

JOTTINGS

A publication of the Danish American Archive and Library

Jan.-May 2021

MORE PROGRESS FOR THE DANA COLLEGE CAMPUS

Dana College closed its doors nearly eleven years ago. For those of us with any connection to the college there was a tremendous feeling of loss—almost as if there had been a death in the family.

People were afraid of what would become of the campus, and rumors circulated that the campus would become everything from a prison to a shopping mall. But for the first few years, nothing really happened except that the grounds and buildings began to deteriorate, and the campus looked like the abandoned place it was. Both Midland University in Fremont, Nebraska, and Grace University in Omaha considered purchasing the campus, but neither plan came to fruition.

In 2013, Omaha real estate developer, Frank Krejci, purchased the campus and then donated it to Angels Share, a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the homeless community in the Omaha metro and Council Bluffs area. Angels Share's founder and CEO, Ed Shada, is an Omaha banker with a long history of working to help the homeless. Shada's plan for the Dana campus is to provide housing, training and employment for area youth who are aging out of foster care or are otherwise at risk, as well as housing for low- to moderate-income senior citizens.

Angels Share recently received \$8.3 million in grants to renovate and convert Blair and Mickelsen Halls into 1- and 2-bedroom studio apartments. The project is expected to begin this fall and to finish by spring of 2022.* Other buildings on campus already have been repurposed. The athletic auditorium is open and used for local sporting events. Trinity Chapel, located in the former Classroom Center, was purchased by Christ Lutheran Church, which is holding services there, and other spaces in that building are now classrooms and offices.

Eight young people now live in the newer apartment-style dormitory that was completed shortly before Dana closed, and at least one young man has found employment with a local car dealer. According to City Administrator Rod Storm, the City of Blair is anxious to work with Angels Share to help them reach their goals. "Our community provides many opportunities for these young people to become trained and enter the workforce with good-paying, long-lasting employment," he said. He went on to list opportunities at local car dealers, the technical campus at Cargill and even a planned Dollar General distribution center among others.

Archive Board Member Dr. John Mark Nielsen, who also serves on the Angels Share board of directors said, "I feel that Dana College alumni and others who care about the college's history are fortunate to have what Angels Share is building on the campus. You could say that in working with these young people, Angels Share is broadening the reach and fulfilling goals that Dana College had in the first place."

After a long period of uneasiness about what would happen to the Dana College campus, former professors, staff members and students, as well as the people of the Blair community are pleased and happy with these new developments. Everyone is looking forward to seeing the campus revitalized and active again. ■



(Photo courtesy of The Blair Enterprise)

Current view of Blair Hall, right, and Mickelsen Hall, to be converted into studio apartments by May of 2022.

*Leanna Ellis, Blair Enterprise: March 26, 2021.

FROM THE DANA ROOM

Farewell to Ann Harms George (1932-2021)

by Sandra Wigdahl, Editor

The Danish American Archive and Library, and *Jottings* in particular, experienced a tremendous loss when Ann Harms George passed away last February. Since the spring/summer issue of 2013, Ann had authored our “From the Dana Room” column beginning with an article about a 1963 visit to the campus by track and field legend, Jesse Owens. Her last article, featured in the September to December 2020 issue, was in my opinion one of her best. It was about the origin of *Hail Dana* and the evolution of the lyrics. The article even included an online link to the anthem being sung by the Dana Chorale. I have to admit, listening to that song choked me up a little, and I didn’t even graduate from Dana.

In between those dates, “From the Dana Room” included articles about visits to the campus by Dana alum and U.S. Senator, Paul Simon, legendary opera star Lauritz Melchior, popular Danish concert pianist Victor Borge and the 1939, 1976 and 2009 visits by Danish royalty. Argo Hall, the Copenhagen Gas Lamps and Dana’s linden trees were featured along with a wealth of other fascinating and sometimes little-known Dana College history.

I first met Ann when I hired on in the public relations office at Dana in 1991. She was serving as the alumni affairs director at the time, but was doing so much more. She wrote and edited the *Dana Review*, Dana’s monthly magazine; organized Dana’s Homecoming



Ann in 2010, shortly after we moved to our new building.



Ann greeting Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark in 2009.

events; and provided input and support for many of Dana’s other major events.

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I soon learned that anything that Ann George touched was always done correctly, completely and on time. I also soon learned that if I ever had a question about spelling, grammar, punctuation or syntax, she was the go-to person, rather than “Clippy,” the annoying little animated talking paper clip offered by Microsoft Word.

Ann and then Executive Director John W. Nielsen created the filing system for the massive amount of Dana College material while we were still located in the Dana library. That system is still in place today and allows Dana alumni and other researchers to easily find the pieces of history they are looking for.

Once the Dana Room was up and running in our current building, Ann worked with retired chemistry professor Gene Lindblad identifying hundreds of photos contained there. When I began editing *Jottings*, I came up with the idea of having Ann write the column “From the Dana Room” for each issue, and as with everything else she did, she picked up the ball and ran. Jill Hennick can testify that it was Ann who got me started assembling each issue, because she sent me her article, complete with photos at least a month before I usually began putting the newsletter together.

So where do we go from here? Luckily we have a person who may be our most knowledgeable about stories contained in both the Dana Room and our general collections—Michael Hennick. Starting with our next issue, Michael will be doing double duty, writing the “From the Dana Room” column along

with his regular “In the Stacks.” I personally miss Ann’s intelligence, grace and humor, but she has left “From the Dana Room” in good hands. Following Ann’s example, Michael has already completed “From the Dana Room” for the next issue. Ann would have loved it. ■



**Danish American
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IN THE STACKS

P. C. Jensen: The Hidden Historian

By Michael Hennick, Library Director



Reverend P.C. Jensen receiving the Diamond Jubilee Award for distinguished service to the UDELIC as editor, statistician and historian, on behalf of Dana College and Trinity Seminary. Presented by Dana College President Dr. C.C. Madsen June 19, 1959 at the 63rd Annual Convention Sidney, Montana.

The Danish American Archive and Library exists as a working institution thanks largely to the efforts of our volunteers. Their work with the collections over the past thirty years has preserved and made viewable and usable what might have become a lost history. One of the most helpful volunteers to me over the past seven years at the DAAL actually passed away in 1978!

Peder Christian Jensen was born in Sønder Stenderup, Denmark, in 1887, came to America in 1900, and was schooled at Dana College and Trinity Seminary in Blair, Nebraska. In June of 1916 he was both ordained by the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church and married to Kirsten (Katie) Schmidt of Audubon, Iowa. They would have four daughters and one son over the next ten years. P. C. served churches in Idaho, Montana, California, Iowa and Nebraska until he retired in 1944. He must have had a passion for history since the UDELIC elected him to be the Synod's first "Statistician" (1933-1959), "Necrologist" (1936-1960) and "Historian" (1946-1978). He was also the editor of the church's newspaper "Luthersk Ugeblad" from 1938-1960.

Not surprisingly Rev. Jensen had a well-stocked library and he diligently saved clippings from many publications that provided

information on Danish Americans, particularly those associated with the UDELIC/UELC. His collection here at the DAAL encompasses seventy boxes. He was a dedicated "annotator" in that he wrote explanatory comments (in pencil) on many of these items. Oftentimes when I have been about to give up on who somebody was or how they were connected to the world of Danish America I would come across one of his notes and my questions were answered. For example, just recently I was trying to find out something about a writer of devotional materials simply known as Th. Lund. For all I knew he might have been a Norwegian since most of his works were published in Minneapolis. But then I found P. C.'s note written on the cover of a little booklet entitled "Til et søgende Hjerte" (To a searching Heart): "Th. Lund: Early Danish pioneer at Vermillion, SD. Father of Revs. John & August Lund, Prof. N. T. Lund (Blair) & Mrs. P. J. Østergaard. He served as itinerant colporter lay witness to countrymen in S.D. & Iowa District – P. C. J." Once again P. C. had come through for me as he has a hundred times. Now I knew Lund's family, location and his work for the church. Thomas Jørgensen Lund (1827-1912) was very much a Danish Lutheran.

P. C. Jensen's tell-tale notes are written in countless books and periodicals at the DAAL. I know his hand-writing immediately when I see it and am always thankful for the information or context that his words supply. He may have been gone for over forty years but he is still doing his part to preserve the history of Danish Americans and he's here every day. ■

DAAL COVID 19 UPDATE

Finally! We are planning to reopen the DAAL to volunteers and the public June 1, but with restrictions. Masks and social distancing will be required, and to ensure the social distancing, we will limit the number of people in the building at one time to 10 in addition to Jill and Michael. Sadly, our coffee breaks for which we are famous will be discontinued a while longer. When you plan to visit us, please call ahead to be sure the 10 limit hasn't been reached. These restrictions will be lifted when CDC guidelines ease. We look forward to seeing you soon! ■

Immanuel Hospital School of Nursing circa 1925. While these women didn't serve during the 1918 pandemic, they are typical of those who did.



VOLUNTEERS: 595 hours by 19 volunteers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska.

VISITORS: 35 visitors from California, Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, and Nebraska.

USERS: 41 users from Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Canada, Denmark, Germany and email.

ACQUISITIONS

Materials:

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:

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.

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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.

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 Deb Schou Wood ■
A special thanks to SHARE Omaha for coordinating volunteers and donations through their "Do Good Week" in April.

...AND THEY JUST KEEP COMING....



The pandemic and the DAAL's being closed happily hasn't stopped the flow of wonderful books and documents. This latest collection of books came from Dr. John R. Christianson, long-time professor at Luther College. The books cover such subjects as Danish royalty, the aristocracy, 16th and 17th century Denmark, and the arts.

We love these donations, so keep them coming!

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



*Executive Director
Jill Hennick*

While the DAAL has been closed to the public, I have had the time to organize my families' collections, which consist of 47 boxes and files with information about 26 related families.

Stories become so much more interesting when you know something about relationships. Relationships can also help solve mysteries. The initial organization of a collection is more easily done by someone like me, who is familiar with the people involved. And, it is even easier when all of the tables in the Archive are available on which to spread out documents!

I found a good example of the advantage of knowing relations and relationships in the collection of my grandparents, Sigurd and Dorothy Petersen. It includes a mystery photo of a man on a bicycle with a note in Danish on the back. The note indicates that he was "sister Katrina's son Kristian who had married sister Maren's daughter Anna." At first I thought the photo was from Dorothy's family, but through research in the related collection of Alvin Petersen I found a hand-written family tree that showed the children and grandchildren of descendants who had emigrated and those who stayed in Denmark. On that I found the cousins that had married. So the photo was from the Petersen family and is now in the correct place. On the family tree I also noticed two other sets of first cousins that married in Denmark. Was that common? Or is that a skeleton in our closet?

We recently separated our online catalog from the Blair Public Library catalog. Although we are grateful to the Blair Public Library for allowing our materials to be found through their search engine (something we really needed at the time) we now can access our materials directly. This makes searching through our materials much easier and quicker. A big project Library Director Michael Hennick is working on now is adding the periodicals into the catalog (about 400 titles). Letting the outside world know the contents of our holdings is always a priority, and the online catalog is our means of doing so. Our former library director, Sharon Jensen, has been adding to the catalog from home during the pandemic. She is able to catalog a box collection in astonishing detail, and this plays a large part in our ability to use the online catalog to find all of the different collections that have reference to a specific subject or person.

The DAAL enables us to have a relationship with people of the past by reading their letters and diaries and sharing their hopes, dreams, fears and sorrows. We see photos and are surprised by how much our great-grandfather's photo looks like our own grandson. We see history repeat itself, and the astonishing changes that can happen during one person's lifetime.

The importance of preserving history has become even more evident during the pandemic. While we have been closed, interpersonal relationships have suffered. But many of our friends have kept in touch by email, phone, or letter. They have remembered us with family and Dana College materials that they found as they used their extra time at home to go through long neglected stacks of paper. They informed us of struggles as they sent in memorials. And they shared their joys as they sent in honoraria.

Thank you for sharing yourselves with us. We look forward to our 2021 goal of reopening, restoring our relationships and spending quality time together again. ■



Would you like to help?

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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

AROUND THE ARCHIVE



On June 5, 2021, The Danish American Heritage Society is presenting their 2021 Spring Conference. The theme for the conference is “Traditions & Transitions: Ways of Being Danish.” The conference is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Time Zone. Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, the conference will be presented remotely in Interactive Virtual Format. For a complete schedule and details on how to register and access the presentations, go to DAHS 2021 Annual Conference (danishheritage.org). This looks to be an interesting conference with presentations, panel discussions, and question and answer sessions centering on Denmark’s history and the many ways it has adapted to a changing world.

SILENT AUCTION!



Here is your chance to own a significant piece of Dana College history. A complete row of theater seats from the historic Alumni Memorial Auditorium came to us when we were still at Dana, and we want to see them go to someone who will treasure them. They are not in perfect condition and will need a little refurbishment.

We will be accepting bids until Friday, June 18, and the seats will go to the highest bid received by 2 p.m. that afternoon. We will be reopening again June 1 if you want to look at them in person. The seats must be picked up in person. To submit your bid, contact Jill Hennick at 402-426-7910 or at info@danishamericanarchive.com. Highest bids will be posted weekly on the DAAL website home page. Don’t miss this opportunity to have a piece of Dana College history in your home.

Facebook Problems

You may have noticed that we haven’t been posting on Facebook lately. That’s partly because we’ve been closed and there wasn’t much to post, but mainly because our Facebook page has been malfunctioning. We can post information, but if you respond or ask a question, we have no way to answer you. We need your help. If you have extensive Facebook expertise, please consider helping us restore our Facebook page to full functionality. Please contact Jill Hennick at info@danishamericanarchive.com, or call her at 402-426-7910 if you are able to help us. ■



PARTING SHOT

Here is our favorite photo found within the last four months.

This dapper and smartly-dressed gentleman is Rasmus Rasmussen standing in front of his store, The Toggery.

We would love to have more information about Rasmus or The Toggery. Please contact us if you recognize either one.