■



Would you like to help?

Please cut out this card and send it in with your charitable contribution.

A check for \$ _____ is enclosed. (Please make payable to the Danish American Archive and Library.)
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Thank you for your ongoing support of the Danish American Archive and Library

Oaks Indian Mission (Cont.)



Cherokee artifacts loaned by Phil and Florence Larsen of Blair.

In response to Detlev Leerskov's plea, the Blair Church sent a recent Danish immigrant, Rev. N.L. Nielsen, to minister to the Cherokee in Oklahoma. A year later his bride, Jensine Christensen Nielsen, joined him in what became a lifelong venture. They worked continuously with the Cherokee until ill health forced their retirement in 1924. In 1903 through the efforts of the Niensens as well as other Danes and Cherokees, Oaks Indian Mission was established near the village of Oaks in northeastern Oklahoma.

From the start Oaks Indian Mission depended on both Danes and Cherokee for its success. Over the course of many decades Danish Lutherans came, often from Dana College, to teach, to preach,

and to build. Some stayed for a few months, others, such as C.A. Vammen and Helen Sagen Romer, for a lifetime. At the same time, the litany of Cherokee leaders is long and includes, along with many others, Nannie Hatfield and Richard Russell. Several Cherokee youth, such as Florence Rusk Lamont, attended Dana College and returned to Oaks to teach.

The primary focus of the Oaks Indian Mission has always been on education, for the Cherokee realized early on that education was key to rebuilding the Cherokee Nation. Preaching and caring for children received special emphasis, too. These three themes grew into three intimately related organizations—church, school, and orphanage. Financial support for Oaks Indian Mission came from several congregations in the UDELIC as well as the synod as a whole. ■



Sample of the photos currently on display at the DAAL.

1738 Washington Street
Blair, Nebraska 68008

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

IN THE STACKS

From the Magazine Rack: the Periodical Collection

By Michael Hennick, Library Assistant

Occupying about one third of the library shelves at the DAAL is our periodical collection. This amounts to 360 feet of shelving space. Included are publications of all sorts: magazines, bulletins, newsletters, journals, yearbooks and reports. These materials, of which about two thirds are in Danish, deal with the many interests and aspects of life in Denmark or Danish America.

One example from here in the States is the official publication of the Danish Brotherhood. Originally entitled *Danske Brodersamfund*, this newspaper ran from 1916 until 1940. Making the transition to English in 1941 the work became *Danish Brotherhood Magazine* and ran until 1972. Another name change in 1973 brought out *American Dane Magazine*, which ceased publication in 1995. The Brotherhood filled its pages with Danish culture, travel, news from the lodges, official actions of the society, recipes, and lists of new members and deceased members. The magazine became

more illustrated after the switch to the English language. Also of interest are the numerous advertisements by Danish American businesses and products, and some from Denmark as well.

Another very different publication is *Indre Missions Tidende* or *Inner Mission's News*. The Church Association for the Inner Mission in Denmark was founded in 1853 as a revival movement within the Lutheran state church of Denmark working for "the revival of faith and the union of believers." The DAAL has issues dating from 1863 to 1908 and from 1953-2010. It was Danish immigrants, influenced by this association, who founded the old United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, Trinity Seminary and Dana College in Blair, Nebraska. The group and its magazine continue on in Denmark to this day.

These are just two examples of the more than four hundred periodicals in the DAAL collection, some of which may have hundreds of issues and others only one. So before you recycle your or your ancestor's Danish-related publications, let us know what you have; we might need it. ■

