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*The Bridge* and the *Newsletter* are semi-annual publications of the Society. Manuscripts dealing with the Danish immigrant experience in North America are invited. Address submissions to Peter L. Petersen, Editor of *The Bridge*, 1407 Twenty-Sixth Street, Canyon, TX 79015. E-mail repete71@hotmail.com

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Two articles in this issue of *The Bridge* were written by recipients of grants from the Edith and Arnold Bodtker Fund for Research and Internship awarded and administered by the Danish American Heritage Society. (For a recent update on the Bodtker Fund and all its recipients see the report by DAHS board president James D. Iversen in the February 2007 issue of the society’s *Newsletter*). In the first of these articles, Anders Rasmussen explores the large and complicated issue of ethnicity and Scandinavian immigrants during the American Civil War. The other recipient, Torben Tvorup Christensen, uses one Danish immigrant family to test the assimilation model developed by Elliott Barkan, one of the nation’s leading immigration historians.

Thorvald Hansen, surely the dean of Danish-American historians, recounts the efforts of several emigrant individuals and groups to establish utopian societies in the United States.

Laura Petersen Balogh introduces us to Karl Dane, a Danish-born movie actor whose meteoric rise as a celebrity in Hollywood’s silent film era was followed by an equally stunning fall from fame that contributed to his tragic death.

J. Christian Bay (1871-1962) and Christian Petersen (1885-1961) are two Danish immigrants whose contributions to history, literature and art live on long after their deaths. In 1950 they collaborated for an article in *Julegranen* and now, more than half a century later, we are happy to publish James D. Iversen’s translation of Bay’s poignant story of an immigrant family during wartime along with its two illustrations by Petersen.

The books under review in this issue cover a wide range of topics. We thank our reviewers for sharing their time and expertise with us.

This issue marks the 30th year of publication for *The Bridge*. For the convenience of our readers and researchers interested in the Danish American experience, an index of all issues is now available on our website at <www.danishamericanheritagesociety.org>
Contributors to This Issue

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Not for the King, but for God and Country: Scandinavians and Ethnic identity during the American Civil War

by Anders Rasmussen

Introduction

The history of the United States is essentially a history of immigration. From the Spanish arrival in Florida in 1565 to present-day America, immigration has been a continuous factor in the history of the United States, and it has repeatedly challenged notions of what it means to be American. Among the many immigrant groups which came to the United States were the Scandinavians. The Civil War between 1861 and 1865 forced these newly arrived immigrants to make important decisions in regards to ethnicity, politics and nationality. This article explores the Scandinavian Civil War experience through the prism of ethnicity and argues that throughout the Civil War Scandinavian ethnic identity can best be described as a complementary identity emphasizing Old World nationalism and New World loyalty. However, ethnicity for the Scandinavian immigrants also existed on multiple levels, what has been termed exclusive, political and national ethnicity for analytical purposes. Within these levels of ethnicity important shifts took place between 1861 and 1864.

Scandinavians and Ethnic Identity, 1861-63

On Monday, September 30, 1861 a call for Civil War service was issued through the Scandinavian newspaper Emigranten:

To all able Scandinavians in the United States [,] countrymen and fellow citizens!

The authorities above in this our new homeland have as we all know called the citizens of the country to arms to support the government in its attempt to preserve the Union and its constitution. (...)

Scandinavians! Let us recognize our present position, our duties and our responsibility as we should understand them.
We have still far from carried the part of the war’s burdens in respect to delivering personnel as the Scandinavian population’s great number here in the country oblige for us. … While the adopted citizens of other nationalities such as the Germans and Irish have put whole regiments in the field, the Scandinavians of the West have not yet sent a single complete Company of infantry to the grand Army. Must the future ask: Where were the Scandinavians, when we saved the mother country? It has occurred to us, that the formation of a Scandinavian Regiment would be the best means to gather our Countrymen under the colors of the Union and additionally to give the whole population testimony that the Country’s Scandinavian population takes its share in the fight for the preservation of the Union.¹

The appeal was signed by ten of the most prominent Norwegians in Wisconsin and yielded important clues to how these prominent citizens wanted ethnic identity to be understood in the public sphere. In fact, the call for volunteers introduced three different understandings of ethnicity for the Scandinavian Americans.

First of all, the phrase “Scandinavians in the United States, countrymen and fellow citizens” was a reference to a perceived shared ethnicity purely among the exclusive group of “Scandinavians in the United States.” No one else in the United States could share this exclusive ethnicity unless they, in the words of J. Milton Yinger, had a “common origin” and shared “important segments of a common culture.”²

Secondly, the call for volunteers introduced a political ethnicity, in which Scandinavian unity was defined in opposition to the Irish, the Germans or the Yankee Americans.³ Not only was a common Scandinavian ethnicity a practical construction in order to unite against more numerous ethnic groups; it was also necessary, because Americans were not able to tell Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians apart.⁴

Lastly, the petition called for affiliation with values greater than Scandinavian-American values or state-wide political power. It called for adherence to the values of the American constitution. It
was made even clearer by the Scandinavian regiment’s future colonel Hans C. Heg in *Emigranten* on October 7th, “the government of our adopted country is in Danger ... that which we learned to love as freemen in our old Fatherland—our freedom—our government—our independence—is threatened with destruction.” The constitution, the government, freedom, and independence were all values that everyone in the northern states could subscribe to. They had a universal character and thus went beyond the exclusive and political ethnicity.

**Exclusive ethnicity**
The call for volunteers in *Emigranten* was one of the first explicit appeals to form a Scandinavian ethnic regiment in Wisconsin during the Civil War. In the first line of the appeal, the signers equated “Scandinavians” with “fellow citizens” and “countrymen,” thus making no effort to distinguish between men of Danish, Swedish or Norwegian descent. Yet, the distinct reference to the Old World origins where constantly combined with mentioning of American values. Hence, this view of ethnicity fit well into what has been termed a “complementary identity” by the American immigration scholar Jon Gjerde.

According to Gjerde, complementary identity is “the dual loyalties to nation and subgroup.” This type of ethnicity “powerfully promoted an allegiance to American institutions at the same time that it fostered maintenance of ethnic forms.” Gjerde argues that complementary ethnicity strengthened assimilation into American society, since it allowed space for staying ethnically and religiously distinct, and thereby letting immigrants integrate into American society at their own pace. As a consequence, the freedom to maintain ethnic identity led to a positive view of the United States among the immigrants, which muted dissatisfaction with those immigrants that did not experience the United States as the land of opportunity.

During these early years of the Civil War, the subgroup that Gjerde referred to was publicly perceived to be a pan-Scandinavian group. Leaders in the Scandinavian communities stressed what united Danes, Swedes and Norwegians instead of focusing on what divided them. Though the Norwegian signers of the petition may or
may not have felt as Scandinavians privately, public statements and gestures of Scandinavian brotherhood were common in the 1860s.

The idea of Scandinavian brotherhood did not emerge out of the blue in Wisconsin in the early 1860s. In the Old World the movement of Scandinavianism had its roots in late 18th century literature and evolved throughout the 19th century. In 1863 proposals were heard in the Old World for a common Scandinavian weight and measurement system, for a united postal service, and a mutual toll system based on free trade. However, none of these proposals materialized into actual legislation, and when the Danish king Frederik VII died in late 1863, pragmatic Scandinavianism in the Old World essentially died with him.7

In the New World the need for Scandinavian unity was also recognized. In a country where Scandinavian immigrants were vastly outnumbered, pan-Scandinavianism expanded the foundation for organizations and political candidates. A public Scandinavian ethnic identity thereby helped the Scandinavian immigrants not to be “completely lost in the ocean of American life.”8

As a consequence, Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian migrants, in the first years of the Civil War, organized themselves publicly as Scandinavians. In a description of the creation of the Scandinavian company in the 1st New York Infantry Regiment, the author did not even distinguish between the different individuals’ nationalities but simply referred to them as “nearly 80 Scandinavians equally divided between the three countries.”9 Obviously, the author knew the specific national origins of the 80 soldiers he was describing, but he still chose to describe them by their common soubriquet. The 1st New York Regiment was not the only one to use the Scandinavian label publicly. In 1860 the Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod was formed because the religious leaders could not imagine the church becoming a national church at that time.10 This pattern clearly repeated itself during the first year of the Civil War. It only took 50 to 100 men to create a company, but still the Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians in New York chose to form a Scandinavian company there.11 The New York Scandinavian company’s first Sergeant J. M. Jansen was the former host of the Scandinavian Society. In Illinois, a Scandinavian company was formed as part of the 82nd Illinois Infantry
Regiment, and, even in the Confederacy Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians around New Orleans formed a Scandinavian company. During the Civil War, a Scandinavian society was formed in Madison, Wisconsin, and another was created in Lawrence, Kansas to promote “association and agreement among the local Scandinavians.” Additionally, the point of being Scandinavian publicly was even more succinct in the case of the 15th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment. The 15th Wisconsin was made up of approximately ninety percent Norwegians, but it was still organized and promoted as the Scandinavian Regiment.

According to the Norwegian historian Karl Jakob Skarstein, the Norwegian ethnic elite in Wisconsin mainly wanted to make a name for the Norwegians by creating a Civil War regiment. While this may have been their intentions privately, almost all the public references to an ethnic military unit in Emigranten are visibly Scandinavian in focus. For example, the September call for volunteers specifically referred to the Scandinavians to unite and did not mention nationalities.

**Political ethnicity**

The September call for volunteers did not only advocate beliefs in a common Scandinavian heritage, it also disclosed an ethnic rivalry between the Scandinavians, the Irish and the Germans. Between 1861 and 1863 the Scandinavian immigrants focused on ways to maximize Scandinavian immigrant influence in American political life without much regard to national politics. Yet, by 1864 outside events had influenced all parts the Scandinavian immigrant communities and the focus shifted towards assimilation and national politics.

The 1861 call for volunteers explicitly pointed to the German and Irish Civil War contribution, while lamenting the lack hereof by the Scandinavians. To accomplish the goal of competing for political influence in Wisconsin, the Scandinavian Americans had to think of themselves as a coherent group, at least publicly, to increase their number of eligible voters. Moreover, as the ethnic historians Dag Blanck and Jørn Brøndal have pointed out, “[the] process of ethnicization was both descriptive and ascriptive.” By this
statement, Blanck and Brøndal argue that while the Scandinavians were struggling to find their individual or common ethnic identity (i.e. Scandinavian identity), the surrounding society was not able to tell Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians apart and therefore naturally viewed them as Scandinavians.17

Therefore, using the Scandinavian epithet publicly was a logical way to present a united front against Americans and other ethnic groups, even though the Scandinavian immigrant grassroots did not always perceive themselves as one homogenous group. The common Scandinavian label improved the Scandinavian Regiment’s visibility in Wisconsin’s public life as well as fit into the white Americans’ view of a Scandinavian ethnic group.

The September petition recognized these advantages, and Hans C. Heg explicitly encouraged the Scandinavians in Wisconsin to raise an ethnic regiment to compete with the Irish and Germans for political power after the war.18

Reading Hans C. Heg’s letters closely leaves no doubt that, in his mind, the formation of a Scandinavian Regiment was the right thing to do. Yet, Heg knew it was also a pragmatic political move. In November, Heg asked Emigranten’s readers, “shall we Scandinavians sit still and watch our American, German, and English-born fellow citizens fight for us without going to their aid?”19

Yet, the Irish and Scandinavians also fought over other things than politics in 1861. In camp on Christmas Eve 1861 the Norwegian private Casper Hansen stole a keg of beer from a wagon driving through camp. The influence of the beer mixed with ethnic rivalry led to a big fight between the 15th and 17th Wisconsin (the Irish Regiment).20 Though the fight did not have any direct consequences, it underlined the ethnic tension that existed between the Scandinavians and the Irish.

The 15th Wisconsin was, however, successfully organized and trained. When the Regiment had taken the field in 1862, Heg continued his thoughts on a political career after the war based upon his Civil War service. In July Heg wrote to his wife,

it is worth thousands to me that I went into the service at the time I did. I am now far ahead—and if my health holds out,
and the Government [sic] will do me justice—you will not have occasion [sic] to be ashamed of your husband.\textsuperscript{21}

The ethnic political tension between the Scandinavians and the Irish/Germans was, however, apparent around the important elections of 1863 and 1864 also.

On November 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 1863, the Danish immigrant Fritz William Rasmussen went down to his local schoolhouse and cast a “Union vote” but Rasmussen could not help remark what a “clamour the ‘Catholics’ made” as the Catholics were “all without national distinction – ‘Democrats’.”\textsuperscript{22}

It was Rasmussen’s impression that religion determined the way the Catholics voted around New Denmark and it led him to an occasional negative remark against the Catholics.\textsuperscript{23} The animosity towards the Germans and the Irish continued in 1864. In January, 1864 \textit{Fædrelandet} wrote, “Even today the Irish is an alien, that other Nations loathe to have amongst them.”\textsuperscript{24} The slurs against the Irish and Germans also appeared in the heated newspaper debates that led up to the presidential election of 1864. On October 13, 1864 an editorial in \textit{Fædrelandet} read,

In the Democratic meetings some big-name Gentlemen are sitting with intelligence, a smile on their lip and clever stratagem behind their ears, but the masses are formed by the Irish and Germans, who never knew what the constitution contained and blindly follow their leaders’ say … When we see Norwegian farmers among this crowd, we have to believe that either they seek office at the presidential election or they have degraded themselves to being equals with the Irish and intellectually inferior Germans.\textsuperscript{25}

These were the words from one of the prominent Scandinavian papers. Publicly, ethnic rivalry, based on politics and religion, did indeed exist between the Scandinavians on one side and the Germans and Irish on the other. This rivalry was one of the direct causes of the Scandinavian Regiment’s creation. In Hans C. Heg’s mind, the 15\textsuperscript{th} Wisconsin was the foundation for political competition with the Irish and Germans in American post-war society.
National ethnicity
The September call for volunteers issued in Emigranten in 1861 contained an appeal to the universal rights written in the Declaration of Independence. Liberty and equality were important concepts for Scandinavians emigrating from Old World monarchies and obvious social stratification. The call for volunteers explicitly encouraged the Scandinavians to help defend the government and the Constitution of the adopted homeland. A Scandinavian regiment was needed to defend the core American values of freedom, government by the people, and independence.

Freedom, liberty, and equality were all concepts closely tied to the issue of slavery. Slavery was therefore the most hotly debated issue leading up to the Civil War, and within the Scandinavian community opinions were also divided.26

Emigranten had ever since Carl Frederick Solberg became the editor in 1857 championed emancipation and praised the universal concepts embodied in the American constitution and declaration of independence. Solberg continued this idealistic support in the early part of the Civil War, but as the fighting grew increasingly bitter, the idealism yielded somewhat to pragmatism in the Scandinavian public forum.

In his first editorial, Solberg declared, “our watchword is: no slavery neither for black nor white.”27 Yet, the position within the Scandinavian American religious community was less transparent. While the Norwegian-Lutheran church did not support slavery, they did not explicitly oppose it either. On behalf of the Norwegian-Lutheran Church, the pastor A. C. Preus stated, “even though it is not a sin in itself to keep Slaves, it is still an evil and a punishment from God.” Preus went on to say, “nowhere can it clearly be deduced from God’s word that keeping slaves is sinful.”28

In the context of the Civil War it seems surprising that the Norwegian-Lutheran Church did not clearly denounce slavery but instead offered implicit moral support for the economic foundation of the South, namely slavery. To the Norwegian-Lutheran clergy, allegiance to the exact letter of the bible, at this time, overrode all loyalty to the national ideal of freedom, as well as moral, political or regional loyalty in a time of war.
However, as has been pointed out by Jon Gjerde in his case study of the immigrant church in America, Scandinavians were opposed to slavery at the grassroots level. According to Gjerde, the pastors of the Norwegian-Lutheran Church were “at odds with their parishioners”²⁹ and also with some of their pastors. The Danish pastor C. L. Clausen was thrown out of the Norwegian Synod when he declared that slavery was irrefutably sinful. A bitter feud ensued, and some pastors lost their congregations as a result of the different opinions on slavery. For the Norwegian Synod the problem was that it aligned itself with the strongly conservative German Missouri Synod, and their official view was that slavery was not sinful.³⁰

That the Scandinavian immigrant soldiers were opposed to slavery is evident in their letters, diaries, and from the soldiers’ voting patterns in the gubernatorial election of 1863. Every Scandinavian soldier in the 15th Wisconsin, who had the opportunity to vote, voted for the Republican candidate.³¹

Additional support of opposition to slavery at the grassroots level can be found among the Scandinavians living in the Confederate region, where it, from the standpoint of regional loyalty, did not seem wise to oppose human bondage.³² A Norwegian immigrant living in Texas, had to cancel his subscription of Emigranten in January 1861 because he agreed with its anti-slavery position, and according to family histories the Danish Confederate soldiers George W. Henrichson and Christian Wilhelm Hander also opposed slavery.³³

In the North before the Civil War, abolition was being advocated by the Republican newspaper Emigranten, but also by Emigranten’s stark critic, the Democratic newspaper Nordlyset. Nordlyset was edited by the future Danish Civil War soldier, Hans Borchsenius, but the newspaper was sold to Carl Frederik Solberg in 1860.³⁴

Scandinavians and Ethnic Identity, 1864-65.

On January 14th, 1864 the first edition of Fædrelandet was published from La Crosse, Wisconsin. In their opening editorial, Fædrelandet’s editors briefly mentioned the concept of Scandinavian brotherhood, but they used most of the space to establish a nationalistic focus underlined by the statement that, “a Norwegian paper shall
naturally use the Norwegian language.” It was an important shift in terms of Scandinavian exclusive ethnic identity. Before 1864 the Scandinavian press and Scandinavian leaders had consciously attempted to establish feelings on pan-Scandinavian feelings, but by 1864 Old World nationalism was powerfully introduced to the public discourse.

Fædrelandet’s editors’ nationalistic tone in the opening editorial was unmistakable. The surplus from a lottery would help support institutions that were beneficial for Norwegians in America, such as the college in Decorah, Iowa. Furthermore, Fædrelandet would “stand up for Norwegians everywhere,” and the Norwegian paper should “naturally use the Norwegian language.”

One week later, the entire front-page of Fædrelandet was overflowing with pride of Norwegian history, as all eight columns were dedicated to an article and illustration involving Norway’s Viking past. Though calls for Scandinavian unity were still heard in Kansas, and Fædrelandet’s editor Frederick Fleischer was elected vice-president of the newly formed Scandinavian Association in La Crosse, pan-Scandinavianism was waning by 1864. There were multiple reasons for this development. First of all, there were strong Old World nationalistic currents running through the pages of Fædrelandet, but also within the Scandinavian societies in Chicago, Illinois. Additionally, in 1864 there was tremendous pressure from the Scandinavian press and the Scandinavian societies as well as the Union government to be patriotic and loyal to the new homeland, especially as the future of the nation was at stake at the upcoming presidential election. Moreover, the 15th Wisconsin and other Scandinavian military units had almost been entirely diluted of their Scandinavian element.

Events in the Old World also worked to show that by 1864 thoughts of pan-Scandinavianism were more idealistic than realistic. The Old World conflict between Denmark and Prussia along with Austria was a matter of great interest in the Scandinavian immigrant newspapers in 1864. In the Scandinavian press there was initially a great faith that Scandinavian brotherhood would prevail in the Old World. As it turned out, Sweden and Norway declined to support Denmark militarily, and pan-Scandinavianism in the Scandinavian
immigrant press suddenly seemed to be more of an ideal rather than an idea grounded in reality. *Fædrelandet* made the position excruciatingly clear:

The editorial office has been sent a request to come to our Danish brothers’ aid with financial contributions during the hard war that Denmark now must lead against the mighty Germany…. [I]f the help from here is not as large as you [the Danes] could expect it, then it is certainly not out of indifference for you and Denmark’s just cause, but because *Norwegians in America are Norwegians in Norway closest* [my emphasis], and if Norway is helped, then Denmark is helped when Norway and Sweden shall fight for Denmark.\(^39\)

*Fædrelandet* took it for granted that Denmark would receive help in the Old World, but even so they had clearly stated that nationalistic feelings weighed heavier than Scandinavian unity. As Jørn Brøndal has pointed out in his study of Scandinavian Americans in the progressive era, “whenever a conflict between the ‘national’ and the ‘Scandinavian’ commitment arose, the former invariably won out.”\(^40\)

Illinois was dominated by the Swedes, but there was also a large Norwegian contingent in the state.\(^41\) On September 29, 1864 *Fædrelandet* reported that “Thursday night a meeting was held by the Norwegian-born citizens of Chicago to establish the *Norwegians’ United Republican Club.*”\(^42\) This news was followed by a letter published in *Emigranten* three weeks later. Here a Danish immigrant living in Chicago wrote,

We have here in Chicago 4 Scandinavian Societies, namely 2 Norwegian, 1 Swedish and 1 Danish. Of these, the Danish Society Dana is the only one that has a Scandinavian stamp; the others are rigorously separated within their ethnic boundaries.\(^43\)

Jørn Brøndal and Dag Blanck have pointed out that “in their rural settlement patterns Scandinavian immigrants tended to remain nationally exclusive, whenever their numbers permitted it.”\(^44\) Though Chicago could not be considered rural, a part of the reason that the Swedes and Norwegians could maintain nationalistic
societies in Chicago was their demographic dominance among the Scandinavians in Illinois.

La Crosse, where Fædrelandet was published, was more rural in character than Chicago, and here the Norwegians, according to Arlow W. Andersen, had established several ethnically exclusive organizations that were active when Fleischer settled in La Crosse in 1864.45

The emergence of Fædrelandet strengthened nationalistic currents in the public sphere. Yet, at the very same time, Fædrelandet advocated assimilation in the United States as the way to maximize opportunities for Norwegians and therefore fit well into Jon Gjerde’s concept of a complementary ethnic identity.

As Andersen has argued, “Fleischer [one of Fædrelandet’s editors], while sensitive to possible Yankee denial of immigrant aspirations, merged his European-bred feelings into the general stream of American patriotism.”46

**Political ethnicity**
The prerequisite for taking an active part in American society was the acquisition of the English language. If any Scandinavian immigrant had ever doubted this, it was made clear by Fædrelandet in its editorial on January 14, 1864.

> those immigrants, who yet only understand Norwegian, must be glad that their children get English reading materials in the house [a weekly column in Fædrelandet]; For without this language they can not successfully move forward and work among their American fellow citizens.47

*Emigranten* was also thinking along the lines of assimilation through English articles in late 1863 and early 1864.48 When stating the vision for Emigranten in the coming year, Carl Frederik Solberg wrote on December 7, 1863, “the coming year will more completely treat the political questions of the day, deliver correspondences from Norway and Denmark…if possible two or more Columns selected English reading etc.”49

In reality, a very small part of the Scandinavian language papers were written in English in 1864. However, the steps that were taken to include even a little English, as well as the
admittance that English was a prerequisite for assimilation, were important initiatives that fit well into the developments of 1864. Faædrelændet actively advocated unification with the “fellow American citizens,” since “the children must become Americans” and no reasonable man could “contemplate founding a new Norway within the Union’s area.” Assimilation into American society was therefore the ideal advocated by Faædrelændet.

Language was a key component in what tied the Scandinavian immigrants together ethnically and in order to assimilate into American society, they had to adopt their new homeland’s language, at least in public. Consequently, the Scandinavian immigrants who knew English became community leaders, and were also the ones offered the officer’s commissions in the 15th Wisconsin.

All orders in the 15th Wisconsin were in English, despite the everyday language being Norwegian. There are no exact numbers of how many Scandinavians spoke English. In his study of the 15th Wisconsin, however, Waldemar Ager points out that “a large part of the soldiers in the 15th Wisconsin had a poor command of English.”

Hence, the Scandinavian immigrants who did know the English language served as a link between the non-English speakers and the surrounding society. This function naturally elevated the English-speaking Scandinavians’ position in the immigrant community. Fritz W. Rasmussen was one of the Scandinavian-Americans who helped his fellow immigrants to get in touch with American society, and as a consequence he held many official positions throughout his life in New Denmark. In his diary on New Years day 1863, Rasmussen wrote,

sat talking a while, whence came Mrs. Charlotte Haward, to get a paper made out, to draw money from the public (Volunteer) fund; and when done with that; came Lars Andersen to get a couple of letters written—one to his son in the Army and one to the Office of the ’Emigranten’ with a part of his contingent....

Public service in politics or the army was a practical way of showing loyalty to the adopted homeland. By 1864, war service was the ultimate act of patriotism and assimilation. The connection
between public service and assimilation was recognized by the Yankee Americans and underlined by a speech given by J. Prentys to the 46th Illinois, when the regiment’s soldiers were home on leave in February,

under the American institutions no one occupies such a high position as the, towards his country, loyal warrior, and especially when he belongs to a foreign nation, who can not be led by the inborn love for one’s native country, and who were not wooed by a high bounty, but voluntarily answered the call based on higher and nobler motives....55

For those Scandinavians that could not serve in the Civil War or were not elected to public office, symbolic acts of assimilation were used to show loyalty towards the new nation.

On March 3rd, 1864 the Scandinavian Society in Madison, Wisconsin celebrated George Washington’s birthday. According to Fædrelandet, the ball was attended by more than 200 people including the mayor. Furthermore, the song “the Volunteer Soldier of the 15th Wisconsin” was sung. The song was an interesting mix of Old World nationality and New World loyalty. In other words, it was the essence of complementary identity.

The song was written on the old Danish tune “Dengang jeg drog afsted [back when I set off]”. This tune had important nationalistic implications for the Scandinavians, especially the Danes, as it was written during the First Schleswig War, when the Danes, with the help of Europe’s great powers, quelled a rebellion from the duchies Schleswig and Holstein. In the United States, however, the song was rewritten to celebrate the Scandinavians volunteering to defend their adopted homeland amidst a commemoration of George Washington.56

English newspaper articles, celebrations of George Washington’s birthday, and Old World Songs rewritten in English were the order of the day, and as a consequence it weakened the ties to pan-Scandinavianism.57

Additionally, by 1864, the Danish element in the 15th Wisconsin had nearly vanished, and the regiment was almost solely Norwegian. The Scandinavian company in Louisiana had been captured,58 the Scandinavian company in New York had been
disbanded and, according to William Burton, the 82nd Illinois with its Scandinavian company had been diluted beyond any ethnic cohesion.59

Pan-Scandinavianism among the immigrants in 1861 was constructed out of four main elements, namely the perceived common origin, the Scandinavian societies, the press, and the military units. Yet, by 1864 pan-Scandinavianism was being deconstructed, as the four cornerstones were beginning to take on different characteristics. The basis for the perceived common origin was, first of all, found in a common language which the Scandinavians and no one else understood. When English was introduced into the important Scandinavian papers, and Scandinavian soldiers served in English-speaking regiments, it weakened the linguistic basis for pan-Scandinavianism. Secondly, the Scandinavian societies in Chicago were by 1864 broken up into nationalistic factions, in which only the Danish society still retained a Scandinavian element. Thirdly, a second Scandinavian paper, emphasizing Norwegian over Scandinavian heritage, was introduced on January 14, 1864 and immediately made itself heard among the Scandinavians. Lastly, by 1864 the former Scandinavian regiment, the 15th Wisconsin, consisted almost solely of Norwegians, and all other Scandinavian units were either disbanded, captured, or had lost their ethnic dimension.60

National ethnicity
Assimilation in American society was closely connected to the Scandinavians’ belief in certain universal values that were worth fighting for. Equality, freedom, opportunity, and liberty were some of the ideals that the Scandinavian immigrants cherished in the United States. As the presidential election neared in 1864, the nature of these values was debated vigorously. In its very first editorial, Fædrelandet declared programmatically that it was a Union paper, not because Abraham Lincoln is of the Union party; not because Negro emancipation is the work of this party, neither because the Republicans are the mightiest and victorious and their opponents weaker – but Fædrelandet is a Union paper because the Union and the pure, on liberty and
equality, created Republic is truthfully a glorious institution in accordance with human and divine laws.\textsuperscript{61}

With Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 and the inclusion of black soldiers in the army, the war could suddenly be viewed as an instrument to fulfill the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.

The Scandinavian papers were generally opposed to slavery, and when slavery was discussed the concepts of liberty, equality and everyone’s god-given rights were at the forefront of the discussion. On March 24, 1864 \textit{Fædrelandet}’s editorial stated that

when a Republic allows part of its citizens to live from slaves’ work, then an arrogance and ruler mentality develops, that is irreconcilable with a constitution founded upon liberty and equality...where slavery exists, a master system with all its contempt for fellow citizens must naturally also exist.\textsuperscript{62}

For the editors of \textit{Fædrelandet}, it was important from a human perspective that the slaves were freed, but emancipation was not nearly as important as the fact that slavery undermined the values that \textit{Fædrelandet}’s editors cherished the most about the United States.

In the view of \textit{Fædrelandet}’s editors, a classless society in which Norwegians were not subjugated to nobility was of prime importance; the individual rights of blacks were less important. As one of \textit{Fædrelandet}’s editors wrote,” it is not about the slaves that I speak, but about the ‘system’ of slavery.”\textsuperscript{63}

Though the Scandinavians did support the Republican government in large numbers during the Civil War, it did not mean that they were not prejudiced towards other races. Even a heralded Scandinavian leader such as Hans C. Heg referred to his black servant as a “nigger,” and Irish, Germans and Jews were from time to time commented negatively upon in the letters, newspapers, and memoirs written by the Scandinavian Civil War soldiers.\textsuperscript{64}

During 1863 and 1864 everyone had to choose a side politically. If one had an opinion about slavery, freedom, and equality, it was impossible not to take a stand after the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863. Claus L. Clausen, the 15\textsuperscript{th} Wisconsin’s former
chaplain, broke with the Norwegian Synod for the very reason that he and many Scandinavians opposed slavery.65

Furthermore, P. S. Vig claims that the Danes in the mid-West joined the army due to their dislike of slavery and respect for law and order. Additionally, Vig states, “if all the Danes that hated rebellion and slavery should have joined the war, then only women, children and the old and sick would have staid home.”66 *Emigranten* used the same reasoning to justify its support for Lincoln, despite his unpopularity in September, 1864. Solberg did not believe that Lincoln was a good president, but he was against slavery and therefore Solberg had no other choice than support his reelection.

Opposition to slavery was not the same as a practical belief in absolute equality, however. Many Scandinavians, including *Fædrelandet*’s editors as well as Hans C. Heg and Henry Syvertson, did not consider black people as their equals, but neither did they think that the Germans, Irish or Jews were.

The Civil War by 1864 was a hard war that left little room for idealism or compromise. The tone in the newspapers leading up to the election had been harsh. Everybody knew that the future of the nation was at stake, and, to the Scandinavian editors, balanced journalism was a necessary sacrifice. Carl Frederik Solberg, who had been a strong supporter for freedom of speech before the Civil War, had to admit that idealism in a time of war was not practical. Though Solberg in 1861 had called freedom of speech “the cornerstone for the system of government” and “one of the greatest blessings all over the world,” this was no longer the case by 1863.67

When the Lincoln administration started arresting citizens that spoke out against the war and the President, Solberg justified the arrests in *Emigranten*. In an article written on October 26, 1863 Solberg discussed the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus68 and stated that, “habeas corpus is surely one of the most important safeguards of our Civil Liberties”. Solberg, however, went on to argue that Lincoln had the Constitution and the law on his side and stated,

We see no danger to our Civil Liberty in the President’s action and even if we thought to detect a violation of the writ of habeas corpus we would consider it impossible that a
government could attempt such a thing when it has less than a year left before the question of its reelection or rejection will be raised….No citizen can or will suffer under it [the suspension of habeas corpus], as long as he takes care of his business now as before.69

*Emigranten*’s newfound view that the freedom of speech could be suspended in a time of war was supported by *Fædrelandet* during 1864. Freedom of speech was by no means an ideal pursued by the Scandinavian press leading up to the presidential election. *Fædrelandet*’s comment on October 13 came to ring hollow in the light of subsequent statements from the editors, ”We believe that the Democrats among our fellow countrymen will admit that this paper always impartially admitted that they were entitled to their own opinion.”70 Especially from September and onward *Fædrelandet* voiced contempt for Northern dissenters and support for the Government. *Fædrelandet*’s lack of tolerance for Democratic viewpoints culminated on November 3 in the last issue before the presidential election, when the editors wrote,

> Any man, who on election day votes for McClellan, brings down his children’s and grandchildren’s crimes over his grave and future generations will point to his grave with these words, “there lies one of those who, blinded and confused during the party controversy, voted for McClellan and an immediate peace that bred a subsequent eternal war.”71

There was a big gap between *Emigranten*’s idealistic support for freedom of speech to *Emigranten* and *Fædrelandet*’s explicit denunciation of democratic viewpoints. *Emigranten* which was a progressive and idealistic newspaper on issues such as racial equality, had to revert to a more pragmatic, reactionary position in regards to freedom of speech when real-political conditions dictated controversial presidential actions.

During the Civil War the Scandinavian press continually mixed idealism with realism. Idealistic views of equality were mixed with more realist notions of the United States as a racial society. Additionally, idealistic views on freedom of speech were substituted
by a belief that there are certain things that can not be said in a time of war.

The Republican administration in 1864 ran on a platform of emancipation, but did not pay black soldiers the same as white soldiers. Additionally, it had made the decision to suspend the writ of habeas corpus so that dissenters could be kept silently in jail for the duration of the war. Lastly, the Lincoln administration advocated continuing the war to the bitter end.

All of these measures found strong support in the Scandinavian press in 1864 and seemingly also appealed to many Scandinavian voters at the grassroots level, as most of the Scandinavian counties voted for the Republican Party. The election of Lincoln helped assure the outcome of the Civil War, as there could no longer be any talk of peace.

Many scholars have claimed that the Civil War helped integrate the immigrant soldiers, but they have used very little evidence to support this claim. Arlow W. Andersen, for one, stated that during the Civil War,

Norwegian-born soldiers became more conscious of their responsibility toward the federal government and of their potentialities as American citizens. Relatives and friends behind the lines were similarly affected.72

While Andersen personally did not offer any evidence to back this claim, the fact that the Scandinavian soldiers were exposed to English on a daily basis, that they exhibited a great deal of loyalty to the Lincoln administration during the elections of 1863 and 1864, and that some of them after the war became part of a nationwide veterans organization, supports Andersen’s argument. Some Scandinavians such as Hans Borchsenius, Ole Heg or Knute Nelson,73 even used their Civil War service to establish a political career. In these respects, the Civil War did indeed contribute to making the Scandinavian immigrants move a small step closer to the mainstream of American society. Even small steps towards American society were steps away from the earlier pan-Scandinavian identity. By 1865 the Scandinavian immigrants, who had experienced the Civil War, were instead walking towards assimilation.
Conclusion
During the Civil War Scandinavian ethnic identity can best be described as a complementary identity, yet an identity which existed on multiple levels where the noteworthy changes occurred.

On the exclusive level, the Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians between 1861 and 1864 publicly organized themselves as Scandinavians. In the Civil War’s early years there was a distinct focus on what united the Scandinavians. From 1864 and onward, there was a conscious drive in Wisconsin and Illinois to separate Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians within their ethnic boundaries. The focus on pan-Scandinavian bonds in the early years of the war had by 1864 largely been superseded by a focus on Old World nationalism in the public sphere.

Norwegian nationalism was strengthened markedly in the public sphere by the emergence of Fædrelandet and nationalistic currents were prevalent in the Swedish and Norwegian societies in Chicago. Pan-Scandinavianism was constructed through linguistic ties, common military units, Scandinavian societies and a press that voiced Scandinavian viewpoints. By 1864 this was no longer the case, and the very institutions that helped construct pan-Scandinavianism also helped deconstruct this ethnic identity three years later.

On the political level, the Scandinavian immigrants throughout the Civil War were looking for ways to gain influence in American society. In 1861, the Scandinavian ethnic elite consciously sought to construct a common Scandinavian ethnicity to compete with other ethnic groups for political influence. By 1864 many more Scandinavian immigrants were part of American institutions primarily due to military service. English was realized, in part by the Scandinavian press, as a prerequisite for taking an active part in American society and the Scandinavians who already knew English, therefore, had a natural leadership position within the Scandinavian community. By 1864 the Civil War had channeled the political energy towards showing loyalty to the Union, which the Republican Party embodied at the time.

On the national ethnic level, the Scandinavians in 1861 and 1864 believed in equality—a value they had sought since they emigrated
from Old World Scandinavia. The majority of the Scandinavians was genuinely opposed to slavery throughout the Civil War. Equality to the Scandinavians meant equal opportunity to act and pursue happiness in the United States, but it did not necessarily mean that all men were created equal. Both Scandinavians at the grassroots level and the Scandinavian leader Hans C. Heg expressed prejudice towards other races, especially black Americans. As such, the Scandinavians were a product of their time, neither better, nor worse. Despite all the idealistic talk of fundamental American principles, the Scandinavian immigrants were guided by pragmatism. When a conflict arose between American ideals and American reality, reality naturally governed the Scandinavians’ actions. When Freedom of speech became a problem during the Civil War, the Scandinavian newspapers no longer viewed it as the cornerstone of democracy, but rather as a privilege that could be revoked in times of crisis.

By the end of the Civil War pan-Scandinavianism was waning since Old World nationalism and active participation in American society were emphasized in the Scandinavian culture-carrying institutions. Yet Old World identity was only a part of the Scandinavian immigrants’ identity during the Civil War. Throughout the war the Scandinavians exhibited loyalty to American institutions as part of their complementary ethnic identity. By this time, the pan-Scandinavian idea had drowned in a sea of conflicting identity currents. Yet, for years to come, pan-Scandinavianism continued to re-emerge for a gasp of air.

1 *Emigranten*, September 30, 1861. The letter was dated September 18, 1861 and among the ten prominent Wisconsin Norwegian signers were i.e. Hans C. Heg, J.A. Johnson, Knud Langeland and *Emigranten*’s editor Carl Frederik Solberg.


binary opposition of center-margin in discussions of identity based on the concept of “the other.” The center defines what is on the margins. In this case the Scandinavians on the margins defined themselves in opposition to the Germans and Irish, who were perceived to be closer to the center, because of the German/Irish superiority in numbers. According to Grøngaard Jeppesen, Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians in 1860 combined for 23,265 immigrants, while the Germans constituted 123,879 out of 276,927 foreign-born in all of Wisconsin. Furthermore, approximately 60,000 Irish immigrants lived in Wisconsin in 1860. Also see Burton, page 21.


5 Before 1861 the Scandinavians had formed a Scandinavian press association, Scandinavian churches and Scandinavian societies, but never previously had a Scandinavian military regiment been proposed. Together these public ethnic institutions contained the most important culture-carrying elements in society and were instrumental in shaping a feeling of pan-Scandinavianism in 1861.

6 Jon Gjerde: The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West 1830-1917. The University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill, 1997, page 59-65. Hereafter Gjerde, 1997. From the ethnic religious leaders’ perspective, the downside to this freedom was that Old World family patterns and religious practices also came under pressure due to the increased freedom found in the United States. Additionally, not all Yankee Americans were convinced that allowing the immigrants freedom to maintain their ethnic traditions would lead to assimilation. On the contrary, some believed that the Mid-West could be used as an area in which threats to the United States government could be plotted undisturbed by untrustworthy immigrants, page 5-8.


9 Emigranten, August 12, 1861.

10 Brøndal and Blanck, page 6-7.

11 Peter S. Vig: Danske I Kamp I og For America [Danes Fighting in and for America]. Omaha, Nebraska,1917. Hereafter Vig. According to Vig, New York was even the city where most Danes were recruited from. Seemingly, it
would have been possible to create national companies among the Swedes, Norwegians or Danes, had they wished to do it. Vig page 187-189.


14 Skarstein, page 75-76. Skarstein himself acknowledges that even before there were plans to form a regiment, the Norwegian politician J. A. Johnson attempted to raise a Scandinavian company. In a special edition of *Emigranten* from October, 1861, there was even talk of Scandinavian brigade, but later in the article “Den Skandinaviske Brigade [The Scandinavian Brigade]” the ambitions are scaled down to fielding a Scandinavian regiment.

15 An example of the ethnic rivalry is offered by Anders Madsen Smith. Smith wrote about sailing across the Atlantic with Germans that, “the remaining crew were all Germans and the hatred that reigned among them and my countrymen caused my stay on the ship to be far from festive. Kicks, blows and terms of abuse were the order of the day.” Anders [Andrew] Madsen Smith: *En omvandrende danskers tildragelser paa jagt efter lykken* [A wandering Dane’s pursuit of happiness]. Minneapolis, 1891, page 27. Hereafter Smith.

16 Brøndal and Blanck., page 4. For further discussion of the process of ethnicization see Brøndal, 2004, page 30-35.

17 Even in 1870, former Civil War General, and now President Ulysses S. Grant was not able to distinguish between Danes, Swedes and Norwegians, but simply saw them as Scandinavians. Jørn Brøndal: *Ethnic Leadership and Midwestern Politics: Scandinavian Americans and the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin, 1890-1914*. Norwegian-American Historical Association. University of Illinois Press. Urbana and Chicago, 2004. Hereafter Brøndal 2004. Another example is found in *Emigranten* on November 21, 1863 in a translated excerpt of the *Annals of the Army of Cumberland* by John Fitch. In this excerpt it is noted that while the 15th Wisconsin is only the regiment that fully represents “the Scandinavian nationality [my emphasis], thousands of Scandinavians have taken up arms and can be found in every regiment in the Northwest.” Brøndal 2004 page 33

18 Arlow W. Andersen: “Lincoln and the Union: A study of the editorials of *Emigranten* and *Fædrelandet*”. Norwegian-American Studies and Records 15,
1949. Hereafter Andersen. In this passage Andersen credits *Emigranten*'s editor Solberg for making the observation about Heg's postwar political ambitions. Andersen, page 97


21 Blegen, page 111. Letter to Gunhild, July 19, 1862.


23 Rasmussens assertion that religion determined the voting for Catholics is supported by William Burton in his book *Melting Pot Soldiers*. Here Burton writes that the ethnic vote “was local in nature and religion was more important than ethnicity in the creation of the ethnic bloc. The familiar Irish vote in many cities was really the Irish-Catholic vote...what patterns are discerned among immigrant population, they show the influence of religion rather than nativity...German catholics, on the other hand, stood firmly within the Democratic fold.” Burton, page 17-19.

24 *Fædrelandet*, January 28, 1864.

25 *Fædrelandet*, October 13, 1864. It is interesting to compare these comments to the marriage patterns collected by Grøngaaard Jeppesen. Grøngaaard Jeppesen shows that the Danish immigrants married Germans or Irish much more frequently than other Scandinavians if they could not marry a fellow Dane. Grøngaaard Jeppesen page 132. Though there can be many different explanations for these marriage patterns, Grøngaaard Jeppesen’s findings can be seen as a testament to the frailty of pan-Scandinavianism. If pan-Scandinavianism had served an important purpose for the Danes at the grassroots level, it would have been logical to marry a Swedes or Norwegians more frequently.

26 Within the Norwegian Synod, the clergy offered theological justifications for slavery, while the laity opposed slavery. See Jon Gjerde: *Conflict and Community: A Case Study of the Immigrant Church in the United States*. Journal of Social History. Volume 19, 1986. Hereafter Gjerde, 1986. After the Civil War and abolition, the Scandinavian regiment was naturally described as
opposed to slavery, and the Norwegian press during the Civil War also advocated abolition. Gjerde, 1986, page 681-693.


28 Emigranten, December 16, 1861. Document called: De norsk-lutherske Præsters Erklæring i Slaveri-Spørgsmålet nærmere forklaret [The Norwegian-Lutheran Pastors statement in the Slavery question further explained]. Other Scandinavian religious leaders did not agree with this view on slavery; among them were the Danish minister Claus L. Clausen. Clausen had been the first editor of Emigranten in 1852 and served as the Chaplain for the 15th Wisconsin during the Civil War. Clausen gave an account of the dispute within the church in a small book called Genmælet [the Retort] see R. Andersen: Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen – Banebryder forDen Norske og Danske Kirke i Amerika [Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen – Pathbreaker for the Norwegian and Danish Church in America]. New York and Danish Lutheran Publishing House. Blair, Nebraska, 1921, page 133-141 and 231. Hereafter R. Andersen, 1921.


31 Emigranten, November 21, 1863. The article involves state voting patterns and lists the votes given by every Wisconsin Infantry Regiment and Artillery Battery. The support for the Union candidate is overwhelming, but only the 10th, 14th and 15th voted 100 percent for the Union candidate. In the 14th Wisconsin, 230 voted, and in the 15th 41 soldiers voted. In the 10th Wisconsin 32 votes were given and in the 5th Wisconsin the soldiers voted 418 to 1 for the Union candidate.

32 The Danish Confederate soldier Christian Wilhelm Hander did not sympathize with slavery either. Sailing down the Mississippi on February 7, 1863 he noted, “The house of the owner was a beautiful large house…but certainly not inviting, if one thought of the negro whip which was used so often.” Hander (C.W.) Family Collection. Box 2K261. Leonard B. Plummer’s translation from 1960-61. Hereafter Hander. The Danish nobleman and Confederate officer Charles Grimus Thorkelin de Lovenskiold also opposed slavery, at least for white people, as he rescued a girl, “white as the purest of the Circassian [sic] race” from slavery at an auction in New Orleans. Lovenskiold, Charles Thorkelin de. Biographical Vertical Files located at Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin. Corpus Christi Times May 7, 1936. Hereafter Lovenskiold. Also Mrs. Frank DeGarmo:

33 Lena Henrichson Crofford: Pioneers on the Nueces. San Antonio, 1963, chapter 15. Hereafter Crofford. This book is not a scholarly work, but a family history, to some extent, attempting to glorify the family. Ascribing George W. Henrichson anti-slavery sentiments would be a natural tendency in a family history. Yet, the book is also based on archival research, and it is the only work that exists about the views of this Danish Confederate soldier. Also Ethel Hander Geue: New Homes in a New Land. Waco, 1970, page 37. Hereafter Geue. Geue, with good right, referred to Christian Wilhelm Hander as being German. He settled among Germans in Texas, wrote his journal in German, and had a father who had been living in Germany before moving to Denmark. However, though he probably felt German ethnically, Hander was born and raised in Denmark, and among his papers that survive to this day is his Danish passport. Both books and Hander’s passport are located at the Center for American History in Austin, Texas.


35 Fædrelandet, January 14, 1864. There are three references to a Scandinavian nationality in the editorial, while Norwegians and the Norwegian nationality are mentioned nine times.

36 Fædrelandet, January 14, 1864.

37 According to the Pension Files available at the National Archives in Washington D.C., almost all the Danish leaders in the 15th Wisconsin had resigned by 1864 mostly due to health problems or personal reasons. Major Charles M. Reese resigned from the 15th Wisconsin on August 27, 1862, Sergeant Lars Hannibal resigned on December 20, 1862, Adjutant Hans Borchsenius resigned on September 28, 1862, Chaplain C. L. Clausen resigned in November, 1862, private Jens Andersen and private Jørgen Vejle had moved to an Artillery Battery in July, 1863. The Danish Captain Joseph Mathiesen did, however, serve the entire war in the 15th Wisconsin, but according to his pension files he came home completely debilitated due to chronic diarrhea.

38 Only 529 Swedes, 106 Norwegians, 7 Finns and 3 Icelanders volunteered to the Danish army of 38,000 troops assembled to fight the Prussians and the Austrians. See John Christensen and Henrik Stevnsborg: 1864 – Fra helstat til

39 Fædrelandet, March 17, 1864.
42 Fædrelandet, September 29, 1864.
43 Emigranten, October 17, 1864.
44 Brøndal and Blanck, page 7-8.
45 Andersen, page 111. Among these organizations was the Scandinavian Association of which Fleischer became vice-president. As the example shows, allusions to a Scandinavian identity still existed in the public sphere in 1864, but Old World nationalism and Union patriotism was afforded more attention in the culture-carrying Scandinavian institutions such as the Scandinavian press and the Scandinavian societies.
46 Andersen, page 119.
47 Fædrelandet, January 14, 1864.
48 Actually, as the American historian Marion Marzolf has pointed out, Emigranten had since 1852 been writing about assimilation, “Emigranten’s first front-page editorial, however, was set in Roman type and printed in English ‘To Our American Friends.’ In it Clausen explained his desire to ‘hurry along the process of Americanization’ among Norwegian and Danish immigrants. He wanted them to emancipate themselves from the ‘degrading bondage of ignorance’ and learn about American institutions, customs, and the responsibilities and duties of citizenship. The Scandinavian peasants had been accustomed to take everything on trust, Clausen declared, therefore, it was important to make them independent.” Marzolf, page 30-35.
49 Emigranten, December 7, 1863.
50 Fædrelandet, January 14, 1864.
51 Werner Sollors: “Theory of American Ethnicity, or”? S Ethnic?/Ti and American/Ti, De or United (W ) States S S1 and Theor?”. American Quarterly. Volume 33. Number 3, 1981. Hereafter Sollors. As R. A. Schermerhorn pointed out in his definition of ethnicity, language was an important factor
when determining what tied ethnic groups together, “kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypal features, or any combination of these [unite ethnic groups].” Sollors, page 262.

52 Grøngaard Jeppesen, 2005, page 203-205. Torben Grøngaard Jeppesen points out that not until 1900 did the immigrants answer questions concerning command of English in the Census Manuscripts.

53 Ager, page 224.

54 Rasmussen Papers. December 31, 1863. Throughout the Civil War, Rasmussen switched, every two months, between keeping his diary in Danish and English. Rasmussen, hereby, signified an interest in keeping up his knowledge of his Old World language, while he also recognized the need for speaking and writing English in the United States. Rasmussen’s diary is an explicit example of complementary identity.

55 Fædrelandet March 3, 1864. It was a speech by J., Prentys, Esquire given to the 46th Illinois which included the Norwegians Sergeant F. Brown, Ole Olsen, Corporal John Amunsen and Mathias Halvorsen among others.

56 Fædrelandet, March 3, 1864.

57 Interestingly, Carl Hansen in his history of the Scandinavian press uses the celebration of May 17th as evidence of “the pure idyllic Scandinavianism that prevailed in the pioneering age.” Hansen, page 34. The fact that too few showed up to even make the procession feasible, however, seems to indicate that Scandinavianism by 1864 was not all that idyllic.

58 Charles Avery and Jesper Nielsen: Danish Americans in History: They Fought for the Confederacy. Aalborg, 1992, page 11-13. Hereafter Avery and Nielsen. This manuscript traces the history of Danes in the Confederate army and incorporates the history of the Scandinavian company in the Louisiana Chalmette Regiment. According to this history, the regiment was captured first on April 27, 1862 outside of New Orleans and once again on September 3, 1863. Hereafter the regiment was disbanded.


60 Skarstein, page 283-285. According to Skarstein, by April, 1864, “the 15th Wisconsin, where almost 100% of the soldiers were of Norwegian origin... had been reinforced by a number of recruits and recovered soldiers from the hospitals could muster 320 men.”

61 Fædrelandet, January 14, 1864.
The Norwegian Civil War soldier, Henry Syvertson, expressed even less sympathy for former slaves on June 9, 1864 when he wrote the following passages to Fædrelandet, “Any phrenologist...would tell you based on the head’s development that a Negro is unsuited for higher education...That a time should come when an educated, moral woman would marry a Negro I doubt. The loathsome stench alone that sometimes comes off a Negro would be an insurmountable obstacle.” Fædrelandet June 9, 1864.

Hans C. Heg wrote his wife about his black servant, “he seems to be a good Nigger. I got him a pair of pants and he struts around as big as a Monkey.” Blegen, page 57. Anders Madsen Smith expressed prejudice towards Jews. Smith, page 67 as well as Ole C. Johnson Skipness. Ager, page 210.

Ole A. Buslett: Det Femtende Regiment, Wisconsin Frivillige [The Fifteenth Regiment, Wisconsin Volunteers]. Decorah, 1895. Hereafter Buslett. The point that the Scandinavians at the grassroots level were against slavery is supported by the following passage: “This feud [of whether slavery was sinful or not] that pinned neighbor against neighbor, and friend against friend, but especially [my emphasis] congregation against pastor, led to Clausen’s break with the Norwegian Synod [as Clausen was a fierce abolitionist]. Buslett, page 334.

Vig’s comments must be taken with a grain of salt, however, as Vig explicitly tried to paint a positive picture of the Danish soldiers’ role in American society, and a part of that picture was to portray Danes as people with a moral opposition to slavery. Vig, page 190-191.

Solberg wrote, “to be able to say one’s opinion without injury is one of the greatest blessings all over the world and no civil liberty can exist without it. Where this right is deprived a people, the people is no longer free, but a slave of the power that covers its mouth. In America where public suffrage is the foundation of the Nations’ institutions freedom of speech is the cornerstone for the system of government. When one does not dare to speak one’s opinion, one does not vote according to one’s beliefs and our government then becomes a Republic only by name, but Despotism in reality.” Emigranten, January 7, 1861.

The writ of Habeas Corpus is a legal proceeding, in which where the defendant can challenge the legality of his or her imprisonment. During the Civil War, Clement Vallandigham, John Merryman and Lambdin Milligan among others spoke out against the governments’ policies, and were imprisoned for their views and actions. The most famous example is the
case of Clement Vallandigham who was the leader of the peace Democrats and a member of Congress. During the war, Vallandigham had spoken out against conscription, the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, and emancipation. For his views and comments, Vallandigham was arrested by the military in 1863. Vallandigham appealed to the civil courts to try his case which he believed to be an obvious violation of his right to freedom of speech. In January of 1864, the case of Vallandigham made it all the way to the Supreme Court, and here the Supreme Court agreed with the government’s argument that civil courts had no jurisdiction over military courts. William E. Gienapp (ed.): *The Civil War and Reconstruction – A Documentary Collection*. Norton & Company, Inc. New York, 2001. Hereafter Gienapp. Gienapp, page 172-175. The document is called *I think I Shall Be Blamed for Having Made Too Few Arrests*. Also see James M. McPherson: *Battle Cry of Freedom*. Ballantine Books. New York, 1989. Hereafter McPherson. McPherson, page 592-600.

69 Emigranten, October 26, 1863.
70 Fædrelandet, October 13, 1864.
71 Fædrelandet, November 3, 1864. An anonymous Norwegian reader from Chicago followed Fædrelandet’s comment on November 10 when he wrote of Frøiseth, “I will in the future brand him a disgraced coward that has forgotten that he is a descendant of a free and noble people, that never could sell itself for the repression of its homeland.”
72 Andersen, page 121.
73 Knute Nelson was a Norwegian who served in the 4th Wisconsin. After the war Nelson became Governor of Minnesota and served 28 years in the United States Senate. Skarstein page 344.
Becoming American—according to the Jorgensens

by Torben Tvorup Christensen

Introduction
For those who have waited a long time for this article about integration among Danish-American immigrants I can only say that I am sorry. Lack of time has kept me away from my Danish-English dictionary and thus prevented me from writing a more public friendly version of my Masters Thesis. Knowing how difficult it would be to convert more than a hundred pages into a few readable lines—I guess—is the real reason why I have not undertaken this task before now. Another reason is simply that I each time I began thinking about doing something I was being overwhelmed by a strong desire to return to the Danish Immigrant Archive at Dana College—the place where I did most of my research—and to the fantastic crowd of volunteers that work there. Distance can truly be a curse when it prevents one from visiting friends and places of great personal value.

Having said this I will only add that this small article can never replace the original manuscript but is merely a small fraction of it. For a more complete and detailed letter analysis and conclusion please read my thesis “I Danmark er jeg født—hvor har jeg hjemme?”. Jim Iversen, president of the Board of Directors of the Danish American Heritage Society has a copy of the thesis and another is soon to be found at the Danish Immigrant Archive at Dana College, Blair, Nebraska. I do hope though that this article gives the reader an idea about the complexities of integration.

Great Danes?
It is a normally accepted statement that Danish immigrants who came to the United States rapidly assimilated into the dominating Anglo American society. This statement has flourished at least since the publication of Kristian Hvidt’s doctoral dissertation “Flugten til
Amerika” or “Flight to America” in 1971 and possibly even before 
that time. 
Kristian Hvidt mentions it briefly though it is a subject that lies 
beyond the contents of his dissertation. Despite this fact and by the 
using American Census Reports he concludes that Danish 
immigrants compared to other immigrant groups generally chose to 
settle among Americans or non-Danish immigrants and therefore 
more rapidly got accustomed to American living. This was not the 
case for most immigrants of other nationalities. They instead tended 
to cluster residentially with those with whom they were most 
familiar or with whom they were associated by ties of kinship and 
other networks of association. 
Kristian Hvidt uses several methods to verify his statements. I 
shall not bother you with all the details but merely suggest that the 
general impression by and large has been—and still is—that Danish 
immigrants, contrary to other ethnic groups, geographically were 
more scattered and thereby more easily were assimilated compared 
with those nationalities that stuck together for a variety of social, 
religious and cultural reasons. 
Since the publication of Hvidt’s dissertation the world has seen a 
number of interesting and qualitative works, which all in one way or 
another have dealt with the issues concerning Danish immigration 
and the aspects of integration and assimilation. It would require 
more space than is left for this article to mention them all. But I 
would like to recommend a single one which I believe is quite 
interesting. It is the book A New Life by Niels Peter Stilling and Anne 
Lisbeth Olsen. In this study the authors use Danish immigrant letters 
as their main source and aim at describing the migration processes 
by focusing on various issues from the decisions to emigrate on to 
dealing with the question about assimilation. 
Compared with other ethnic groups we do not now much about 
Danish immigrants and their experiences when in comes to the 
matters of integration and assimilation other than what has been 
said in a few books. Is most studies focus has mainly been on Danes 
as members of certain groups and not that much on the individuals 
behind the history.
I have tried to rectify this by involving the immigrants themselves and using their letters in my work. I have done so because I consider integration, like the decision to emigrate, as an individual process which varies from person to person. This has also given me the opportunity to ask the question: Is it all together possible to conclude anything about integration and assimilation within an ethnic group based upon their geographical scattering? In my world this sounds very naive and almost too easy. One could instead claim that such a process solely depends on the immigrants’ personal will to be transformed and has nothing to do with whom you live together with—be they compatriots or people of other nationalities.

I would also like to add that for me it seems a bit overwhelming when Kristian Hvidt and others apply a concept like assimilation onto immigrants when the term normally is regarded as a stage at which the immigrant has lost contact with his or hers original group and become one with the dominating culture.

From Contact to Assimilation
How should we then define concepts such as integration and assimilation? In search of material that could provide me with answers relating to the aspects of integration and assimilation I have come across the works of Migration Historian Elliott R. Barkan. Among his works there is one article in particular that has captured my interest. It is called “Race, Religion, and Nationality in American Society: A Model of Ethnicity – From Contact to Assimilation.” In it Barkan criticizes the fact that “many writers have defined assimilation quite differently. There has been only marginal consistency; indeed, there has actually been a muddling of meanings and not uncommonly a seemingly careless substitution of one term for another.... As a consequence, a consensus on meaning and terminologies has been lacking.”¹ The big question for Barkan is how to define fundamental processes such as integration and assimilation and just what are the stages that could lead to integration and assimilation.

Barkan therefore suggest the following definitions:
Assimilation most accurately represents the point at which individual members of ethnic groups have shed the cultural,
linguistic, behavioral, and identificational, or structural, activities that have set them apart from others. These individuals’ political and cultural norms, cultural and social activities, language usage, residential locations, friends, spouses, identities, and loyalties have by and large become indistinguishable—or insignificantly different from—those aspects of the general society and core culture. On the other hand we have integration, which Barkan believes is an important concept because it entails more that the initial efforts to adjust an acculturate. Acculturation meaning the absorption of the cultural practices, norms and values of the host (or dominant) society. For many integration could be the final stage, but it does not represent as complete as possible change as does assimilation, which marks a full blending or incorporation. Integration is taking place when an ethnic group person becomes bilingual or monolingual English; moves beyond the boundaries of his or her ethnic community and begins to associate on a regular basis with members of the larger society, or other ethnic groups; participates in external organizations, such as labor unions, public service groups, fraternal associations and so on; is involved in the general political processes; and, depending on age, goes through some phase of educational system usually the public schools.

The person who has begun to integrate has therefore gained some acceptance from the larger society, has become what Barkan calls bicultural. That implies that the individual’s ethnic identification persists, attachments to and participation within the ethnic group may remain and some primary relationships, including marriage, may still involve one’s traditional community.

The model that Barkan uses to describe the processes, which immigrants go through, is called “From Contact to Assimilation”. It consists of the following six stages:

- **Stage 1, CONTACT**, refers to newcomers, for example new immigrants. Their focus is overwhelmingly toward their native homelands and cultures and in most instances, the frames of reference and cultural and social norms remain there, and even for
those who might not wish to preserve their bonds to that homeland they yet strive to hold on to the roots in their traditional society and culture. The use of native language is predominant and individuals at this point may not have even fully developed an explicit group consciousness or sense of identity beyond that associated with their region of origin. Only few interact with outsiders except, possibly, in work situations. Citizenship is not yet an option.

By stage 2, ACCULTURATION, if they had not already existed, ethnic group identities and communities emerge, with an array of different organizations and usually native language publications. At the individual level, there also begins to be some exposure to the larger society and culture. As a result even more components of the dominant culture and language are likely to be adopted by the immigrants.

By and large, immigrants with the same background at this stage preferably live rather clustered, use their native language, participate in local community associations—secular and religious ones—and rely upon their ethnic and kin networks.

Some second generation members are present and may seek more interaction with the larger society and elements of integration might therefore begin to appear. Barkan points out that second generation can refer to the children of immigrants and immigrants who arrived before their teenage years.

There may even be some cases of intermarriage at this point. Some first generation immigrants at this stage seek citizenship while others are usually inclined to postpone applying unless there are particular economic, political, or personal motives. The focus of most immigrants remains predominantly toward the homeland.

With stage 3, ADAPTATION, substantial acculturation (with greater use of English) takes place. The focus of the group—be it family or community—is less toward the homeland and more toward the dominant American society and culture.

Some both second and now also third generation individuals take more direct steps to separate themselves from their family or ethnic group. Others may not go that far but do experience some integration through more extensive associations with no group
members, such as in schools, unions, sports teams, and dating. As a result there is more intermarriage.

Finally, significantly more, foreign-born persons acquire citizenship. Among those who reach stage 4, ACCOMODATION, there is a smaller amount of foreign-born persons. Third and fourth generations are far more visible – either in the sense of time since arrival or since sustained contact with the dominant society. There is meager attention to affairs in the homeland (or it’s merely ceremonial), little use of the native language, and limited participation in ethnic community affairs.

There is by now considerable occupational, social class, educational, and geographical mobility as well as more intermarriage.

Finally, at this stage, we find more integrated individuals having, perhaps, an “academic” or nostalgic interest or curiosity about their ethnic past.

By the time members of an ethnic group have reached stage 5, INTEGRATION, a considerable degree of incorporation in the general society has been attained, although some cultural, identificational, symbolic and behavioral characteristics remain and, quite likely, particular language expressions, traditional foods, and some festival celebrations that are episodic or infrequent.

By and large, most persons at this stage identify with the core society, expressing only marginal or symbolic interest in the affairs of the homeland or their original community.

At the last stage, ASSIMILATION, a formalistic or limited group memory persists among some persons, but descendants of the original ethnic group have by this phase, largely blended or melded into the larger society culturally, socially, institutionally, and identificationally. Although persons may retain knowledge of their ancestry, they no longer see themselves as ethnic group members. People at this last stage are no longer regarded or perceived as distinctive by members of the dominant or general society.

**The Jorgensen family**

In the light of the allegation that Danish immigrants rapidly assimilated, I have examined how the members of a common Danish
emigrant family experienced the transformations processes. If have done so by the help of their letters to the family back home in Denmark and by the application of Elliott R. Barkan’s stage model.

Using letters as a source there are of course certain matters that need to be considered. The authors of *A New Life* mention the fact it is only a small percentage of all immigrant letters that have been preserved up until today and perhaps only those that were best written had an interesting content or a dramatic story. The authors continue: “Taking this into account, as well as the fact that we don’t know how many emigrants never wrote home, there is little to be gained by a discussion of whether or not the letter writers are typical. Emigration was, after all, an individual phenomenon with emigrants sharing some common points of intersection.”

The letters I chose to work with were written by Hans Julius Nielsen (1877-ca. 1964) to family and friends in Denmark. The letters are now preserved at The Danish Emigration Archives in Aalborg, Denmark. At the Danish Immigrant Archive at Dana College, Blair, Nebraska, I found a collection which consisted of a total amount of approximately 5,000 letters that were written in the period 1892 to 1992 by the Jorgensen Family: a family consisting of Hans Jorgensen (1881 - 1966), Rosa Jorgensen (1880 - 1965), and their four daughters, Edna (1905 - 1985), Ruth (1907 - 1981), Lilly (1912 - ?) and Agnes (1915 - ?). In this article I have chosen to refer only to the Jorgensen Family.

In 1910 the parents with their two eldest daughters emigrated to America, where the two youngest
were born. After having lived some time at various places they ended up in California, where the parents lived until they died.

It is no coincidence that I chose this family. I was inspired by the fact that they came to America at a time when the era of mass migration was coming to an end and shortly before the American entrance into World War I which stimulated a variety of Americanization programs. The letters are also distinguished by telling a continuous story. They do so because of the large number and the long time span in which they were written. That means that we are able to follow the family at close quarters right from the beginning.

When the family came to the United States in 1910, Hans Jorgensen was probably the one most eager to create a good life for the family. And he knew he had to do something so that the transformation process would be as painless as possible. Previous to the transatlantic journey he took English lessons and continued to improve his English skills after the arrival in Nebraska by subscribing to American newspapers and attending church services in English. This shows that Hans Jorgensen, while being at Barkan’s Contact Stage, very early on took steps towards the Acculturation Stage. One indication of this was that one year after arrival he applied for “First Papers,” the initial step in becoming an American citizen. When reading his letters from that period one also discovers more and more English words and an Anglofication in the structure of sentences.

In 1914, four years after his arrival, the letters reveal a linguistic confusion so noticeable that it is possible to demonstrate the presence of English linguistic elements in his vocabulary. This tells us that Hans Jorgensen very much was in contact with the American society and therefore had entered the Acculturation Stage.

In 1918 all members of the family take yet another important step toward the American society in that they all become American citizens. Through citizenship the family gains access to a variety of rights that give them the ability to influence society equally with other American citizens and at the same time feel that they themselves are a part of it. This means, on a structural level, that the family in principle has become integrated; officially they have
become Americans but in reality they are Danish-Americans. The term Danish-American is appropriate because it indicates an equality of status but at the same time the term shows that they are not totally identical with “real” Americans, the so-called Anglo-Americans. The Jorgensen family has now actively and legally become a part of the American society and culture; not under the same conditions but on equal term with the Anglo-Americans.

Through different jobs Hans Jorgensen remained in contact with the American society all his life and the letters show that through work, language and habits he was open toward the United States and its possibilities. In 1921 the family lived in California and in a letter Hans Jorgensen writes to the relatives in Denmark he mentions all the material goods he would not have if he lived in Denmark: “I like it”, he writes in English and continues in Danish (now translated to English) by explaining why: “… in California I’m a day-laborer. It’s hardly the same a being a tourist but I would rather be a tourist in Denmark and day-laborer in America than vice versa. Here I have my own car which I drive to work in every day; I guess that wouldn’t be possible in Denmark.”

There are many things that indicate that Hans Jorgensen did not take steps toward the Adaptation Stage but remained at the Acculturation Stage all through his life: The letters show that his focus remained predominantly toward Denmark. Nor is there anything that indicates a considerable degree of adaptation to the American culture patterns, it seems rather that he constantly confirmed his close ties to Danish culture: All through his life he participated in religious activities in the Danish congregations at the places where the family lived. His personal network was also based on Danish relations and he and his wife Rosa Jorgensen kept on celebrating Danish traditions and customs.

We do not know that much about Rosa Jorgensen and her integration process. According to the few letters she wrote to her Danish relatives and the information I got from reading letters where she was mentioned, one gets the impression that she—compared with the rest of the family—had the hardest time fitting in. Unlike her husband she did not speak any English when the
family came to the United States and according to herself, her English skills were poor for many years.

The decade 1910–1920 is a time when Rosa Jorgensen often writes about all the things she misses about Denmark. First in 1920 when the Jorgensen family moves from Montana to California one senses a positive change in Rosa Jorgensen’s mood. The climate and fertile landscape seems to have uplifted her and could have inspired her (if it had not happened before) to open up and start fitting in.

In 1921 Rosa Jorgensen found job as a fruit picker, apparently her first job, and started seeing other people than Danes. One also detects an improvement in her English skills—both verbally and grammatically. This together with other matters indicates that Rosa Jorgensen entered the Acculturation Stage and remained there in all of her life. Like her husband her focus was predominantly toward other Danes, but she interacted functionally with the American society in a positive way.

On the other hand we have the Jorgensen daughters. Their integration processes are marked by much more dynamism compared to their parents. This was caused by the fact that they, right from the beginning in the educational system, were in direct contact with representatives of the core culture. It is also important to point out that they jumped over the Contact Stage and went directly to the Acculturation Stage; that goes especially for Lilly and Agnes Jorgensen who were born in USA. Shortly after their arrival in 1910 the two oldest daughters Edna and Ruth Jorgensen, ages five and seven respectively, started in public school; two years later in 1914 the letters show that they were well-integrated in the school system and doing very well. Both in school and at home they spoke English with each other and tried deliberately to fit in. There were afraid of being different and tried to avoid that in many ways. For example they asked Rosa Jorgensen to make them English sandwiches instead of Danish open-faced smørrebrød. In 1916 when the family moved from Nebraska to Montana both Edna and Ruth continued to progress in school and ended among the top five in spelling in their classes.

The third sister Lilly Jorgensen started in school in 1918 at the age of six, and came like her two older sisters in direct contact with
represents of the core culture. According to Lilly’s letters and memories she entered the Adaptation Stage at a very early age. Her focus very was early on toward the dominant American society and culture and less toward her parents’ and sisters’ homeland.

In 1921 the youngest sister Edna Jorgensen also starts in school. At that time Lilly is in second grade while Edna and Ruth have started in High School. In 1922 they are chosen to represent their High School at a type-writing competition. Besides showing that the sisters had talent this also shows that they fit in and were accepted by the system as equal skillful members of the society. Letters from the two women in that period indicate that they too had entered the Adaptation Stage: For example were they fluent in English and had non-Danish-American friends. After graduating from High School in 1925 both sisters start working. Ruth became a nurse and in 1927 Edna married a Dane by the name of Henry Emil Jørgensen.

The letters show that in the period 1920-1927 all four sisters experience changes that are much more progressive than those of their parents which resulted in a direct approach toward a deeper involvement in the core society. School attendance confirms this together with improving English skill, and non-Danish-American friendships. Like the two oldest sisters both Lilly and Agnes went to High School. After graduation Lilly went on to becoming a teacher while Agnes opened a flower shop.

From around 1913 up until the present time all four girls seem to have been in close interaction with the American society. All four had a Danish heritage in common which does not seem to have been a hindrance to them. On the contrary they lived with a “Danishness” that was closely tied to the elements of American culture. Elements which seem to have gained more and more influence as older they got. We know for certain that that was the case of Ruth Jorgensen who, after visiting Denmark in 1947, admitted to the fact that she preferred the niceties of American life compared to the life of her Danish relatives where her kind of niceties seemed to have been missing entirely. Ruth Jorgensen is the one who most explicitly explains the differences between the culture the family left and the culture she and her sisters gradually adapted to. In 1947 during a
visit to her relatives in Denmark Ruth Jorgensen writes to her sisters and American friends:

We could not be satisfied to live on a little Danish farm which looks most picturesque with low waving straw-thatched roof..., tiny flower-filled windows, and the little cobblestone farmyard enclosed by the joined buildings. Never a window opened but that the aroma from the cows' home is wafted in – never a window or door opened but that the flies are all over.... Maybe ours has become too artificial a manner of life, I don't know, but it does nevertheless seem to me that there is nothing to be said for a bathtub in every home, and perhaps even the luxury of a washing machine. Why should a house like this one here [her uncle’s house where she lived during her stay, built in 1925, as a parsonage], not boast a bathtub and one more point with running water other than the kitchen sink. Running water unless otherwise specified refers only to cold. And that is considered a rare luxury. I like the niceties of American life. Many of the niceties to which we are so sensitive seem to be missing entirely here. Even among the more privileged group, sturdy healthy young men and women do not seem to feel the need of deodorants – baths among the stronger sex are hardly a weekly affair. [To explain the differences further she writes that the Danes] also seem to live closer to the arts that we do in our highly developed machine age....

Our Uncle in Verninge [A Danish village on the island of Fyn] has a lovely Venus de Milo about 20 inches high in the living room, a very nice thing, but I can just imagine what a sensation even a modest one would create in any of our more ordinary homes. Our Uncle has in his living room, as the dominant theme, a large oil painting of a nude woman sitting, back half turned, done in greens, and it is very well done. I don’t know how long it would take me to become quite unconscious of her, but I don’t think most of my American friends would understand nor appreciate such a display.
The quotes show that the life of Ruth Jorgensen was not the same as the lives of her Danish relatives. The same goes probably for her sisters too. For many years they had been under the influence of American culture. An influence that made an impact especially on the daughters because they were not to the same degree as their parents a part of the culture from which the family migrated. The sisters did though remain in close connection with their Danish roots through all of their lives and confirmed the bonds to the ethnic group by marrying men of Danish descent, keeping contact with their Danish relatives and by celebrating Danish traditions. As a family the daughters carried on the same customs even as adults, for example the Danish Christmas Eve customs, to which the new in-laws according to the letters most interestingly seem to have adjusted.

When applying Barkan’s model to the letters of the Jorgensen family in order to determine the stages at which they ended up the result reveals a rather complex truth. For even though that we can detect a range of changes that can be characterized as integration among the six family members it is also possible to detect different degrees of adjustment within the stages: Hans and Rosa Jorgensen belonged by the time of their death to the Acculturation stage while their daughters —probably all four— were at stage 3, the Adaptation Stage.

This superficial presentation of the original thesis I hope does enough to show that when using Elliott R. Barkan’s definitions we can first and foremost establish that none of these individuals ever assimilated. How could they when assimilation most accurately represents the point at which individual members of ethnic groups have shed the cultural, linguistic, behavioral and identificational characteristics of their original group as well as disengaged from the associational, or structural, activities that have set them apart from others.

The big question now is: What about all the other Danish immigrants about whom we have read were assimilated quite rapidly? With help from Barkan’s theories or at least other non-statistical methods I’m convinced, that this important piece of
history will be revealed in a new, more complex and equally fascinating and interesting light.

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Stilling, Niels Peter and Olsen, Anne Lisbeth: *A New Life*, Udvandrerhistoriske studier nr. 6, Danes Worldwide Archives, 1994, p. 17.
5 A 914.
6 The Jorgensen Collection – JOR, The Danish Immigrant Archive at Dana College, Blair, Nebraska.
7 JOR 992 13-1-14x, The Danish Immigrant Archive at Dana College, Blair, Nebraska.
Europe was in ferment during the nineteenth century. The American Revolution and the French Revolution, both of which had taken place during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, had brought to the fore new questions as to the status of the individual in society. The emphasis in the one on the equality of all men, and in the other on "Liberty, equality and fraternity," had inspired and given hope to some, but had struck fear into the hearts of others. It was inevitable that this should give rise to reformers, particularly in England and France, reformers who were concerned with the social and economic welfare of the working class. Beginning in 1814, Count Saint Simon, a Frenchman, who was an insistent reformer wrote a number of books with a socialistic bias. This was before the word socialism, which did not come into general use until after 1830, and long before the days of Karl Marx. Meanwhile the Scottish factory owner and philanthropist, Robert Owen, was attracting much interest in Britain by setting an example in using his own plan for a more just social organization of society. In other European countries there were also reformers who were aware of the inequities in the social and economic order under which society was organized. Reform was definitely in the air in early nineteenth century Europe.

Yet given the social and economic conditions of the time and the need for reform and given the plethora of reformers, strangely enough no serious and lasting change took place during those years. A part of the problem was that there was no consistency in the proposed reforms. There were as many suggestions for reform as there were reformers. The word socialism, for example, covered a number of different reforms though they did have certain things in common. Then, too, some of the reformers were eccentrics. Saint Simon was a poor and humble man who was
nevertheless often seen as a crank, yet his thoughts represent some of the best views of the modern age. Though Charles Fourier was a kind and good man, his views were often laughed at. It is interesting to note, incidentally, that none of the plans for reform included democracy. Generally, they looked toward a kind of social engineering and dismissed the masses as being unable to govern. Another factor which may help to explain the failure of reform in Europe at that time is the inertia of established governments. The social and economic climate of a place and time are not lightly or easily changed. It was this resistance to change on the European scene that led the reformers to more and more look to the new world as a proving ground for their theories.

New World Utopias
Those who sought to reform society and place its social and economic structure on a more equitable base should not be lightly dismissed as crackpots or those who sought to escape from the pressures of the real world. They were determined to establish reform without violence and this was one reason for turning to America. They saw an embryonic community as being more amenable to new ideas than an old established society.

The aforementioned Robert Owen was the first to bring his scheme to the new world. In 1825 he purchased an old German settlement at New Harmony, Indiana. Here he sought to organize the settlement in a kind of communistic society. His son, Robert Dale Owen, was to be the leader of the community. However, within two years, New Harmony, begun with high hopes, exhibited more discord than harmony. While Owen was personally likeable, his anti-religious views worked against the harmony he sought. Charles Fourier, the Frenchman, who shared Robert Owens’s socialistic views, was seen as less of a threat and was more readily tolerated. Fourier feared capitalism and saw it as ultimately destructive. He sought to have the members of society gather in what he called phalanxes, or associated groups which could then transform society. Some 40 of these were formed in the
ten years after 1830. They all failed except for Brook Farm which provided the inspiration for a novel, *The Blithdale Romance*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Brook Farm became definitely socialistic in 1843 but by 1847 a fire put an end to the already poverty-stricken community.

**Scandinavian Utopias**
Unlike some of the Utopian societies founded in America, the colony established by the Swedes at Bishop Hill, Illinois, did not have its beginnings in economic reform. It was founded by a sect called the Janssonists in the interests of religious freedom, though as a practical matter to aid the emigrants and to foster the settlement, communistic practices were quickly adopted.

Erik Jansson, who was also known as the prophet, was a flour salesman and a lay preacher. In his travels as a salesman he came in contact with many lay readers of the Bible. From 1842 and onward he met often with them to discuss the Bible and other religious writings and to pray together. Before long they formed a sect whose belief was that the believer could immediately lead a sinless life. They often engaged in book burnings of Lutheran works and devotional material that was contrary to their beliefs. Inevitably, these beliefs and actions put them in conflict with the authorities in Lutheran Sweden. Jansson spent most the two years prior to 1846 in prison.

Meanwhile, two of Jansson's followers, the brothers, Olof and Jonas Olsson decided the group should emigrate. The fall of 1845 found Olof consulting in New York with Olof Gustav Hedstrom and making preparations for the arrival of the Janssonites and selecting a site for their settlement. Olof Hedstrom was a lay preacher associated with the Methodist Church and his "Bethel Ship" lay permanently anchored off lower Manhattan. Here he preached the Methodist doctrine to new arrivals, gave practical information as to the travel routes, and suggested the best places for them to settle. In this case, Hedstrom directed Olsson to his brother Jonas Hedstrom in Illinois. Jonas, who was also a lay
preacher, aided Olsson in selecting a site in Henry County. That site lay some 140 miles west and slightly south of Chicago.

The prophet, Erik Jansson, was still in Sweden where he had been arrested for the sixth time. There, while being transported to a prison, he somehow managed to escape and by the summer of 1846 he had found his way to the Henry county site. With Olof Olsson and a few who had already arrived, he purchased land for the settlement. Two years later the settlement had a population of 800 people; it also had a name, Bishop Hill, a name taken from a location near Jansson's birthplace in Sweden. Some engaged in farming, but they also established several industries, some of which proved to be profitable. They built substantial buildings of brick which they had molded themselves. One large building, completed in 1851, was four stories high, with a kitchen and dining hall on the first floor while the three floors above were divided into seventy family dwellings.

Bishop Hill continued for some years as a communal enterprise, in fulfillment of its ideal, but also of necessity. The dictatorial Erik Jansson was murdered, in May of 1850 in a dispute over a marriage plan. His successors governed the community more democratically and still maintained a collective stance, but there began to be speculation in capitalistic enterprises. The colony eventually lost faith in the leaders and the collective principle was given up. The property was divided among those settlers remaining. Today only a few substantial buildings remain to remind the visitor of their collective origin.

There is nothing in the experience of the Norwegian immigrants comparable to the Bishop Hill colony of the Swedes. Economic reasons were secondary for the Norwegian emigrants; religious freedom was a prime factor in the early migration. There was a Quaker colony in Stavanger, in the southern part of Norway, where the Quakers were constantly at odds with the Lutheran state church. Their fellow Norwegians were sympathetic with and much influenced by the Quakers. By 1824 two men were sent to investigate conditions in America. One of them died, but the other,
Cleng Peerson, was able to report favorably and received promises of help from Quakers already established in the new world.

Plans were quickly made to cross the Atlantic in a sloop, which they had named the Restauration, The sloop was small, (54 ft. x 16ft) and the 52 passengers made it quite crowded. Not all of the passengers, who have since been referred to as "the sloopers" were Quakers. After three months at sea they arrived in New York on October 9, 1825. Here they were met by Cleng Peerson, and a number of Quakers who stood ready to help. They soon discovered that they needed more help than they had imagined. On landing in New York the sloopers learned that they had unwittingly broken the law in that the sloop was carrying many more passengers than allowed on a ship of its size. They, therefore, faced a heavy fine, but a well-to-do Quaker put up the bond money, helped formulate a petition for the release of the ship, and sought a waiver of the fine. This was granted. The New York Quakers then directed the sloopers to Kendall, a colony in upstate New York, some 25 miles northwest of Rochester, on the shore of Lake Ontario. The New Yorkers further aided them by providing the necessary funds for their travel. The sloop had been sold but brought only $400 which would not have been enough.

The sloopers did go to Kendall and settled there for some years until they gradually accumulated enough money to move farther west. Some of them then migrated to the Fox River region, considerably west of Chicago, in Illinois where there were other Norwegian settlements.

Among immigrants from Norway prior to 1860, there were few who came with any specific plans for a Utopian settlement. Nils Otto Tank was an exception. While still in Norway he was converted to the teachings of the Moravians. In 1849 he learned of a Moravian colony in northeastern Wisconsin, in the Green Bay area. He had married a wealthy Dutch woman and, therefore, having the necessary means, he purchased land in the northern part of the Green Bay region and sought to establish a socialistic colony, to be called "Ephriam." Settlers did come and took up the
land he had made available, but they did not accept his communal ideas. Tank was descended from the nobility and the settlers simply did not trust a man of his background. Within a short time they moved farther north in what is now Door County and founded a colony in which there was to be private ownership of the property.

Another exception was the colony of "Oleana" founded under the aegis of Ole Bull, the celebrated violinist. Bull had first hand knowledge of the 1848 revolution in Paris and had been influenced by it. There are indications that he had Utopian ideas and wanted to put them into practice. He was definitely interested in the welfare of his fellow Norwegians and he sought to found a large colony for them. Therefore, in 1852 he bought a large tract of land in Pennsylvania for a Norwegian settlement. In September of 1852 the first colonist arrived. Shortly thereafter Ole Bull arrived and with him came an engineer who was to lay out lots on which the settlers could build. Bull himself selected sites for a carpentry shop, a nursery, a church and a schoolhouse. The entire enterprise appeared to be off to a good start.

Nonetheless, Bull owned the land and would sell to the settlers at a price which was considerably higher than they would have paid for government land. He did offer them work at one dollar a day, but within a short time his funds were running low and he had to cut the pay to fifty cents a day. He then set off on another concert tour to raise more money. He returned the following spring and for a time things seemed to go fairly well, but by September Bull withdrew from the project and sold the remaining land back to the original owners. Thus another immigrant Utopian project failed.

Danish emigration to the new world came late. Prior to 1850 there were relatively few Danes who came to America. Thus, the period of reform in Europe that had taken its cue from the French revolution and from the developments in France in 1848, saw no reformers in Denmark with a Utopian bent attracted to the land across the sea.
The labor movement was coming to the fore in Denmark during the early 1870's and the Social Democratic Party was formed largely due to the activities of the labor activist, Louis Pio. Though they had lived in Denmark for some generations, the Pio family had come from France. Partly due to adversities which he had personally experienced, Pio began to play an active role in the labor movement and he eventually became a socialist. By 1873 he had become the editor of the socialist paper, *Social Democraaten*. Meanwhile, because of things he had written and said, Pio had come to the attention of the Copenhagen police. He and some others were arrested when they insisted on holding a meeting in defiance of the police. They were sentenced to prison. Two years later they were pardoned by the King, partly because there was some question as to the health of Pio. Upon his release from prison, Pio resumed the editorship of the socialist paper.

The police continued to see Pio and an associate Foul Geleff as a threat and used funds supplied by two major industries in Copenhagen, to essentially bribe Pio and Geleff to leave the country. In April of 1877, Pio, Geleff and a small group of settlers left Copenhagen bound for Kansas where they intended to establish a Utopian colony. Kansas was chosen because Geleff had been there the year before and Kansas had found favor with him. At Salina, Kansas they gathered to make plans for their colony. A fund, expected to last six months, was raised by each contributing slightly less than $100, with Pio contributing the most, some $300. At Hays, Kansas they got title to the land under the terms of the Homestead Act. Here they bought supplies they felt they would need and, filled with high hopes, they set out on foot for the colony site.

The hopes and dreams did not last long. Within six weeks what had begun so enthusiastically, had failed miserably. What had happened? It was said the men worked hard and worked well together, but the women simply could not get along. Harsh words and jealousies were an everyday occurrence. Whether or
not it is fair to place the blame for the failure on the women is questionable, but suffice it to say that the break-up came because human nature asserted itself. So it was that the remaining funds and goods were divided equitably and each left for his own destination.

Pio, for his part, went to Chicago, where he lived until his death in 1894 at the age of 52. He was engaged in a number of different occupations during those years. At one time or other he was an editor, a real estate salesman, a civil servant, a customs house clerk and a civil engineer. He also frequently met with the prominent Danes of Chicago on a Friday afternoon in Wilkins Wine Cellar for relaxation and discussion.

Shortly before his death, Pio did found a colony, albeit not a socialist or Utopian colony. In collaboration with the capitalist, Henry Flagler, Pio established a Danish settlement called White City, some five miles from Ft. Pierce, on the east coast of Florida. The town of White City, about 100 miles north of Miami still exists today.

One by one, from New Harmony and Bishop Hill to Brook Farm and Louis Pio’s dream, the Utopian colonies all failed and without exception, they foundered on the rock of human nature. What does this, and 2,000 years of intermittent warfare tell us of the prospects for world peace? It tells us that in spite of good intentions and the best efforts of humans, the quest for a collective peace is bound to fail; it is bound to founder on the rock of human nature. Such peace as one can know will come only to the individual. As we sing:

"Happy is he who has peace in his heart, Peace with himself with his God, with his neighbor: He has of happiness found the best part, Reaps he but little reward from his labor."
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Denmark’s Forgotten Film Star: Karl Dane

by Laura Petersen Balogh

“Slim of ‘Big Parade’ Dead Amid Poverty,” “Riches to Rags,” and “Actor Who Once Made $1500 a Week Saved From Pauper’s Grave.” These were some of the headlines that appeared in American newspapers in April 1934 after the suicide of Copenhagen-born silent film star Karl Dane.

Today, the name Karl Dane is almost unknown in his native Denmark. In America, where he achieved fame and fortune, he is sadly known mostly to classic film fans and readers of Hollywood scandal books.

Karl Dane’s rise and fall is unparalleled in the history of film stars. In 1925, an unknown, he shot to stardom after appearing in King Vidor’s classic The Big Parade as the buddy of star John Gilbert. Just nine years later, after plummeting to the depths of poverty because of the perceived unsuitability of his voice for sound films, he shot himself in his Los Angeles apartment. To compound the tragedy, he had been reduced to operating a hot dog stand just outside the gates of the studio where only several years earlier he had achieved so much adulation. Until MGM stepped forward to arrange his funeral, it looked as if he would have to be buried in a pauper’s grave.

In reviewing the circumstances of Karl Dane’s life and death, one wonders how someone who received so much fame and made so much money, could be reduced to such despair and poverty so quickly? In researching his life, it becomes obvious that there was so much more to Karl Dane than his tragic death.

Karl was born Rasmus Karl Therkelsen Gottlieb on October 12, 1886 in a small second floor apartment at Tűresengade 23, in the parish of St Johannes, in central Copenhagen. He was the second of three sons to a glove maker, Rasmus Carl Marius Gottlieb, born in Horsens in 1860. The name Gottlieb is German, meaning “God’s love” and in fact his great-great grandfather, Johann Gottlieb Just, settled in Horsens from Stendal, then Saxony-Anhalt, in 1780, and became a butcher. Karl’s mother, Anna Cathrine Simonsen, was from Aarhus. Karl’s brother Reinald Marius was a year older than
Karl, and they were very close companions until adulthood. Karl’s father’s great passion was toy theater, (Dukketeater, or doll theater) all the rage in Victorian Denmark, and custom built his own model. This probably was created about the year 1892 in his glove makers’ workshop right outside the family’s ground floor residence at Nørrevoldgade 38 Stue in Copenhagen. According to family lore, this theater was so elaborate and professional, that people bought tickets to it. The two boys loved to take part in these shows, and this fired young Karl’s lifelong love of performing.

Despite this happy pastime, life in the Gottlieb household must have been stormy, since Karl’s mother Anna filed for a legal separation from her husband in 1903, and they were finally divorced in 1908. As the Danish law then required, the couple was counseled by a Lutheran priest, and each made a statement that still survives today in the Archives. Rasmus poignantly admitted to problems with alcohol and “money mismanagement,” and this latter issue would prove to be a major problem for Karl as well late in his own life.

Karl and his brother both attended the Nansensgade School from age six to age fourteen, when they were both apprenticed as machinists to the firm Smith, Mygind, and Hüttemeir, the makers of railroad equipment. Karl was always very proud of his ability to work with his hands, even during his heyday in Hollywood. In an April 1927 interview for Motion Picture Classic magazine, he said, “I’ll fix anything for you—from a locomotive to a typewriter. I always owned my own shop—and you gotta be a good man to do that in the old country.” When his four years of apprenticeship with the firm was completed in June 1907, Karl began his mandatory military service with the First Artillery Battalion (later known as the Coastal Artillery Regiment) responsible for the defense of Copenhagen’s land fortifications at the island fort of Trekroner (literally, “three crowns”) Battery. He earned high marks as a soldier, receiving regular promotions each year, and was discharged in October 1909. He joined up again when war broke out in August 1914, to defend neutral Denmark’s shores, and served until December 1915 as a full Corporal.

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Karl was very tall, at 6’3 ½”, (70.5 Danish inches) and while lanky, he was also powerful and athletic. He loved all sports, was an excellent swimmer, rode a horse, and could do just about any trick on a bicycle. It was also reported that he was one of the first pilots in Denmark, and a noted race car driver, who won a medal in a cross country auto race in Sweden. As a person, Karl was a bit of a paradox. While sometimes described as a quiet and private man, he was also friendly, down to earth, kindhearted, and a big flirt with the ladies. He also loved to play practical jokes, and was a fearless daredevil from childhood.

At the age of 23, Karl met and fell in love with an attractive young dressmaker, Carla Dagmar Hagen. They were married in September 1910 at Saint Paul Church in Copenhagen. Carla and Karl welcomed their son Ejlert Carl, into the world in 1911. A daughter, Ingeborg Helene, followed the next year. The new family lived in a small flat at Marstalsgade 51, Copenhagen, and they settled comfortably into domestic life. Karl worked as a machinist, repairing Singer sewing machines, until the outbreak of the war, when Karl re-enlisted.

Following Karl’s military discharge, prospects for finding employment were poor, so he decided to immigrate to America and send for his family later. He sailed in January 1916, on the ship Oscar II, with only $25 and no English skills at all. He settled in New York in February with his friend Charles Lindgren who had emigrated earlier, and got a job in a foundry. Karl’s draft registration card in June 1917 showed that by this time, he was working for the Robert Gair Company on Washington Street in Brooklyn, and living in a
boarding house on Clermont Avenue. Karl, like his father, was a restless soul, and wandered for awhile out west, working for a time in Lincoln, Nebraska, as a car mechanic, before returning to the East Coast again.

Karl never forgot about his happy years performing in his father’s theater, and by 1917, Karl decided to seek work as an extra and stunt man in Brooklyn and Fort Lee, New Jersey. His height, unconventional good looks, and strength got him noticed. He was also a fine and natural actor, who could play any sort of part. His first film was a Vitagraph short, but his small part ended up on the cutting room floor. Fate intervened, though, when the Warner Brothers were looking for someone to play the giant German Chancellor in their first feature, the first American propaganda film, My Four Years in Germany, and Karl fit the bill. He was so good that he reprised the role in two more films. He also made a terrific nasty but understated second villain in the serial, The Wolves of Kultur, starring motorcycle daredevil star Charles Hutchison.

As Karl was making his mark in films, he was also losing touch with his family in Copenhagen. Carla no longer wanted to join him in the United States, due to ill health, and they legally separated. A lonely Karl then fell in love with young Swede named Helen Benson. Tired of taking risks as a stunt man and suffering from his own periodic illnesses, they decided to move out west. The couple purchased land in southern California, and became poultry and fruit farmers on Kester Avenue in Van Nuys. He also proudly became an American citizen, and changed his name to Karl Dane.

The couple remained happily on the farm for the next three years. Helen became pregnant, but tragically, in August, 1923, both she and the baby girl died in childbirth. Grief-stricken and alone, Karl rushed into another marriage within months, this time to telephone operator Emma Sawyer, seven years his senior, but this was short-lived.

One day, Karl ran into Charles Hutchison, who was by then an independent producer. He convinced Karl to be a part of his current production, another serial. Meanwhile, MGM director King Vidor was trying to find the right actor to play the part of the gangly tobacco-chewing riveter Slim in The Big Parade. Robert McIntyre, the
Casting Director who had given Karl his first extra role, saw him on the screen again, and brought him to Vidor’s attention. Karl was a sensation in Vidor’s film, and became a star overnight. *The New York Times* echoed the sentiments of many critics, citing his “gorgeous characterization”, and reporting that Karl “just about runs away with the picture.” He signed an MGM contract in June 1926. At the time, though, the Gottlieb family in Denmark was totally unaware of his newfound fame—and new name. When *The Big Parade* premiered in Copenhagen at the World Cinema in January 1926, Karl’s then 13-year old daughter Ingeborg, was astonished to see the father she barely remembered, reportedly exclaiming “Why, that’s Dad!” out loud in the crowded theater. In Aarhus, his brother Reinald, now a successful electrician and taxicab company owner, also saw Karl in the film, and wrote to him in Hollywood, to which Karl responded: “Dear Big Brother! I have received your letter, and confess that I am Karl Dane!”

*Karl Dane, left, in The Big Parade*

Courtesy Bruce Calvert
The legendary Lillian Gish saw an early screening of the film, and personally handpicked Karl for her next projects, *La Boheme* and *The Scarlet Letter*. More assignments quickly followed, with prominent stars such as Rudolph Valentino, Marion Davies, William Haines, and Buster Keaton. He was then teamed with pint-sized actor George K Arthur in a series of successful comedies. Their first film together, the Army-themed *Rookies*, was enormously popular, and was quickly followed by many other successful features and shorts. Karl, despite his fame and fortune, never enjoyed the Hollywood social scene, as Arthur did. He was happiest in simpler pursuits, like building his own beach house in Malibu, working in his carpentry shop in his Beverly Hills backyard, or simply sharing a beer in the kitchen with a friend.

The bubble finally burst for Karl after the arrival of the sound. The primitive new sound equipment made his speech difficult for some to understand, and MGM dropped him in 1930. Although he made some funny sound shorts with Arthur at Paramount and RKO, which led to a nationwide vaudeville tour, Karl’s strong Scandinavian accent suddenly branded him as unfunny in the eyes of voice-obsessed Hollywood. His career was over by 1932.

Karl’s finances were in a shambles by this time. Like his father, he had never been wise with money, and now he was unemployed. This badly affected his confidence and he became deeply depressed. Every one of his new ventures failed miserably. Karl invested thousands into two separate mining deals in Nevada and Oregon, during a small boom set off when FDR increased the price of gold in 1933, but both investments soon went bust. Desperate, and now deep in debt, he sank all of his remaining funds into a hot dog stand situated outside the MGM gates, but this too failed when the business was shunned by his former co-workers. Karl then went to his former bosses, and begged for any job, any job, even as a humble extra or carpenter. They callously refused.

On Saturday evening, April 14, 1934, Karl was to meet a friend, Frances Leake, for a movie. When he failed to show up, Frances hurried to his apartment, and pounded on the door. She finally enlisted the aid of Mrs. White, his landlady, and together, they found Karl’s body slumped in his chair, with a revolver at his feet.
Frances fainted at the terrible sight. When she was revived, Frances saw Karl’s final note on a nearby table, next to the scrapbook he always kept, filled with his old studio contracts and rave reviews. The simple note read, “To Frances and all my friends—goodbye.”

Karl Dane’s tragic end can be seen in many lights. It is a stark reminder that fame is fleeting and times change. It also serves as a sad reminder of the terrible way people from different cultures were treated in Hollywood. What is important to keep in mind, however, is that Karl, despite the mistakes he made, and the tragedies he faced, managed to achieve so much living in his short forty-seven years. He lived his dream, but despite his fame, always remained in spirit the same simple machinist from Copenhagen. For this reason, he still intrigues 120 years after his birth—and deserves a deeper look.

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INTRODUCTION - This short story is an example of a collaboration of two outstandingly productive Danish Americans, one in literature, the other in the world of art. The names of J. Christian Bay (1871-1962) and Christian Petersen (1885-1961) have appeared before in The Bridge. Two translations of Bay’s work have been published; the first was in an article about an account of a fictional visit to Chicago by Hans Christian Andersen. The second was a translation of his article about the plant scientist Niels Ebbesen Hansen. Two reviews of books about Christian Petersen have appeared in The Bridge.

J. Christian Bay was born in Rudkøbing on the island of Langeland in Denmark on the 12th of October, 1871. After receiving a degree in Botany from the University of Copenhagen in 1892, he left to find his fortune in the United States that same year. He started working at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, Missouri, but in 1894, he moved to Des Moines, Iowa, where he worked as a bacteriologist for the Iowa State Board of Health. He became well acquainted with other prominent Danish Americans while he was in Des Moines and participated in the dedication ceremonies at Grand View College in 1896. He taught at the Ashland Danish Folk School in Michigan for a couple of years before starting work at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. in 1900, where he was involved in helping to develop the Library of Congress book classification system. In 1905 he was invited to become a "Classifier" in the John Crerar Library of Science at the University of Chicago. He was named Librarian (i.e., Director) of the Library in 1928 and continued in that position until he became Librarian Emeritus in 1946.

Bay was a prolific writer in both the Danish and English languages. Much of his writing in the English language was in the area of his research and bibliographic interests, but he also did many translations and other writings about Danes and Danish Americans, in both Danish and English.
Examples of these include writings about Danish immigrants such as Max Henius and Frederik Lange Grundtvig. The work about Max Henius was published in 1959, when Bay was 88 years of age. In the preface to his book of short stories Frisk Luft, Bay counted himself among six Danish American authors who attempted to interpret "life on the prairie" for those Danes who had immigrated to the Midwest. He felt that one of the goals of these six authors' writing was to help the people who remained in Denmark gain empathy and understanding for the immigrants who had left their homeland. He proclaimed Anton Kvist the master of the six. Kvist had earlier written a poem in honor of J. Christian Bay in 1930, but it wasn't published in this country until 1955. A short story by Bay follows Kvist's poem in the same issue of Dansk Nytaar. J. Christian Bay wrote a large number of short stories. In that same 1955 issue of Dansk Nytaar, Editor Paul C. Nyholm indicates that Bay, by that date, had written more than 60 short stories, published in various places.

A primary reason for the translation and republication of "The Yellow Envelope" in The Bridge in the year 2007 is that the Christian Petersen Art Museum has opened this year in the restored Morrill Hall (built 1890) on the Iowa State University campus in Ames, Iowa. The new museum houses more than 700 pieces of Petersen's sculpture and drawings. There are now four books which have been published regarding the art of Christian Petersen, and the first two of these, as stated above, have been reviewed in The Bridge.

Christian Petersen was born on a farm just outside of Dybbøl, in Southern Jutland, on 25 February, 1885, and immigrated with the rest of the family to the United States in 1894. He and his family eventually settled on the East Coast, and that is where he received his training and his early reputation as an engraver and sculptor, but he moved to the Midwest in the late 1920s and lived in the Chicago area from 1928 to 1934. We know that while in Chicago, he became well acquainted with Royal Danish Consul General Reimund Baumann, and also with the renowned landscape architect Jens Jensen. Thus, it is likely that he also became an acquaintance of Librarian J. Christian Bay during those 6 years in Chicago.

In 1935, Christian Petersen became the nation's first "artist-in-residence" at Iowa State College (the name later changed to Iowa State University) and remained in that position as well as a member of the teaching faculty until he retired in 1959. Although Petersen was
apparently not as well-known to the professional Danish American community as J. Christian Bay, he was quite proud of his Danish roots and completed a number of works pertaining to Danes and Danish Americans.

After his move to Iowa, he became a good friend of August Bang of Cedar Falls, Iowa, who was the editor of the Danish language weekly Dannevirke as well as the annual Christmas publication Julegranen. A comprehensive illustrated article about Christian Petersen and his art was written by Bang and published in Julegranen in the 1943 issue, and shorter presentations were published in later issues.

In the following short story by J. Christian Bay, the author emphasizes, with eloquent poignancy, the sacrifices made by these "pioneers of the prairie" during World War II. Christian Petersen's illustrations measure up to Bay's literary standard.

Rasmus Lind drove straight home from the post office. It was a letter from their son, from Peter, who had gone to fight over in Africa or some other place. That much they had learned. A little doodling on some letters of the alphabet here and there; when they put those letters together, there stood "MOROCCO". That was, however, three months ago, so there could have been much that happened since then. Rasmus did not open the letter in the post office. Mr. and Mrs. always stood outside, but it was Hanne, who opened the letters from their tall, handsome boy, who had been taken from her -- and, of course, also from Rasmus, of course. But Mother is always Mother for a boy.

The old Ford sighed and groaned on the road out of Nyborg. Rasmus' only thought was to get home with the letter. "The Lord be praised" it wasn't a telegram. Yes, that did happen, that people received yellow paper in their boxes. The color showed the kind of message, so the colors all faded and all hope turned gray, and fathers and mothers sat silent and serious and surprised about that all these strong men who were pictured in the papers, could sit there and look happy.

Søren drove in through the gate and stopped in front of his farmstead. A good little farm. Everything in order--so it was. It had been difficult to get everything taken care of after the oldest boy had
been taken. The three daughters were very capable, for that Hanne had the honor, but there were no menfolk to find for help.

It was getting dark. Rasmus drove his car into the garage and waved to Hanne, who had opened the kitchen door.

"There's a letter!" shouted Rasmus.

Mille, the oldest of the girls, came running out of the barn. "There's a letter, Father, great." She snatched the letter, which Father had held out, and flew over the yard to her mother. Rasmus calmly collected the sacks together, which he had bought in Nyborg, and walked after her.

Hanne, Mille and the two younger girls, sat in the living room with the precious letter. Rasmus stumbled into the rocking chair and said nothing.

"Hang up your jacket, Father", said Hanne.

From the front porch he had asked "Where is the letter from?"

Hanne had already opened it. "No place," she said: "There are only some stamps. Well, it doesn't make any difference, where he is living. Please, in God's name, read it, Mille". She handed Mille the letter and folded her hands in a devotional attitude.

Mille read slowly and with fascination. The letter was in English. The Nebraska Twenty-Second had finally come out of (blacked out) --- "That would be Africa." surmised Mille --" and was stationed in (blacked out) and it was a very nice place with palm trees and mountains. They got wine to drink because the water was so bad. And Peter had been promoted to corporal."

Rasmus slowly rocked back and forth in his chair. "Hey," he said, "My father was also a corporal, but he made fun of that, when he talked about it. He had been stationed in Horsens.

"My mother's brother was stationed in Aarhus," remarked Hanne. 'You are in error, Father. Your father and my uncle were soldiers together. They both came from the Aarslev area. I am certain they were stationed in Aarhus."

"No, it was Horsens," Rasmus declared. "For I was just a little fellow, once we were driving to Horsens, and they showed me the prison. That was a good place to stay away from, they said, and I have never ever been there since, ha."
Hanne shook her head, but composed herself. "Read on, my girl", she said. Mille read on.

One of Peter's comrades had been a newspaper boy in Brooklyn. His name was Joe. He had no parents. Mille looked up from the letter. "Yeah, that's what it says all right, he has no parents and no brothers or sisters.

"His parents are probably deceased, my girl", Hanne said carefully.

But Joe was a good pal. They shared everything with each other. Cigarettes and sweaters and socks and chocolates and gum. Joe was a Catholic and very interested in the many churches and pictures of the saints there in (blackened out). Their group had made slow progress forward. The country's people were friendly, but afraid, and many of them were in dire need. Peter and Joe and all the others worried about all the small children.

"He has to be in Italy", said Rasmus. "The big boys couldn't let us know whether our children are at the North Pole or in Australia. We could just as well tell the Germans something about it anyway."

"What are you talking about?" shouted Hanne. "If we knew everything, we could easily write it to the Germans, and so they could sneak up on our people, and ---"

Rasmus Lind stood up and lit the lamp. "That is a sure way, Mother," he said, "we write every other day to Hitler, ha". Hanne opened her mouth to answer, but was interrupted.

"Listen!" Mille interrupted. "There is more. 'If I should be excused altogether from coming back, and if Joe should be on hand, remember we are pals.' "She repeated those words slowly and with a trembling voice, put her hand on her forehead, and fought back the tears. It was very quiet in the living room. Finally, Rasmus Lind rose from his chair, found his pipe and tobacco and stood thoughtfully. "Nothing can take him from us, Mother," he said; "he belongs to you and me."

"Belongs?" blurted Hanne. "He belongs to the whole world. Can you get that in your head, Rasmus? Peter and Mille and Karen and Marie, they belong to all others, and all others belong to others - now. Now! Rasmus. It was different, when we lived here nearly alone and hardly had any neighbors. We brought up our children,
that was not more than our duty. Our horses and cattle and our dog and our cat, yes, they belong to us, but the children -- no, now the world is quite different, that can we perceive.

"Yeah" said Rasmus gently. "But the responsibility, Mother, that we still have."

The twelve-year-old Marie crawled up and had set herself on his knee. "I am your girl, Father." He stroked his hand softly over the blond braids. "That you are, Marie."

"The duty," Marie proclaimed, "You well mean the responsibilities, yes, those we have, and those we also must continue with."

Rasmus stood up and laid his pipe aside. "I have to go out and do the chores," he said; "That is my duty."

"No," Hanne replied. "That is your responsibility."

"Hm. Ha." Rasmus stood in the kitchen door and set his cap on his bald head. "I don't really understand that, Hanne."

"Yes," answered Hanne with a little smile. "The children, they are our responsibility, as long as we have them. Now it is my duty to put food on the table, and it is your duty to do the chores. But you have no responsibility if the buckwheat freezes in the night or ---"

Rasmus closed the door. Hanne was smart enough, ha.

"----- or just as when Peter is away from us over there in the war," Hanne ended her sentence half to herself. "Come, girls, and let us get the food on the table."

II

After the fighting in Africa, the Twenty-Second Nebraska regiment was blended in with many other units when the army was transferred to Italy. The landing was difficult, and the opposition had been bitter. But a significant force had finally been assembled on the plain near Capua, and, supported by energetic air strikes, the troops had advanced forward to San Germano, where the enemy had organized a stiff opposition and among other places were occupying the ancient Cloister Monte Cassino. They were fortunate enough to occupy Caserto with its old Neapolitan Royal Castle, but from San Germano the way was strongly blocked. In addition they had reached a mountainous area. It appeared that the Cloister had been hastily occupied and fortified and that the Pope had sought to
get the armies to leave it alone. Much earlier, however, many of its rich artifacts had been taken away and hidden in holes and in rocky areas. But before many days had passed the crimson-colored mountain anemones were speckled with crimson of another kind than the blossoms up along the steep mountain roads. It could now be seen, that all of the noble cloistered brethren had fled in great terror, and soon the bombs smashed the beautiful halls with their fine lumachello marble walls, while the infantry laboriously crawled on hands and knees up along the steep cliffs under the waving Pistacios and Euphorbia. Nothing could be more meaningless than to destroy this honorable place, where the church's arched, beautifully decorated ceilings, Solimeno's altar paintings, and the old hand-carved pews collectively constituted a national treasure; twelve hundred years this place had stood under many other wars, while Father Benedict's grave itself under the altar was visited by all the world's travelers and pilgrims.

Among the thousands of soldiers, who obeyed orders and crept up the mountain, dangerously adorned with cliffs and ravines, there were two, who breathlessly and nearly frantically under the call of duty and a more intangible sense of responsibility followed a courageous young lieutenant. It would be a splendid achievement to surround and expel the hated enemy in the Cloister on the mountain top. And it worked. Finally one fortunate and victorious crowd of young men swung over the wall, which surrounded the Cloister's outer yard, and one of them shouted: "Boys, that's the way my old grandpa climbed Lookout Mountain in the Civil War," -- then a salvo crashed down over them from the half-destroyed tower.

"Peter!"
"Yes, Joe."
"Hit?"
"I -- can't move, Joe."

Some of the comrades gathered around. Neither of them could get up: Joe tore off his shirt and wrapped it around his knee. A young officer came quickly. Peter coughed up a bloody froth, his pal tried to set his little water cup to his mouth. The officer thought that the fight was about over and help was on the way to the wounded, the dead, the dying.
"Joe."
"Yes, Peter, old boy."
"We got there, Joe," -- he closed his eyes. "You -- you take my ---- my place. I can't -- can't see you, Joe. --- Mother --- tell them all cheerio. --- take my place. At home, Joe."
"You bet," said Joe. Blood flowed in a stream from his badly injured leg, and Joe, the paperboy from Brooklyn, fainted beside his pal, whose last breath he mercifully was spared from hearing.

III
Rasmus Lind stood clothed ready for travel.
"You should come along into town, Mother. It will cheer you up. There are signs of Christmas all over, and it would be good for you to see other people. The girls can take care of everything until we get back home."
"Oh, Rasmus, I have seen other people every day, Stine & Niels Olsen and Ane & Marie Løvbjer. Somebody comes every other hour and asks for news. You know, Rasmus, the only news that is in our minds -- and now it has been four months since we have had a letter."
"Perhaps it will come today, Mother."
"Yes, perhaps," sighed Hanne. "But you have to remember everything on this list, you mustn't forget anything of what I have written down for Christmas."
"If there should be a letter, I will come home immediately at high speed, whether I have bought anything or not. Are any of the girls coming with me?"

"That would have to be Marie, because I need Karen and Mille." Marie had heard the discussion and quickly changed her clothes.

The old Ford sighed and groaned, which on this gray December day aimed toward Nyborg, and the child talked nearly incessantly to her Father, whose thoughts were just as far away as Hanne's.

"Do you have any money?" finally he spoke.

"Yes, I have a little, if there is anything I see that I want to buy," answered Marie.

Rasmus smiled in his beard. She is just like Hanne, he thought.

"But maybe I can get some from you, Father!"

"Hm, ha," said Rasmus and thought, well, that for once, was not quite like Hanne.

It started to snow, before they reached Nyborg and stopped by the station. Marie headed toward the row of stores. The Christmas decorations had long since conquered the windows, and the people met and greeted one another, talked a little bit and then hurried further. There were yet fourteen days until Christmas, but out in the country people shopped carefully, so there was no crowding either outside or in.

Marie wished to go into Hansen & Robertson. The father walked past all the stores and into the post office, where women and young people pushed forward with packages -- most with long addresses to foreign lands. Rasmus and Hanne had sent theirs much earlier. Rasmus greeted Peter Mogensen. "-- Good Day, we're getting a little snow, but of course, it is the season."

On the bench by the window sat two hardheaded figures in overalls and heavy boots, sucking on their pipes, and Rasmus captured a fragment of their conversation -- "four attractive Galloways. Niels Jensen, and I have held them in the entire Fall, until they calved, but they had trouble, and there was nothing to do but feed the creatures with mash, so I got a grinder and gave them the mash, but then they had some trouble with digesting the grain; so I also gave them some milk, and so I will ------"
Rasmus Lind turned the key in his post office box. There were a couple of newspapers and some catalogs and letters to Hanne and the girls and some calendars. While he collected all of them together, in from the office someone stuck a couple of postcards in the box and also a letter in a yellow envelope.

A letter - no, a telegram.
A telegram.

In from the office the postmaster’s daughter nodded and smiled through the square tube of the box: "Hello, Mr. Lind. Good news, I hope!"

Rasmus grabbed the little yellow letter and it felt like a heavy weight in his hand. There stood Western Union Telegraph Co. in the one corner. Hm. It was addressed to himself. He started to shudder a little, then felt a handslap on his shoulder and heard a cheerful voice: "Yes, Rasmus, I assume everything is going well at home! You are always ready ahead of time. But the buckwheat harvest was very skimpy this year. No one got anything."

He answered with some appropriate words, while the yellow letter slid down in the deep side pocket on his overcoat. Hm. What now?

Yes, now it was necessary to straighten his back and not display his feelings. Mechanically, he followed the stream of people back out on the street. People greeted him, and he nodded. Just let on as if nothing had happened. He found his way in to Hansen & Robertson and found Marie. She had bought some things and was out of money. He thought about Hanne and found the shopping list in his pocket. While Robertson laid the wares on the counter, Marie aimed toward a case where there were displayed some embroidered belts.

"Father," she said, "I would like to get something like these for Mille and Karen for Christmas."

"Do that, my girl. And pick one out for me - one that you would like." With the good Mrs. Robertson’s help there were three sparkling belts selected, and Marie was delighted.

Outside the evening train had stopped and the passengers and goods tumbled out at the station. Then the train started slowly again and steamed out on its way to Central City.
Robertson had assembled all the goods on the list, and while his colleague Hansen tallied the costs, he delivered to his partner one of his many stories. That became almost a complete novel. "'But so,' I said, 'I was konked on the head', and so I said 'You take this word back, Kresten, otherwise I will -----'"

The telephone rang. Hansen took off the receiver, listened and turned.

"There is a man over at the station, who is asking about you, Rasmus Lind. The agent said it is a soldier."

"Peter!" shouted Marie, "Peter coming home!"

All the conversation in the store suddenly stopped. Rasmus Lind looked around at the customers and shoved his trembling hand in his pocket. "I come," he said, grabbing his daughter's hand and walked slowly out of the door and over the street.

It was, sure enough, a soldier. He was sitting in the waiting room and got up when Rasmus and Marie came in. His uniform was new, and across his breast ran a series of stripes and medals. He supported himself with a cane. Oh, Lord God, thought Rasmus, he is so young!

"This is Mr. Lind?"

But Rasmus was unable to answer. He nodded.

The young man walked closer. Oh, Lord God, thought Rasmus, his legs are badly injured.

"Are you my brother Peter's pal?" sounded Marie's clear child's voice in the half-darkened waiting room. "Are you Joe from Brooklyn?"

"Yes -- I am --- I was your brother's pal. Are you his sister Mary?"

Then Rasmus found his voice.

"Welcome home, Joe," he said and shook the young man's hand. It was all he was able to say.

"Peter told me to come. I suppose that I belong nowhere else."

Rasmus pulled the yellow envelope out of his pocket, squeezed it again in his hand, and thought: So we never need to open it, never! He left to get the creaky old Ford. Joe had quite a bit of luggage, which was put in the trunk, and then they went over to get their packages at the store.
"Was it your Peter?" Robertson asked, when Rasmus came in. The ears perked up from all sides.

Rasmus Lind turned a little towards the door with eyes glistening and arms full of packages. "Ye--ah", he said. "We have our son again. Now we are driving him home to his mother."

IV
All the lights were on, when they drove into the farmyard. Not many words had been exchanged on the trip home. Marie sat with Joe's hand in hers. The car stopped, and now Rasmus felt it was time to pull himself together. He asked the two younger ones to stay in the car and then he walked resolutely into the house with his heart in his throat. Mille and Karen hugged him. Mille told him, that the telegraph man had called and wanted to speak to Rasmus, but would not say more. Then Hanne knew what it was. She sat in the bedroom and waited for him. Rasmus walked in to see her.

"Yes, Mother, so now we know --"

Hanne stood up. "I have suspected the whole time," she said softly. "God be praised, anyway, Father!" In an instant she clung to him.

"But hear once, Mother -- out in the car sits Joe, who Peter wrote about. He came on the train just a little bit ago. He walks with a cane, so they have sent him home. But otherwise he is well and has his strength. It was him who our Peter wrote to us about---"

"Where is he?" quickly asked Hanne.

"Out in the Ford with Marie."

Hanne ran out, opened the gate and called:

"Joe --- Joe."

"Right here. Coming!"

Hanne ran down the steps. A single snowflake fell from the light prairie sky -- Winterdew. Like one of the old time courageous prairie women she hurried forward until she stood in front of the young man, who supported himself with his cane, and had gotten out of the car to greet her. And she wrapped her arms around this young person, who she had just seen for the first time. "Velkommen hjem," she said.
"I understand that, all right," said Joe and bent over the slender older woman. "Thank you --- Mother!"
So then the prairie home closed itself around them all.
9 Christian Petersen papers. Special Collections, Iowa State University Library, Ames, Iowa.
10. Petersen's Danish-oriented works include portrait sculptures of Consul General Reimund Baumann (72), Explorer Vitus Bering (88), Peter Christian Lutkin (Dean of Music at Northwestern University, 91), Landscape Architect Jens Jensen (95), Danish gymnastics leader Niels Bukh (168), Iowa State College dairy scientist Martin Mortensen (173), and Mt. Rushmore sculptor Gutzon Borglum (275). The numbers in parentheses refer to the Catalogue Raisonné in DeLong's book *Christian Petersen, Sculptor*. We do not know of any work he might have done of J. Christian Bay, although a portrait sculpture of Bay stands in Rudkøbing, the city of Bay’s birth, created by Danish American artist Christian Warthoe of Chicago in 1955.

Reviews


The Nordic Sagas provide the background and basis for this novel about three women—Katla, a “thrall” (slave) who is the daughter of an Irish Christian woman captured by Viking Raiders along the Irish Coast before Katla was born, Bibrau, Katla’s daughter, who is conceived after a brutal sexual assault, and Thorbjorg, who is a seeress and healer to the Viking settlement in Greenland and a faithful servant to the Nordic God, Odin. Fate brings these three women together and the story is told through their thoughts and feelings about each other, the events which bring them together, life in the Viking settlement, and the influence of Christianity in the world of the Nordic Gods.

In 985-86 a group of 400 settlers from Breidafjord (Broad Fjord), Iceland travel in twenty-five ships to Southwestern Greenland under the leadership of Erik the Red (Erik Raude in the story). Katla, one of Einar’s Thralls, many other thralls, and Thorbjorg are among this group of settlers. They start several settlements along the fjords in this area. These homesteads are some distance from each other and require a long journey to go from one to another.

Katla tells of her mother’s capture and life as a thrall in Einar’s family. The mother was Einar’s concubine and she and her daughter were protected and treated well, but after mother’s death, Einar seemed less protective and concerned about his son Torvard’s interest in Katla. Katla’s mother had taught her about Christianity including several Christian phrases such as “Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison” which Katla calls on for strength in times of trouble, and her mother’s prayer beads are always with her. She has two admirers—Torvard, who neither wise, nor kind, nor loving and whom she tries to avoid, and Ossur Asbjarnarsson who is poor free man, but on the other hand is kind and gentle. He is frequently gone from the settlement to hunt and fish while Torvard is always
around. Eventually, Torvard assaults Katla as he is angered that she rejects him and prefers Ossur.

The healer Thorbjorg cares for Katla and arranges with Einar for Katla to become part of her household. They travel Thorbjorg’s homestead with her other eight thralls where they live together making their living caring for sheep, spinning, weaving and farming while Thorbjorg serves the Vikings with her healing potions, pagan rituals, rune stones, and twigs. She often travels throughout the settlements with some or all of her thralls, for births, marriages, times of illness, particularly during a plague, and to Althing markets where they sell their weavings, meat and other items. Katla’s physical wounds heal, but she is full of anger and bitterness about the rape and the child growing inside her. She wishes the child would die, but she delivers a health baby. Bibrau knows from her birth that she is hated by her mother, but loved by Thorbjorg who senses something special in the child and becomes her foster mother. Bibrau quickly and easily learns Thorbjorg’s spells, pagan rituals and runic symbols. The conflicts between mother and daughter grow as the years pass and there are suspicions that some of the events that happen are caused by Bibrau and that her magic has taken an evil turn.

The feelings of love, hatred, mistrust and conflict grow among the three women and are told in stories of their daily lives and activities. The conflicts are affected by the other thralls in Thorbjorg’s household, by relationships with other members of the Viking community, especially Einar’s family and Katla’s growing love for Ossur. The arrival of a Christian priest brings another conflict to the community as Thorbjorg senses the threat to Odin and the other Norse gods.

Judith Lindberg offers a vivid word picture of life in this Greenland settlement—conflicts, celebrations, family relationships and all the hardships of living in such a challenging environment. In the closing chapters the author gives a brief hint of the impact of Christianity on the Viking community, leaving the reader to wonder about what will happen to the Norse gods and all they symbolized. In her historical notes, Lindberg gives additional information about Leif Eriksson and the coming of Christianity.
I found this to be an interesting and compelling novel about what life may have been like in a Viking settlement, especially life for a thrall. In some aspects it is a dark story with its vivid descriptions of violence, rape, births, fights, personal conflicts and Nordic rituals. The struggle to survive the elements, to search for and provide food, and the social aspects of feast, weddings, and interpersonal relationships provide a glimpse into the life of the early Greenland settlers.

The author’s ten years of research and writing have produced a historical novel well worth reading.

Margery Peters Iversen


*Minority Policy in Action* is a book about the Danish and German minorities on each side of the common border. Jørgen Kühl and Marc Weller, who jointly edited the book, and who each contributed with a chapter, and co-wrote the introduction and conclusion, had the book published to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Bonn and Copenhagen Declarations of 1955, which proclaimed the rights of the Danish minority in Germany, and the rights of the German minority in Denmark.

The book contains tables, notes and copies of the declarations, but unfortunately no bibliography or index. The book is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the history of the minorities and the background of the Declarations, which laid down the policies, which are still followed today. The second part focuses on other border and minority issues in the European Union. The third part looks at minorities in a wider European context.

The Danish-German border area is not a problem today. The border is completely open, virtually non-existent, like the border
between American states, with no border checks or even border crossing buildings. The minorities can move freely across the border.

The minorities do not face any discrimination and enjoy the right to their own schools, churches, political parties as well as associations, be they cultural or sports organizations. And all these activities can be pursued in their own language. In other words, there is no problem or burning issue. Minority Policy in Action is therefore more a celebration of successful policies. The book shows how others might use the Danish and German approaches to minority issues in Slesvig/Schleswig as a model.

Of course, there were problems in the past. These surfaced with the rise of nationalism after the Napoleonic Wars. Prior to the war between Prussia and Denmark in 1864, there was a German minority in Denmark, and after that war, with Schleswig-Holstein being incorporated into Prussia, there was a Danish minority in Germany. However, with the referendum in 1920, when Schleswig was divided, according to nationality, a minority was created on each side of the border.

With the new border, adjustments had to take place in the 1920s. Then during the Hitler years, 1933 to 1945, the German minority in Denmark was nazified by the Hitler regime, which did not help ease tensions. Moreover, during World War II many young men from the German minority joined the Waffen SS.

After the liberation of Denmark in 1945, many of the young men from the German minority, who had served in the SS, spent a short time in Danish internment camps. As well, after the war the border was more or less closed by Denmark. The border was gradually opened, and by 1954 all Germans were given the right to cross the border and visit Denmark. A year later the two governments each issued a unilateral Declaration on the rights of their respective minority.

Jørgen Kühl explains that the Federal Republic of Germany was interested in normalizing the situation in early 1955, so Denmark would not hinder Germany’s entry into NATO.

The Declarations guaranteed, under law, among many others, the following:
The right to establish schools;
The right to establish congregations;
The right to establish political parties;
The right to establish associations;
The right to vote and stand for election; and
The right to publish newspapers.

These were two unilateral Declarations, and not a bilateral treaty between two countries, as Denmark refused to negotiate or sign any bilateral agreement with Germany on minority issues. Denmark wanted to avoid giving Germany any pretext for using a bilateral agreement to justify any interference into Danish internal issues.

The Declarations also laid down who belonged to the minority. Membership in the minority groups is based on the principle, “whoever wants to be a minority is a minority.” In other words, it is up to each individual, and the decision may not be challenged nor investigated by the authorities. No records are therefore kept on the size of the minorities.

Minority Policy in Action also quotes some studies, which reveal that the first language the German minority in Denmark learns at home is Danish. It is the same for the Danish minority in Germany. The first language they learn is German, which they learn in the home. It is not until they enter the minority school, set up specifically for the minority, that they learn the minority language. And this is the case for both minorities.

The book also reveals that there has been Danish resistance to abolish the border and the Danish approach to cross border cooperation has been sceptical and reserved. This stands in contrast to Danish enthusiasm in establishing Ørestad, a Danish-Swedish region, encompassing Copenhagen and Malmö. However, it is Denmark who is pushing to have a bridge built across the Fehmarn Belt between Denmark and Germany.

Minority Policy in Action also briefly discusses Northern Ireland, the Sudetenland and Tyrol. After World War II over 2.5 million Sudeten Germans were expelled from the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. In total about 12 million Germans were expelled
from Poland, the Czech Republic and Kaliningrad. No Germans belonging to the German minority in Denmark were expelled.

The book does mention the impressive progress that has been made in Europe, thanks to the European Union and other European bodies in relation to minorities and border policy. With the free movement of goods, services, capital and labor, the European Union has opened the borders between the EU Member States and it has eliminated internal border control within the EU. The EU has established a regional policy and supports regional cooperation in various ways. Moreover, the book briefly explains how the EU plays a leading role in protecting minorities.

The Danish media carries stories about immigrants in Denmark, particularly Muslims, every day. It is a highly controversial issue. On the other hand, there is hardly ever any mention in the press of the German minority in Denmark.

In Germany, however, the Danish minority does receive some press coverage, primarily due to its political activities in Schleswig-Holstein. But in Denmark the German minority is scarcely visible in the press, which to a large extent confirms how successful the national policy vis-à-vis the minority has been. The Bonn and Copenhagen Declarations can serve as an inspiration for other minorities, showing how neighbours can overcome a bitter past and start down a road of peaceful and constructive cooperation. But this is only possible if the will exists on both sides.

Rolf Buschardt Christensen


*Rescued from Hitler’s Hell. Denmark and The White Buses 1941-45* is an account of the extraordinary humanitarian effort to rescue Danish and Norwegian prisoners from Nazi prisons and concentration camps prior to Germany’s capitulation on May 5, 1945.
Many Danish and Norwegian concentration camp survivors owe their life to Red Cross packages and to Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte’s White Buses. The story of how the White Buses operation rescued thousands of inmates from Nazi Germany and transported them to safety in Denmark and Sweden in the spring of 1945 contains many myths. For example, the Red Cross packages were actually arranged and paid for by the Danish government and not the Red Cross. Secondly, most of the buses were not Swedish, but indeed Danish buses, conscripted from the Danish State Railway (DSB) as well as from private bus companies all over Denmark.

The book lays out the organization of the rescue, the negotiations the Danes and Swedes carried out with the Germans, the heroism of the chauffeurs and other volunteers, such as doctors, nurses and civil servants in self-made uniforms, who risked their lives to help get the starving and tortured inmates out of the camps. The negotiations took place in Copenhagen, Stockholm and Berlin. In Copenhagen, Deputy Minister in the Danish Foreign Ministry Nils Svenningsen (there was no Danish government), negotiated with Dr. Werner Best, Germany’s top diplomat in Denmark. In Berlin, Count Folke Bernadotte, head of the Swedish Red Cross, met with the Gestapo Chief, the Foreign Minister and the Secret Service Chief before meeting with Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, who ultimately was responsible for the KZ camps.

Himmler agreed to let Bernadotte take the Danish and Norwegians inmates out of the camps, at no cost to Germany. Through his contacts with Bernadotte, Himmler hoped to conclude a separate peace treaty with Britain and the US. The private and DSB buses were painted white and drove around Germany from camp to camp, mostly in March and April 1945, picking up Danish and Norwegian inmates. Some of the camps were located in what is today’s Poland, Czech Republic and Austria. The conditions in the camps were terrible. Driving around Germany was dangerous. They had to drive through bombed out cities and across a country where German and Allied armies were fighting. The buses were not spared by the Allies’ carpet-bombing of Germany, and some inmates were killed on the way to Denmark, despite the buses’ Red Cross markings. Prior to the German surrender the White Buses were able
to rescue over 10,000 Danish and Norwegian prisoners as well as over 7,000 others, mostly Frenchmen and Poles.

Many books have been written about the White Buses. Most previous books about the White Buses operation have dealt with certain aspects of the rescue operation, or are personal accounts.

Already in June 1945, Count Folke Bernadotte published his book *Slutet* (*The End* or *Closed* in English). He only deals with his own involvement and the hastily written book was criticized as pure self-promotion. As well, many KZ inmates have written about their experiences in the KZ camps. A more professional work is Jørgen Hæstrup’s 1971 two-volume *Til landets bedste* (*For the Good of the Country*), which touches upon the negotiations in Copenhagen between Svenningsen and Best. In 1984, Johannes Holm published *Sandheden om De Hvide Busser* (*The Truth about the White Buses*) which is rather critical of Count Bernadotte. In 2002 Professor Sune Persson, University of Gothenburg, published *Vi åker till Sverige*, which gives a good overview of the White Buses operation. He shows how the Swedish Foreign Ministry was reluctant to be involved in the rescue operation.

The Danish Foreign Ministry, on the other hand, took a very active part in the negotiations. Already in his foreword, Hans Sode-Madsen emphasizes that this rescue operation was based on collaboration with Nazi Germany and could not have been carried out otherwise. Without this collaboration most of the 17,500 prisoners would not have survived. Nearly all were brought to safety in Denmark and Sweden prior to the end of hostilities.

Sode-Madsen wrote the book to give a fair and balanced overview of the operation. He also wrote it because he had promised H. H. Koch and Finn Nielsen that he would write a comprehensive overview, which they thought was missing. Koch and Nielsen, whom he talks about in the book, were heavily involved in the rescue and had wanted to write a book, but in the end left their documents and notes with Sode-Madsen.

Hans Sode-Madsen, born in 1942, is a senior researcher at the Royal Archives in Copenhagen. He has written articles about the Nazi occupation for Danish encyclopaedias and a book about the Danish Jews 1933-1945, which includes a chapter about the Danish
Jews in the ‘model camp’ in Theresienstadt. As an academic and an archivist Sode-Madsen conducted research in all the relevant archives in Denmark, Sweden, Germany and Britain, whereby he has been able to uncover letters, photographs and reports, not previously published or consulted.

Some might find the book offensive as Sode-Madsen continues to stress that collaboration with the Nazis was necessary to free the prisoners in question. Some might also find it frustrating to read several times, “I will deal with such-and-such in the next Chapter.” That aside, this book should be read by many – and it should be translated into other languages.

This is real history with heroes, mass murders, innocent bystanders and unselfish volunteers. It is an awe-inspiring account of a humanitarian rescue from death camps. In short, it is a moving account of doing the right thing, even when you have to deal with evil people in the process.

Rolf Buschardt Christensen


This is the second volume by von Eyben about Michaëlis. Her first book was *Karin Michaëlis. Incest as Metaphor and the Illusion of Romantic Love* (Peter Lang 2003). *Det farlige liv* borrows its title from a translation of the title of Michaëlis’s most famous novel, *The Dangerous Age: Letters and Fragments from a Woman’s Diary*. Originally published in 1910, *The Dangerous Age* has been translated into English and is available through Northwestern University Press.

Michaëlis (1872-1950) was a Danish writer of international renown at the beginning of the twentieth century. She was quite prolific, the author of sixty-five books and over a hundred articles in Danish and German newspapers and magazines. *The Dangerous Age* was made into a movie twice; one of these movie versions starred Asta Nielsen. Forty-five of her novels and stories were translated into German and
several of them into many other languages. Her children’s books, the Bibi Books were said by Astrid Lindgren to be the model for Pippi Longstocking. She was a frequent lecturer in Europe and the US and involved in humanitarian endeavors. One of her charitable activities was to offer her home to refugees from Nazi Germany during the 1930s. As pointed out by von Eyben, this work and Michaëlis’s frank criticism of Nazism resulted in her becoming an undesirable person to the German government. She spent seven years in the US as a refugee from the Nazis. As an exile, she befriended prominent Germans, such as, Einstein, Brecht, Mann and many others. She supported herself as a writer and lecturer, and, as von Eyben makes clear, led a most interesting existence.

Von Eyben emphasizes Michaëlis’s importance as a writer with insight into women’s sexual and social issues and with the ability to portray such problems in an engaging manner. Her book is a contribution to women’s studies but most of all it’s designed to reawaken interest in the works of this once very popular writer.

Michaëlis was born into a middle class family in Randers but soon sought to expand her horizons in Copenhagen where she met her future husband, the writer Sophus Michaëlis. They traveled together and lived on their meager earnings from writing. Her early novel, *Barnet* (The Child) was favorably reviewed by Herman Bang: “And now I wish one thing: That the people who buy books will buy this one. You can do this with confidence. Because *Barnet* is the work of a *Diger* (true writer). This book and many of her other books manages to reproduce a child’s speech and thought processes with touching authenticity—having been a child outsider herself, Michaëlis understood and felt for the lonely child.”

*Lillemor* (Little Mother) is an adequate summary of Michaëlis’s themes: a marriage between an older man and a young woman, almost a father-daughter relationship; the trauma of menopause; the dream of perfect love. Marthe, the heroine, suffers through an unhappy marriage, and finally commits suicide. This book was well received in *Politiken* and praised for its style. As she became more successful, she sought to establish a relationship with Georg Brandes, but he refused to acknowledge her work publicly by writing reviews.
As her marriage became troubled, Michaëlis wrote her most successful novel, *The Dangerous Age*. This novel again describes a marriage, a woman’s leaving the marriage, and her dilemma: she can not find happiness in marriage nor in a love affair. Elsie Lindtner is 42 years old. The novel consists of her letters and diary entries, and she is an unreliable narrator. She has married into the haute bourgeoisie, and later falls in love with a much younger architect. She leaves her husband to go to an island where she becomes aware of her feelings for the younger lover. She writes to him, inviting him to come and visit, but the relationship does not work. She tries to re-ignite her marriage, but her husband has found a younger woman, and so Elsie ends up alone and lonely. Few if any writer of her era discussed older women’s sexuality—Michaëlis received many invitations to speak about this taboo topic. Von Eyben describes an interesting anecdote about a talk she gave in Munich for women only, where several men dressed as women attempted to gain admission.

She learned about her husband’s infidelity and decided to visit her sisters in the US to decide what to do about her marriage. On her return voyage, she met her second husband, a nine years younger Norwegian-American professor in economics at Washington State University, Charles Stangeland. But Stangeland became an alcoholic, and they were often separated because of their jobs. Michaëlis became friends with radicals such as Emma Goldman and Käthe Kollwitz. She moved to the island of Thorø which became her home for the rest of her life and further alienated her husband. Their divorce was inevitable, an event that contributed to Michaëlis’s deteriorating health.

Nevertheless, she traveled all over Europe and the US.

Helle Mathiasen
Danish American Heritage Society

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