Danish American Heritage Society
925 NE 15th Street
Salem, OR 97301
Phone 503.588.1331

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Inquiries concerning membership in the Society and subscription to The Bridge should be sent to The Danish American Heritage Society, 925 NE 15th Street, Salem, OR 97301, e-mail: egonb@teleport.com

Inquiries concerning back issues of The Bridge should be sent to Sherri Muller, Grand View University Library, 1350 Morton Ave, Des Moines, IA 50136, e-mail: smuller@grandview.edu

THE BRIDGE and the NEWSLETTER are semi-annual publications of the Danish American Heritage Society. The Newsletter contains items of current interest, including occasional essays, book notes, and the news of Danish organizations and activities in the US and Canada. The Bridge contains articles, book reviews, and review essays dealing with all aspects of the Danish experience in North America.

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Salem, Oregon (ISSN 0741-1200)
The Bridge

*The Bridge: Journal of the Danish American Heritage Society* appears twice a year and contains scholarly articles and book reviews dealing with all aspects of the Danish experience in North America. Past issues of *The Bridge* have also contained Danish-American memoirs, essays, short stories, collections of letters, and historical documents. Book reviews and review essays in *The Bridge* deal with Danish life and history and the broader Scandinavian experience in North America as well as the Danish-American experience. *The Bridge* occasionally reprints previously published material.

Manuscripts submitted to *The Bridge* should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Manuscripts may be submitted in either Danish or English. Please submit electronic versions of the article, endnotes, and illustrations in separate files in MS Word or a comparable format, preferable on a disk or CD. Include a brief, 50-100-word author’s biography suitable for the journal’s “Contributors to This Issue” section.

Please address all manuscript submissions to the Editor or Assistant Editor:

Birgit Flemming Larsen  
Editor of *The Bridge*  
Klostermarken 13  
DK-9000 Aalborg  
Denmark  
e-mail: birgitflemming@hotmail.com

Peter L. Petersen  
Assistant Editor of *The Bridge*  
1407 26th Street  
Canyon, TX 79015-5535  
e-mail: repete71@hotmail.com
Editorial Statement

The articles in this issue of *The Bridge* present a variety of stories which hopefully will be of interest to our readers.

Georg Brandes (1842-1927) was a Danish critic and scholar who had great influence on Scandinavian and European literature from the 1870s through the turn of the 20th century. Julie K. Allen introduces us to Georg Brandes and tells about his visit to Danish-America in 1914. The Danish intellectual made that year a lecture tour to the Danish societies in some of the major American cities and his visit was a great success.

We are happy to be able to bring the poem “To Oldefar Jens” written by his great-grandchild who visits the homeland of her great grandfather. In a few lines Kelsi Vanada is able to express feelings shared by many immigrants.

“The Hampton Letters” only deals with a small fraction of the impressive and valuable collection of correspondence from the Nielsen family at the Harriman-Nielsen House in Hampton, Franklin County, Iowa. The letters tell a fascinating story about a Danish immigrant family from the 1890s to 1999. This collection of letters and a variety of other archival material, collected and cherished by one single family through two generations is not only valuable in itself, but the fact that the house where the family lived and their furniture, clothes and memorabilia are kept as a museum makes the “Hampton Letters” even more valuable. Many stories can be told based on this wonderful material.

Edvard and Harald Degn are from the island of Samsø in Denmark. In 1952 they visited their brother Alfred Degn who had emigrated to the US in 1926, and who now lived in Santa Maria in California. We are sure that you readers will enjoy their comments on Danish Americans, Americans and the US as such.
Contributors to This Issue

Julie K. Allen is an Assistant Professor in Scandinavian Studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison. The great-great-granddaughter of a Danish immigrant from Bornholm, she grew up in Hawaii, earned her B.A. at Brigham Young University, and her M.A. and Ph.D. in Germanic Language and Literature at Harvard University. She teaches courses on Scandinavian history, Søren Kierkegaard, Scandinavian heritage in America, Hans Christian Andersen, and advanced Danish language. In addition to her interest in Scandinavian American culture, she has published articles about Georg Brandes, Franziska zu Reventlow, and Peter Christian Kierkegaard.

Rolf Buschardt Christensen is Press and International Relations Officer for the European Commission to Canada. As the President of the Federation of Danish Canadian Societies he is a prominent leader in Danish Canadian circles. Christensen has over the years been a faithful and helpful contributor to The Bridge.

James Iversen is Professor Emeritus of Aerospace Engineering at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. He is former President of the Danish American Historical Society and is now a member of the Board of Directors. Iversen has dedicated an immense amount of his time and energy in preserving, cataloguing and translating the Harriman-Nielsen collection of archival material.

Berry Johnson and Doreen Petersen are both members of the Board of Directors of the Harriman-Nielsen House in Hampton, Iowa. Both are deeply involved in the restoration plans for the buildings and in the preservation of the collections. Furthermore Doreen Petersen graciously opened her home for the editor during her two-months-stay in Hampton in the fall of 2007.

Birgit Flemming Larsen is Assistant Archivist at The Danish Emigration Archives in Aalborg, Denmark and a member of the Board of Directors of the Danish American Heritage Society and editor of The Bridge.

Kelsi Vanada’s great-grandfather, who inspired the poem which appears in this issue, came from Denmark to America in 1907. As part of her undergraduate education at the University of Denver, she
studied abroad in Copenhagen and was able to learn some Danish and spend time getting to know her Danish family. She graduated with undergraduate degrees in English and Spanish in November 2009, and will be teaching English in Chile in the fall of 2010. Eventually she hopes to publish a book of poetry and pursue a career in publishing. She has previously published in *Precipitate* and *Matter Journal*, and you can read her blog at www.kelsivanada.wordpress.com
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Although his name is not familiar to most 21st-century Americans, the Danish literary critic Georg Brandes (1842-1927) was the most internationally-renowned Danish intellectual of the early 19th century. Aspiring writers from half a dozen countries deluged him with manuscripts to review, while German, English, and American tourists in Copenhagen believed, as Brandes remarked in a letter to Asta Nielsen in October 1920, that “I belong to the sights of Copenhagen as much as the Round Tower.”¹

He was in high demand to give lectures all across Europe and his works were published in a dozen languages during his lifetime. Although he was a highly controversial figure in Denmark, the Danish-American expatriate community was intensely proud of this famous Dane, “one of the geniuses of which each century only produces one, … a Danish man whose intellectual equal has never been produced by our small country,”² and finally succeeded in persuading him to come to America to lecture in May 1914. Brandes only spent a few weeks in the United States, but his momentous, successful visit on the eve of World War I illuminates a pivotal moment in the history of Danish-America and its self-perception in relation to Denmark and Danish culture.

As an internationally prominent socio-political and literary critic, Brandes occupied a de facto representative position as the voice of Denmark abroad. His professional endeavors, ranging from the cultivation of a realistic literary aesthetic to his critiques of the merits and significance of such towering cultural icons as Napoleon, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Jesus, encompassed a concomitant metacultural component of shaping contemporary public perceptions of Danish culture, particularly outside Denmark. Benjamin Lee, professor of anthropology at The New School for Social Research, defines metaculture as denoting “judgments people make about similarities and differences, [when] they judge token
instances of cultural production to be manifestations of the same cultural element." By the early 20th century, Brandes was recognized worldwide as a symbol of Danish culture and his pronouncements on subjects as diverse as women’s rights, drama, democracy, and philosophy were viewed by most non-Danes as authoritative articulations of Danish viewpoints, even when his positions aroused opposition in Denmark. When he came to America in 1914, Brandes was eagerly embraced by Danish-Americans, not just as a venerable expert on literary modernism, a subject which likely only a small minority of Danish-Americans found particularly compelling, but even more as an icon of the distinguished culture of their homeland and its international prestige. Announcing Brandes’s upcoming visit in the Omaha-based Danish-American newspaper Den danske Pioneer, editor Sophus Neble asserted, “When the Danish-Americans receive Georg Brandes as their guest, they will celebrate him in his dual capacity: as the countryman who has meant more for Denmark’s development than any other in recent memory, and as the great international name which resounds across the entire civilized world.”

The timing of Brandes’s visit to America was also significant, for it coincides with the high point of the numeric strength and cultural vitality of the northern European immigrant communities in America, including, but not limited to, that of Danish-Americans. The outbreak of World War I in August 1914 and the subsequent introduction of culturally-repressive nativist legislation and restrictive immigration quotas led to a decline of more than 80% in immigration from Scandinavia over the course of the 1920s. H. Arnold Barton’s assessment of the state of the Swedish-American community in this period applies equally well to Danish-Americans, if not more so, given the more widely-dispersed settlement patterns among Danish immigrants to America: “In 1917 Swedish America still represented natural, inherent ethnicity, based primarily upon the living experiences, customs, values, and language of Swedish-born immigrants, constantly reinforced by fresh blood from the homeland. By 1930 the Swedish-born were significantly fewer, older, and generally more assimilated into the American mainstream.” The Danish-America that Brandes toured in 1914 was
flourishing, but by the time he died in 1927, it was being inexorably transformed from a cohesive outpost of Danish culture to “a matter of personal sentiment, family tradition, and vague nostalgia, no longer strictly tied to ancestral customs or language.”

In this context, Brandes’s visit to America can be regarded as heralding both the climax of the age of Danish-American culture as an extension of the homeland and the dawn of a new age of Danish-American identity on its own merits, as the emergence in the 1930s of such notable Danish-American authors as Sophus Keith Winther and Enok Mortensen attests.

By 1914, Brandes was a living artefact of the tumultuous process of literary and social modernization Denmark had undergone in the final decades of the 19th century, in which he had played a central
role. He had catapulted himself to fame and notoriety in Denmark in 1871, when he commenced a series of lectures on “Main Currents in the Literature of the 19th Century” at the University of Copenhagen. In what eventually grew to encompass six published volumes, Brandes outlined the causes and effects of the major literary movements in France, England, and Germany from the French Revolution through the revolutions of 1848 in terms of each national literature’s relationship to the Enlightenment ideals of unfettered scientific research and humanistic poetics. In particular, he praised the revolutionary quality of the works of authors who defended the causes of freedom and progress, such as Lord Byron and Ludwig Feuerbach’s treatment of religion, Ivan Turgenev’s social critiques, and George Sand’s challenging of gender roles. Arguing that literature must be socially engaged in order to be meaningful, he warned that mid-19th century Danish literature was both aesthetically and socially stagnant, caught in a complacent bourgeois reaction to Romanticism, with the result that it had become meaningless. His mantra became that “the failure of a literature to debate problems is the same as losing all meaning.”

Underscoring the political consequences of meaningless literature for the country that produces it, namely the loss of the ability to bring about development and progress, Brandes laid out a similarly revolutionary course for Danish literature, toward a socially critical, realistic literature in the style of French Naturalist writers such as Émile Zola. He prophesied a dire fate for Denmark of political, social, and even economic irrelevance if the moribund state of Danish literature was not remedied, prophesying that “the nation that produces it... will not be the kind of nation that controls development and progress, any more than the mosquito that believed it drove the wagon, because it occasionally gave the four horses pulling it an insignificant bite.” Naturally enough, the leaders of Danish society was displeased by his pessimistic view of the insignificance of Danish cultural production.

Given the conservative political climate and social milieu of bourgeois Copenhagen in the 1870s, it was perhaps inevitable that Brandes would encounter fierce opposition to his radical program of literary modernization, but his controversial views on social issues,
and his scandalous private life sealed his fate. While his realistic literary aesthetics resonated with many young Danes, his eagerness to debate formerly taboo subjects and thereby challenge social mores alienated the Danish establishment. His translation of John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjugation of Women* into Danish, his condemnation of Kierkegaardian Christianity, and his outspoken advocacy for women’s rights and civil marriage, not to mention his affairs with married women, earned him a reputation as a cosmopolitan liberal. In conjunction with his Jewish heritage, this label was enough to make him a *persona non grata* in certain circles of the Copenhagen national-liberal *dannelsesbourgeoisie* [educated elite] and to blacklist him from the pages of the major Danish newspapers.

As a result of the professional obstacles and personal opposition he faced in Denmark in the late 1870s, Brandes spent several years working in Germany. He moved to Berlin in 1876, where he built a brilliant international reputation as a literary critic, with articles appearing in such leading German journals as *Deutsche Rundschau* and *Nord und Süd*. Through his publications, speeches, and copious correspondence with a dizzying array of German writers, Brandes became a highly influential tastemaker and used his clout to promote the starkly realistic literary style associated with the Modern Breakthrough in Scandinavia, as realized in the works of Henrik Ibsen and J.P. Jacobsen, among others. He re-settled in Denmark in 1882, after a group of private donors committed to providing his financial support, but his European fame continued to grow, especially after he became known as the man who “discovered” Nietzsche. His interests gradually shifted from modern literature to the great men of the past, motivating him to produce lengthy monographs on historical geniuses as diverse as Michelangelo, Goethe, Shakespeare, and Jesus, but his rationalistic approach to these venerable men was as controversial as his earlier literary critiques had been. By the turn of the century, he had also begun a campaign of public activism on behalf of oppressed minorities in Europe, ranging from the violently persecuted Armenians in Turkey to the culturally-oppressed Danes in Schleswig-Holstein.
Throughout the early 20th century, Brandes was a ubiquitous participant in European cultural and socio-political discourse. He conducted annual journeys throughout Europe, visiting his numerous illustrious acquaintances, such as the French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, and lecturing across the Continent. In 1912, he spoke in no fewer than 42 European cities. In addition, he continued his voluminous correspondence with intellectuals and writers in Germany, Poland, Austria, France, and England, while continuing to publish articles and books prolifically in several languages. Uffe Østergaard asserts that Brandes’s “books and thousands of short and long articles in all of the dominant—and several of the minor—European languages gave him a political influence that has never been surpassed.” His recommendation was sufficient to secure a publisher for an aspiring author, while his censure sent foreign governments scrambling for political cover.

Brandes’s decision to embark on a lecture tour of American cities in 1914, his first visit to America, was a momentous and historic event in the Danish-American community. C.H.W. Hasselriis of the Danish-American Association of Chicago, which sponsored and organized the tour, telegraphed an announcement of the upcoming event to the Danish newspaper Politiken on May 8, 1914: “The announcement that Georg Brandes is going to pay a short visit to North America and come to Chicago has awakened lively interest among all Danes. It is a given that Brandes’s appearance here will be the greatest event in the history of Danish-American organizations.” Scandinavian-Americans had been trying to entice Brandes to visit their communities since the 1880s, when University of Wisconsin professor Rasmus B. Anderson had successfully managed lecture tours for the Norwegian literary luminaries Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Kristofer Janson. As the nation’s only professor of Scandinavian languages, Anderson was known for his “ardent missionary spirit for the cause of Scandinavian culture,” and hoped to build the reputation of Scandinavian-American culture by arranging celebrity visits, including one from Brandes. Brandes was not particularly well-known in the English-speaking world at the time, however. By 1881, only one of his many books, his biography of the English politician and novelist Benjamin Disraeli,
had appeared in English translation, but it had appeared in three British and American editions in two years. The first English translation of Brandes’ *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* did not appear until 1901. When Anderson invited Brandes to come lecture in America, Brandes hesitated, as his letter to Anderson of March 1, 1881 reveals: “You believe, that I would also [like Bjørnson] be successful lecturing in America. I dare not be as certain of that. I suppose that I speak quite well, but my bit of eloquence is not of the broad, popular style, nor do I have nearly the same name recognition as Bjørnson. In any case, it is a great undertaking to travel over to you, but if I had a reasonable prospect of success, I might yet do it someday.” In their correspondence, Anderson and Brandes reached a tentative agreement about a lecture tour in the spring of 1883, but it came to nothing, as Brandes accepted a private professorship in Copenhagen and Anderson retired from academic life in the fall of 1883. Sporadic unsuccessful invitations followed over the years, including one from Max Henius to speak at the 1913 Danish Constitution Day celebration in Chicago. When the newly-elected chairman of the Danish-American Association, C.A. Quist, made the proposal in late 1913 of inviting Brandes to America, it fortuitously coincided with Brandes’s acceptance of an invitation from the Hamburg-America steamship line to grace the maiden voyage of its newest and largest passenger liner, *Vaterland*, from Hamburg to New York in May 1914, and so the ardently longed-for engagement came about at last.

When Brandes arrived in New York in late May 1914, he was welcomed as both an important literary critic and a representative of Denmark, a situation that illustrates his dual cultural and metacultural significance. His long-awaited visit was a major event: newspapers reported on his arrival, invitations to more 150 banquets poured in, and thousands of disappointed fans had to be turned away from his lectures. Emil Opffer, the editor of the Danish-American newspaper *Nordlyset*, proclaimed, “We have waited for him [Brandes] for thirty years and he finally arrived with the glory of international fame around his steel-gray head. I don’t hesitate to call his visit here the greatest intellectual event to have occurred for us Danes over here.” In a subsequent interview with *Nordlyset,*
Brandes complained about being hounded by reporters wherever he went in America, but thanked Danish-Americans for their effusive hospitality: “I have never received a reception anywhere comparable to that which I have received from America’s Danes.” In light of the fact that relatively few of his books and even fewer of his articles had been translated into English, the conclusion is inescapable that it was Brandes’s symbolic stature as a great Danish intellectual, whose fame reflected well on both his Americanized countrymen and their homeland, that merited such ardent outpourings. An article in the Chicago-based Danish-American newspaper Revyen articulates precisely this expedient view of Brandes’s visit: “This is an opportunity that Danish-Americans have awaited for many years. May it be fully utilized, now that our genial countryman’s world-fame is greater than ever and sheds glory over the Danish nation.”

Brandes’s American tour was covered exhaustively in the media, in both the U.S. and Denmark. The New York Times featured regular items about his trip, reporting his opinion on such diverse topics as Thomas Paine, Emerson, and women’s suffrage, and sending a reporter along to several of his East Coast speaking engagements to conduct an in-depth interview. The Chicago Tribune proclaimed that “the United States have never before had a visit from a guest whose presence has been as stimulating and valuable for the entire society” as Brandes. Politiken carried highly detailed daily reports on Brandes’s activities in America, contributed by leading Danish-Americans, including Opffer of New York and C.H.W. Hasselriis of Chicago. In his first dispatch, concerning Brandes’s arrival in New York on May 23, 1914, Opffer notes that Brandes was welcomed at the dock by “a group of prominent Danes representing the Danish-American Society, 52 photographers and an army of reporters” before departing to give his first lecture at Yale University that evening. Opffer also previewed a few of the tributes to Brandes, including a torchlight parade in Brandes’ honor organized by Danes in Chicago and a gala hosted by the Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston. In New York City, 8000 schoolgirls performed Danish folk dances for Brandes in Central Park on June 8, 1914. C.H.W. Hasselriis reported in Politiken that “no foreign guest in Chicago has ever been the subject of as much attention” as Brandes, an, in
November 1914, the Danish-American Association devoted its entire quarterly journal to an exhaustive account of Brandes’s visit and the press coverage it garnered.

The acclaim Brandes enjoyed also transcended the linguistic and cultural boundaries between the various American ethnic communities, reflecting the view of Brandes as a cosmopolitan whose accomplishments belonged not only to Denmark, but also to the rest of Scandinavia, Germany, and Europe as whole. According to an article in *Politiken* on May 23, a German-American newspaper in New York, the *New York Staatszeitung*, had published a long article about Brandes and welcomed him to the United States on behalf of all German-Americans. Similarly, *Berlingske Tidende* reported on May 27 that “all newspapers have bid him welcome in front-page articles in English, German, French, Hebrew, and Polish. The *Tribune* calls him a Prince of Literature, the most notable living critic, while the *Herald* praises him as the first among Scandinavian writers.” During his visit, he delivered his lectures alternately in English, Danish, and German, reflecting these multinational affiliations.

Since so many cities clamored to host Brandes in the three weeks of his visit, the Danish-American Association planned out a tight schedule, particularly demanding for a man as old as Brandes, who had turned 72 in February 1914. He gave his first lecture in English at Yale, on Shakespeare, on the evening of his arrival in the U.S. on May 23. The next day, he traveled across half the country by train to give the same lecture in Chicago’s Orchestra Hall, followed by a two-hour lecture on Napoleon in Danish and a gala dinner in the Auditorium hotel on Sunday, May 25. Despite the heat of the day, the hall, reputedly one of the largest in the city, was filled to capacity, containing “the largest Scandinavian audience ever seen in Chicago.” On Monday, May 26, Brandes spoke about Goethe in Milwaukee in German, then on Tuesday and Wednesday at the Universities of Minneapolis and Chicago, respectively, on the subject of Hamlet, concluding with a lecture in English to American authors and literary critics at the Twentieth Century Club that evening. He gave his final lecture in Chicago, on Goethe, at the Germania Club.
on June 2, before traveling to New York City, where he lectured on
the Old Testament to an over-filled hall at the Waldorf Hotel.

The Danish-American communities in Chicago and New York
were particularly invested in Brandes’s visit. Everywhere he went,
he was wined, dined, and toasted extravagantly by local Danish-
American associations. On May 24, Brandes met with
representatives of the University of Chicago, notable Chicago-area
scientists, artists, and writers, as well as a committee of 100 Danes
from Chicago and the surrounding area. On the morning of Sunday,
May 25, the Danish musical associations *Harmonien*, *Magneten*, and
*Arbejder-Sangforeningen* serenaded Brandes outside his hotel on
Michigan Avenue. At a banquet in New York City, Echard V.
Eksesen, president of the Danish-American Society in the East,
described Brandes’s visit “like a brilliant comet that only rarely
appears in the heavens and then disappears.” He continued,

We have longed for years to see you over here, to speak to
you about ourselves, our hopes and aspirations in this great
new society. You were the inspiration and torchbearer of
our youth and we have brought the thoughts and ideas that
you once awakened in us with us over here and sought to
transplant them in American soil. And we are vain enough
to believe that it was in part for our sake that you came and
therefore we thank you with all of our heart. We Danes who
live over here are just a small fraction of the entire American
people, but we have no fear of being swallowed up or
destroyed in this large population, for we derive strength
from the rich culture we bring with us from our motherland,
a great fund of ideas and spiritual values,—and it is our task
to draw from this well over here, to strive with all might to
remain ourselves, so that Nordic art and spirit can permeate
the new society being erected here. ... May you, dear
Doctor, live and work for the benefit of the fatherland and
for all people for many more years and may your flame
continually light the way for us, so that it melts the frost of
the cold nights in our hearts. Many have sung your praises
and our voice is so small and can only repeat what others
have said. But we over here can say one thing with
authority and that is that you have taught us, despite all of the foreignness around us, to love Denmark first of all and be proud of its men and its banner-carriers.27

The effusiveness of Eskesen’s remarks is characteristic of the speeches given at each banquet given in Brandes’s honor. In Chicago, Carl Antonsen strove to outdo Eskesen, claiming that “there is nowhere you have been that Danes of all camps and social classes have praised you in more sincere admiration and love and gratitude for what you have accomplished than here in Chicago.”28

Yet many of those present knew little of Brandes’s work; instead, they revered him for the prestige he brought his native land and, by extension, all Danes throughout the world. A rare exception is Kate Parsons of the New York Times, who, in her full-page article on Brandes on May 31, 1914, credits him with being “the savior of [Denmark’s] literary life.”29 By contrast, at the conclusion of his speech, Antonsen exulted, “Georg Brandes belongs to the entire world, but we Danes are still proud of the fact that you are Danish!”30

In his remarks, Hasselriis expressed the Danish-American Association’s “pride that you are a Dane, and our gratitude for the glory you reflect on our mother country by virtue of your universal and eternal fame.”31 Despite his notorious irritability and individuality, Brandes seemed to accept, even embrace, this symbolic position, though not exclusively. In his reply to a group of Danish choirs that serenaded him in Chicago, Brandes described the task of promoting Danish culture as a collective task:

Here, where we stand in the middle of the great ocean of humanity, you have caused Danish songs to resound across the sea as a sign that Denmark will never perish. You have sent back your thoughts to the fatherland in the east, which neither you nor I can make larger, but together we have spread its renown, made it greater.”32

At the same time, he also acknowledged his own particularly prominent role in this process, explaining somewhat whimsically, to great applause, that “over my cradle, invisible beings sang: Whenever your name is mentioned in foreign lands, Denmark’s name will spring to people’s lips everywhere. The prophecy has come true and thus it has been for 44 years. The name of Denmark
will come to sound over my grave as over my cradle.”33 In both the eyes of his Danish-American audience and in his own estimation, Brandes’s fame as an individual was secondary to his fame as a representative of Denmark.

Yet for all of the celebrations, speeches, and ceremonies, Brandes’s visit to America did not have the lasting impact on Danish-American cultural life that its organizers had hoped. One reason for this might be the generation gap between Brandes and his audience that ensured that his words, which had such a revolutionary effect in Copenhagen nearly a half-century earlier, would make no lasting impression on his American listeners. As several of the banquet speakers noted, they had grown up with Brandesianism and the Modern Breakthrough as respected ideals to emulate, not the radical departures from convention they had once been. University of Minnesota professor Poul Houe argues that “behind all of his modernist rhetoric, Brandes was deeply anchored in the enlightened Romantic and Naturalistic culture of the old world.”34 Ideological differences also played a part in this disconnect; in Houe’s view, Brandes was disappointed by the American interpretation of freedom as “freedom to earn money without society’s interference, not a freedom that promotes intellectual independence.”35 In his correspondence with Rasmus B. Anderson in 1881, Brandes had expressed his reservations about how American audiences would react to his style of lecturing: “I would fit damned poorly in a country where what matters is craftiness, working for one’s own advantage, taking a businesslike view of things. I am afraid that I would be tricked wherever I went.”36 Some of the press coverage of Brandes’s visit in 1914 highlighted his famous temper, his impatience with mediocrity, and his skepticism of democracy, all of which served to isolate him from the Danish-Americans clamoring for his approval.

These relatively minor obstacles might have been overcome, however, were it not for the outbreak of World War II less than two months after Brandes’s departure and a dramatic increase in pressure on Danish-Americans to assimilate more completely into American culture. While both Denmark and the United States declared official neutrality in August 1914, the two countries
followed very different trajectories during the war, leading the United States to ally itself economically with Great Britain and France long before it entered the war on the side of the Allies, while Denmark continued to trade with both Britain and Germany until 1917, when America’s entry into the war and refusal to continue exporting raw materials to Denmark forced Denmark into a greater economic dependency on Germany. The political climate in the United States rapidly became hostile toward anyone suspected of sympathizing with Germany, which meant that Scandinavian-Americans were subjected to sharp scrutiny, due to their centuries of close cultural interaction with Germany. Social pressure to “Americanize” intensified, culminating in the oft-repeated call by former President Theodor Roosevelt for immigrants to abandon the speaking of their native tongue in order to demonstrate their undivided loyalty to America. The governor of Iowa, William L. Harding, went even further, issuing the so-called “Babel Proclamation” on May 13, 1918, which outlawed the speaking of all foreign languages in public and on the telephone. As a result of these pressures, many Danish-American congregations began conducting services in English, while several Danish-American newspapers ceased publication after seeing their circulation numbers drop precipitously. The fierce pride in being Danish exhibited by Danish-Americans throughout Brandes’s visit had become a liability to economic and social acceptance in America and was, therefore, suppressed and reserved for private occasions, such as holiday celebrations.

Meanwhile, in Europe, Brandes had emerged as one of most outspoken opponents of the war, earning the enmity of Germans, Englishmen, and Frenchmen alike. His longtime friend, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, broke with Brandes in a series of open letters published in major newspapers. In his response to Clemenceau, which was printed in several major international newspapers, including The Evening Post: New York, Brandes vigorously defended his country against Clemenceau’s charge that “Danes are a nation ‘without pride,’” outlining instead a very clear-sighted assessment, devoid of nationalist rhetoric, of the complex situation of the war.37 He noted soberly that “the belligerents are all
optimists…. Every one hopes to win and is certain of success,” and posed the prophetic question, “What if none of the belligerents should come out supreme? What if all the horrors now endured should leave the grave question unsettled which inspired the strife?”38 In Brandes’s view, the war was the result of European imperialism and, as such, was not a fight over ideals but markets, which invalidated the nationalist rhetoric being used to rally public support for it. Time would prove Brandes right, but it would not repair the damage done to his international reputation by his honesty.

At the same time, however, Brandes’s passionate defense of Danish neutrality resonated with many Danes on both sides of the ocean. As both Brandes and his fellow Danes were aware, his opinions were frequently interpreted abroad as expressions of Denmark’s views. In this case, his opposition to the war coincided so closely with Denmark’s national policy of neutrality (the official statement of which was, incidentally, drafted by his brother Edvard, Minister of Finance) that Danes welcomed and appreciated his unsanctioned ambassadorial services. Bourgeois Danish society forgot much of its earlier antipathy toward Brandes, to the point that when his essay collection Verdenskrigen [The World War] was published in 1916, it sold out immediately, a rare occurrence for Brandes in Denmark.39 Across the Atlantic, where public and governmental support for American involvement in the war increased over the course of the 1910s, many Danish-Americans shared Brandes’s anti-war stance, even when it earned them the distrust of their American countrymen. One of the most memorable articulations of this position, which shows clear affinity with Brandes’s views, can be found in Sophus Keith Winther’s 1936 novel Mortgage Your Heart, in which his young Danish-American protagonist Hans Grimsen convinces his brother not to enlist, arguing that “war is the last refuge of capitalist exploitation. You become the servant of the imperialistic nations who build their power at the expense of the exploited workers.”40 At the University of Nebraska, Hans adopts Brandes’s confrontational stance, telling his classmates, “If you … weren’t such fools, you would know that this is not your war, but a war for foreign markets, because the
governments at home can’t sell all their goods to those who produce them.”41 When his classmates call him a coward and a foreigner, Hans proudly defends his American citizenship, but his arguments demonstrate his affinity with Brandes and Denmark’s anti-war ideology.

By the 1920s, when the emotional turmoil of World War I was being crowded out by widespread economic and social upheaval in both Denmark and the United States, Brandes found favor in the American press and educated public once more. His byline appears in English-language publications much more frequently during this period than ever before, with commissioned articles appearing in The American-Scandinavian Review in 1921, The New Republic in 1922, The American Hebrew in 1925, and The Nation in 1926, to name just a few. An article in Politiken (Copenhagen) on November 3, 1921 confirms Brandes’s enhanced status in post-war America: “In America, Georg Brandes is now more than an empty name: his comments are cited again and again in the debates of the day, his works are referred to time after time, and his reputation is now so well-founded that even his most recent works, which have not yet been translated into English, are exhaustively reviewed in journals such as The Nation, The New Republic, or in high-brow newspapers like New York Evening Post, New York Herald, or New York Times.”42

More than just demonstrating his renewed popularity, however, this brief renaissance of interest in Brandes secured his American legacy, however little his name has been preserved in America’s cultural memory. Writing from New York, the author of the article in Politiken, Georg Strandvold, cautions that Brandes and America will never have a close relationship, due to a lack of a deep affinity, but asserts that Brandes has still contributed appreciably to American intellectual life:

All around America, there are men and women, primarily in academic circles, who try to understand many of life’s problems through the lens Brandes has provided. The little group of “intellectuals,” who are the salt of the future of American culture, know Brandes by heart, and while they admire him, they learn from him. … Therefore, one can, in a certain sense, speak of Brandes’s own little congregation
over here—a congregation that is numerically insignificant, but which in all other respects plays an important role in the cultural community that is beginning to flourish in the New World.43

Strandvold’s assessment of Brandes’s impact on America, though written for a Danish audience, pinpoints the enduring value of Brandes’s American visit; far more important than the momentary boost in prestige that his presence lent the Danish-American community, Brandes’s memorable introduction to America’s cultural elite in 1914 ensured that his ideas, whether branded as Danish or not, would have broad and long-lasting impact on emerging century cultural and political discourses in the United States in the mid-20th century. Brandes’s lifelong quest to change the world for the better, by challenging whatever aesthetic, social, and political stagnation he encountered, continues to resonate with America’s culture of optimism. In an article published in The New Student (New York) on November 18, 1922, the 80-year old Brandes, whose byline reads, “Great Danish Critic and Essayist,” urges the youth of America to set aside the fears and prejudices engendered by the recent war and focus instead on making the world a better place, however futile the effort may seem:

The fine privilege of youth is its belief that it and it alone can stamp the future of mankind. It does not take into account the difficulties, looks only toward the goal and doesn’t doubt of its ability to find the means leading up to it. The older man knows how little of that which he as a youth hoped to be able to reform he in fact has succeeded in changing. In face of the hard resistance of existing conditions, he is most surprised that he has even succeeded in bringing about some change towards a betterment. The belief that it can revolutionize the world is not, however, only the privilege but also the poetry of youth and its force. This belief, if not dejectedly given up midway, gives to the whole life its consecration.44

This quote is particularly poignant for its candor, as Brandes alludes to his own life and the disappointments he has faced in his ongoing attempts to better the world, but it also raises an idealistic standard
for American youth—Danish-American or not—to carry into the future.

1 Ib Monty, ed. Asta Nielsen. Breve 1911-71 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1998), 36. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.
4 Qtd. in Hasselriis, Besøg, 6.
6 Barton, 264.
9 Brandes, 15.
11 Østergaard, 34.
14 Haugen, 465.
15 Qtd. in Haugen, 467.
16 Hasselriis, Besøg 5.
19 Hasselriis, Besøg, 6.
24 Ibid.
Politiken, May 27, 1914.
28 Qtd. in Hasselriis, Besøg, 17.
29 Kate Parsons, “Georg Brandes, ‘Big, Strong, Unamiable, Yet Lovable.’” The
30 Qtd. in Hasselriis, Besøg, 18.
31 Hasselriis, Besøg, 9.
32 Hasselriis, “Landsmænd.”
33 Hasselriis, Besøg, 14.
34 Poul Houe, “Georg Brandes i Amerika.” Weekendavisen August 11-17, 2000,
9.
36 Qtd. in Haugen 468.
37 Georg Brandes, “Georg Brandes on Denmark’s Neutrality.” Trans. by M.
38 Ibid.
39 Jørgen Knudsen, GB. En Georg Brandes biografi (Copenhagen: Gyldendal,
2008), 585.
40 Sophus Keith Winther, Mortgage Your Heart (New York: Macmillan, 1937),
263.
41 Winther, 292.
43 Ibid.
November 18, 1922.
Til Oldefar Jens
Copenhagen, November 2008

By
Kelsi Vanada

What would you say,
If you knew me?
Would you be proud
I’m here in your country?
This place you left behind
For love and for the open plains
Where there are no red roofs
No water, no cosy thatched farms
No quaint downtown, no hygge

I know –
I’ve been here too.
You chose the prairie –
Would you be glad
I’m bringing your blood back?
Pleased I could speak to you
In your first native tongue?

Maybe you’d tell me
Not to be attached
Not to undo the work
You cried through – the severance

Or maybe you’d be proud
Of how I’ve come to know this land,
Which must have lived on
In vibrant green in your mind,
Backdropped by soft-tongued singing
And the flapping of Dannebrog
Lit by warm candles
Glowing upon Danish dishes.
And then –
You’d wink (you seem the winking type)
   Clasp it to my heart,
   And turn my face
To amber waves of grain.
LETTERS FROM HAMPTON

By
James Iversen, Birgit Flemming Larsen, Berry Johnson, and Doreen Petersen

A unique house filled with memories and memorabilia stands on the west edge of the Franklin County Seat town of Hampton, Iowa. The house and barn and 12 acres, situated in a pleasant & picturesque semi-rural setting, was the home of the Christian Nielsen and his wife Anna, born Jensen, from the time of their purchase of the property in 1920 until the death of their youngest daughter in 2001.

Danish Immigration to the Hampton Area
The history of the Anna and Christian Nielsen family is part of a history of a group of Danish immigrants that survived economically and socially after being transplanted to the United States of America. These Danes settled over years in the Latimer and Coulter area near Hampton in Franklin County, Iowa. In the late 1860s two Danish real estate salesmen came to the area to sell land. They advertised in Danish-American newspapers as well in newspapers in Denmark.

It turned out that there was an interest among Danes to come to this part of Iowa to farm. Some came directly from Denmark; others came from elsewhere in Iowa and from the states of Illinois and Wisconsin.

A Danish Colony
A strong Danish colony began to form. Latimer was a station along the Iowa Central Railroad Line. The railroad was a lifeline for many small rural communities and provided a means of transportation to neighboring settlements. Coulter was a station on the Chicago Great Western Railroad Line and got the name Little Denmark, placed as it was in the middle of a fairly large rural settlement. Two Danish congregations were formed only four miles apart. The West Church known as St. Peter’s Danish Lutheran Church, and The East Church known as St. John’s Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church. In the beginning neither of them had a church building. Services were held in schoolhouses and private homes. The former erected a church.
building in 1893 which was destroyed by lightening in 1899. A new church was built in 1903. Because of decreasing membership the congregation was dissolved in the early 1920s. The latter built their church in 1888 and a parish hall in 1897.

Sunday school was organized from 1885, and a Ladies’ Aid Society started already in 1883. In 1902 the Young People’s Society was established to serve the needs and the interest of the young people of the congregation. The society got the name Dannebrog and had programs of music, song, lectures, readings, summer picnics, dance and gymnastics.

A schism in the Lutheran Church in Denmark had also influenced the church life in Danish churches in the US. A new congregation was born in the area in 1902, named the Nazareth Danish Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, and a church was built south of Coulter.

In 1905 the Danish Brotherhood Lodge no 221, Atterdag, was established in Latimer and had from the beginning about 30 members. The purpose was to support each other in case of sickness, distress, unemployment etc. Being in a new country and
in a new community the immigrants felt the need to support each other. The Danish Brotherhood Hall became a social center for Latimer with many events such as wedding dances, plays, travelling shows and Danish folk dance. In 1911 the Danish Sisterhood Lodge no 124 Dannebrog was started.

A growing number of Danes came to this area and among those members of the Nielsen and Jensen families.

Presentation of the Nielsen and Jensen families

Christian Nielsen was born on the farm Kisum Overgaard, just outside the city of Skive in Jutland, Denmark on July 4, 1878, the sixth of eight children of Niels Jensen and Mette Nielsen Jensen. In the 1890s he served his apprenticeship with a cabinetmaker in Skive and after that journeyed to several places in Denmark. One of his jobs was located in or near Haslev, a town about 50 km (30 miles) southwest of Copenhagen on the island of Sealand.

Anna Petrea Nielsine Jensen was the eldest of four children of Peter and Marie Johanne Jensen. She was born on March 22, 1882, in Simmendrup in the parish of Førslev near the town of Haslev. Anna went to school in Haslev and after her confirmation in 1896 she went into service in Haslev from 1896-1898, part of the time at a baker and confectioner. For a year she served at a large farm near Ørslev and returned to Haslev where she stayed until October 1900. In 1899 she became engaged to be married to Poul Christian Nielsen. Soon after she moved to Copenhagen and served at different places until her marriage in 1902.

As noted three of Christian's siblings immigrated to the United States in the 1890s. This pull of family members already living in the United States near Hampton, Iowa became the incentive for Christian and Anna when they decided to emigrate. So, even though he was doing well in his chosen profession in Copenhagen, they left Denmark in March 1905, and joined the relatives in Franklin County, Iowa.

Christian did not work as carpenter in the New World, but started out as a farmhand, working for other Danish immigrants in Franklin County. After several years he had accumulated enough money to buy farmland, and bought and sold several times until buying a tract
of land on the west side of the County Seat town of Hampton. The house had been built in the late 1800s by the town doctor, O.B.Harriman, and the house and acreage had been sold to Danish immigrants, Henry and Cathrine Skow, in 1905. The Nielsen’s purchased the house and acreage from the Skows in 1920, paying $15,500. The property includes a second, smaller house across the street, which Dr. Harriman had built for his son.

Christian and Anna Nielsen on their wedding-day in 1902
Anna and Christian had two daughters, Petrea, who was born in 1908, and Nielsine, born in 1911. The two girls never married, so what is now known as the Harriman-Nielsen property was the family home until Nielsine died at the age of 89 in January, 2001. Nielsine had been an active member of the Franklin County Historical Society, and since there were no other descendants of the Christian Nielsen family still living at the time of her death, she willed her property to the Historical Society.

The Letters
The Franklin County Historical Society appointed a special committee to oversee the newly inherited property. The Harriman-Nielsen board members and other volunteers have since spent countless hours in examining the property, recording the vast number of artifacts and documentary materials, and repairing and reconditioning the property for public use as a museum. Among the surprising materials found on the estate is a series of letters, about 2,300 in all, of which about 2000 are written in the Danish language. Christian and Anna brought their old correspondence written from 1897 to 1905 across the Atlantic when they left
Denmark in early 1905, which means that the collection of letters covers a century of life, from 1897-1999.

The Harriman-Nielsen Farm is historically important, not primarily because of its distinctive architecture and the natural beauty of the site, but, to a greater degree, because of the artifacts and the archival materials saved and left behind by the Nielsen family. The letter collection is important, not only because the family members were well-known citizens of the community, but because the surviving letters and documents typify the immigrant story in a very detailed way.

Most of the 2000 letters in the Danish language were written to the family by relatives and close friends. Most are from Denmark, but there are quite a few from close relatives and friends who lived in other parts of the United States. The two daughters, Petrea and Nielsine, probably grew up speaking only Danish until they started school. In 1920, after the purchase of the acreage just west of Hampton, the family went on an extended trip to Denmark. After three months in Denmark, both girls were quite fluent in spoken Danish. In the summers of 1928 and 1929, the girls each attended one summer session at the Danebod Folk School in Tyler, Minnesota, and that is where they learned to read and write in Danish, so that most of the letters written by or to Petrea and Nielsine after the late 1920s are also in the Danish language. About that time, the girls started keeping copies of the letters that they wrote, so that in many cases, both sides of the correspondence are in the collection.

The letters and other kinds of archival documents constitute a historically important body of material for historical research. The letters chronicle the developments in the life of an immigrant family, and the letter set constitutes a real treasure for those who might be interested in exploring more of the personal history of a family who suddenly found themselves in a foreign country on the other side of the Atlantic.

**Early Letters, 1897 to 1905**

The impetus for this article came from a program that the Harriman-Nielsen Farm Board of Directors presented at a dinner in Hampton on April 20, 2008. Board Member Berry Johnson and his associates
presented a reading of several early letters, written from the years 1899 to 1906. There are 64 letters in the collection, which date from 1897 to early 1905, before Christian and Anna made the long trip from Denmark to find their fortune in the New World. Many of these letters were written by Christian's sister and his two brothers, who were already in Franklin County, to their brother they left behind in Denmark. Thus, there is material in these letters about life and conditions in Franklin County in the years around the turn of the century. Some of the letters from this period have been translated into English, and extracts of some of these translations follow\textsuperscript{12}.

**May 22, 1899.** One of the first letters in the collection was written by Christian's younger sister Petrea. She has served at a Mrs. Wolfe in Hampton since her arrival. After some introductory remarks about her health she continues:

I received a letter from our cousin Metthea and Jens Chr. in Denmark for my birthday, 8 days late............... They wrote that all of them had been out visiting Father. He was in a good mood and very happy. I was glad to hear that. He had that photo of your girlfriend. We really must congratulate you with your engagement. Dear Brother – it was really early that you became engaged, but of course, you do not have to get married for some years yet. Now you need to save up some money. You wrote you would send her photo to us. What kind of a girl is she? - And what about her father and family? Write to me a little about that. ............

We are fit and feel good. We could not be better off in Denmark than we are here. I feel good here, now I have overcome the worst language problems. Now I can speak just as good English as Jens could when he went back home. I have been an American now for 4 months. I get paid 2 dollars a week. I am serving on a farm outside the town of Hampton, which is our market town........... Niels told me to send you greetings from him. He was here last Sunday and will come again Saturday afternoon if nothing interfere. He will take me out to visit with some of the Danes, and Sunday we will attend services at the Danish Church. That will be a nice outing. It is now a
month ago we were to church there. Last Sunday was Pentecost. I don’t think many Americans pay any attention to that. Niels gets 22 dollars a month, which is a good salary. I will have to stop for now. It is late, and we get up early at 5 in the morning. But now I am used to it, it doesn’t seem so early now. Warm greetings from us – your brother and sister Petrea Nielsen.

My address is:
C/o Mrs. Casper Wolfe
Hampton, Franklin County, Iowa, North America.

We will probably not write to you for your birthday, the 4th of July, and therefore I will wish you good luck now for the year to come. You will maybe remember that I had my 17th birthday now in May. Goodbye and write to us soon. We promise to write to you soon again.

**January 8, 1903.** A short letter written by Marie Jensen, Christian’s stepmother in Kisum to the young couple just after their wedding. They are still living in Denmark:

Dear son and wife, Kristian and Anna
Thank you for your letter. We look forward to your next letter. We really got a lot of letters and photos from America. Niels’s wife wears a white silk dress; she is a beautiful woman. As beautiful a picture as that of Petrea cannot be found anywhere. She is a wonderful person too. She also sent a picture of a young man, and we were supposed to express our opinion, and then she would tell us who he is. She wants us to send her address to you, which is:

Petrea Nielsen
Box 394 Hampton
Iowa North America

Warm greetings to all of you from my husband and myself
Write again, soon! Marie Jensen

**June 19, 1903.** Letter from Jens Nielsen to Anna and Christian in Copenhagen. Jens Nielsen was the eldest of Christian’s siblings and was the first of the brothers to emigrate. He farmed for some time in the Latimer-Coulter area before he bought a farm of his own. Jens
Nielsen married the girl Anna Mand from Salling in 1903. In 1912 Jens Nielsen and his wife decided to return to their homeland with the two girls Signe and Jenny.

Dear brother Kristian and wife
It is a long time since we have heard anything from you. As it will soon be your birthday I wanted to send you a few words. But when I was looking for the stationery, there wasn’t any left. And as I wanted you to get a letter before the 4th of July I had to use something else to write on. I send you my warmest congratulations for your 25th birthday anniversary. I hope you will continue to have happiness and good health, and I wish you a long life. I do hope we will see each other again some time. And I do also hope that you did not take any offense at my latest letter. It is not that I did not want you to come over here, and if you really would like to come, you will be more than welcome, and we would do whatever we can to help you. As times are now, however, you will not be able to earn as much money over here as you do in Denmark. I am glad to hear that you earn enough money for your family living expenses, and to enjoy your profession. I am glad that you learned that even if it was a difficult lesson......... Maybe Father has visited you lately and perhaps you have had many visitors. You can also expect a visit from us in a few years. I wish that all of us could live to meet once more at father’s house in Kisum. He would be very happy to see all his children gathered around him.
Things are the same at our place over here. The crop seems to be all right, but now we are getting so much rain again, I do hope that it is not going to be too much. We got a lot yesterday, and today it is raining again. It is difficult with all these wet years........ Last Sunday we visited Petrea. She is very well now, and so is Niels. ....... My wife sends her congratulations. Love to you and your wife from your brother Jens Nielsen.

August 19, 1903. Letter from Jens’s wife Anna who invites them to Petrea’s wedding:

Dear Brother-in-Law and wife
I do not really know how to write to total strangers even though they are part of the family. I am Jens’s wife. I hope you have received our photograph, and then you would have seen what I look like. I am from Salling. I want to tell you that I am happy to be in America, and I do not wish to go back to Denmark. We are so happy here, that is the most important thing. You will receive a somewhat longer letter from Jens and me as soon as Jens gets the time. He is so busy, there is so much to be done the first year you move to a new farm, but it will get better.

Many greetings from your Brother and his wife. Do come to the wedding, you are welcome.

August 19, 1903. Petrea is going to marry Nis R. Christensen, a merchant in the small town of Coulter, about 8 miles west of Hampton and writes about her coming wedding:

Dear Brother and Sister-Law.

You might wonder why you never hear from me. That is easy to explain. I have said to myself that I would write for over a year now– nothing came of it. You yourselves have had the experience to be engaged – at that point you only think of writing to your beloved and only think of your future together. One day precedes the next. But I promise that from now on, I will be a frequent letter writer, because now I will not have to write love letters any more. We have decided to get married September 2, and the wedding will be here at Jens and Anna’s. I am out here now working on my trousseau. I hereby invite you to come over to our wedding and spend a wonderful day with us. Dear Brother – when we were kids and ran around in Kisum, we never thought of moving so far away from each other. I do not regret coming over here. But you will have to excuse me for not having the time to delve into these matters. After the wedding I will send you our wedding picture and write you a somewhat longer letter.

I will finish my letter now and hope that you will receive this before September 2, and then you might drink a toast to us at your home. Please greet Dorothea and Niels Hansen (note) and tell them that they are invited too. Warm greetings from me and my fiancé.
Early January, 1904. A letter from Brother Jens to Christian:

Dear brother Kristian
As we now have left the old year behind and have entered the new one 1904, I would like to wish you a Happy New Year and I will wish for you that you have a good year, and that you will be well, and that you won’t run out of work. As long as you have work and good health then I will know that you are doing well. That is the way I feel, as long as I have my good health and can work every day and my wife is well, then I feel good. But as soon as something is
wrong, then everything gets more difficult. My wife was very ill in the fall for a week. We had to call the doctor a couple of times – there was something wrong with her stomach, but she recovered. Father wrote that you had been ill too, I don’t know whether you are fully recovered or not, but I do hope you are so that you can keep your job. I know you are a master apprentice in a workshop. Maybe you won’t have to work as hard with that position as before, but at least you have to work. Do you get paid more? Please write and tell me about it, dear Kristian, we should contact each other more often. I have been very busy this summer. Every day of the week, and then on Sunday we went to church or had visitors. It is only three weeks ago that we finished picking corn, you can see it has been a long harvest season. I have been thinking so many times that I should write to you, but then something always came up, and the time got away. I thought that you must have Sundays off, but we never received a letter from you. Let us be a little better to write to each other from the beginning of 1904. Please tell Niels and Dorthea that I think it is their turn to write. I hope you got our picture. At that time I did not have time to write. Our crop was not so big last summer, but it is enough to feed the cattle during the winter, but there will be no wages for all the work we have done, nothing else than the food, but we will hope for a better year this year. But it looks to be a little better, as we have not had rain for several months. The last two years were very wet. Niels got a little girl about two months ago, and she has been given the name Rosa Alvilda Jensen. Petrea is well. She lives in a nice little home. I will finish now hoping that you are well and that we soon will hear from you again. We are very happy to have received your wedding picture, which is very fine. Everybody says so. I think that you take more and better pictures in Denmark than we do over here in America. Warm greetings from my wife and myself, Jens Nielsen.

January 14, 1904. Letter from Petrea to Christian and Anna. After complaint of missing letters and remarks about illness and weather she continues:

Dear Brother and Sister-in-Law!
Yes, dear Brother, now we all are married and each of us has our own home. It is always nice to be in one's own home, it is not always that way when we have to live with others. You have also tried that, dear Brother, since we left the farm at home. You have not always seen days with sunshine, but we have learned to always see the good in things, so that it always goes well with us. We should always hold to what we learned in our childhood, so that we not only do well in this world but also be ready for death, as it comes quickly to so many, we just don’t know when that will happen for us.

I will tell you a little about our wedding. That took place at Jens's. We were thirty people in all, and we had a very jovial time. We received as wedding gifts six forks and knives, six teaspoons, a large fruit spoon, sugar bowl, and cream pitcher, a table centerpiece for fruit, and a centerpiece for placing visitors’ cards, all in silver, and a picture that can be placed on a stand in a corner. On Sunday after the wedding we were surprised by the Young People's Society with a coffeepot and sugar bowl and creamer and one to put teaspoons in, they were also all of silver. I also got a cake-pan, if only now you could come and visit us, so you could believe that I could decorate a very fine table for coffee for you. It is so sad that we are so far apart. I wish that that great body of water did not lie between us, so that we could meet together again. I long so often that I could speak with you. But perhaps we will come home some years from now. Together with this letter I enclose two of our wedding pictures, would you please give one to Dorthea, because I am not writing to her this time.

Many hearty greetings to you from your sister Petrea Christensen and brother-in-law. Our address is N.R. Christensen, Coulter, Franklin Co., Iowa, America.

February 19, 1904. Jens Nielsen writes from Hampton to Christian and Anna in Denmark. After comments of his wife’s health he continues:

Dear brother and wife
I think you have an excellent annual income. That is more than we can earn here in America. Hard times are coming. There is much unemployment here. Many families have gone back to Denmark since early in the fall because there were no jobs. In one day 60 families from Chicago left for Europe. We read in the papers that one factory after the other closes down or go bankrupt. There are several 1000 unemployed. I know very well that at one time, I would have liked to have you over here. But times have turned different now during the last two years. I do not think you should come over here. And apparently you can earn so much more back there. You see dear brother – from the 1500 Danish Crowns you can earn you might be able to put some aside and finally be able to buy your own business. If better times should come here in America, you might consider coming over to farm – by that I mean to rent a small farm. You would not need as much money for that. My wife said to me when she read your latest letter: “They earn much more money than we do; and they will probably also be able put some aside. That is more than we are able to”.

I will be honest with you – you do not just pick up gold off the street in America. You have to be a hard worker. For the last year I have lost money despite all the work I have put into it. I do not wish for more years like that, or I soon will stop farming. We read so much in the papers about the war; will that come to Denmark as well? If so then you will be one of the first ones to go into service. Or will it just be paper talk? You have not written anything about it, so maybe it is only talk. We have read in the papers that Danish soldiers have received orders to be on 24 hours notice. ........write to us soon again if the story about the soldiers is true. Love to both of you from my wife and your brother, Jens Nielsen.

July 31, 1904. Letter from Christian's oldest sibling Ane, who lives near Balling, just a few miles northwest of Skive:

Dear Brother and Sister-in-Law
You should have had a letter for your birthday, dear brother. I wanted to postpone my writing until I was alone at home. It is easier to write when one is alone. The older folks are in
Dronninglund to visit their daughter. They have been away for 14 days, and this is the first day I have found the time to finish my letter. I have been in the field every morning to help with the hay. Today it will be three weeks since Father and Marie were here to visit. Father had a good time here, and I wish that you did not live so far away from us. Have you not considered moving to another town, if it becomes more difficult to find work in Copenhagen? What about a big town like Aarhus? I am so sorry that you are thinking about going to America. I think it is a pity that you will sell all your things, and maybe little Kristian – it might be that the climate in America does not suit you. You are so fragile. I would like all of you in Copenhagen to come to visit us next summer. I do know that travel is expensive.

I have a small birthday gift for you little brother. I hope it will be bigger next time. Goodbye!

July 31, 1904. This is an extract of a letter written by Christian’s father and stepmother, Niels and Marie:

……I have been thinking and have talked with Marie about whether you might consider coming home and taking over my smallholding. It is worth 10.000 Danish Crowns and the debt only comes to 4.000 Danish Crowns………I know that it would please Niels and Jens very much if you would take over my home.

Marie Jensen, the stepmother of Chris continues: Dear Kristian and Anna
Just a few words from me. Both my dear husband and I would be delighted if you and your wife could come to Kisum and take over the home. My husband and I will then move to a smaller house. And Kristian you can be sure that your dear father will come and work for you every day. It would be wonderful, should that happen. Write to us soon. Many warm greetings to all of you from us. Farewell and Goodbye, Marie Jensen.
August 15, 1904. Nis Christensen writes from Coulter to his Father-in-Law Niels Jensen at Kisum, telling about the birth of Niels' grandson and his daughter Petrea's death:

Dear Father
When you receive this letter and you see who wrote it, then you might think that something over here is wrong. And as God in Heaven is my witness, I would wish it were not so. Petrea and I had only such a short time together here on earth. Dear Father you must have guessed, by now that your dear daughter and my loving wife have gone to God in Heaven and left me and our little baby. A baby was born August 12 on your birthday dear father; the baby was a little boy. Petrea was ill for about 4 days before the baby was born, after the birth she seemed to recover. That was last Saturday, and that night she became ill again, and the next day at noon she died. Dear Father! I did everything I could to save her, in order to keep her. We had so much to live for and we loved each other so much, but she was too good for this world.

We had also our new little baby, who during her last hours, took up almost all her thoughts and work. One of her last thoughts was of you, dear Father. She wanted that you could have her little boy. The doctor was at her side almost day and night, and the last day there were two doctors and they hardly left her, but everything was in vain. God had decided that she had to go. I would have given everything on this earth to save her. Thank God in Heaven that she had the power to act like she did. She arranged everything herself. She comforted me and asked me not to grieve. If it was the will of God that she should die, then she was willing to follow Him. She very much wanted to be with me, anyway. She asked for the pastor and our little child was baptized, then we had Communion and sang a couple of hymns, and Petrea sang also, even as the doctor asked her to be silent and not to exert herself. She answered that once they had finished with her, then it would be too late to sing. And she was right. Her mind was so lucid, and she knew it was the end. After the song she asked the pastor to take her child. He comforted her and promised to do everything for her and the child. It has been very hard these days, Father and much is still unreal for me. I
cannot clearly see that last day. The grief can sometimes kill, if not physically then mentally. It is a large and depressing grief. Can He be my God? Petrea asked me to turn to God and find strength with him. Maybe we will meet sometime again on the Day of Judgment. When you call me to reckon for your daughter, I will answer you. And Trea will be at my side again and bid me welcome. The last hymn we sung – the one she asked us to sing – was “Skriv dig, Jesus, på mit hjerte (Jesus, write upon my Heart)”. She also gave the child a name herself. Born on your birthday, Father, he should be called Niels, and the name of my father is Peter. How it is just like Petrea! So very thoughtful! So she gave the child the name Niels Peter Christensen. Anna held the baby, and she also asked to have it, but Petrea asked me not to give it to her. Not that she did not like Anna, but she did not dare to give Anna her last memory. The pastor then took him, and with great pleasure. And he has gotten a very fine home. Petrea also asked me to see to it that the child would be well-behaved in a home of God, and to be a child of God. If it is God’s will, I will try to fulfill all her wishes.

Yesterday at two o’clock she was buried. In all that grief her funeral will always stand as something both dark and light. Few people will have a funeral like Petrea’s. There are many Danes here in this neighborhood. All of them came, although it was in the middle of the busy time of the harvest. But not only Danes, also Germans and Americans came, even those from far away. It was the largest funeral anyone has ever experienced here. The church was decorated in black and white and everything was covered with flowers. We bore her casket from her home to the church and from the church to the cemetery and everywhere on that long tour there were flowers strewn. The coffin was covered with flowers when it was interred and her grave is covered with them. There is something great and comforting and yet very sad to see all this, everyone who served her and loved her. She was so loveable and good. We bore the coffin ourselves on her last journey – Niels, Jens, Martin, Peter Madsen, J. Jørgensen and myself.

Dear Father – one of these days I will forward to you a last memory of Petrea, a flower taken from her breast in the last minute in the church. May God help you in your grief, when you pray to God for
yourself and Petrea then do not forget her grieving husband and child. They will also need God’s help. And one more thing, dear Father, although Petrea has passed away, I will still be your dear son, the man who has loved your daughter and been faithful to, and who will meet with her again. Please do not forget to write to me. And may God be merciful to us and comfort us in our grief.

Love for all of you,

N. R. Christensen.

January 8, 1905. This is an extract from a letter written by Niels Jensen’s wife Ingeborg from Hampton to Christian and Anna in Copenhagen:

Dear Brother-in-Law and Sister-in-Law

Many thanks for your letter, which we received a short while ago. We are all well. Even if I do not know you I must say I feel sorry for Christian and for you, dear Sister-in-Law that you are not feeling well. We do hope you soon will be healthy and strong again.

------- Petrea’s boy is healthy and is growing fast. Nis intends to travel home to Denmark next fall and take the boy with him. We understand from some letters from Niels’s father and Marie that they are ready to take him anytime and would be extremely happy to do so. We would like that to happen, and then the boy would be in his dear mother’s family. We are sending you two pictures of our house and “Den Danske Ungdomsforening (Young People’s Society)” here from the Danish colony. Actually it is not a very good picture of the people, it did not turn out well. I am sure you can find Niels on the photo, but I am not sure whether it is worth looking for me – the dog is lying in front of me, but the photographer left off the head of the dog in the photo, so it is not a very good photo. The picture of the house is better. It is fairly big, we have 9 rooms and kitchen and a kind of laundry which we use as a room for washing and for the pump. We collect rain water in a big reservoir and we use that water for washing clothes. Drinking water we fetch from the windmill.

Love to all of you from all three of us

Your Sister-in-Law Ingeborg Jensen
Write to us again soon.

February 4, 1905 Christian and Anna have decided to come to America, and Ingeborg gives them some good advice concerning the trip:

Dear Brother-in-law and Sister-in-law
I am sure you are longing for a letter from us, and it is certainly the time to write now if we want to reach you before March 8. We have had a hard week with a lot of snow, so Niels has not been able to get to town. He wanted to go today, but now it is snowing again. I would like him to go anyway. It is a bit of a long ride, but during the summer it is not so bad when the road is dry. I have done it myself in an hour or an hour and a quarter.
I have started to write, should Niels be able to get started into town. Should this letter reach you before the ship leaves, then you can go by the English line which is much quicker and with so much better food. That is what Niels says. I was on the ship “Hekla”, when I came over here, but Niels has both times gone by the Dominion Line. The crew is all English, but that will not be a problem, as there will be other Danes onboard. When you arrive at New York, however, it will be the American language all the way to Hampton. Niels intends to go to the bank to find out whether it will be cheaper to send the tickets instead of money. I suddenly realize that the full name will be wanted on the ticket. We do not know your wife’s full name, therefore it might be better to send the money. When you arrive at New York, you will have to go through many different sections, but there will be people there to assist you. They will ask you how much money you carry, and I would think that you should have some. But anyway should you buy through tickets it would be no problem. Should anything happen, there ought to be a Dane in the building to help you to send a telegram to us, and we would be able to help you through. It is stricter now than it was seven years ago when I came. I had only two dollars, but I had a through ticket all the way out to my sister, so I managed. So will you, when you have a brother here and a ticket all the way from Denmark to his place. They asked me whether I was supposed to pay back the
money for the prepaid ticket. I said no! This is actually not allowed. I do not know whether you will get the same question. I got the ticket from America; it might be different if you buy the ticket in Denmark. Please tell us when you will leave, so that we can know when you will arrive. You can also write to us, when you have arrived, then we can find out when the train is expected at the railway station. We can also have a man in town drive you out to Jens, and Jens could drive you out to us. That will be all for now. We will look forward to seeing you. Niels tells me to write to you that if you have some very nice carpenter tools then you ought to bring them. Many times you would probably wish that you had them. If the tools are not new, there would be no customs duty. But there will be customs duty on silverware. Now I will finish. Warm greetings to both of you and to Dorthea and Niels Hansen as well from
Your brother and Sister-in-Law
Ingeborg Jensen
Ingeborg continues: Unfortunately Niels was not able to get to town yesterday. We had a major snowstorm, and the road was not open. Today it is somewhat milder. Niels asks me to remind you to visit your father before you leave. And if you travel by the English Line then you can leave from Esbjerg. When you get to Hampton please ask for Ole Hansen. He is a Dane, and he lives fairly close to the station. If it is not too much to ask, would you please visit my father also, before you leave – that is if you have the time to do so.
Love from Ingeborg

Niels Jensen continues in the same letter:
Dear Brother Kristian – I am now at the bank in Hampton, and I have bought tickets for both of you. It is 50 Danish Crowns cheaper and I will forward 40 Danish Crowns for the travel. The agent here says that you ought to have that much

Eventually Christian and Anna were registered as emigrants on March 11, 1905 and went by the Dominion Line via England.
February 5, 1905. Letter from Christian’s sister Mette Larsen, from Skovsbo (near Svendborg):

Dear Brother and Sister-in-Law
Thank you for the letter we got. It was unexpected news that you want to go to America. If I may write truthfully, then I really do not think that you should go that far away. You young people could easily earn your living if you help each other, no matter where you are. You have just got such a nice home. It is really a shame to move everything away. It is a really long way to go for just a few years. And when you get back you will have used all your money for the tickets, and then you will have to start all over again. But it is for you yourselves to decide if you really want to go. God be with you. God bless you.

February 10, 1905. One more letter from Mette:

Dear Brother and Sister-in-law
We received a letter from you yesterday. We learned that you really have decided to go to America. Well do it if you must! Take care that you have all your papers ready so that you can enter the country over there. They say that it is more difficult now than it was earlier. You will also have to carry a certain amount of money; otherwise you will not be allowed to disembark. You probably already know all that. Bring our warm greetings to all of them from us. Ask Petrea’s husband whether we can have his little boy. Ask if I may be his mother. We live in the hope that we can get him over here. Do not forget to write to us and tell us what America looks like, and how everything is there. Please ask brother Niels to write and ask him to send their pictures.
You wrote about the pendant lamp in wood, we want to buy it. Also the dinner set and the large pot. Do you have a lid also? Should you have a frying pan, we would like to have that also. The washtub, the coffeepot, and if you have a meat tenderizer we could use that too. Also the seven pairs of cups, the tray and the glasses. We do not need the sugar bowl and the creamer, but we might take them also.
Please tell us how much it all will cost. Should you have a chest of drawers and a mirror, we will take that too. We heard that the washstand was sold; we would have liked to have that also. Do not keep back the sideboard; I don’t think we want it.

Warm greetings from Mette and Mads

Maybe you will come round to see us. Otherwise we will send the money when we have received everything. Please be careful when you pack it!

March 9, 1905. Extract from a letter from Ane from Balling to Christian and Anna and Dorthea and Niels Hansen:

My dear beloved brother and sister-in-law.

Many thanks for your dear letter which we received today. Once again a deeply felt goodbye to you, may God be with you and do not forget to pray. I will always think of you and pray for you and hope that we will meet again as God wills.

It was too bad that the parcel went astray; there was a letter from Niels. Then you might have stayed a few more days. It is very good of Niels to send the tickets. I am sure he will do everything he can for you. Please greet my dear brothers and their wives and Petrea’s husband. Has he considered sending the little boy to Denmark? ........................I am sure there will be room for little Niels Peter. It would be easier for me to have him, if I did not have the elderly to care for. I would gladly take him for the sake of my sister, however. My husband is very fond of children, therefore I would be happy to have him.

.......... We will hope to see each other again, God protect you and all of us! We are happy to hear that your travel went well.......... Yesterday evening my husband and I talked about that now you were departing then, but now I realize it will not be until Tuesday. You will always be in our thoughts. Please write as soon as you can. I promise to write to you also. Although we live apart from each other, we will live in each other’s thoughts.

Warm greetings to you my brother and Anna. Farewell and Goodbye and many warm greetings for you sister, Niels and Axel also.
Conclusion
This article only deals with the letters from the years 1897-1905, the time around the emigration of Anna and Christian Nielsen, as an introduction to a comprehensive story of a Danish-American immigrant family
From Samsø to California & Return
1952

By Edvard and Harald Degen

Translated from the Danish with an introduction by James D. Iversen. Edited by Birgit Flemming Larsen

Two brothers, Edvard and Harald Degen, decided in 1952 to travel from their home on the island of Samsø, Denmark to the United States in order to visit their brother, Alfred Degen, who lived in Santa Maria, California, and who had emigrated from Denmark in 1926, 26 years earlier.

Their trip not only gave them a chance to see and visit with their brother Alfred after a very long separation, but also gave them a chance to tour this large country and to compare the differences between the United States and Denmark. The diary of the trip reflects their observances of the country, its people and its landscape. They wrote not only about the differences between the two countries but also of how their former fellow countrymen in Denmark were prospering, and how well (or whether) they had been able to continue the traditions and customs of “the old country”. Many years before their trip, Edvard and Harald had started a business of selling motorcycles and bicycles, and later sold cars and farm machinery. Thus, their business background on Samsø explains their interest in visiting various manufacturing plants and businesses in the United States, as recorded in their diary.

They spent a short part of the stay in Chicago, where they met with an aunt and some of their cousins who had also immigrated to the United States from the island of Samsø. The aunt was Bodil Marie Rasmussen, to whom one of the copies of the diary had been sent, in August of 1952, about 5 months after their visit. Bodil Rasmussen’s grandson, Jorgen Rasmussen, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Iowa State University, has that copy of the diary in his possession.
Professor Rasmussen has responded to receiving the translation of the diary from Danish to English as follows: “As a (third) generation Danish American, reading (Jim Iversen’s translation) of this diary of the American trip of my grandmother’s nephews both gladdened and saddened me. Here were a couple of intrepid Danes, who, shortly after the end of World War II, decided to visit the United States to see how their relatives, who had emigrated some years (earlier), were doing. Not only did they accomplish this by means of a coast-to-coast tour, no less! – but they managed to arrange a tour of the Studebaker auto plant, something that I never experienced despite growing up only 20 miles from it. These nephews were some impressive fellows.

Despite their practical abilities, however, maybe they were a bit naïve. They came to the US expecting to visit some Danes, who now happened to live in America. What they found instead were Americans, who happened to be of Danish heritage. The myth of America as the melting pot always has been most compelling. Wherever we, or our ancestors, are from, we are all one. The downside of the melting pot is the loss of diverse national heritages and cultures. The former Danes that the nephews met had become Americans, fine. But we can understand the nephews’ sadness that those who had been their countrymen now retained so little of their Danish heritage.

The nephews were impressed by much of what they saw in the US. They, unlike the relatives they visited, however, were not enticed to emigrate. The United States was a nice place to visit, but they preferred to remain Danes. Their balanced view of American’s strengths and drawbacks generates a number of astute and insightful evaluations of the country a half-century ago.

Although South Bend, Indiana (home of Studebaker) was only 20 miles from my home, the town of La Porte, and on the rail line that one took to Chicago, where the nephews would visit their Aunt Bodil, my grandmother, they did not stop off to visit my father, their cousin. My father had six brothers and sisters. Why he was the one who received the diary of her nephews’ trip when my grandmother died, I don’t know. The diary was found among his things when he died. For years we were uncertain just what it was.
Then we asked Jim Iversen if he could give us some idea what it was about. He found it so fascinating that he did a full translation. Once you start reading you’ll soon see what grabbed his attention. How fortunate that this document came to my father and Jim now has brought it to life.”

Extracts from a Diary
February 5 to April 2, 1952

Those who as young people traveled out as emigrants nearly always had the desire to again visit the old country at least once. Most did realize that desire.

Many of us who remained at home have also had the dream to go over and see how it went with those who left. Unfortunately, that dream is not often fulfilled, so when that did happen for us, it became an event we will always remember.

Therefore this account has been written, which is more like a diary pieced together in an imperfect fashion.

Our wish to visit our brother in California had long been our desire together with a yearning to tour in America. When one finally makes that decision, there are so many things to get in order, and so when the trip was planned in January 1952, we had to hurry to make preparations. Because of our business the trip had to be in the wintertime, when we both would be free for a couple of months. We had to leave our house in the best condition possible. The work had to be finished and the year’s accounting done and the tax forms completed. There were many things to think about, but everything was accomplished.

It is not so easy to receive permission to be a guest in “God’s Own Country”. We telephoned the American Consul General on the necessities for obtaining a tourist visa and how long would it take. We were informed that normally a visa could be obtained in about a month, and the consulate sent us forms to be filled out. Here we had to give precise information on personal conditions, family conditions, political activity and much more. In addition we had to
obtain information from family in the US, criminal activity (if any), copies of proof of vaccinations, etc.

A visa to the USA cannot be obtained without a guarantee from family or friends in the US that we can stay with them as well as guarantee that we would return before the expiration date of the visa.

Once the different papers were posted we could after more conversations meet at the Consulate on the 6th of February in order to finally obtain the visa. We may assure that “Uncle Sam” takes no chances when it comes to receive guests to the country. There were an uncountable number of papers filled out and our fingerprints were taken, and in addition we had to undersign a formal declaration that we at no point had been members of the Communist, Nazi or Falangist parties. After that we were taken in to the Consul, where we had to swear that everything we had written was correct. Now finally the desired visa could be delivered to us. After that we went to the National Bank to exchange money, which was a maximum $50 per person. We were then directed to the Farmer’s Bank, where the “hard” currency was delivered. Here we should state that the entire ticket, travel to and return from California could be purchased with Danish Kroner. These were obtained at Ø.K. (East Asiatic Company), after the visa had been obtained. It took all day in Copenhagen to get these things accomplished.

The first day of the trip, **February 7**, dawned with cold and sour weather.

We got to the pass control in good time, and all in all that went very easily with no pain. “Stavangerfjord” was supposed to sail at 10 o’clock in the morning, but it was 10:30 before the gangplank was raised and the cables were loosened. One young woman with a little child stopped on the gangplank just when it was about to be swung in. She just barely made it on board. One should not come too late to the ship when sailing to America.

“Stavangerfjord” is no modern boat. It was launched shortly after the end of the First World War, and so now it is over 30 years old. It is 13,700 tons, so it is not so small. The crew consists of 300 men, and there are places for about 700 passengers. It is sufficiently
seaworthy, so several travelers to America choose it instead of one of the newer ones. The sailing through the Sound and across the Skagerak to Kristiansand, Norway occurred in fair weather, and we reached Kristiansand at 1:30 am on 8 February. We stayed there only two hours, and soon our ship steamed away through the night across the North Sea.

The weather got worse with a strong headwind. Many passengers became seasick and we stayed a little longer in our bunks than usual. The unpleasantness soon got better, however, and one gets used to the sea. There was breakfast at 8am, lunch at 12:30 pm, and dinner at 6:30 pm. The food was satisfactory, but not quite like the Danish.

On Saturday the 9th of February, the weather again was good, and all men were on their feet. There was instruction for the passengers regarding life vests at the respective lifeboats at 4pm. All proceeded according to program.

One learns to know different interesting people. One young engineer was on his way for further education in San Francisco. A young Danish-Jewish couple was headed to the Midwest to begin anew after their turbulent existence in Denmark and Sweden during and after the War.

The 10th and 11th of February went by uneventfully. Monday afternoon the captain had a party for all the children on board. That was held in the tourist class activity room and there was good attendance. Treats consisted of Coca Cola, ice cream and cookies, of which there was plenty. Afterwards several of the small guests sang solos or entertained. The orchestra played and there were solos sung by adults. In addition there were arranged several games and contests, which were much enjoyed. The hall was full of passengers from all three classes.

After the end of the children’s program there was arranged a “bingo play” in the cabin class activity room. We won 42 kroner with only a few kroner of input. In the evening there was a very enjoyable dance.
We got acquainted with a young man who was sent over by his company for a 3-month study visit in the United States. He is a manager in a large confections factory in Copenhagen and had letters of introduction along to about 30 different companies in America. He planned to travel around in most of the states and of course hoped to learn something in the process.

On Wednesday, the 13th of February, there was again very windy weather with high seas. The day passed with long walks and conversations on deck. In the evening there was performance by different artists, partly the ship’s own amateur performers and partly from among the passengers. The presentation was quite good.

In the evening we saw a bit of America, as we passed a lighthouse at Cape Race in Newfoundland.

On Thursday the 14th of February, the ship’s doctor was quite busy. A young Finnish mother delivered a son, however two months premature. The boy died shortly after birth. In addition a two-year old boy was operated on for appendicitis.

We had expected to reach Halifax in the evening, but we were already a number of hours late.

On Friday, the 15th of February, we reached Halifax at 8:30 am. The weather was cold, minus 8 degrees (18 degrees Fahrenheit). The city has about 200,000 inhabitants, but it didn’t look appealing, and the weather was not inviting. We were at the quay for about two hours and about 100 emigrants were off-loaded. We were informed that the final arrival at New York would take place at 8am Sunday morning, so we were happy to learn that already the same day we could board the train. The captain’s farewell dinner was at 6 o’clock in the evening. That was very enjoyable. The tables were decorated with Norwegian and American flags. In addition there was arranged on a large table in the middle of the dining room a very fine exhibit of the ship in miniature as well as several coast panoramas. The dinner consisted of soup, fish, roast goose, ice cream, coffee and several fruits. The conversation was constant.
except for a thanksgiving and reminder that we would soon be separated from the good friends we had made on the 8-9 days co-existence on the boat. The little boy who was born the day before was early in the morning buried at sea with the captain conducting the service, as one of our friends on the voyage later informed us.

At our arrival in Halifax the two patients were taken by ambulance to the local hospital. In the evening the wind started up again. That was an unfortunate thing to happen at the same time as our good dinner. A collection, about 2000 kroner, was taken on behalf of the young mother for her hospital stay in Halifax, which was fortunate because it was obvious the young couple hadn’t much money.

During the day we had been up to first class to visit an old Danish American from Chicago. He and his wife travelled home for a visit to the old country every year. He was one of those who had made his fortune in America. He owns a large construction company in Chicago.

**On Saturday the 16th of February** the humor was high and everyone was in good spirits. We were informed that we would be in New York harbor at 8pm, but the ship had first to sail into its berth at the quay and the passengers would be expedited from on board Sunday morning. In the evening we could begin to see land, and the traffic on the ocean became more and more lively as we approached the harbor. One big English passenger ship reached and passed us in the space of a few hours. When darkness fell, we could more and more see the lights from the great city, and an extraordinarily impressive spectacle it was to behold the city from a shorter distance, when our ship first dropped anchor in the harbor.

Already early on Sunday morning a number of US government employees came on board and before we had berthed at the quay at Hoboken the many passengers had gotten their papers perused and stamped, so when finally the gangplank was laid out could the first passengers quickly begin to walk on land. The civilian passport people were gruff and haughty to most passengers, and especially to the immigrants, who besides their many papers also had to present
their x-rays which were opened and examined. The customs officials, on the other hand, were courteous and talkative, and when all the passengers’ baggage had been put in order alphabetically, and because there was a great effort by the customs people to expedite matters, the customs procedures went relatively easily. Gifts that had been brought along had to be shown, and we had to pay duty on everything brought in.

We were soon through customs, and we could hire a taxi and drive to New York Central Station to obtain the train tickets with the ticket receipts we had brought along. Here we had our first difficulty, as it appeared that our travel agent “American Express”, from whom we had ordered our tickets, was not open on Sunday, and we had therefore a very difficult time at the Central Station to get that straightened out, and as there were several lines to choose from the question became a bit difficult.

In the meantime, after about an hour, the matter was taken care of, and we had only a little time left to wait for our train, which was scheduled to leave at 3pm.

When one walks off the ship to the land in New York, the city makes a very big impression. This busy city with its many skyscrapers and with its fearsome traffic in the streets can nearly take one’s breath away. New York should be visited at length, but that we had to forego, because our train was scheduled to depart at 3 o’clock.

One thing we were very surprised about in New York was the disorder in the streets. They were flooded with paper and other debris, and it didn’t seem like they were often cleaned. New York Central Station, only one of several train stations, was overwhelming in dimension and quite nicely decorated. It seemed as though the entire world’s people streamed through it. People of all colors and races moved among each other. We stretched our necks and said, “Did you see him over there”, or “No, look at those two over there.”

We were in the Central Station’s restaurant, and it quickly seemed very American, that we could sit at a long table and almost get fed by a conveyor belt.

The food was good, cheap, and served quickly. As soon as one sat down a glass of ice water was set in front of us, and that seemed
to be the custom in all restaurants and drug stores in America. The
waiters didn’t wait for an order of beer or some other drink as in
Denmark. On the other hand, drinking coffee seemed to be
obligatory, and was served and enjoyed with the meal.

Our train left Central Station precisely on time, and it was with a
sigh of relief that we could set ourselves on our pleasant seats on the
train. It was snowing lightly when we moved out of New York, but
we were happy to see open country again. The railroad follows the
Hudson River for quite a distance, and we could for a long time see
the attractive mountains with communities on the other side of the
river. Soon it became dark and the lights were twinkling. We
could relax while our train continued on in the night to our
prearranged goal of St. Louis in Missouri.

In the evening we could fold the chair backs down and
simultaneously put the footrests up. So we could sort of lie down
and nap a bit. A real night’s sleep it was not, however, and in the
early light of day on Monday morning we could begin to notice the
landscape we were traveling through. It was flat farmland with
close villages much like many places in Denmark. The ground in
most places, however, had not been fall-plowed and we could see
that much of the corn stubble was still standing. As we traveled
farther southward the snow disappeared, and in several places we
could see herds of long-haired red and black pigs in the cornfields.

One thing which surprised us very much was to see the overall
deteriorated conditions of the buildings out in the country. All the
buildings were built of wood, in any case all of the farm buildings.
Even in the larger station towns the buildings were of wood, and it
seems that many of them had not received any paint for many years.
There were boxes and all kinds of junk, wood and iron lying around
nearly all the houses and ugly grim-looking sheds with rusting
corrugated metal roofs in all the most unlikely places.

We were impressed by the boundless disorder which was
prevalent. It came to be predictable, that even outside the worst-
looking house, worse than a Danish chicken coop even, there would
be a “Dollargrin”1 of recent vintage. That was the most surprising
to see on this train ride to Missouri, the awful-looking houses and
the overwhelming number of cars. This abundance of cars is true all

60
over America, and it is numbing to consider all the good cars. No American family with any self-respect can be without a car, and many families have two or three or more depending on the size of the family.

It was related to us that even school children down to 15 years of age can get driving permits, on the parents’ recommendation and if there is a good reason for it.

We traveled past “car cemeteries”, where hundreds of cars including postwar models were piled in rows for cannibalizing.

On Monday the 18th of February our train reached St. Louis at 11:30pm. St. Louis is a very large city, and there was here, as elsewhere much traffic on the streets. We quickly noted that the weather was milder. The sun was shining and the weather was delightful.

The first thing that caught our attention at the railroad station was the large number of colored people, especially Negros. They were by far in the majority and were many shades of color from very light brown to very dark. In order to find the most to see of the southern states we had planned to travel from St. Louis with the “Southern Pacific” through Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Southern California. We were not disappointed in our expectations at seeing many extraordinary things. This route is also called the “Sunshine Route” and not without reason. We had a stay in St. Louis and went out to see the city. The many Negros dominated the picture. We visited a large monumental building with a memorial hall for those who had fallen in the World Wars, and the accompanying museum of exhibits from the Wars impressed us. Then back to the train station.

Our train was scheduled to leave at 5:30 in the afternoon, and we had a very long continuous train ride ahead of us, before we would first change trains in El Paso about 2000 km farther west. The trip across Arkansas gave us the same impression as Missouri. Great flat stretches with farmland and farms spread overall. No buildings were especially good to look at from the train. We could notice that we were traveling farther south. It got steadily warmer. At dawn
On Tuesday the 19th of February we reached Dallas in Texas. Here there was an especially long stopover before we should travel further, and we began to be more impatient to reach the end of the road.

After the train finally left the station and we came out into the country again we could notice the new landscapes which passed our window. Now it was no longer farmland but hills and mountains with groves of scrub trees and some poor land where there were residences only once in a while. We continued westward and especially after we had passed through the large city of Fort Worth the landscape became wilder. Now once in a while, we began to see the oil derricks pop up out of the landscape, and even the landscape was wild and desert-like, the small stations became more frequent, because of course the rich oil-districts require many people to work at getting the oil out of the ground and in the refineries. The impression of all those pumps, thousands of them, which day and night and year after year pump oil out of the ground, will always be with us. We at home are happy that we have even only one pump situated near Tønder. In Texas it was like the oil was jumping out of the ground.

We arrived at El Paso about 11pm, and as expected, that didn’t leave us enough time to go out and see the town before we had to switch to the next train. El Paso is very Spanish influenced, at any event, as far as the population is concerned. One sees many of plainly Spanish type, but also many Mexican, or more correctly, Mestizo, of blended Spanish and Indian origin. We had some difficulty in El Paso in getting our baggage switched to the other train, but finally the difficulties were overcome just in time that we could take our place in the reserved Pullman car before the train began to move. The time was about 1am and there was no possibility to see more of the city. Our fellow passengers were a mixed lot. We especially noticed an elderly Mexican couple who certainly had just crossed the border and no doubt didn’t travel by Pullman every day. The man had on a hat as large as a mill-wheel and the wife was in clothing which is not seen at home for every day use.
Our train would only stop for a few minutes in San Luis Obispo – our final destination. We were a bit concerned about whether the family had received our telegram, so if they would be at the train station to meet us. But there they were. Our joy and happiness was great on both sides, but when people have not seen each other for 20 years, it takes a bit before one finds his voice. Alfred had to concentrate quite a bit to search for words before the Danish words would come. His wife could neither understand nor speak Danish, so it was up to him to communicate.

We got into the car and drove the 50 km to Santa Maria and covered that quickly. When we reached the home we talked and drank coffee and talked again so it was far into the night before we got to bed. It was so enjoyable to sleep in a real bed again after so many days with our clothes on.

Alfred had taken some vacation and already on Friday the 22nd February, it was agreed that we would go on a longer tour in the car to see the different places in California. Early on that Friday morning, our suitcases were again packed and laid in the trunk of their delightful 1949 Plymouth, which should roll us around on the highways of California.

Our first goal was Fresno, the “raisin city”, where we wanted to visit an elderly Danish-American woman, an old acquaintance. In the evening we stopped at one of those well-known places found overall in California, a “motel”, more closely defined as a motor hotel. A long low building with parking places in front. One can rent a room with kitchen and bathroom as well as extra beds if desired. In front of the door to the room is the parking place for the car, and all problems are thus solved at once. If one wishes to prepare food in the kitchen that can certainly be one. There is an electric range or a gas range and all the kitchen equipment. Of course, people can also go out to a restaurant to eat and only use the room at night. In addition it is normal to find a TV set in this motel room, so if one does not want to go out, the room can be used to see movies for the entire evening.

After we had gotten a good evening meal we got into the car again, and drove to a “Drive In”, an open-air movie theatre outside of town. In such a movie theatre one simply drives in with his car
and finds a place in a row of cars. On the right side of the car is a stand with a speaker and cable. One simply takes the speaker off the stand and hangs it in the car, pushes the button, and closes the window. Now we are ready to see the show. In front is a very large structure which holds the movie screen. The operator sits in a tower in the back. If one is not too far back in the rows of cars one can see just as well as in a normal theater. We were, however, quite a way back from the screen, and so the picture was a little hard to see. We could, however, follow the whole thing and the sound, of course, came through the speaker in our car. If one has a nice roomy car to sit in, it can be a very enjoyable way to see a movie. We watched a film which was about the world situation. This was a dramatic movie, which I am sure has not been shown yet at home.

It was late before we got back to our nice motel. Saturday morning we drove out to find the little town of Easton, outside of Fresno. Here was our old acquaintance Mrs. Clara Sørensen supposed to live, and after some searching we found her house. Fortunately she was at home.

We were welcomed with open arms, and we had to finally go with her to visit her several children, who lived in and around Fresno. Protest from our side was useless, and soon she was ready to ride with us. It was not long before we didn’t regret that we had begun to visit these “children”. First we drove out to see her oldest son Chris Sørensen, who owned a large farm near Fresno. We were very welcomed by Chris Sørensen, who is about 50 and a man of pure Danish descent, a man who has done well. He could not speak Danish and in general did not have much to do with the large numbers of Danes one finds in and near Fresno.

Chris Sørensen has been an unusually successful individual and his fresh-packed fruit is sold all over the U.S.A. We were in to see his private home, and that nearly took our breath away, when we saw this magnificent residence. The house is quite large and spacious and with many rooms. The kitchen is unique and the large spacious living rooms are furnished and decorated with excellent taste. We can nearly believe that anything one can find in the modern household can be found in Chris Sørensen’s home. As a special logo Chris Sørensen has selected the old wagon wheel. The
wagon wheel is on the label of his fruit boxes. It is burned into the tiles in the kitchen and in the bathrooms. The leather furniture is likewise decorated with the wagon wheel, as well as the carpets. Much of the furniture is built with the wagon wheel as a motif. Yes, even the headboards on the house’s beds consist of half of a wagon wheel.

We got permission to photograph Chris Sørensen’s house both inside and out, and after we had thanked him for his welcoming reception, we drove on.

We finally reached Mr. N.H. Mortensen’s private home, where we were invited in for lunch. We were heartily welcomed by his wife, who is the daughter of Clara Sørensen. After lunch we had the opportunity to see Mrs. Mortensen’s splendid home, and during that Mr. Mortensen himself arrived. We now had a conversation about Ferguson tractors and Ferguson dealerships and after a while we drove off.

In the meantime an invitation came by telephone that we must come out and visit another of Clara Sørensen’s children, mechanic and farmer Harry Sørensen, who lives outside Ridley.

Here also we received a hearty welcome, and soon we were again seated at a well-supplied table. This time for dinner. The gathering was most cordial and festive although there were some language difficulties. After we had finished eating, Mr. N.H. Mortensen and his wife came to the place, and we had a delightful time.

Harry Sørensen is one of those who recognizes his Danish heritage, and because he is a member of the Danish Society in Ridley, a chapter of the Danish Brotherhood, he invited us along to a visit to the Danish meeting house in Ridley, where there was a festive meeting with coffee, dancing and card playing as one wished in the evening.

We came just in time for the coffee table, where we as visiting Danish guests were presented and bid a special welcome. That, however, was all in English. We had the opportunity to talk with a number of old Danes of the second generation. Our impression is that the Danish Societies will survive, but the Danish language will in many places die out, and it could not be otherwise. Indeed many of the first generation who in their lives have not been back home on
a visit have nearly forgotten how to speak Danish and many of the second generation have on the whole not learned it, and there are others who on the whole are not even interested.

Of course, the adjustment is not the same everywhere, but as a whole one can say with certainty that the use of Danish will die out. Too few Danes emigrate now. We talked to some who call themselves Danes but they, on the whole, understood not one word of Danish. And also many Danes have married Americans and here understandably the interest in Danish is less, but on the other hand, we also met other examples such as one woman whose parents were Danish, but was born in America and with remarkable success got her American husband into the Danish Society, and even taught him to speak Danish.

In Fresno and the surrounding area there must be 6-7000 people who are Danish or of Danish descent. After that interesting visit to the Danish meeting house in Ridley, we drove back again.

**On Sunday, the 24th of February**, the sun shone early as it nearly always did in California and after a good breakfast with our dear hostess and after having photographed both here and there we took a heartfelt departure with promises to write and send pictures.

**On Monday the 25th of February** we toured around San Francisco and were among other places at the Norsk Amerika Liniens (Norwegian American Line) office in order to obtain our passage home, which was set for the 21st of March, with the SS Stavangerfjord.

San Francisco impressed us with its bridges, the 8 km long Oakland – San Francisco Bridge and the huge Golden Gate Bridge with the longest suspension span. We took a lot of photographs and hope they turn out.

Another thing which made a strong impression on us in San Francisco was the unusually steep streets. Several places it seemed we were in doubt whether we would be able to drive up them. In any case one should have a powerful and superior automobile and have good brakes in order to negotiate the hills. When driving down such a street it seemed as if we were in danger for our lives
like novices in the hands of the driver. That evening we stayed in San Francisco.

On Wednesday morning the 27th of February we again left Santa Maria and turned southward. We passed through the really peaceful part of California on the way to Los Angeles. Among other places we visited was the little Danish town of Solvang ca. 65 km (40 mi) south of Santa Maria, but more on that later.

We reached Los Angeles in the evening and we settled in to a motel in North Hollywood. Because our room had the most delightful television apparatus, it was difficult for us to tear loose to go out in the town and find something to eat and to see some of the large city. Despite that consideration, we did go out to see something, and we decided in the evening to attend a burlesque theater for a midnight show in order to see some of California’s beautiful women. The show consisted of performances by dancing ladies and various skits, etc. The scenery was magnificent, and the dancing ladies performed partly in beautiful flowing dresses and partly in almost nothing. The dancers were very capable, but parts of the show were so daring that a portion of the show certainly would not be allowed back home.

On Thursday morning the 28th of February we left Los Angeles again to go back to Santa Maria. Alfred should be home before evening, when his club (or lodge) “Knights of Pythias” would have a party in the evening on the occasion of the opening of a sports locale for children. Alfred is on the board of the lodge and was “primus motor” for the event. When we got to Santa Maria towards evening we were met by his wife with the information that there had been a whole series of telephone calls from lodge members about the evening’s arrangements. Now he was busy changing clothes and left home again.

The Lodge has its own building in Santa Maria. Several of the directors had already arrived and were busy getting things ready. Our old friend “Papa Johnson” was busy making soup in the hyper-modern kitchen, and we had to quickly go to the bakery to get the cakes reserved for the coffee. The party began at 7pm. First as a
fund-raiser for the Sports Hall there was an auction of fine packages which had been brought by the women. The bidding was lively, and some packages went for as much as $5.

When the auction was over we were all sat down, opened our food packages, and the soup was served. The conversation was lively, and we felt quite at home as guests at the party. The lodge members were doctors, lawyers, businessmen, laborers, and a few farmers. After the meal we were treated to a talk in the Lodge’s hall. The lecture was on sport, primarily sport for young people. In addition we were introduced with a special welcome by the president as Danish guests on a visit to Santa Maria, and while the gathering applauded we had to greet to all sides.

The Lodge “Knights of Pythias” in Santa Maria is an old chapter of a large brotherhood of the same name, which has chapters all over the USA. The Lodge has a Society for men and an auxiliary for women and only when there is a special event can the women come to the men’s gathering. There is a club meeting once each week, and the real meetings which are secret, only admits members. Members can bring male guests who can participate in conversations after the meetings.

On Saturday the first of March we found ourselves all day in Santa Maria, and we went out to see the town. There are about 12,000 inhabitants and the city is attractively situated in a valley. The streets are broad and with nice well-kept buildings and beautifully landscaped with palms and other tropical vegetation. Just in Santa Maria there are 12-14 churches of different denominations, and it seems that each denomination strives to support their church.

On Sunday the second of March we went to church service in the afternoon in the large Methodist church. The church is quite spacious and there were many in attendance. The service was formal and nice, but unfortunately we understood very little of the sermon and also the hymns were unknown to us. A large choir clad in sumptuous red robes was quite decorative and sang well.

In the afternoon we were invited to visit our old school comrade from Samsø, Marinus Jensen, who lives in San Luis Obispo.
way there we stopped to visit Tage Jensen who lives in Shell Beach (just north of Pismo Beach) on the Pacific coast. He went with us further to visit Marinus Jensen. When we arrived we received a hearty welcome from Marinus and his wife.

A whisky-soda was served as soon as we arrived, and the conversation became quite lively. Marinus Jensen has a large and delightful home which cost him ca. $35,000. He may soon buy a larger and more costly house. A very nice dinner was served in the evening. Marinus Jensen, who has been home on a visit twice since he emigrated in 1926, has also kept up with developments back home, and he still speaks excellent Danish. His wife who is American is very lively and she related several jovial anecdotes in Swedish-American, as she declared that she was Swedish, but it turned out that two of her grandparents were Swedish. Marinus Jensen operates a trucking business and his four trucks which deliver wares to groceries and he serves a fairly large district. We were in to see his workplace, and came quickly to the conclusion that it is easier to operate such a business in America than in Denmark, because the wares come in standard packaging in the USA.

After several hours of jovial visiting we left Marinus Jensen and his wife and rolled again towards Santa Maria. We stopped again at Tage Jensen’s and had an additional couple hours conversation over a strong whisky soda.

On Monday the fifth of March Alfred’s vacation was over, and we had now made arrangements that we should ride with him around on his tour to the different restaurants, hotels, barbershops, etc. That was a trip of over 100 km (60 miles), and we visited the several smaller towns in the region as well as the large military installation Camp Cook which is as large as a medium size provincial town at home.

In the afternoon we got a test of the American police vigilance as we were out on the highway and were stopped by a patrolman, who drove up beside our car. Alfred had to get out and show his driver’s license and a lively discussion ensued when the patrolman insisted that we had been driving too fast, because the speed limit on
this stretch of highway was only 45 miles per hour. We strongly insisted that we had maintained a speed under the limit. The patrolman then decided to give us just a warning in a very gruff tone, and then we could drive on.

Our tour included the little Danish town of Solvang. It lies beautifully in a valley between high mountains and near the old Spanish mission of Santa Ynez. There has been so much told about Solvang so that we will confine ourselves just to inform that the town has about 1500 residents, of whom 600 to 800 are Danish or had Danish parents. A somewhat special characteristic is that all the people greet each other on the sidewalk. Several places we were greeted with the Danish “go’ dag” and of course when we were in a Danish gift shop we were greeted by the manager and others in perfectly good Danish. You can also buy a Danish beer here, and at the Danish bakery we were in to have a little conversation and got a rye bread to take home for the evening. The church was built in completely Danish style as were other buildings in town. The known Atterdag College or High School towers on a hill outside the town. The college, as is known, was founded by Pastor Nordentoft about 1911. It is easy to get along with the Danish language in Solvang and many families speak Danish in the home, but in general the primary language is English, however. For the time being the Danish language is held in honor in Solvang, and they also celebrate “Danish Days” in the summer. Then thousands of tourists come from near and far, especially Danish. We talked to many Danes in the town about people at home we knew in common.

**On Wednesday, the 12 of March** we were in Santa Maria, however, with two trips to San Luis Obispo when Alfred’s wife drove us in the morning in order to get papers in order before our travel to Chicago. After a lot of negotiation with the officials, and with our good friend Marinus Jensen’s help we finally were delivered a “sailing’s permit” at the city hall. This permit is necessary to leave the USA. They want to be sure that people with a visitor’s visa haven’t earned any money during their vacation in the USA. In the evening Alfred drove us again to San Luis Obispo and we were there together with Marinus Jensen and Alfred at the train station to register our large
sized baggage which should get to the ship in New York a few days before we ourselves get there. In the evening we were up to Marinus Jensen’s private home for a cup of coffee and a farewell drink. The time got late. After we said goodbye to Marinus Jensen and his lovely wife we again drove back to Santa Maria.

**On Thursday the 13 of March** we were up with the chickens to see the sights one more time before the travel and to get the whole family photographed. Our visit to Santa Maria and therefore to California was drawing near the end. We had in the preceding days driven over 6000 km (3600 miles) around to the different places in California. We had wandered in the snow in the Yosemite mountains; we had picked oranges off the trees, lemons and olives near Fresno. Now we again had to go out on the long train ride through San Francisco and eastward to our intermediate goal, Chicago. In the home in Santa Maria we had not spent all that much time during our stay in California, and despite Alfred at the end of our tour would like us to stay longer, we had to continue eastward if the trip were to continue according to plan.

Alfred had now lived in California for 27 years and had in this period worked in Santa Maria, first with Knudsen’s Creamery Co. and later at another dairy. He married in 1934 and his wife Dixie was born in California of Danish parents. Some years after marriage he got the position, as stated earlier, with Mr. Johnson’s large laundry business. Here he had now been for many years the traveling sales representative and the firm’s best man. He receives a commission and has a good weekly income, approximately $100. He says he is a poor man, and he had an illness some years back, but is now quite well.

His talk of being poor one can take as a sort of Danish humor. He owns clear and free a delightful villa with all modern equipment, and a very large garden with development possibilities, a nearly new car, and likewise a nearly new tractor for garden work and to rent out. In addition he has investment funds. That doesn’t sound like a poor man in Denmark. At any rate his activity if home in Denmark would give him the opportunity to buy a large farm. He is just about to complete a deal for a business in the city and from the
middle of the summer 1952 he will be his own boss. He hopes it goes well, and he is looking forward to it.

The daughter Dixie Alice is 15 years old and in school and wishes to continue her education. The elderly 80 year old mother-in-law owns two houses in the vicinity, and she offered one of her houses for our use the entire time we were in Santa Maria. After enjoying a splendid dinner, the last in the home in Santa Maria, we were all together in the evening at Alfred’s brother-in-law Erwin Lyda and wife, where we used the last hours together before leaving having a cup of coffee and a nice conversation.

At II o’clock Alfred started the car after we had said our goodbyes to the family in Santa Maria and then we drove out to bid farewell to “Papa” and Mrs. Johnson. They promised to visit us, when they again travel to Europe. We shall see. We got to San Luis Obispo Ca. 12 o’clock, and it was a happy surprise to see Mr. and Mrs. Tage Jensen at the train station. Mrs. Jensen had been on a visit to family in Seattle, and she had just flown back from Seattle. We were glad to see her and thus got the opportunity to at the last instant get a greeting from her to take back with us to Denmark.

The departure time was drawing closer, and we had much to say before so many miles came between us, so the minutes went by very fast. We were all a little serious at the last. We thought: Do we see each other again, or is this the last handshake? Then the train came. It stops for only a few minutes. We find our car and we depart again. The departure whistle sounds. We enter at the last minute. The train departs. The last words we hear are Alfred’s “Greet those at home from me” and the train trip has begun. We now have a 60 hours almost uninterrupted train ride in front of us before we reach Chicago. During the night we rode through the State of Nebraska and most of the State of Iowa. Here is the good farm land. In the early daylight hours of Sunday morning we could again begin to observe the Iowa landscape. Gently rolling terrain. All farmland. Large fields of stubble of wheat and corn. Horse, cows, sheep and pigs wandering over the fields. Spring was not yet quite here, but most of the snow had gone. When we got farther east and into Illinois the population density started to increase and we could see that we were getting closer to Chicago. We finally got to Chicago at
1:40pm on Sunday afternoon and we quickly hired a taxi to the address of our elderly aunt (father’s sister). Here the family was home and we were welcomed with open arms. Aunt Bodil Marie Rasmussen is now 82 years of age and came to America the second time in 1925. All of her six children live in the city or nearby. She herself now lives with her daughter Jennie who is married to a custodian at one of the city’s large slaughterhouses. Aunt Bodil is well and of sound mind although she has some difficulty walking. She was very happy to see us and to get greetings from home. She understood us quite well, but had some difficulty in speaking Danish. Jennie, on the other hand, spoke quite good Danish without blending the two languages together, and she is also keeping contact with the family by letter with family and friends in Denmark. Her husband could not understand a word of Danish, but he spoke slowly and clearly so we could have a conversation any way. He is a very lively and hospitable man, and we were all soon sitting together at the well-supplied table.

In the evening we met cousin Jens and his wife as well as cousin Otto and the conversation now turned to the old days. Later in the evening Otto drove us on a tour around the city and afterwards delivered us to another part of town to the house of cousin Carrie Ness and her husband, where we were scheduled to stay overnight. We were also heartily received here, and we absolutely had to have something to eat even though we had already had dinner earlier and it was soon midnight. We were also upstairs to visit cousin Dagmar who lives in the same building as Carrie. Our third cousin Rose, who is a widow and lives in another part of the city also appeared so it was a big family gathering. It was very late before we got to bed, and we had previously been on the train for three nights.

On Monday, the 17th of March, however, we were up early for expedition again. At noon we should again go eastward on the train. Carrie and Rose went with us to the train station. Chicago, with its 4 million inhabitants is a mighty city, and we rode a longig ways through the subway to get to the station. Chicago is a very dirty city, and it is well known for both its good and bad. Carrie told us that some years back her nearest neighbor was the notorious
John Dillinger “America’s public enemy number one”. Until he was arrested, however, there was no one in the neighborhood who knew anything about him. Our train was to leave precisely at 12 o’clock and soon we stood at the window to wave farewell again.

Next goal: South Bend, Indiana which we reached at 2 o’clock in the afternoon. Here we got off in order to visit the Studebaker factory. From Nordisk Dieselauto in Copenhagen we had gotten an introduction pass to the factories, and we were welcomed with unusual friendliness by Mr. McNeill, who offered us coffee in the factory’s large and very nice cafeteria. We had difficulty because of the language barrier but we managed in spite of the difficulties. After finishing with coffee, we were invited in to see Director Mr. A.E. Albini, one of the leaders within the company. He was very nice and presumably had time to engage in conversation. It was by now too late in the afternoon to have a tour of the factory that day, and since we were not scheduled to leave for New York until the next day at 1 PM, it was decided that we would be able to have a tour the next morning.

Mr. Albini reserved a hotel room for us for the night and at the same time invited us to dinner in the evening. Because there was still some difficulty with the language, he called an office director, Mr. V.A. Keil was a nice and very pleasant man, with whom we were happy to talk to, except he didn’t really know very much Danish. He himself was born in the States but his father came from Holstein, and his mother was born on Samso, from where she came to the USA from Copenhagen when she was very young. Mr. Keil was assigned the responsibility to pick us up at the hotel at 6 o’clock and take us along to dinner. Precisely at the appointed time he stopped his new Studebaker at the front, and we rolled away. First Mr. Keil wanted to show us some of his town, which he seemed to be quite proud of. South Bend is a city with a good 200,000 inhabitants, and with a significant amount of industry. The city was of a good size, but according to Mr. Keil, it was also a good place to live.

After we had driven around for a little less than an hour, we pulled up at a fine restaurant outside of town. We went in and were soon sitting at a luxurious table. “Don’t hold back at taking food,
Studebaker is paying”, was the refrain of Mr. Keil. We had all what we could wish for, and the conversation was lively. Mr. Keil was a jovial host. “I like you”, he said. “You will come with me home and see my children and my wife.” Mr. Keil has a very nice home on the edge of the city and after we had been introduced to his wife, both of the children were roused out of bed so we could see them. Mr. Keil invited us to his club. That evening there was a musical program and a large 60 person orchestra. That was a very enjoyable time, and it was late before Mr. Keil drove us back to the hotel.

On Tuesday morning the 18th of March one of the Studebaker factories new buses was outside our hotel. It had been planned that we should be on a driving tour around the city and area before we started the factory tour at 10 o’clock. It was a very nice tour of South Bend. We saw the large college with the associated Catholic Church “Notre Dame”. We visited the church, and after that we saw the large stadium. We also saw the Bendix factory, which employs about 12000 workers. Also Singer has a sewing machine factory here, with about 4000 employees.

At 10 AM we stopped in front of Studebaker’s main administration building. We received a little book about the factory and saw an exhibit with a little group of Americans who were also touring the factory. This lasted about two hours, was very interesting, and we saw all the departments possible, although in that length of time it was not nearly possible to see it all. The Studebaker factory was started as a wagon manufacturer in 1858 by the 5 Studebaker brothers. In 1902 they fabricated their first electric powered car and in 1904 they exhibited their first gasoline-powered automobile. The development since then has been enormous. The work here is as in all automobile manufacturers, on the assembly line basis. It is very interesting to follow all the steps in fabrication right from the raw material to the completely finished car.

An entire book could be written about the Studebaker factory. Here we only comment that today there are 21,000 laborers and 1500 office workers. At the end of the two assembly lines there are so many new cars rolling off that it takes a large staff of chauffeurs to drive them away. How many cars were finished each minute we did
not learn, but the number is large. The factory’s area is so large that we had to drive around in a bus from one department to the next. After having finished the factory tour we thanked all the men for all the hospitality, and then we were each surprised with a cigar lighter with the Studebaker initials. We went out and quickly a chauffeur showed up with our hand luggage to the car, and he drove us to the train station. The visit to Studebaker had been a tremendous experience, and our reception had been much more hospitable than we ever could have expected. On the further train ride from South Bend to New York there is nothing special to tell about. We traveled through the states of Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York, and early Wednesday morning we were in New York City.

We now had two days to see the city before the “Stavangerfjord” was scheduled to sail. Our first heroine was at the Visitors Bureau on Park Avenue, where we were directed to a good inexpensive hotel and also received other interesting information. Then out to experience the town. We took a sightseeing bus tour in the afternoon — in the center of the city and with several important stops. A visit to Chinatown closed the tour. We were into several Chinese shops and bought some small things. We also saw a Chinese temple. Chinatown is a special part of the city which is populated only by Chinese people. We went by a restaurant where all of the people were eating with chopsticks. Very interesting!

In the evening we were out to see the life of “amusement”. New York with its neon billboards is a magnificent spectacle. The large show area ‘Latin Quarter’ was filled with people, and the many variety shows were open. The shows were over after dark, and we hurried back to our hotel. New York with its numbered streets and avenues is very easy to find around in.

On the 20 of March we were again out early and walking around to buy souvenirs, etc. We couldn’t resist taking the tour to the top of the Empire State Building as it costs $1.50 per person to go up to the observatory on top, floor #102. The building is 1050 feet tall, and in clear weather it would be possible to see an area where more than 15 million people live and work. The view was magnificent, but unfortunately that day there was a little mist in the weather. There
is a restaurant at the top and a shop where they sell postcards, souvenirs, etc. The trip down on the elevator went very quickly, and you get the same problem as when landing in an airplane, namely pressure in the ears, but that disappeared quickly. In front of another known skyscraper “Rockefeller Center” there is installed a large artificial ice-skating arena, and we saw young people show their best artistry on skates. We closed the day by going back to Times Square to buy a Danish newspaper.

On Friday the 2nd of March we were up early to get things packed in order to get to the boat on time. The passport control opened at 8AM, and when we arrived at 9AM there were already many people on board. It went smoothly with the several formalities and a half-hour after our arrival we were on board. We were glad that we earlier at the Norwegian American Line’s office in San Francisco had gotten all the information about the trip, so that we had our “sailing permit” in order as otherwise we would have had a fearful amount of problems at the last instant. Many passengers had not gotten this famous piece of paper filled out and so at the last instant had to go to one office or another back into the city.

When Stavangerfjord” at 11:30AM cast off the hawsers and the gangplank swung in, the ship’s orchestra first played the American national anthem and “Ja, vi elsker dette landet” (Yes, we love this land), the Norwegian anthem. All passengers stood with bare heads, and the ship slowly slid from the quay. Many people were on deck and there was much waving of hats and handkerchiefs.

The Statue of Liberty was soon out of sight, and in the afternoon we passed the Ambrose lightship. After that there was only ocean and more ocean as far as the eye could see.

Most of the passengers on the trip home were either Americans or Norwegian-Americans who were on the way for a visit home to the “old country” as the Norwegians call it. We made here a very interesting acquaintance, because every morning on our walk on deck we encountered a very friendly Norwegian, a Rector at a high school in Oslo. He had been on a 6-months study tour in the USA and spent most of his time at Harvard University to study American history. We had many lively discussions including about the time
when Norway was a part of Denmark. Quite a few of the passengers used a lot of their time in playing cards. Others sat with a glass of beer or snaps in front of them the whole time. The ship was scheduled to stop at Bergen, Stavanger, Kristiansand and Oslo, but not Copenhagen, and therefore we had already in San Francisco arranged to take the train from Oslo to Copenhagen. We would rather have just sailed directly into Copenhagen, but on the other side of this coin, we now got this tour of the Norwegian coast and that enriched our trip somewhat. At 8 o’clock on Sunday morning the boat lay in the harbor at Bergen and many passengers left the ship. All passengers irrespective of destination had to go through pass control, and could thereafter walk around the city, and we availed ourselves of this opportunity, because the boat was not scheduled to leave until 3 o’clock in the afternoon. It was snowing and slushy underfoot, but that could well be normal weather for Bergen. It is easy to see that Bergen is a bustling city with much ship traffic — there were many steamships in the port. It was a relief to once again get hard ground underfoot and also nice to come in to a restaurant and see people sitting and taking their time. The difference is striking after just having come from New York. We remember a conversation with one of our Norwegian friends on board. The man is a machine master and was on his way home to visit his family after three years of sailing to New York and Jamaica. “America is not a country for me”, he said. “The people are restless and pale and unsatisfied. They do not have a fresh color and active lifestyle as we have at home in the old country”. And we could agree with him to some extent, although most Americans will tell you that the USA is the only country in which to live.

It was a quiet Sunday in the streets of Bergen and after a couple of hours of walking we turned back toward the boat which sailed again in the afternoon, bound for Stavanger. Sailing into the deep Stavangerfjord took a very long time, and it was after 8PM before we went into port. There were many people at the pier meeting many of the passengers. Again quite a few people left the ship and also a quantity of goods was unloaded including some ‘dollar-grins” (American cars) which the Norwegians also needed.
Tuesday morning we were up very early, and all the passengers who had stayed overnight were now assembled at the last breakfast time on board before we spread to the four winds. Most of us, however, were Danish who traveled further on the Express from Oslo at 9:30 AM. We were in company with some of the employees from the East Asiatic’s Erria” which had burned at the Pacific Coast on the 20th of December, 1951. They had stayed onboard the vessel and had removed some of the furnishings onboard. Left onboard were only 4-5 men who were involved in towing the ship to Hong Kong where it would be rebuilt. These seamen related several incidents from the ghastly fire on the ship.

In Hälsingborg Swedish passport control came onto the train together with the Danish officials. The Swede stamped our passport for travel out of Sweden and shortly after we got the passport stamped for entry into Denmark. The customs officials also visited us in the compartment while we rode across the sound to Helsingør. That all occurred easily and pleasantly. After another hour our train rolled into Copenhagen’s main train station. Here on the platform we were met by our wives and other good friends. The reunion happiness was great.

In a brief two months we had now traveled forth and back from a trip on ship, train and automobile totaling Ca. 26,000 km (16,000 miles). In addition to having darted around California this way and that we had traveled through 22 states in the US arid along the way touched three other countries, namely Canada at Halifax, Mexico at El Paso, and Scotland at the Orkney Islands. Finally, we had concluded our travel home through Norway and Sweden.

Our perception of America as a land of great opportunity was certainly increased by our visit, and it is incontestable that the average man over there has many more good opportunities within his abilities, economically, than he would have here at home, but whether one’s satisfaction with his existence is greater, we shall leave unsaid. In the meantime, we hope and believe that our trip has resulted in more tight and strong ties with the family on the other side of the pond. We will feel closer in spite of the thousands of miles which separate us. Likewise, old friendships have been renewed and new ones established. We will continue to recall our
many varied and different impressions and experiences with fondness in the years ahead.
The book *War Games* focuses on the events of the week prior to the Nazi occupation of Denmark. The book details the political, military and diplomatic moves in Northern Europe day by day, starting on April 1st and ending with the invasion on April 9, 1940. For each day we are given an account of what was happening in Copenhagen, Berlin and London, as well as in other locations – on land and sea. *War Games* is an excellent book for anyone who wants to know in detail what happened just prior to the occupation; why the occupation took place; and the Danish reaction to it. The book gives a brief introduction to relations between Denmark and Germany as well as background information on the international situation. At the end, the book gives an evaluation of Denmark’s policies and reaction to the invasion.

The amount of research involved in writing *War Games* is impressive. The sources for each chapter are all listed at the back of the book. *War Games* gives a fair account of how the Danish government reacted to the invasion. The authors competently explain the foreign and defence policies of Prime Minister Thorvald Stauning and Foreign Minister Peter Munch. These policies of disarmament, neutrality, non-violence, negotiation, compromise and diplomacy are likely to be little understood or appreciated in the United States of today. And therefore a good reason for writing the book!

According to Peter Munch, a strong Danish army and navy would never be able to match Germany’s armed forces. Putting up a fight was useless. A slogan of Munch’s Radical Party was “Hvad kan det nytte?” – What’s the use? Therefore Denmark might as well disarm. By disarming Denmark was also telling Germany that Denmark would never be a military threat.

From the German point of view, Munch had created a weak northern flank by disarming Denmark. Germany therefore had to
step in to secure its northern defences – or the weak northern flank would be an invitation to Britain to attack Germany through Denmark. The emasculated Danish forces wouldn’t even be able to keep the British at bay for a day, until the Germans arrived. Due to Foreign Minister Peter Munch’s policies the German invasion was not a military attack, but practically a peaceful crossing of the border by German troops and the unhindered landing of German naval vessels at various Danish ports. The German invasion caused resentment and bitterness against Germany and the German people, and many Danes were in a state of sorrow over the state which had befallen their country. They more or less accepted the government’s decision to meet the German demands, and there were no strikes or street demonstrations against the Danish government. The adoption of Munch’s approach did not clarify the relationship between Denmark and Germany. The Germans had promised to respect Denmark’s integrity and sovereignty, and yet the country was occupied. Furthermore, the government was to continue its policy of neutrality, and yet its territory was occupied by a warring power. Perhaps this could be called a ‘peace occupation’, which however, was a concept which lacked a clear-cut definition, even in international law, because of the nearly total lack of a precedent. There was therefore no case in international law which completely covered Denmark’s case. The Nazi occupation of Denmark stands in stark contrast to the occupation of all other countries occupied by Germany. The Danish case is unique, which makes it extremely interesting. The case is worth studying, and the book War Games is therefore an excellent contribution. Thanks to Peter Munch’s policies and approach Denmark was spared a military attack, the destruction of property and the loss of lives. Most Danes could carry on life more or less as before. Denmark was not officially at war and the government could deal with the Germans – government to government - in a relatively civilized manner for the next three years. The authors of War Games refer to Foreign Minister Peter Munch in glowing terms, calling him ‘the great Dr. Munch’ and recalling how
‘he had served with great distinction as defence minister’ during the First World War. The book is very much a defence of Peter Munch. And yet, the book ends with two following paragraphs:

Rumors circulated after the war that Munch had been involved in a secret meeting with the Germans on March 17, 1940, in Rostock. Supposedly the Germans informed Munch of their plans to invade Denmark and he then made a deal that Denmark would abstain from resistance. In spite of official denials issued through the press, the rumors stayed alive for a great many years, even following the death of P. Munch on January 12, 1948.

It is indeed puzzling why the book ends on this note, as War Games is otherwise a tribute to Peter Munch and his policies. Moreover, did the authors not note in Viggo Sjøquist’s ‘official’ biography Peter Munch, that Sjøquist emphatically rejects this rumor? Dr. Sjøquist was a historian and the Chief Archivist of the Foreign Ministry’s Archives from 1961 to 1974.

Peter Munch truly thought he was doing the right thing for his country. Even if one vehemently disagrees with his policies, Munch was not a traitor. He did save Denmark from destruction and the loss of life. He acted well-knowing that there were Danes who would not appreciate his stance.

Despite his courage and sacrifice Peter Munch is not remembered as a hero. In Denmark he remains an important yet controversial politician. This is readily evident in the many books about the German invasion of Denmark. Even in major encyclopedias, which try to be balanced and unbiased, Munch is remembered as a controversial figure.

To the freedom fighters in the Resistance Movement, which gradually grew, Munch was the symbol of collaboration with the enemy. Their slogan became Never Again an April 9th! In short Peter Munch was made a public scapegoat along with the other collaborators.

War Games was written by Lucille Wilder and was later edited by Torben Tvorup Christensen. Ms. Wilder, who did an enormous amount of research, did not completely finish War Games before she
passed away. After her death Torben Tvorup Christensen carefully proofread and edited the book so it could be published. Many books on the invasion deal with the topic from one side only – in Danish books from the Danish side. War Games, however, shows what was happening each day in each country. War Games is an easy and fast read, which quickly sets the scene for the dramatic events of April 1940. Most important, War Games tells the story of what really happened back in April 1940, and not only how the events have been interpreted.

Rolf Buschardt Christensen


“A queen-like beauty, a tall blond Danish type of perfect harmony, a charming creature; she literally came stalking forward in a nimbus of sunshine, the most beautiful and loveable lady in Denmark”

Who was this woman described in such a way by journalist Anker Kirkeby? Sylvia Pio, born in Denmark in 1876 as the daughter of the legendary socialist leader Louis (Albert Francois) Pio (1841-1894) and Augusta Jørgensen (1853- ) and very active within the socialist women’s movement.

Louis Pio was a pioneer of Danish socialism and later the founder of the Danish social democratic party. He had organized a section of Internationale in Copenhagen. The authorities feared that the dawning socialism would change the society to the worse. The rising of workers in Paris in 1871 had spread a fear among citizens all over Europe. At a large meeting for the working class in Copenhagen in May 1872 Louis Pio and his friend and colleague Poul Geleff were arrested. On the Danish King’s birthday in 1875 the two of them were released, and Pio took up again his socialistic activities. He was elected head of the Danish labour movement. Pio started a newspaper “Socialdemokraten” which indebted him completely.

The Copenhagen police director raised a sum of DKK 10.000 among leading Danish capitalists. The money was offered to Louis
Pio provided that he promised to go to America. Pio accepted and brought Augusta Jørgensen and their little daughter to Chicago. At that time Chicago was a metropolis of 300,000 inhabitants and an important centre of traffic for the many millions of immigrants on their way to the prairie to have their share of the generous offer of the Homestead law – 160 acres of free land.

Pio married Augusta, and their little baby was baptized and got the name Sylvia Mizpah Pio. The family found a small flat in the western part of Chicago and began a new life based on the income of Augusta’s piano – and song-lessons. Louis Pio’s health was not very good, and he was not able to manage a permanent job. During her childhood in Chicago Sylvia moved 13 times, and she remembered the years as marked by poverty. Two more children were born, two sons who stayed in the US. Louis Pio died in 1894.

Sylvia was now 18 years old and had started a study at the Chicago Musical Institute. Later she worked as a shop assistant and a typist. She had become an intelligent pretty young lady. In 1902 she became ill and to recover she was sent to Florida. She stayed at the most fashionable hotel in Miami, and here she met a young Dane who owned a farm on the island of Lolland. The young man was Eggert Christopher Knuth. He proposed successfully to Sylvia, and the couple went to Chicago to ask permission to be married. Augusta Pio was against the liaison, as she found the 21-year-old Eggert Knuth too young for her Sylvia who at that time was 27 years old. Finally she gave in, and Eggert went back to Denmark to tell his family of nobility about his choice of a coming spouse. The farm was the huge Danish estate Knuthenborg, and Eggert was the heir and a count. The wedding took place in London in 1903, and a completely different life started for the Danish-American woman, the daughter of a socialist.

Her straightforward American manners gave offence in the rural surroundings on Lolland. On Knuthenborg they addressed her as “Your Grace”, and her husband was not of any help. He was more interested in his hunting parties than in helping his wife to adapt to the – for her – different life as a countess. However she fulfilled her most important duties, the continuing of the family Knuth. One year after the wedding she gave birth to the son, Frederik Marcus Knuth,
and seven years after to the daughter, Eva Knuth. In 1912 the count and countess were divorced. During her years as countess Sylvia spent a great deal of her time in Copenhagen where the couple had a large well-equipped apartment at their disposal, and she keenly participated in society. Her beauty, her tactfulness and her intelligence charmed the bigwigs of the intellectual life of Copenhagen. The brothers Georg and Edvard Brandes were both her great admirers and so was editor of “Politiken”, Henrik Cavling. Johannes Poulsen, a much-admired actor, could not resist her charm either, and after the divorce from Eggert Knuth Sylvia married Johannes Poulsen. The marriage lasted only five years.

1921 Sylvia Pio became acquainted with Thorvald Stauning, the leader of the Danish social democratic party and later the Prime Minister of Denmark. The party could soon celebrate its 50 years anniversary, and Sylvia saw the occasion as a possibility to rehabilitate her father Louis Pio, the founder of the party. She wanted her father’s urn, brought back to Denmark from Chicago, to be lain to rest in the homeland on the “Vestre Kirkegaard”. By her charm and her ability of persuasion she finally succeeded to talk Stauning into the idea. Stauning even gave a speech in honor of Louis Pio, and a monument was raised on the grave. Stauning’s first wife had recently died, and should Silvia had had the wish, she definitely now had the opportunity to become Stauning’s second wife.

But Sylvia Pio had other interests at that time. She looked eastward – to the ned Sovjet Republic. In Copenhagen she had met the future Sovjet foreign minister Livinov, and she took advantage of the connection to get a visa to travel to the country of the Bolscheviks. In 1922 she spent some time in Moskou and reported back to the newspaper Politiken. A later visit to the USSR together with her son Frederik had a bad ending, and Silvia finished her relationship with the Sovjet.

Back again in Denmark Sylvia wanted to continue her social democratic career, and her new hobby-horse was to focus on the women of the party. She succeeded in having Stauning’s support and a committee for women was founded in 1929 in Copenhagen.
Stauning had then remarried, and the close cooperation between Stauning and Sylvia Pio became a threat to the marriage.

In 1930 Iceland could celebrate its 1000 years anniversary. Thorvald Stauning and his wife were invited to participate in the celebration and went by ship to Iceland. Onboard was a certain lady, Sylvia Poulsen, née Pio. What happened on the ship and during the stay on the Island of the Sagas is unknown, but on his return to Copenhagen Stauning applied for divorce. Two days later the catastrophe happened, Sylvia had a cerebral hemorrhage which caused a paralysation. Her health deteriorated, and on April 24, 1932 Sylvia Mizpah Pio died.

In *The Bridge* 1990, Volume 13, no 1 Kristian Hvidt presented an article “Sylvia Pio. A Danish-American Livewire”. Hvidt happened to meet Sylvia Pio in the late 1980s - in a historical respect it was – during his research for his book *Edvard Brandes. Portræt af en radikal blæksprutte*, published in 1987. In the correspondence of Edvard Brandes Hvidt found a couple of letters from Sylvia Pio. These letters were extremely well-written, and from then on Hvidt caught a special interest in this woman and wanted to know more about her life. At the Royal Library and at Arbejderbevægelsens Arkiv in Copenhagen Hvidt had access to many letters written by Silvia Pio to a large number of people, however there were only few letters written to Silvia Pio. A meeting with the Russian historian Boris Weil changed the situation. Weil was able to supply Hvidt with material from Sylvia’s Russian adventure in the 1920s. Also Hvidt contacted the grandchild of Sylvia Pio, the present count Adam Knuth at Knuthenborg. It turned out that valuable material, several hundreds of letters, and her personal notes were kept in a green canvas suitcase which was found in one of the stable buildings of the manor.

Now it was possible for Hvidt to get a closer impression of his protagonist, and the new material became an important basis for this book about Sylvia Pio. The book presents a life story of a woman who gets to the top of the social ladder in a class-divided society. It is a very colorful presentation of an exciting period of the history of Denmark. We follow a daughter of a convict who spends her years of adolescence in Chicago and is transplanted to an isolated island in
Denmark. The woman is described by her author as somewhat of a dreamer, but she had a strong power, much energy, and a lot of courage. She was influenced by her father who was a very gifted person. To compensate for the defeat of her father she wanted to continue his socialistic ideas. Hvidt gives this characteristic of his protagonist: “She is sexy and very beautiful with a twinkle in her eye. She sways her hips in a seductive way and understands to say the right thing at the right moment. Her American upbringing has made her straightforward and aggressive in a charming way and she must have been a very exciting acquaintance.”. Maybe the author is a little infatuated himself. Hvidt tells his story about Sylvia in a florid and dramatic language. The reader is well entertained.

Birgit Flemming Larsen
Danish American Heritage Society

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