

JOTTINGS

A publication of the Danish American Archive and Library

Jan.-April 2020

A NEW LOOK FOR OUR SECOND DECADE



It was the summer of 2010 when the DAAL was compelled to pack up and leave the lower level of the Dana College library. We took with us our complete inventory of books, documents and the rest...and our website, which we had introduced a couple of years previously. As we enter our second decade as an independent corporation, a new, more streamlined website now represents the DAAL online.

The bright new design, created by Mark Hennick of Plum Design of Kansas City, features photos, both historic and current, that depict Danish Americans from the early days of immigration to today. And that illustrates what today's Danish American Archive and Library is all about—preserving the history of all Danish Americans regardless of when or how they lived.

Starting with the home page, visitors find easy ways to navigate throughout the site as well as information about how to locate us and when we are open. The About page features a great photo of the iconic Danish American family of Phil and Florence Larsen, which includes our president, Gary Madsen, as well as many members who volunteer at the Archive. Moving to the Collections page, visitors will see ten examples of collections we house and a few samples from each collection. We hope seeing these samples will inspire visitors to donate their own materials to us for safekeeping.

Through the Donate page, we are asking for more than just money. Equally important to us are the letters, family histories, diaries, obituaries, photos and business documents that depict Danish American history. Here, we also ask for the volunteers whose work helps us continue to thrive.

The DAAL is on the cutting edge of digitizing our materials, and visitors to the site can access everything we make available online through the link to the Digital Archive. You can access other digitized materials by visiting the DAAL in person.

Finally, researchers can initiate a search utilizing the Search link. This links you directly to the Blair Public Library and Technology Center's online catalog. The Blair Public Library has supported us in this way ever since we left Dana College.

Our goal in redesigning our website was to make it visually stimulating, concise and easy to navigate. From the feedback we have received so far, we feel we have accomplished all three of those goals. Please take a few moments and visit us at www.danishamericanarchive.com.

New Brochure and New Logo

The website redesign affected two other parts of our marketing approach. Enclosed in this issue of *Jottings* is a copy of our new informational brochure. We worked to create an attractive piece based on the website design that gets our point across without overwhelming our readers. And our new tagline, "We never met a document we didn't like," is prototypical of the Danish dry sense of humor. The other change that came about was the redesign of our logo. The new logo incorporates elements of our first logo in the font used for the letters DAAL. With this design we can use just the graphic portion without the accompanying words and we're still clearly identified.

Both our new website and brochure show the open, warm and welcoming attitude that is our trademark at the DAAL. ■



FROM THE DANA ROOM

On Writing *A Place Called Dana*

by Ann (Harms) George

Looking ahead to Dana's 1984 centennial, planners decided that an important part of the celebration should be a new history of the college and Trinity Seminary. Their choice of its author – if he'd agree to writing it – was Dr. Peter L. Petersen, a 1962 Dana graduate and history professor at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, who wrote and taught classes on the U.S. in the 20th century and the history of immigration.

Phil Pagel, Dana's director of public relations, asked Petersen, and he, fortunately, agreed to writing the book. The result was his highly readable and informative *A Place Called Dana*. *

In his Preface, Petersen writes, *"In this centennial history of Trinity Seminary and Dana College, I have sought to accomplish four major goals. First, I have attempted to identify and describe the significant events and people in the past of the two institutions so that this work may serve as a book of reference. Second, because Danish immigrants are widely perceived to be among the most rapidly assimilated of the disparate groups which settled the United States, I took advantage of a rare opportunity to highlight some of the small but colorful Danish threads in the rich tapestry of American ethnic history. Third, in an age when most students attend national research universities, large state colleges, or community colleges, there is a pressing need to illustrate the significant contribution to higher education made by small, church-related, liberal arts colleges like Dana. Finally, education does not occur in a vacuum, even on a Nebraska hillside, and hence I have sought to place the history of Trinity and Dana within the larger framework of American history."*

To accomplish these goals, he gathered information for the book and wrote it over the course of two years, as his academic schedule allowed. His travels included, of course, campus visits for research and interviews. He also found useful information in research notes and other material compiled by William E. Christensen for his 75-year history of Dana and Trinity, "Saga of the Tower." (In his Preface, Petersen thanks Christensen, who taught history at Dana from 1955-56 and 1975-77, for permitting him to use this information.)

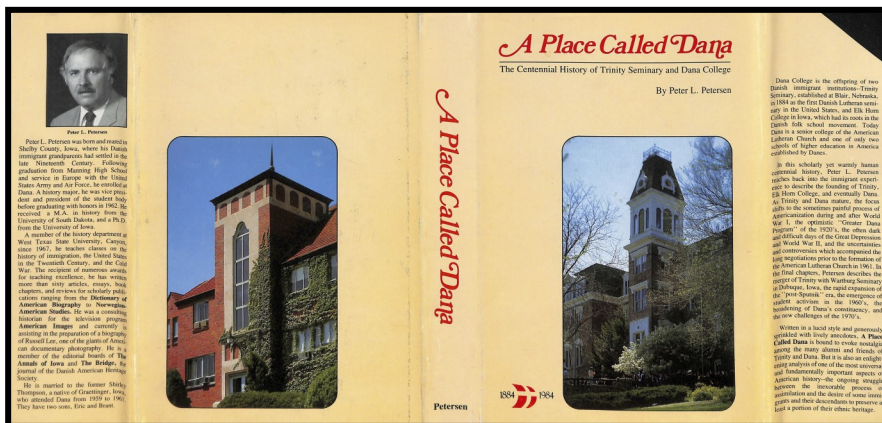
Petersen also did research at the Nebraska State Historical Library in Lincoln, and in Iowa, at Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque (Trinity's archive was transferred there when the two seminaries merged in 1960) and at Grand View College's Danish Immigrant Archives, in Des Moines.

In Denmark he did research at the Danish Emigration Archives in Aalborg. Other destinations included the Skagen and Aarhus Art Museums; each had a painting he asked to reproduce for the book, and both granted permission. And, from an interview with a church historian, he learned about divisions within the Church of Denmark in the last third of the 19th century.

In his Preface to *A Place Called Dana*, he thanks his West Texas department chair for arranging his teaching schedule so that he'd have large blocks of time for writing.

Petersen introduces each chapter by placing "the history of Trinity and Dana within the larger framework of American history," his fourth goal. For example, at the beginning of chapter one, "A New Church in a New Land," he writes: *"It was mid-September, 1884. Eight years had passed since the Centennial of the United States, a celebration marred briefly by shocking news from the West – the death of General Custer and his men at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Across the nation rival supporters of Grover Cleveland and James G. Blaine were already at work on what soon degenerated into one of the most scurrilous presidential campaigns in American history. Vivid memories of the Civil War still affected the voting behavior of many among the country's population of fifty-five million. . . . In eastern Nebraska there was already a hint of fall in the air. Pasture and hay lands had started to turn brown, while in the corn fields which dotted the region's fertile hills and valleys, the rich green of summer was slowly losing out to the tans and beiges of autumn. Because the arduous task of harvesting corn by hand would not begin for several weeks, it was an ideal meeting time for farm people. At a little country church, near a place called Argo in southern Burt County, men were gathering. Largely from Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota, they were coming to form a new Lutheran church body in America. And although Dana College was still a thing of the distant future, the meeting at Argo that September set in motion some of the events which led to its creation."*

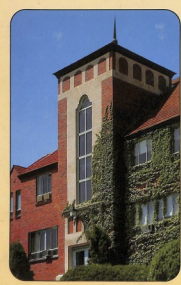
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Peter L. Petersen was born and raised in Shelby County, Iowa, where his Danish immigrant grandparents had settled in the late Nineteenth Century. Following graduation from Manning High School and service in Europe with the United States Army and the Navy, he earned a B.S. in education from the University of Iowa. He received a M.A. in history from the University of South Dakota, and a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa.

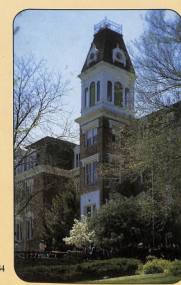
A member of the history department at West Texas State University, Canyon, since 1967, he teaches classes on the history of immigration, the United States in the Nineteenth Century, and the Civil War. The author of numerous award-winning teaching materials, he has written more than sixty articles, essays, book chapters, and reviews for scholarly publications ranging from the *Journal of American Studies* to the *Journal of American Studies*. He is a contributing member of the editorial boards of *The Journal of American Studies* and *The Journal of the Danish American Historical Society*.

He is married to the former Shirley Thompson, a native of Cambridge, Iowa. They shared Dana from 1969 to 1981. Their four sons are Eric and Stuart.



A Place Called Dana
The Centennial History of Trinity Seminary and Dana College
By Peter L. Petersen

A Place Called Dana
Petersen
1884-1984



Dana College is the offspring of two Danish immigrant immigrants: Trinity Seminary, established at Blair, Nebraska, in 1884 as the first Danish Lutheran seminary in the United States, and Elm Hill College in Iowa, which had its roots in the Danish folk school movement. Today Dana is a state college of the American Lutheran Church and one of only two schools of higher education in America established by Danes.

In this scholarly yet warmly human centennial history, Peter L. Petersen reaches back into the immigrant experience to describe the founding of Trinity, Elm Hill College, and eventually Dana. He traces and Dana's growth, the Danish folk school movement, the Danish folk school organization during and after World War II, and the Americanization movement which accompanied the immigration of the 1920's. The often dark and forbidding of the Great Depression and World War II, and the Americanization movement which accompanied the immigration of the 1920's. The often dark and forbidding of the Great Depression and World War II, and the Americanization movement which accompanied the immigration of the 1920's.

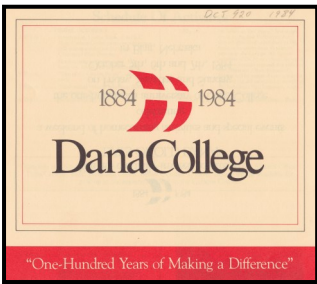
Written in a lucid style and generously illustrated with black and white photographs, *A Place Called Dana* is bound to evoke nostalgia among the many alumni and friends of Trinity and Dana. But it is also an enlightening and enlightening analysis of one of the most important and fundamentally important aspects of American history—the complex interplay between the inevitable process of assimilation and the desire of some immigrants and their descendants to preserve a distinct portion of their ethnic heritage.



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A Place Called Dana (Continued)



Petersen dedicated the book to his wife, Shirley (a Dana alumna), “and all other Dana students, past, present, and future.”

A book signing for *A Place Called Dana* was a featured event when the college celebrated “100 Years of Making a Difference” at its 1984 Homecoming. The weekend schedule included several centennial-related activities; chief among them was “Aebleskiver and Autographs,” a Saturday breakfast where alumni could enjoy aebleskiver (a Homecoming tradition) in the Hunt Center's dining room and then meet and visit with Petersen as he signed their personal copies.

A Dana Distinguished Alumnus, Pete Petersen, as the author of *A Place Called Dana*, knew more than anyone about the history of the college and seminary. He and Shirley often participated in the

Archive's Volunteer Week. He was a member of the Archive's Steering Committee when the Archive was at Dana and during its transition, and then, after the Archive's relocation in downtown Blair, became a member of its Board of Directors.** We were saddened to learn of his death on February 5.

During his long tenure at West Texas he received many honors for his teaching and scholarship, among them being named, in 1990, a Piper Professor by the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation of San Antonio; in 1997, the university's first Texas A&M's Regents Distinguished Service Professor; and, twice by its student government, Outstanding Member of the Faculty. In 2003, he was named Professor Emeritus. In 2013, the Organization of American Historians named him a Distinguished Member. He wrote two books, compiled and edited two others, and contributed to many reference books. He also contributed more than 30 articles or chapters to scholarly journals and books and published close to 60 book and film reviews. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Danish American Heritage Society, and after he retired, served for 14 years as editor or assistant editor of the Society's journal, “The Bridge.” ***



*Publication of *A Place Called Dana* was made possible by an anniversary grant from Aid Association for Lutherans.

**The Steering Committee was formed to explore the Archive's becoming an independent corporation when it was on the Dana campus. When the college closed and the Archive relocated, it became a 501(c)(3) Nebraska corporation, and Steering Committee members were subsequently elected to the Archive's newly formed Board of Directors.

***This information is from Petersen's obituary in the February 10, 2020, “Canyon News.” ■

THE GREAT COVID-19 SALE OF 2020

In this time of “sheltering in place,” many of us are running out of reading material. With that in mind, the DAAL is helping out by putting our Lur books on sale for just \$1.00 each. Lur books were written by and about Danish Americans whose fascinating experiences are still relevant today. Here is a list of the books that are available. Supplies are limited for certain books.

A Frame But No Picture
Danish American Lutheranism (1860-1908)
Danes in America: Kansas-Nebraska
Elna
Embracing Two Worlds
Inside the Fighting First
Our Last Frontiers
P.S. Petersen's Memoirs
Passages from India
Pauline and Panno
Plough to the Setting Sun
Recipes and Reminiscence
Tante Johanne
Under the Cloud
War Games



You can order your Lur books by email at info@danishamericanarchive.com or by calling 402-426-7910.

Book Prices: \$1.00 each

Shipping and Handling (USA): \$4.00 for the first book. \$1.00 for each additional book.

7% tax for Nebraska residents.

Save the postage—curbside delivery available.



VOLUNTEERS: 993 hours by 36 volunteers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska.

VISITORS: 162 visitors from Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Ohio.

USERS: 31 users from California, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, Canada, Denmark, England, Germany and unspecified in email.

NUMBERS ARE DOWN IN ALL CATEGORIES DUE TO COVID-19. SPRING VOLUNTEER WEEK WAS CANCELLED..

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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50/100 Club:

Members of the 50/100 Club pledge to give at least \$50 per month toward our annual operating budget. Our goal is to have at least 100 donors give in this way. Members sustain the DAAL by giving a minimum of \$600 per year. Those at the Founder's Level give at least \$2,000 per year. All members of the 50/100 Club receive one donation acknowledgement for tax purposes in January reflecting a yearly total of all their donations. These donations are part of the General Fund.

50/100 FOUNDER LEVEL

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 Myrv Christopherson (Decorah, IA)
 Fritz Hansen (Wichita, KS)
 Roger Hanson (Cedar Falls, IA)
 Michael & Jill Hennick (Blair, NE)
 Elaine Hoyer (Blair, NE)
 Tim & Sharon Jensen (Blair, NE)
 Julianne Johnson (Columbus, OH)
 Chuck & Joyce Jorgensen (Blair, NE)
 Gene & Nancy Lindblad (Blair, NE)
 Barbara Meduna (Monument, CO)
 Vordyn Nelson (Luther, MI)
 John Mark & Dawn Nielsen (Blair, NE)
 Lisa Nielsen (Fairfield, PA)
 Donald Pedersen (Pea Ridge, AR)
 Jay Planalp (Frederick, MD)
 Palma & Larry Plume (Evergreen, CO)
 Scott & Colleen Rasmussen (Omaha, NE)
 Sandy Sonderup (Blair, NE)

50/100 Club (Cont.)

Joan Sorensen (Richardson, TX)
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Agnete Temali (Arden Hills, MN)
Nick Temali (Mahtomedi, MN)
John & Deb Wood (Oklahoma City, OK)
Sandra Wunder (Eaton, CO)

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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Myrv & Anne* Christopherson
Bernhard* & Marilyn* Erling
Kathryn (Olsen) & Milbern Goetz
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Michael and Jill Hennick
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Russell P.* and Esther A. Jensen
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Paul & Liz Johnson
Lorene Larsen
Phil & Florence Larsen
Gene* & Nancy Lindblad
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 ■

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



**Executive Director
Jill Hennick**

As we go through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have to wonder how we will survive and what later generations will say about how we overcame it. Here at the DAAL we are able to observe firsthand the experiences of those who went through major crises in the past.

A great example of this is our collection for Reverend Joseph Girtz, who lived from 1896-1999. During those 103 years, he experienced many trials and tribulations. Think of all the staggering world events that occurred during that time period—two world wars, the 1918 influemza pandemic, the polio epidemic, the 1929 stock market crash and the cold war to name a few.

Reverend Girtz served the Santal Mission in India from 1925-1938, where he encountered sickness and disease, including leprosy. He and his

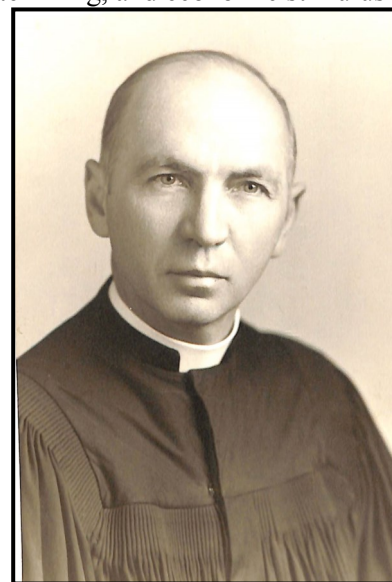
wife Mabel lost two sons there. How did he get through difficult times? From his writings it is evident that he kept a sense of humor. In 1942 while serving Trinity Lutheran Church in Albert Lea, Minnesota, he wrote about an upcoming fundraising trip. *“Then I was going to Sleepy Eye and to Hutchinson to solicit for the Jubilee Appeal, but if this gasoline rationing goes into effect, then that will make a difference. And it will perhaps upset some of our District Convention plans too. But now we shall see. Perhaps they might give us preachers a few drops more than ordinary mortals.”*

His strength and ability to get through adversity wasn’t just a personal thing. He shared it and encouraged others. The fact he touched many lives is evident in the 94 letters and cards in his collection congratulating him on his 60th anniversary of ordination.

Sometimes it is hard to look to the future when we are in the midst of turmoil. As with your own investments, our endowment fund is losing value because of the stock market decline. Luckily, we have not been relying on the endowment income to cover any of our monthly expenses. And because our board of directors has always been conservative with spending, we expect to weather the storm.

Unexpected gifts or bequests really make a difference for us as well. The bequest from the estate of Dody Johnson helped us recover one-third of our year-to-date

endowment’s loss of value. And most recently, a bequest from the estate of Lois Girtz Halley, a daughter of Rev. Girtz, will cover an entire month of our 2020 expenses! We expect overall donation totals to be less this year as we all struggle in this economic slump. Measures in the CARES act, such as the ability to deduct some charitable gifts without itemizing, and economic stimulus



Reverend Joseph Girtz

checks could help. One person has already shared their stimulus check with us.

Because you helped us pay off our mortgage in 2017, we are not in debt. That is also a blessing in this current crisis.

It is an uncertain time. Looking at upheavals in our past and drawing courage from those who overcame them helps. ■

“We never met a document we didn’t like.”

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.)
Or to pay by credit card:

____ Mastercard ____ Visa ____ Discover ____ Am Ex for \$ _____

Credit Card No. _____ Exp. Date _____ V-Code No. _____

Signature _____

Please consider the DAAL for matching fund programs and for estate gifts.

Name _____ Spouse _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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

AROUND THE ARCHIVE

Executive Director Jill Hennick and Library Assistant Michael Hennick still come to work every day even though the DAAL is closed to the public because of COVID-19. As Jill says, they shelter at the DAAL and at home. They are using the time freed up by the closure to shift the books and boxes to make more room on the shelves and do extra cleaning. They also are working on the family files (collections that live in file folders in file cabinets because there is not enough material to warrant an entire box).

The project steps are:

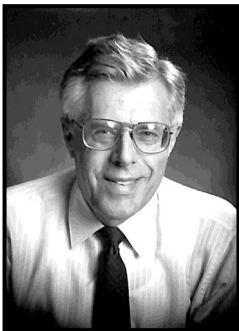
- Remove duplicate items now available through the obituary project, digitized newspapers or indexes.
- Move information to a family box collection or pastor file when appropriate.
- Consolidate family files of relatives.
- Enter files into the online catalog and the internal database.
- Scan the contents.

To show the size of this project, Jill estimates they should be through the Hs by the time we reopen.

Other projects people have been working on from home are internship coordination, proofreading, cataloguing, translating, organizing obituaries, computer software testing and IT questions, completion of the website and brochure redesign and organizing personal or family documents in preparation for donation. The Board of Directors communicates and makes decisions remotely.

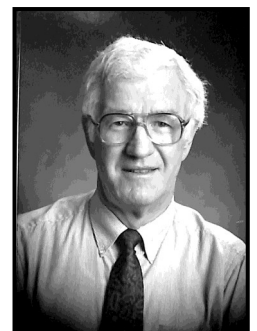
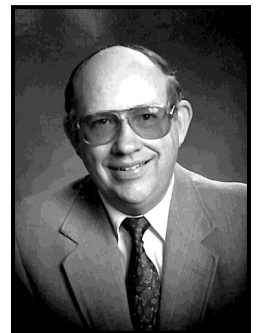
Sadly, three popular former Dana College professors have passed away in 2020. All three stayed connected through the DAAL:

- Roger H. Olson, age 84, passed away January 24, 2020, at his home in Blair. Prior to coming to Blair, Roger taught math at Tarkio College in Tarkio, MO for five years, then at Dana College for 35 years. He is survived by his wife, Dorothy, also a former Dana College professor. Roger was a great friend and visitor to the DAAL, especially at Kringle & Mingle during the Dana College Homecoming weekends.



- Eugene Clarence Lindblad passed away April 6, 2020, at age 91. Before coming to Blair, Gene worked as a chemist for Union Carbide Chemical Company, but in 1963 began a 33-year career teaching chemistry at Dana College. After he retired, Gene spent many hours volunteering at the DAAL identifying photos of Dana College staff and students. He enjoyed our teasing about being a Swede working in a Danish archive.

- Darrell (Dib) Wallace Dibben died April 12, 2020, from complications of the COVID-19 virus at age 90. He began his 30-year tenure at Dana College in 1965 where he taught communications, language arts, and education classes. He was instrumental in starting the Dana College radio station KDCV-FM and remained the manager and advisor until his retirement in 1995. He, too, often visited the DAAL during our Dana College events. ■



IN THE STACKS

1935 “Dansk Almanak” Remembers the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-1920

By Michael Hennick, Library Assistant

The *Dansk Almanak* was an annual publication of the Danish Lutheran Publishing House in Blair, Nebraska. Published during the Christmas season, this volume contained a calendar, stories, poems, devotions, historical and theological articles and remembrances of those who had died during the previous year. The work was published from 1921-1953; it then continued with the name *Dansk Nytaar* from 1954-1961.

The 1935 issue of the *Almanak* notes the passing of Christen Andersen (1870-1935) of Viborg, South Dakota. The bulk of the article revisits a trying time in Andersen’s life when his family was afflicted with the Spanish flu in 1920. His nineteen-year-old son, Martin, was a student at Dana College and had become infected by the virus. The translated article states:

In the first days when he was under doctor’s care he was nursed by some of the male students at the college. But as the illness progressed he was cared for by the Danish pastor’s wife from Blair. A message was sent to Martin’s father. He and others in the family were also suffering from the flu. It was with great difficulty that he could get to Blair, but he arrived there a couple of days before his son died. Martin’s recovery had been given up by the doctors, and it was evident that the end was near. His sister Olga was also at the school and was suffering from the same illness. She was carried to Martin’s room and was barely able to talk to him. His suffering was great and his strength was small.... The woman who nursed him asked: “Don’t you have a greeting that I can bring from you to your mother?” When it [the question] was repeated he said: “Yes, tell her that it was strange that I should come to Blair to find my father.”... During the laying on of hands Pastor (P.S.) Vig gave the blessing to the dying man....It was evident that the release of the sick man was at hand. His father, who slept in another room was called, but before he came Martin’s breathing had stopped. The day of Martin’s death was February 21, 1920. The father brought the body back to Viborg for burial there.

The article does not tell us, but we must assume that Christen’s other children in South Dakota survived. His daughter Olga K. Andersen definitely recovered from the virus for she is listed in the Dana College register of students for the following school year of 1920-21. She was enrolled in the school of music.

The DAAL has over three hundred periodical titles in English and Danish relating to Denmark and Danish America. We have three sets of *Dansk Almanak* because of its valuable remembrances of Danes who were prominent in the Danish Lutheran churches, schools and other institutions. It is fortunate for us that the article on Christen Andersen and his family had been translated long ago by a faithful volunteer when the Archive was located at Dana College. We are also mindful that a hundred years from now it will be our experiences of a worldwide pandemic that will be “archived.” ■

