



# JOTTINGS



A publication of the Danish American Archive and Library Sept. - Dec. 2019

## THE DAAL PARTICIPATES IN A BOARD-LEVEL COOPERATIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

*The following article is based on a summary by Dr. John Mark Nielsen of the board-level Cooperative Strategic Planning Workshop.*

On October 1 and 2, 2019, board members from three major Danish American institutions toured each others' facilities, and afterwards met to discuss how they could work together in the future to benefit all three institutions. The event was facilitated by the Danish American Heritage Society (DAHS).

Participating were Dr. Gary Madsen, President, the Danish American Archive and Library; Dr. William "Bill" Nelsen, board member, the Danish American Archive and Library; Karen Sorensen Brodie, board member, Grand View University;\* Dr. Carl Moses, Provost, Grand View University; David Hendee, board member, Museum of Danish America; Carol Svendsen, board member, Strategic Planning Committee Chair, Museum of Danish America; and Dr. John Mark Nielsen, President, DAHS.

### **The group came out of the tours and meeting with four goals:**

- To determine a common platform to catalog archival holdings at the three institutions, leading to greater clarity and accessibility of holdings;
- To continue to develop communication and cooperation between board members of the three institutions facilitated by the DAHS;
- To explore collaborative fund-raising for appropriate activities involving the three institutions; and
- To develop a long-term vision for how the three institutions might work collaboratively, enabling the greatest possibilities for future decision-making.

They then decided on a five-step plan for how to proceed: **(1) work toward a common platform for cataloging archival holdings along with the staff to manage it within a two or three-year period; (2) explore funding sources to underwrite purchase of and migration to a common cataloging platform; (3) hire necessary staff to coordinate and facilitate migration to the common platform; (4) simultaneously with above steps, plan and sponsor larger education events; and (5) continue communication between participants in this collaborative strategic planning workshop, meeting when appropriate.**

At the fall board meeting of the DAHS, it was suggested to find a way for the collections of all three institutions to be searched in a common database. Also that the momentum created by the initial strategic planning workshop should be built upon, and another working group made up of staff and select archivist/librarian professionals to begin the steps proposed by participants of the Cooperative Strategic Planning Workshop. The board decided to allocate up to \$3,000 for the staff working group to continue strategic planning as it relates to finding a common discovery platform. The DAHS plans to contact well-established Scandinavian archives to learn the processes they have developed to achieve database information sharing.

"This workshop was a good first step toward greater cooperation and efficiency for all three of these institutions," says Dr. Nielsen. "Eliminating duplication of effort and materials, as well as creating better ways to make this valuable information more readily available to the public at large, are issues all of us have discussed for some time. We intend to make it a reality." ■

\* In the case of Grand View University, the intent is that the focus is solely on the archive holdings which are viewed as a special collection and not the University at large.



## FROM THE DANA ROOM

### The Sights and Sounds of Christmas – and How it Grew

by Ann (Harms) George

*This article is based on one by the same writer that appeared in the Winter 2007 issue of the Dana Review, the college's alumni magazine.*

A December 3, 1973, clipping from Blair's Pilot-Tribune in the Archive's Dana Collection announces that "The sounds and sights of Christmas, many of them with a distinct Danish flavor, will be offered to the public during the annual Christmas Open House at Dana on Sunday, December 9."

It's apparent from the clipping that the college had been inviting the public to earlier Christmas programs, to its "Christmas Open House." Those programs had featured concerts by the Dana Choir and Concert Band; they'd also included, at various times over the years, a Santa Lucia ceremony, the Dana Folk Dancers, and "Let's Make It Danish" (hands-on instruction on making Christmas tree ornaments). There had also been pastries from Denmark and Christmas trees with Danish ornaments, including a very tall one in the Hunt Campus Center – already a Dana tradition.



*The traditional Santa Lucia ceremony.*



*A family learns to make traditional Danish Christmas ornaments at "Let's Make It Danish."*

Then in 1973 Phil Pagel, director of public relations, decided to put many of these together into a one-day package, "as a Christmas gift to the area," he said, "and to showcase our student talent and emphasize Dana's Danish/German heritage." And so the Sights and Sounds of Christmas was launched.

The Pilot-Tribune article describes the events planned for the day, many of which became repeated favorites: Storytime, a Santa Lucia ceremony, performances by the Dana Folk Dancers, a "Sounds of Christmas" concert by the college's choir

and concert band, an exhibit of Christmas art, and displays of the college's antique candlesticks, Danish Christmas stamps, and Bing and Grondahl and Royal Copenhagen Christmas plates. In addition, the Bookstore would have a "Denmark Corner" featuring gift items from Denmark and other Scandinavian countries.

By 1975 attendance was estimated at 2,000. A smorgasbord that served 775 participants that year became a major feature of the day, with a lavish spread and several noon and late afternoon settings.

Sights and Sounds schedules list events that were added over the next decades. Those in the 1970s included a Festival Worship Service to open the day, plays with Christmas themes staged by the Theater Department, and Danish, German, and French



*Dr. John W. Nielsen captivated the children with Christmas stories and poetry.*

(Continued page 7)

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Arnold Jensen, Charlottesville, VA  
Frederik & Dawn Jensen, Minnetonka, MN  
Ken & Bonnie Jensen, Albert Lea, MN  
Lynda Jeppesen, Oak Park, IL  
Joyce Johnsen, Huntington Beach, CA  
Alice M. Jorgensen, Ferndale, MI  
Dorothy Jorgensen, Bemidji, MN  
Lis Jorgensen, Burnsville, MN  
Siobhan Kimminau, Omaha, NE  
Deb Katt, Herman, NE  
Richard & JoAnn Kleber, Northfield, MN  
Charles Lang, Orlando, FL  
Keith & Lori Larsen, Blair, NE  
Harold & Barbara Laursen, Kearney, NE  
Frank & Margaret Madsen, Santa Maria, CA  
Don Marshall, Oaks, OK  
Sarah Meldrum, Mertztown, PA  
Linda Moore, Eagan, MN  
William C. & Margaret R. Nelsen, St. Peter, MN  
Leon & Alice Neve, St. Paul, MN  
Ron & Kathie Nielsen, Maplewood, MN  
North Logan Cemetery Assn., St. Paul, NE  
Folmer & Vera Nyby, Michigan City, IN  
Gunnar Nyholm, Valley, NE  
Kris O'Neil, Flower Mound, TX  
Myrna Olsen, Prior Lake, MN  
Philip Panum, Englewood, CO  
Jon & Sonya Pedersen, Homer Glen, IL  
Duane & Dixie Petersen, Wichita, KS  
Marc & Carlene Petersen, Omaha, NE  
Noel & Ruby Petersen, Omaha, NE  
T. Richard & Mary Lou Petersen, Herman, NE  
James Peterson, Richfield, MN

John E. Peterson, Pottstown, PA  
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Ann Marie & Sigrid Rasmussen, Junction City, OR  
Carl L.M & Nancy Rasmussen, Kirkland, IL  
Corinne Robinson, Minneapolis, MN  
Bob & Judy Schmoll, Greenville, PA  
Greg Schou, Albert Lea, MN  
Jens & Eileen Simonsen, Oakdale, NE  
Jan Sorensen, Columbus, OH  
Arliss Stockdale, Ames, IA  
Larrie Stone, Ames, IA  
Paul Thisted, Evergreen, CO  
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John Braunhold, Chicago, IL  
Judy Brehm, Blair, NE  
Ronald & Mary Bro, Cedar Falls, IA  
Lois Carter, Blanchard, LA  
Dale & Laurel Christiansen, Dannebrog, NE  
Roger Clark, Franklin, WI  
Sue Clifford, Lincoln, NE  
Danish Sisterhood Dagmar Lodge 4, Chicago, IL  
Danish Sisterhood Pacific Northwest, Seattle, WA  
Walter & Linda Duda, Omaha, NE  
Elizabeth Dutton, Boalsburg, PA  
David & Marilyn Falksen, Arlington, VA  
Lyle & Dorothy Feisel, Chestertown, MD  
Charles & Sherry Forrest, Omaha, NE  
Jon & Elizabeth Fredlund, Anoka, MN  
The Geiseler Family Trust by Alice Geisler  
Al Girtz, Mankato, MN  
James Haney, Plover, WI  
Kristie Hansen-Mendez, Chicago, IL  
Lee & Charla Hardesty, Fair Oaks, CA  
Kevin & SusanAnn Harrison, Portage, MI  
Marilyn Hawes, Fort Calhoun, NE  
Alan Hanson & Mary Henriksen, Omaha, NE  
Janice Heath, Hardin, MT  
Ralf & Inga Hoifeldt, Urbandale, IA  
Teresa Hyndman, Vergennes, VT  
James & Margery Iversen, Decorah, IA  
Bonnie Jensen, Eagan, MN  
Ray & Julie Jensen, Aquilla, TX  
Hanne Karman, Chadds Ford, PA  
Vivian Kelley, Blair, NE  
Gladys Kempe, Tustin, CA  
Ramona Klaasmeyer, Omaha, NE  
Bob & Joan Krogh, Blair, NE  
Lorene Larsen, Omaha, NE  
Marilyn Larsen, Underwood, IA  
Ginny Leppart, Eden Prairie, MN  
Galen Lillethorup, Omaha, NE

Don Mattox, Sheboygan, WI  
Ruth McMaster, Omaha, NE  
Patricia Miller, Crawfordsville, IA  
Jorn & Bodil Muller, Hillsboro, OR  
Kaj Neve, New York, NY  
Loyd & Marie Neve, Omaha, NE  
Stanley Nielsen, Monona, WI  
Roger & Dorothy Olson, Blair, NE  
Ivan & Pat Paulsen, Walker, MN  
Uffe Pedersen & Jytte Rasmussen, Denmark  
Carol Petersen, Mesa, AZ  
Gary & Linda Rasmussen, Ankeny, IA  
The Moses & Emily Margritt Rodriguez Fund  
of Schwab Charible  
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Carl Steffensen, Houston, TX  
Arlene Stork, Fremont, NE  
Karen Taylor, Springville, IA  
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Evelyn Thomas, Northfield, MN  
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Marion Vierow, Saco ME  
Marion Ward, Blair, NE  
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Susan Bennerotte, Maryville, MO  
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Joanne Carlson, Papillion, NE  
Vaughn Christensen, Blair, NE  
Bjorn Christopherson, Decorah, IA  
Willa Cleary, Alexandria, VA  
Fred & Lois Donaldson, Vancouver, WA  
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Erik & Greta Hansen, Racine, WI  
Kenneth Hansen, Blair, NE  
Mary Ann Hansen, Blacksburg, VA  
Carol Haussermann, Blair, NE  
David Hendee, Northfield, MN  
Mitch & Lydia Hennick, Taylors, SC  
Kathy Henning, Middleton, WI  
Ron & Rikki Hulsebus, Omaha, NE  
Del & Trudy Hutton, Blair, NE  
Jack & Opal Jensen, Blair, NE  
Paul & Marilyn Jersild, Norfolk, VA  
Marjorie Johnson, Omaha, NE  
Nancy Kay, Omaha, NE  
Lois Kemble, Lincoln, NE  
David & Carol Kuhr, Blair, NE  
Beulah Larsen, Fremont, NE  
Susan Larson, Fort Snelling, MN  
Larry & Susan Legore, Algona, IA  
Michael Lowe, Logan, IA

## ANNUAL REPORT 2019 (Cont.)

Aaron Loyd, Blair, NE  
George & Julie Madsen, Omaha, NE  
Maxine Mitchell, Omaha, NE  
Minna Mortensen, Brook Park, OH  
John Nelson, Los Banos, CA  
Martha Nelson, Webster, MN  
Howard Nicholson, Marquette, MI  
Cheryl Nielsen, Harlan, IA  
W. Clayton Nielsen, Solvang, CA

Liv Paulson Norderhaug, Chanhassen, MN  
Krista Olivier, Sioux Falls, SD  
Alis Olsen, St. Paul, MN  
Arylce Olsen, Missouri Valley, IA  
Jim & Sue Olsen, Blair, NE  
Agnes Paulsen, Tucson, AZ  
Glenn & Dorothy Pedersen, Omaha, NE  
Eric Petersen, Mission, KS  
Lynn Petersen, Omaha, NE

Robert & Darlene Rademacher, Lincoln, NE  
Kristin & Kevin Ronnenkamp, Omaha, NE  
Carole Schetter, Highlands Ranch, CO  
Margaret Sibbensen, Bennington, NE  
Michelle Snow, Washington, DC  
South Creek Wedding Events, Blair, NE  
Ralph & Nina Spear, Burlington, NC  
Martha Stone, Providence, RI  
Gerald & Ellen Thain, Stoughton, WI ■

## AROUND THE ARCHIVE

- ◆ The Danish American Archive and Library and Creighton University (CU), a private Jesuit university located in Omaha, Nebraska, recently signed a Community Partnership Agreement. The purpose of this agreement is to formally establish a relationship between DAAL and CU to facilitate member, supporter and visitor opportunities; to share and exchange professional resources, works and materials and to promote educational, scholarly and creative endeavors. We are offering internships to Creighton students through this agreement, and will work toward joint projects as well. We previously signed similar agreements with the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Grand View University in Des Moines, IA, and the Museum of Danish America in Elk Horn, IA. These agreements show the increasing interest in the DAAL as a research and educational institution. ■

**Creighton**  
UNIVERSITY

### From the Dana Room (Cont.)

Christmas rooms featuring the holiday customs, decorations, cookies, and pastries of those countries. (A Spanish Christmas room was a later addition.) “Let’s Make It Danish” was reintroduced.

The first Sunday in December became the established day for Sights and Sounds. Word spread about the event, and visitors soon began arriving not only by car, but by the busload, on tours sponsored by travel agencies, banks, and senior centers.

By 1977 attendance was estimated at 3,000, with 1,200 visitors enjoying the smorgasbord. Five years later, in 1982, an estimated 5,000 attended from 14 states.

Contributors to this success, in addition to members of the various campus performing groups, included the many students and members of the faculty and staff and their families, who, beforehand, helped plan the activities, decorated, and baked, and then assisted throughout the day.

By 1983 the festival had grown to the point that the December issue of *Better Homes and Gardens* named it one of the major Christmas festivals in the U.S.

And in 1991, an article in the December issue of *Midwest Living* titled “A Christmasy Nebraska Campus,” reported that “Last year, more than 4,500 visitors flocked to the campus.” It advised readers to make their smorgasbord reservations early.

Among the visitors in 1995 were the Danish ambassador to the U.S., Knud-Erik Tygesen, and his wife, Ulla, and U.S. Representative Doug Bereuter of Nebraska's First Congressional District and his wife, Louise.

Over the years the schedule continued to evolve. Art students exhibited and sold their work. There was a Christmas Marketplace with guest vendors. Area quilters, china painters, weavers, and lacemakers either displayed their work or gave demonstrations. In 2004 there was a Viking encampment, and in 2005 a Hans Christian Andersen reenactor.

“Showcase” concert choirs from area high schools and other area and campus vocal and instrumental groups also performed. And in 2007 Dana’s musical theater alumni returned to the campus “to present,” a Dana news release announced, “Broadway’s take on the holiday in song and dance.”

Repeat visitors said that they looked forward to the event – for them, they explained, it was the way they liked to begin the holiday season. “The Sights and Sounds of Christmas,” Pagel said, in looking back, “just took off and became a major tourist attraction.” ■



*The concert by the Dana College Chorale was a highlight of the event each year.*

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

## 2019: A YEAR OF OUTREACH AND SERVICE



*Executive Director  
Jill Hennick*

As I look back on this past year, I am surprised by how much we accomplished. And as we look forward to celebrating the 10th anniversary of our move from Dana College, I am even more proud of how far we have come.

As always, we continue our day-to-day operations—collecting and processing materials relating to the Danish American experience and sharing that experience with researchers and others. ***And we are not slowing down! During the months of May-August, the number of our visitors doubled from 89 in 2018 to 180 in 2019.*** The reasons for the visits varied, from old friends traveling through Nebraska to those who just noticed our sign and decided to stop in.

***Donations of materials aren't slowing down either.*** We average two offers of library books per month, and some collections are substantial in size. Families add additional information to existing collections on a routine basis, and, this year we have seen an increase in “digital only” collections as families who still want to keep their original documents have offered to let us scan the contents. At least three of our larger family donations this year were from people who found out about us on the internet. We are currently updating our website and brochure.

Already we have added PayPal to the website, which allows us to accept online financial donations.

We couldn't exist without our volunteers. Although we regret that some long-term, regular volunteers are no longer able to be with us, our volunteer numbers have not diminished. ***We had the largest number of volunteers last year since leaving the Dana campus. That was 80 volunteers, including 16 new ones. This year, we had five new volunteers.***

We continue to help researchers and genealogists both in person and through email. As we improve our finding aides, the process becomes smoother. We enjoyed having Danish American Heritage Society's Bodtker Grant recipient here in August researching events in the Danish/German Schleswig-Holstein territory dispute. He spent an entire week just gathering information and found so much he didn't have time to analyze any of it while he was here. It was satisfying for us to have a university student use our materials again. Also in August a Danish historian did research here on Danish Americans in World War I.

Additional educational highlights included two summer undergraduate interns from the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), and a graduate student in a non-profit management course at UNO using the DAAL as the subject for a fund development plan report. We continue to have inquiries from potential interns, from this area and nationally and in one case, internationally.

### ***Our facilities are being used more:***

- ***The Dana College Alumni and Friends Association has been holding their meetings here until they have a space promised to them on the Dana campus. This closer relationship has encouraged us to clarify the roles of each institution to better define our responsibilities in preserving the legacy of Dana College.***
- ***The Liberal Arts Reading Program (LARP) book club meets here every other Wednesday afternoon.***
- ***The Dana College class of 1969 had their 50<sup>th</sup> class reunion planning meetings here.***
- ***The Omaha AAUW Genealogy group had a tour of the Archive on September 13<sup>th</sup>.***
- ***The Danish American Heritage Society held their board meeting here on October 3rd.***

October was a busy month for us. One of our board members, Palma Plume from Evergreen, Colorado, manned a table at the Danish Sisterhood Convention which took place in Omaha October 3-6. Through this we disseminated information about the DAAL. Plus we presented the first 25 visitors with a free copy of *Elna: a Danish Blossom in Urban Blight* by Harold E. Olsen. On Oct 5<sup>th</sup> we hosted approximately 80 people at our annual Kringle and Mingle event.

That month we also enhanced our relationship with UNO by once again having our traveling exhibit “Danish Children Growing Up American” on display at their library, the place where it all started in 2013. The Washington County Historical Museum in Fort Calhoun provided many artifacts to enhance the photographs on the panels. A local business, Sid Dillon Chevrolet, provided transportation for the exhibit items, so it really was a community project. Danish lecturer Jan P. Jessen spoke about “Denmark 1931-1932: Roots of Nazi Influence” in an area adjacent to the exhibit. UNO hosted the presentation and a reception following the lecture and the DAAL gave out free copies of the book *War Games: Denmark on the Eve of the Nazi Invasion, April 1940* by Torben Christensen and Lucille Wilder. UNO students and other Omaha groups attended the lecture.

My thanks go out to all of you. Without your help none of these impressive accomplishments would be possible. Next year will be our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an independent non-profit Nebraska corporation. If any of you have ideas of fun ways to celebrate that you would like to coordinate, please let me know. It is when we all share our various talents that the DAAL becomes all it was meant to be. ■



**Would you like to help?**

Please cut out this card and send it in with your tax-deductible contribution.

A check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed. (Please make payable to the Danish American Archive and Library.)  
Or to pay by credit card:

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**Please consider the DAAL for your company’s matching fund program and for estate gifts.**

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

**IN MEMORIUM: Dolores (Dody) Jensen Johnson (1926-2020)**



The Danish American Archive and Library lost a true pioneer when Dody Johnson passed away on January 1, 2020. One of her final requests, to make her last two 2019 50-100 Club payments, shows her extraordinary dedication to the DAAL.

Dody organized our spring and fall volunteer program in 1991 when we were still located at Dana College, and managed it from then through Fall Volunteer Week 2019. Simply put, we would not exist without our volunteers from this area and from around the country.

She was a long-time DAAL volunteer and mother of current board member Dave Johnson and former board member Paul Johnson. Daughter Julie participates in the volunteer weeks as well.

For years Dody’s main focus was on cataloging the thousands of obituaries about Danish Americans that we continue to receive. Fran Anderson, who has worked with Dody on the obituary project since 2012, had this to say. “We are going to miss her terribly. She was a

delight to work with, and she had a wealth of information about the people, families and even the towns we came across in our work. Whenever we had a question about a person or place, she almost always had the answer right from the top of her head.”

Executive Director Emeritus John W. Nielsen, who knew Dody from when they were children, said, “We knew each other too well not to see through any undue praise or blame. We knew each other’s faults, and it didn’t spoil our friendship of 90 years.”

We are honored that Dody’s family chose to hold a visitation for her here at the DAAL on Friday, January 10 from three to six p.m. We displayed some of the many photos of Dody from our files that depicted her years of service here. ■



*Dody, John W. Nielsen and Fran Anderson at the obituary table.*

1738 Washington Street  
Blair, Nebraska 68008

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## IN THE STACKS



Montana Multimillionaire  
Peter Larson

### **Peter Larson: Montana Multimillionaire**

By Library Assistant Michael Hennick

When Peter Larson died in 1907 at the age of fifty-eight in Helena, Montana, the local newspaper called the event a “calamity.” This Danish immigrant had achieved great economic success in a variety of enterprises, but for many in the Northwest he was known simply for his integrity, humility and charity.

Peter Larson, born Peder Larsen in the village of Strærup on the Danish island of Fyn, was a poor peasant when he came to America in 1868. Despite being penniless and knowing no English he quickly did what so many immigrants did and continue to do, he began taking hard labor jobs such as dock work and freighting. Though he landed at New Orleans, he worked his way north into the Dakotas and was caught up in the railroad boom that was sweeping the nation. Supplying railroad construction crews was big business and good money. Larson developed a knack for choosing good partners and making wise investments. He also had a gift for avoiding politics and reporters! He was eventually involved in many industries including railroads (in both the U.S. and Canada), banking, merchandising, logging, mining and real estate. When he died his net worth was at least ten million dollars.

He married Margaret Moran, an Irish girl from Bismarck, in 1884. The couple settled permanently in Helena, Montana. They had no children of their own but adopted a niece of Mrs. Larson. The large house they lived in was sold by Margaret after Peter’s death and eventually was acquired by the state of Montana to serve as the Governor’s Mansion from 1913 to 1953. Larson survived a ship wreck in 1904 while traveling from Seattle to Victoria, but he did not survive the liver cancer that claimed his life three years later. Remembered as a charitable man he contributed to churches, hospitals, children’s homes, family members and former employees. His mausoleum in Helena’s Resurrection Cemetery simply bears the name Larson.

The Peter Larson collection (LAP-2019) at the Danish American Archive and Library consists of one box with some photographs and numerous articles in English and Danish on Larson’s life, genealogy, investments and business partners. There is also research-related correspondence from the donor. The DAAL is pleased to have received this material and learn of a Dane who was heavily involved in the development of the American West. ■