

JOTTINGS



A publication of the Danish American Archive and Library Sept. - Dec. 2018

“THE NIGHTMARE ON NYHOLM STREET”



Professor Paul Nyholm

When husband and wife, Board Member Dr. Timothy Jensen and Library Director Sharon Jensen, first began sorting and cataloging the DAAL’s massive Paul C. Nyholm collection, they jokingly dubbed it “The Nightmare on Nyholm Street.” But in reality, to the Jensens, and at the DAAL, this collection and others like it are a dream, not a nightmare.

The wealth of information found in this collection filled 41 of our acid-free boxes when it was first accessioned, but will probably increase after being reorganized. The collection includes letters, notes, manuscripts, records, lecture notes, tests, pictures and published articles. It testifies to Professor Nyholm’s long and distinguished career as a pastor, teacher, author, editor and organizer.

Born in Hjørring, Denmark in 1895, Professor Nyholm attended a private school in Copenhagen, and then earned a degree in theology from the University of Copenhagen and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Chicago. He served as a parish pastor in Iowa, Nebraska and Alberta, and as president of the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute. He was twice a delegate to the World Council of Churches—in Amsterdam in 1948 and Evanston, Illinois, in 1954.

When Professor Nyholm arrived from Denmark in 1922, he began an illustrious teaching career, first at Dana College, then going on to Grand View Seminary, Trinity Seminary and Wartburg Seminary. He was named Professor Emeritus at both Wartburg Seminary and Dana College. **According to former DAAL executive director Dr. John W. Nielsen, while teaching at Dana, Professor Nyholm was one of those instrumental in starting the Dana College archive, which is one of the foundation archives on which the DAAL is built.**

During his career, Professor Nyholm edited four Danish American periodicals and wrote for both the Danish and Danish American press. He took over a failing Danish language publication, *Dansk Almanak*, and added some content in English, which broadened its appeal. He changed its name to *Dansk Nytaar* (*Danish New Year*) and significantly increased the circulation during the nine years he was editor. In 1941 he established the Dana Chapter of the American-Scandinavian Foundation and served as its president for eight years. He was widely acclaimed for his book, *The Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Church in America*, which was recognized for both cultural and church history.



...while Board Member Dr. Timothy Jensen works at another.

Among the international honors awarded to Professor Nyholm was inclusion in the Danish version of Who’s Who. His work in the promotion and understanding of Denmark and to cultural and religious activities was recognized by King Christian X of Denmark, who awarded him the Liberation Medal. And King Frederik IX of Denmark named him Knight of the Order of Dannebrog.

So how do you even begin to sort such a rich and varied collection? Tim and Sharon approach it in different ways—first to respect as much as possible the order in which the material was donated. When further sorting is needed, they sort chronologically and according to subject. Sharon outlined the example of letters found in the collection. “I start sorting chronologically. Then I cull out the letters written in Danish for future translation. The letters from the Nyholm immediate family are separated and put in chronological order, and all the others are sorted together chronologically.” Tim went on to describe other categories,

such as lecture notes, letters and other paperwork from teaching; and correspondence and notes from Nyholm’s time as editor of *Dansk Nytaar*. “These examples don’t even touch on the rest of the exceptional materials included in this collection,” he said, “including photos, honors and awards, sermon notes, news articles and other records too numerous to detail here. He was an extraordinary man who accomplished extraordinary things during his lifetime, and that has resulted in an extraordinary collection left for historians everywhere.”

Professor Nyholm died in 1977. ■



Library Director Sharon Jensen works on the Nyholm collection at one table...

Dana's Copenhagen Gas Lamps: A Brief History by Ann (Harms) George

This article, with updates, is based on one by the same writer that appeared in the Winter 2009 Dana Review, the alumni magazine.

In 1959 Dana College and Trinity Seminary were preparing for a 75th anniversary, a Diamond Jubilee. And in 1959 Copenhagen was replacing its gas lamps, which had lined the city's streets for 102 years, with electric lights. When Norman C. Bansen, professor of English at Dana, learned of these plans, he wrote to the Copenhagen street department about obtaining several of the lamps for the campus as a reminder of its Danish heritage.

Ingvard Dahl, director of Copenhagen's Department of the Environment (the department's responsibilities include public utilities) replied: "The municipality will be glad to present the college with four of the old lamps, and begs to consider this a greeting from Copenhagen to Dana College on its 75th anniversary."

In announcing the gift, Bansen recalled how Hans Christian Andersen had marveled at the new gas lamps, which replaced oil lamps dating to 1680, as he strolled along the streets of Copenhagen on December 4, 1857, the evening they were first lighted. That stroll led Andersen to write *Godfather's Picture Book*, in which he describes "that memorable year when gas replaced the old oil lamps in Copenhagen. . . ."

On the campus a 75th anniversary celebration was planned for October 10, Homecoming weekend. Guests would include Count Kield Knuth-Winterfeldt, Denmark's ambassador to the U.S., and Nebraska native Val Peterson, this country's ambassador to Denmark.

As part of the festivities, the lamps would be lighted for the first time.

The Swedish American Line had agreed to ship the four lamps, free of charge, on the MS Carlsholm across the Atlantic to Chicago via the St. Lawrence Seaway (it had opened that year to navigation) and the lamps were picked up in Copenhagen on August 8 and delivered in Chicago 32 days later. Then a trucking firm lost them, and it was only after many phone calls by Phil Pagel, director of public relations, who had made the shipping arrangements, that they were found in an Omaha warehouse. The lamps arrived at Dana on November 16, much too late for the October 10 lighting ceremony. When they were unpacked it was discovered that one had been damaged in shipping and couldn't be used.

There was one more delay: The local gas company, which had offered to install the lamps at no charge, was hindered in its plans by bad weather, but it was able to place them along the sidewalk between Old Main (built in the gaslight era) and Pioneer Memorial in time for Christmas.

The three lamps stood there for many years, their gas flames casting a mellow glow.

Eventually there were two mishaps. The first was minor, when someone shot at one of them, breaking its globe. Pagel wrote to the same Copenhagen department that Bansen had, and almost immediately a replacement globe arrived. Pagel recalled that "When we opened the wooden case, a bottle of Tuborg beer was enclosed, wrapped in a note that simply said 'skaal.'"

The second mishap was more serious: A riding lawnmower damaged one of the lamps, seemingly beyond repair, so it was put into storage. The remaining two were then moved to each end of the terrace in front of Old Main. And because of problems in keeping the gas flames burning, they were converted to electricity.

Remarkably, when Old Main burned on August 25, 1988, the lamps weren't damaged – a photo shows them just to the left of a fire hose that's shooting a stream of water into the flames.

During their half-century at Dana, the parade of campus life went past them – students going to and from class, Commencement processions, weddings, Homecomings, Sights and Sounds of Christmas

To paraphrase from another of Andersen's stories, *The Old Street Lamp*, "On what a number of events they have shone – how much they have seen."

Today the 160-year-old lamps continue to shine on events, but not at Dana. After the college closed in early July 2010, they were moved to a new and appropriate location—to Elk Horn, Iowa, where they stand at the approach to the Museum of Danish America.

John Mark Nielsen, the museum's executive director from 2003 to early 2017, and a Dana graduate who had been a member of the college's English department, wrote to English majors who had been taught by Bansen. In his letter he described how their late professor's initiative had brought the gas lamps to the campus, and he suggested contributions in Bansen's honor to enable the museum to buy them from the bank that now owned the campus, and then to install them at the museum.

(Continued Page 8)



**Dana College Christmas card circa 1965.
L-R: Karl Petersen, Kay McGill, Liz Anne Nielsen, Chuck Jorgensen, Holger Schultz, Jr., Mary Jane Clausen are pictured in front of one of the Copenhagen gas lamps.**

VOLUNTEERS: 1,846 hours by 55 volunteers from Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio and Texas.
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Gary & Diane Madsen
George Madsen
Ronald D. Johnson* and Bodil Strom Muller
John W. & Elizabeth Nielsen
LeVern* & Marilyn* Nielsen
W. Clayton Nielsen
Larry & Palma Plume
Joan Sorensen ■

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

\$10,000 and over

The estate of Bernhard & Marilyn Erling
The estate of Ada Jeppesen

\$2,500 - \$9,999

Thomas Bengtson, Rock Island, IL
Erna Berthelsen, Albert Lea, MN
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #1, Omaha, NE
Christie Gehringer, Omaha, NE
Frederick J. Hansen, Wichita, KS
Tim & Sharon Jensen, Blair, NE
Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Rønner Lauritzen, Omaha, NE
John W. & Elizabeth Nielsen, Blair, NE
Larry & Palma Plume, Evergreen, CO
Joan Sorensen, Richardson, TX

\$1,000 - \$2,499

Benevity Community Impact Fund by
Stephanie Adams

Karen & Mike Brodie, Richardson, TX
Borge M. Christensen, Rochester, MN
Ingrid Christiansen, Brookline, MA
Myrv & Anne Christopherson, Decorah, IA
The Grandage Family Fund of Schwab Charitable
by Linda Grandage
Roger Hanson, Cedar Falls, IA
Michael & Jill Hennick, Blair, NE
Dody Johnson, Blair, NE
Don & Joyce Jorgensen, Ripon, WI
Richard & Delores Jorgensen, Poy Sippi, MI
Charles & Janet Kahn, Gulf Breeze, FL
Luther & Doris Kloth, Wauwatosa, WI
David & Carol Knutson, Preston, MN
Philip & Florence Larsen, Blair, NE
Gary & Diane Madsen, Omaha, NE
Lowell & Sue Madsen, Fresno, CA
Marilyn Meyer, Everly, IA

The Belz/Nelson Family fund of Fidelity Charitable
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Lisa Nielsen, Fairfield, PA
Joanne Peterson, Oshkosh, WI
Sandy Sonderup, Blair, NE
Janice L. Sorensen, Columbus, OH
Thrivent Choice Funds, Appleton, WI
LeRoy & Sandra Wigdahl, Blair, NE
Sandra Wunder, Eaton, CO

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Keith & Paula Anderson, Gaylord, MN
Ginny Beck, Colorado Springs, CO
Blair Area Community Foundation, Blair, NE
Mark & Erika Bondo, Freehold, NJ
Phil & Becky Bryant, West Des Moines, IA
Arlene & Neil Grover, Staples, MN
Arvin Hernes, Blair, NE

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Geraldine Jasan, Northfield, MN
Esther Jensen, Santa Maria, CA
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Bill & Toni Lawson, Green Bay, WI
Gene & Nancy Lindblad, Blair, NE
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Vordyn Nelson, Luther, MI
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Don Pedersen, Pea Ridge, AR
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Agnete Temali, Arden Hills, MN
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Marilyn & Greek Abariotes, Blair, NE
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Ruth Ruden Burrows, Urbandale, IA
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Please accept our profound thanks for all of your support. Your contributions ensure that Danish American history is preserved for future generations.

MORE DEVELOPMENTS AT DANA COLLEGE



Demolition of Argo and Elk Horn Halls

On Monday, November 26, 2018, demolition began on Argo Hall as an excavator bit into its 96-year-old brick walls.

Argo Hall first came into being with the construction of a new “Girls’ Dormitory” in 1922. The building was later renamed Argo Hall after the town of Argo, Nebraska, where the forerunner of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church was first organized in 1884. Besides providing living quarters to accommodate 250 students, the dormitory housed kitchen and dining

room facilities for the entire student body. In 1959 the dining room facilities were remodeled into a cafeteria in order to serve the greatly increased student body. The building was last used as a dormitory in 2007.

Four years after the construction of Argo Hall, the new “Men’s Hall” was begun. It later became Elk Horn

Hall, commemorating the Iowa community of Elk Horn, birthplace of Elk Horn College, which moved to Blair in 1899.

The building was completed in 1927 at a cost of around \$65,000. In outward appearance it matched the women’s building, but was of somewhat more modern construction. Its capacity was 85 students besides trunk storage space and office and living quarters for the dean of men. Elkhorn Hall relieved the pressure for housing in Old Main, the first Dana College and Trinity Seminary building, and permitted some of the dormitory

areas in that building to be converted to classrooms.

Demolition is now complete, and Argo and Elk Horn Halls are no more, except in the memories of those who lived and worked there, and in the Dana Room at the DAAL.

Pioneer Memorial

Pioneer Memorial has been listed for sale by Investors Realty of Omaha for \$995,000, and a parcel of agricultural land that lies along highway 91 and extends to the north and west of the football field has been listed by the same company for \$3.2 million.

Built in 1947, Pioneer Memorial contained faculty offices and rooms for classes and seminars. But its primary purpose was to house the library and administrative offices. It also was the home of Trinity Seminary until 1956 when the seminary moved to and merged with Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. In 1969 when the library was moved to a dedicated building, the space was renamed Parnassus and became the center for Dana’s humanities program.

The vision for Pioneer Memorial is to turn it into condominiums, and for the agricultural land is residential development. ■

AROUND THE ARCHIVE

- ◆ Ming Xie, a doctoral student in non-profit management and public policy at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), visited the DAAL in September. She was gathering information about how non-profits utilize social media in getting their message out as part of her research for her dissertation.
- ◆ In one of those coincidences that regularly seem to happen at the DAAL, the week of October 22 saw an influx of information about Danish gymnastics.
 - Olav Ballisanger, an elite Danish gymnast who taught physical education at Dana College in 1972, stopped in for a visit.
 - Carl V. Jensen sent two copies of the book *Primitiv Gymnastik* by Niels Bukh along with some yearbooks from the gymnastics school.
 - Edgar Madsen sent the manuscript of his father's book, *The Missing Link: Odyssey of a Great Teacher* by Niels B. Madsen. This book documents the history of the Ollerup Academy of Physical Education in Denmark and its founder, Niels Bukh.
 - Cheryl Nielsen donated a Danish Gymnastics Team World Tour 1997-98 booklet.
- ◆ We were honored to receive a substantial bequest from the estate of Ada Jeppesen who devoted her life to education and was a longtime supporter of the DAAL. The bulk of the bequest has gone into our endowment fund, with the remainder to be used to further our vision and goals.
- ◆ The Blair Area Community Foundation granted \$600 to the DAAL for the purchase of a moveable, adjustable table, the first of three that we plan to purchase. These tables will provide flexible work space that can be set up in different areas of our building for different uses, for example, for the extra workers who come in for our volunteer weeks.
- ◆ An exhibit of three-dimensional Christmas cards is on display at the DAAL. These cards, on loan from Florence Larsen and Dody Johnson, are sent to them annually on Christmas and Easter by relatives in Denmark. The intricately cut fold-out and pop-up cards portray a variety of aspects of each holiday.
- ◆ Chantal Powell, a senior studying English and psychology at UNO will be interning at the DAAL for the spring semester. During her 45 hours here, she hopes to experience several areas of our operation including archive techniques, the history of Danish Americans, non-profit business operations and marketing, advertising and social media. The volunteers and staff at the DAAL are looking forward to working with Chantal and feel she will be a tremendous asset for us. Chantal will earn college credits for her time here.
- ◆ 2019 Spring and Fall Volunteer Weeks are scheduled for April 1-5 and October 7-11 respectively. Please contact us by email or telephone if you are able to attend either or both of those weeks. A popular alternative to the Summer Volunteer Week has been families or Dana College classmates scheduling working reunions at the DAAL during the summer months. If you would like to schedule a reunion, simply call or email and we will work with you on it. Keep in mind that the DAAL is closed May 20-24, August 26-30 and December 20-27 for Spring, Summer and Winter breaks. ■



FROM THE DANA ROOM (Cont.)

He describes their response as “very generous,” and the museum subsequently negotiated the purchase of the lamps through a bank representative and moved the lamps from Blair to Elk Horn.

And what of the third lamp, the one damaged by the errant riding lawnmower? The alumni contributions also paid for its restoration, and it's displayed inside the museum with a placard describing the role of Bansen (who had originated the concept of the Museum of Danish America and who was a charter member of the board) in bringing the lamps from the streets of Copenhagen to the Dana College campus. ■



Plough to the Setting Sun

A novel by EnoK Mortensen provides an interesting insight into the tension between different factions of the early Danish Lutheran Church, and the gradual waning of that tension. The author also describes the hardships faced by the small struggling congregations and the difficulty of parents trying to retain the loyalty of their children to Danish language, practices and beliefs.

Originally priced at \$15.00, you can now purchase this book for just \$5.00 plus \$4.00 shipping when you **call 402-426-7910 and mention the code LUR1738.** (Nebraska residents add 7% sales tax.)

A complete list of Lur books is found on our website at www.danishamericanarchive.com

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Thank you for your ongoing support of the Danish American Archive and Library

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE



**Executive Director
Jill Hennick**

My grandfather died in 1981, but he still tells me stories through the family history he wrote, *My Early Years* by Sigurd D. Petersen, which is now part of our Sigurd Petersen collection.

“In 1914 or 1915 we learned that Grandfather Lars found it necessary, at the age of 75, to go to work again. None of his children in Denmark seemed able to give him a home. Father resented the idea, so he sent [Lars] a ticket to come to us in America. Grandfather Lars had only one tooth. He used his sharp pocket knife to cut the bread crust in suitable sections. Potatoes and meat should not be eaten together. That was ‘fraaserig’- gluttony. Potatoes were such lovely fish, he would remark with a twinkle in his eye, because they have no bones. He challenged us boys to a foot race. He insisted that he could run away from us. So we all lined up – Grandfather in the middle. On the signal to go, he turned and ran in the opposite direction. He laughed heartily, his full beard sticking straight out.”

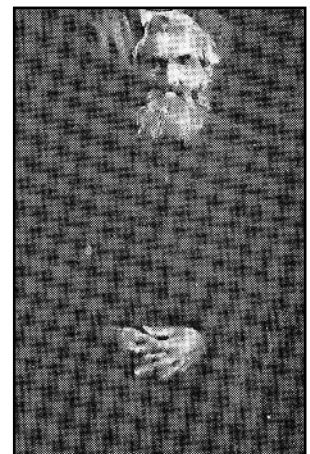
Reading this story is like meeting my great-great grandfather. Did any of your Danish ancestors have this same sense of humor? Although I would be satisfied with the story, imagine my delight to see a copy of a family photo in the Alvin Petersen collection that includes

Grandfather Lars.

This is a good example of why we want to document any relationships between collections within our archive. Sigurd and Alvin were brothers. While I know that, future generations may not. Rather than relying on memories, we are inputting this and similar information into our computer system. During the past year we have focused like a laser beam on implementing “finding aids” that allow us to find this information and these connections by computer in a fraction of the time that it used to take to search it out by hand.

I want to thank all of you who have told us about relatives that went to Dana College and relationships between families of United Evangelical Lutheran Church pastors. Projects to enter these connections into our database are currently underway.

While these are works in progress, they have already been useful. The family of Rev. S.S. Nielsen recently donated a photo album that included a picture of “Grandpa Nels Svendsen sawing”. Because we had documented that Mrs. Nielsen was Rev. H.A. Svendsen’s niece, we were able to share the photo with his descendants including a granddaughter who is a spring DAAL volunteer. ■



A formidable-looking Lars Petersen actually had a well-honed sense of humor.

1738 Washington Street
Blair, Nebraska 68008

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

IN THE STACKS



The Danish Baptist Church of Oakfield Township, Iowa, was built in 1893. The congregation moved into Elk Horn, Iowa, in 1918.

Denominations of Danes

By Michael Hennick, Library Assistant

In October the DAAL received ten large boxes of books and papers from researcher Robert A. Olsen of Houston Texas. Mr. Olsen is a long-time student of church history and music. The material dealt mainly with the various churches that Danish Americans became affiliated with in their search for faith and meaning in the new land. Like many who came to America, the Danes did not necessarily stay with the cultural churches of their homeland, but sought out places of worship from many backgrounds to meet their spiritual needs.

There are many estimates of how many Danes remained within the Lutheran tradition ranging anywhere from nine to twenty-five percent. Mr. Olsen's research touches upon the sizeable number of Danish Americans who were Baptists, Adventists and Mormons. They were also well represented among the Methodists, Evangelical Free, Moravians and the Salvation Army. The DAAL, because we evolved mainly from United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church and Dana College archives, has a large collection of Lutheran books and papers amounting to a least ninety percent of our Christian denominational material. This

makes the contribution by Mr. Olsen of great value to us in presenting a more wide-ranging portrait of church-going Danes.

The donation included nearly seventy books on topics relating to the lives and history of Danish Americans. Many of the two dozen hymnals were from denominations not previously represented on the shelves of the DAAL. Almost ninety books deal with various churches and important religious figures within them. More than fifty periodicals or copied articles deal with specific topics in Danish American history and religion. Also included was Mr. Olsen's correspondence seeking information from the many denominations and congregations. At least three-quarters of the donated items will be kept and cataloged by the DAAL. Some of the books on general Danish American subjects and much of the Lutheran material was already part of our library. Since the DAAL is be a research facility, such donations are a great gift to us in presenting a more complete picture of the lives of Danes in America. Throughout the history of the United States, the seeking of religious identity has always touched the deepest core of individual and community life for millions of Americans. This will remain a topic of great interest, and we are grateful to have received more materials that examine how Danish Americans are a part of it. ■