

# HISTORY

of the

## DANISH AMERICAN HERITAGE SOCIETY

The First 25 Years

Publisher

of

## THE BRIDGE

and

## DAHS Newsletter

**Note by Robert A. Christiansen, 9 Jun 2015:** Jim Iversen kindly E-Mailed me this document, entitled "DAHS History", on 5 Jun 2015. I have converted it to DOCX format, renamed it "DAHSHistory2002.docx", and saved as a PDF file for access from the DAHS's new website; otherwise I have made no changes

# **History of the Danish American Heritage Society The First 25 Years**

**Compiled and Edited by James D. Iversen**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Danish American Heritage Society celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2002 with the sponsoring of the International Conference on Danish-North American Relations Since World War II, held in Omaha, Nebraska on October 10-13.

For the first 21 years, from 1977 to 1998, Arnold Bodtker, his son Egon Bodtker, and nephew Gerald Rasmussen were members of the Board of Directors of the Danish American Heritage Society. Arnold's wife Edith Bodtker and Karen McCumsey (later Nielsen) were also founding members of the Board of Directors and remained so until their deaths in the mid-1990s. Arnold N. Bodtker founded and served as the first president of the Danish American Heritage Society and was also the first editor of **The Bridge**. Arnold served as president until 1989, and as editor of **The Bridge** for most of the first 10 years (Donald Watkins edited 5 issues from 1982 to 1984). Egon Bodtker became editor with the first issue in 1988, and continued for 11 years, through 1998. Eva Nielsen was a member of the board through most of the first decade. Gerald Rasmussen replaced Arnold as president in 1989, and served as president until October, 1998. More people served on the board as it enlarged through the second ten years, including George and Elsie Norman, Ove & Edith Kilgren, Victor Nielsen, Inga Kroman, Roelie Goddik, Allan Nyegaard and Kirsten Jensen.

The Conference Committee deemed it appropriate to publish a history of the Society to coincide with the International Conference. There is no more logical source for the first 20 years than Arnold's article, "Twenty Years Old", which was published in 1998 and is thus reprinted here, as well as his obituary which appeared in the issue of **The Bridge** dedicated to Arnold's memory in 2000.

**2. Arnold Bodtker, 1904-2000, In Memoriam**, Reprinted from **The Bridge**, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2000, pp. 13-15

Arnold N. Bodtker died in Junction City, Oregon on March 28, 2000. He was 95 years old.

His parents were Hans Nielsen Bodtker and Susanne Jacobsen Bodtker, from Denmark and the Faeroe Islands, respectively. They were among the very first Danish immigrants to settle in the newly founded Danish colony in Junction City, where Arnold was born on December 5, 1904.

After graduating from high school in Junction City in 1923, he alternated between farming and studying at several colleges and universities. His first college classes commenced in 1923-24 at Oregon Agricultural College (as Oregon State University was

then known). He was back on the family farm in 1924-25, and then studied at Grand View College in Des Moines, Iowa in 1925-26. For the next five years he farmed in Junction City, worked on farms in the middle west, and studied, when time and money allowed, at The University of Oregon, Oregon Agricultural College, The University of Minnesota, Nebraska State Teacher's College, and Drake University in Des Moines, from which he graduated with a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Biology in 1930.

It was at Grand View College that he met Edith Gravesen from Askov, Minnesota. They married in Junction City, Oregon, in 1932. They taught together for one school year at Nysted Folk High School, joined a cooperative farm in the middle west for one growing season, and then farmed with Arnold's father in Junction City, until a modest stipend became available for Arnold to do graduate work at Oregon Agricultural College (Oregon State University), where he earned a Master's Degree in Agricultural Economics & Soils in 1937. They lived in Corvallis while Arnold studied and worked for the Oregon State Extension Service.

In 1937 Arnold embarked on his lifelong career with The United States Department of Agriculture, eventually serving from 1954-1973 as Oregon State Executive Director of the Agricultural Conservation and Stabilization Service. His experiences assisting in implementing the New Deal agricultural programs in the state were a formative part of his life and acquainted him with large numbers of Oregon's farm leaders and characters. The position of executive director was a political appointment, subject to new appointment when the U.S. presidency changed political parties. But at the insistence of Oregon's farm leaders Arnold retained his position while Democratic and Republican presidents came and went.

While living in Portland, Arnold was active in urban affairs, serving on several committees dealing with metropolitan government, transportation, and downtown issues. He was a longtime member of the Portland City Club. He was also a member of the Oregon State Grange, Portland Foreign Relations Committee, and other agricultural and environmental organizations.

Upon his retirement from the Department of Agriculture in 1973, Arnold and Edith moved from Portland back to his home town of Junction City, where he engaged in a wide variety of activities. He delivered meals for Meals on Wheels, was on the board of the Junction City Scandinavian Festival, and was active in the Junction City Danish Brotherhood Lodge Vestens Stjerne (Star of the West), of which he was a lifelong member.

During this time Arnold founded, and served as first president of, the Danish American Heritage Society. For ten years he also served as editor of the Society's historical journal, **The Bridge**. While serving as President of DAHS, Arnold encouraged the Board of Directors to appoint a Midwestern committee to examine the establishment of a Danish Immigrant Museum, which ultimately led to the creation of the current museum in Elk Horn, Iowa. He supported research and writing of Danish American history with perceptive advice, generous contributions, unflagging enthusiasm, and a mental

alertness which challenged all of his younger colleagues in the enterprise.

Arnold also took seriously his gradually developing role as family patriarch. He kept track of family and all the descendants, even to maintaining contact with relatives out to the fifth generation who live in the land of his mother's birth, the Faeroe Islands. He carried on a correspondence with some young members of the family in the U.S. who were just learning how to write. He read books he would never otherwise have read just because they were written by one of us. And all his life he visited family members regularly. His correspondence was nothing short of phenomenal, and even extended into the technological age, when at the age of 80 he learned how to operate a computer. Last fall he began to switch to email, a transition which at times frustrated him mightily. A few more weeks and he would have come close to mastering the system.

Arnold's contributions did not go unnoticed, as indicated by the following list of some of his awards, recognitions and appointments:

Appointment to the State Board of Forestry in 1974.

Grand View College Distinguished Alumni Award in 1990.

William Niskanen trophy from the Oregon/Southwest Washington Associates of the Scandinavian American Foundation.

Arnold loved literature and books. He could recite from memory poetry memorized in high school. He was an indefatigable collector of interesting books which no one else had heard about. He gave books liberally to friends and family, each book chosen carefully to fit the interests and characters of the recipients, or occasionally, chosen because Arnold thought the recipient ought to read about that particular topic.

Arnold was a man of ideas, fully engaged in life. When he received the 1990 Distinguished Alumnus Award from Grand View College, he wrote in his acceptance speech: ".it does make a difference as to what we know and believe, and how we live with what we know and believe." He possessed an enduring interest in ideas and activities which might serve to better human beings and the society in which we live.

After Edith's death in 1993, Arnold was engaged in gardening, reading, keeping in touch with friends and family via his voluminous correspondence, and writing his "Remembrances." We can hardly wait to read his own accounting of what was a very long, interesting, and fruitful life.

A memorial service was held on April 15, 2000, at 2pm at Festival Hall in Junction City, Oregon.

Contributions in his memory may be made to the Edith and Arnold N. Bodkter Fund of the Danish American Heritage Society.

### **3. Beginnings of The Danish Immigrant Museum**

The seeds for the ultimate establishment of The Danish Immigrant Museum were nourished by Arnold Bodtker and the Danish American Heritage Society. Norman Bansen, Richard C. Jorgensen, and Thorvald Hansen met at the Danish Inn in Elk Horn in August 1979 to discuss the possibility of a museum and archival center. In 1980, Bansen, with the approval of the Dana College Board of Regents, presented a proposal to the Danish American Heritage Society to request that the Society appoint a committee to study the matter. Arnold Bodtker appointed the committee, with Signe T. Nielsen Betsinger as chair, to evaluate the proposal. The members of the committee included Bansen, Willard Garred, Thorvald Hansen, Harald Jensen, Marion Marzolf, Otto Sorensen, and Donald Watkins. Later, Otto Hoiberg joined the committee and in 1982 Arnold appointed Diane Doyle, Hans T. Nielsen and John Mark Nielsen to the committee. The officers of the Museum Board of Directors at the time of incorporation in 1983 were: Signe Nielsen Betsinger, President; Harald Jensen, Vice President; Lisa Riggs, Secretary and Treasurer. The other members who carried on from the planning committee were Bansen, Doyle, Hansen, Hoiberg, Hans Nielsen, John Mark Nielsen and Watkins. Gail Holmes and Howard Juel were also initial members of the museum board.

Building a museum, with buildings, staff, and other facilities, of course, is a still more difficult project than the founding of a literary/historical society. Thus it took seven years for the Museum's board of directors to begin construction of a museum building, and four more years for the grand opening of the new building in Elk Horn in 1994. One wonders whether the museum project could or would have been realized if Arnold Bodtker had not founded the Danish American Heritage Society a few years previously. The backing of the Society, and the official appointment of a blue-ribbon committee did ultimately result in the existence of this most important facility. Perhaps it is symbolic that at their annual meeting in 2001, the members of the museum's Board of Directors elected Egon Bodtker, Arnold's son, as President of The Danish Immigrant Museum.

**4. TWENTY YEARS OLD**, by Arnold N. Bodtker, Reprinted from **The Bridge**, Volume 21, Number 1, 1998, pp. 83-94.

It was 20 years ago that the Danish American Heritage Society (DAHS) came upon the scene. I use the term "came upon the scene" advisedly. Reflecting on the circumstances and discussions that led to the formation of the Society makes the term seem appropriate. It had been noted from time to time in the decades before that when Scandinavian American historians and writers assembled and the role of the Scandinavian immigrant was considered, the Danish Americans were conspicuous by their absence. In contrast, the Norwegian American Historical Association was formed in 1925, and has had a distinguished existence since then. Its scholarly publications have attracted wide attention. The Swedish American Historical Society was formed in 1940, and published a quarterly which has been referred to as "the most important and continuing source of information about Swedes in North America."

In 1975, a conference called *Scandpresence* (Scandinavian Presence in North America), sponsored by Scandinavian Airlines and the University of Minnesota, was held in Minneapolis, but Danish Americans had no formal organizations to represent them. A

book of proceedings was published. John Christianson, professor of history at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, spoke at the conference on “Danish American Special Interest Societies” and noted that,

With regard to historical organizations in the United States something seems to have gone wrong among Danish Americans . . . the Danes have been burdened by a legacy of an energetic and brilliant start that was headed down the wrong track-- ----the Danes lack a unifying central organization in North America. This has been a serious detriment to Danish American historical scholarship.

Other equally telling remarks were made at the conference.

In 1974, Professor Dorothy Burton Skårdal in her book, **The Divided Heart**, wrote that, among the Scandinavians, “In the fervor of their cultural nationalism the Norwegians were by far the most enthusiastic, the Danes the least, for many complex reasons.” In 1976, the Rebild National Park Society, Inc., made available **Danes Go West**, a translation of Kristian Hvidt’s **Danske Veje Vestpå**, a book about the emigration to America. Dr. Hvidt deplores the fact “that there is no single comprehensive work describing the Danish minority in the United States from a modern-historical point of view and based upon written as well as oral basis.”

It is difficult to pinpoint any exact set of circumstances that led to the formation of the Danish American Heritage Society. No doubt the aforementioned publications had aroused many individuals across the country who had an interest in their cultural antecedents and the story of the emigration and settling in America. Questions arose as to what, in anything, might be done to fill the gap, so to speak, in the exploring and recording of Danish immigrant history.

A discussion had been going on with the Danish Interest Conference, an affiliate of the Lutheran Church of America, relating to the Danish immigrant and the Danish heritage. We noted that a resolution had been adopted at one of its conferences instructing its board of directors “as a committee to look into the possibility of establishing a new Danish American group.”

Enok Mortensen, who for years almost single handedly had been gathering and cataloging material relating to the Danish immigrant, realized that if his labors were to bear fruit there needed to be an overall historical organization. In this connection it is important to recall that Kristian Hvidt referred to Enok Mortensen as “the greatest contemporary expert on Danish-American history.” In correspondence with Enok Mortensen and in our mutual family visits we invariably talked about and shared experiences relating to our Danish legacy.

During the early 1970’s there had been an exchange within the Danish Interest Conference, highlighted in its publication Kirke og Folk (now Church and Life) about the need for exploring, and making a record of, the Danish immigrant experience. Many thought that the Conference should initiate an effort in this direction, but there was also considerable hesitancy among many members as to whether the Conference could, or

should, take the leadership in such an undertaking, feeling perhaps that more specifics were needed. I shared all this with Egon Bodtker and Gerald Rasmussen.

In the September 1973 issue of Kirke og Folk, Editor Johannes Knudsen wrote, 'We have cast scorn upon intellectual understanding of what things are all about. I believe firmly that a tradition can be lived and be made valuable without an analytical understanding of what it is all about, this is the way in which the great mass of culture propagates itself.' In the June 15, 1974 issue Enok Mortensen asks: "Is it not possible that there are people outside of LCA (Lutheran Church of America) who share our concerns and interest? I feel certain there are. However, before any firm conclusions are drawn, why not have a concerted effort to make contacts and inquiries in a broad enough area to permit an evaluation of the interest?"

These exchanges in Kirke og Folk led me to write an article on the subject, which I sent Enok Mortensen for his comment. He responded by telling me that he had sent the article on to Johannes Knudsen, recommending it be published in Kirke og Folk. It appeared in the May 10, 1976 issue. In it I outlined five areas toward which the Danish Interest Conference might direct its efforts. These were not new thoughts, but ones recalled as avenues toward which the Danish Interest Conference might direct its efforts. The headings were; Contact with Denmark, Emigrant History, Museum and Library, Department of Danish Studies and A Medium for DIC to Maintain Contact With an Expanded Membership. Others, including Egon Bodtker, sent in their comments to these proposals.

While visiting with Enok Mortensen in November 1976, we talked a lot about the likelihood of the Danish Interest Conference moving in the direction I had suggested. We finally concluded that the only way to get action of any kind would be to prepare a statement setting forth the purposes of a Danish American historical organization. Enok would submit it to Thorvald Hansen, who now was in charge of the Danish Archives at Grand View College, for his suggestions, assuming that DIC would not act. I would write to Dr. Ernest Nielsen, the President of the Danish Interest Conference for his thought, since it was here that there had been much discussion, mentioned earlier, as to the need to give more attention to the Danish Immigrant experience.

I told Egon and Gerry about my discussion with Enok and what we had done in the way of initiating an organized effort to do something. Early in 1977 I received a letter from Enok transmitting a statement from Thorvald Hansen, "Some Presuppositions For A Danish American Organization", to which he had made some alterations. Ernest Nielsen responded to my letter, saying that he could envision no reason why such an organization would not find acceptance with DIC members. He further stated that the extent to which DIC could be supportive would depend on the policy of AELC, of which DIC was an affiliate. Accompanying the statement from Enok and Thorvald, was the suggestion that it be sent to others for comment and suggestions. Egon, Gerry, Karen McCumsey, Edith and I made further changes and additions and submitted the statement to a few others. The response was supportive and urged us to drive on.

We were a small group in Oregon, just large enough to compose a Board of Directors, with the backup of Enok Mortensen in California and Thorvald Hansen in Iowa. We had talked and consulted enough. We decided that to continue in this vein would be deadening. To indicate that we were serious we organized as the Danish American Heritage Society and incorporated as a “not for profit” organization in Oregon. With this we had the assistance of Ted Kulongoski, a friend and attorney (now a Justice on the Oregon Supreme Court), at a very nominal cost. The incorporators were: Arnold N. Bodtker, President; Gerald Rasmussen, Vice-President; Karen McCumsey, Secretary; Egon Bodtker, Treasurer and Edith Bodtker, Member. We received approval April 15, 1977.

The Danish American Heritage Society is deliberately a “Heritage” society rather than a “Historical” society. We felt that Heritage is a broader term, encompassing not only what Danish Americans were, but what they have become and what they hope to be. It allows for a wider variety of interest, e.g., contemporary arts and humanities, and present day Denmark. We thought that “Heritage” would be less imposing, consequently less intimidating to the non-academic. We believe that “Heritage” is less formal and consequently reflects an aspect of our goals which stresses that many belong.

Egon prepared a statement, setting forth the objectives of this Society, using the proposals by Enok and Thorvald, taking into account later alterations and additions. This was incorporated in a letter to a select group of possible members. (In this we were not entirely in the dark, since there were several with whom we had been in contact regarding this effort and who had agreed to having their names used in making the initial appeal). The letter read:

Some of us have finally taken seriously the idea of starting the Danish-American Heritage Society that we’ve tossed around informally for a number of years. Even though we’ve incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in Oregon, the idea is still floating in a sea of general hope and expectations. (Those involved are Otto Larsen, Wilmer Larsen, Enok Mortensen, Gerda Sundberg, Elsie Hansen, Johannes Knudsen, Arnold Bodtker, Egon Bodtker, Ejner Farstrup, Karen McCumsey, Gerald Rasmussen, Caroline Olsen, Thorvald Hansen, and Otto Hoiberg.)

*Among the things we’ve dreamed about such an association doing are the following:*

*Preserving and promoting interest in Danish–American immigrant life.*

*Providing a means of communication between those interested – both immigrants and their progeny – through a quarterly publication.*

*Organizing regional chapters for the purpose of sharing ideas at local meetings and eventually to meet for larger plenary sessions.*

*Collecting, evaluating, preserving and displaying records (books, pictures, letters) as well as artifacts pertaining to the life and culture of Danish-American people.*

*Promoting research into the life and culture of Danish-Americans by making this material available to scholars and researchers and to serve as an agency through which any resulting studies might be shared and published.*

*Serving as a clearing house and providing information on all phases of Danish-American living – past and present.*

*Encouraging research in these fields by making grants to researchers within the limits of available funds.*

*Encouraging Danish-American writers in the novel, drama, short story, and poetry.*

*Seeking public and private grants or funds to further the projects and programs sponsored by the Society.*

*It is our intention to form an organization with a base broad enough to appeal to anyone and to cooperate with any individuals and/or organizations with interests similar to those listed above.*

*These are the kind of grandiose plans, and just getting off the ground and making contact with people and institutions who might be interested will take some money. That's really why I'm writing to you now. Those of us who have been planning this have decided to each write to five people and ask for a \$10.00 contribution (tax deductible, we hope). If it works we'll have \$500 or more with which to make a large appeal and to start the society moving.*

*Please send your \$10.00 to the Danish-American Heritage Society, Inc., Egon Bodtker, Treasurer, 1132 Newport Drive S.E., Salem OR 97302, by the end of May, 1977. We will let you hear from the Society by mid-summer when we report on the progress of the initial appeal and propose some plans for the future.*

As we waited for responses we thought of other earlier attempts, appraised our own chances, and tried to prepare ourselves for whatever might come from this first appeal.

We were more than pleasantly surprised at the response. Encouraging letters arrived, and the \$10.00 contributions gave us \$650.00. We were on our way. Now it was up to us. We responded with our first *Newsletter*, early in July, listing the names of the individuals and families who had contributed. We proceeded with some publicity, generously provided by **Bien, Den Danske Pioneer**, and the **Danish Brotherhood**. A second *Newsletter* was issued in January 1978, when we reported 122 members (individuals and families). We had decided that our primary effort should be directed toward the publication of a journal, at least semi-annually, which would bring to our members and other readers an understanding of the immigrant experience and, equally important, to make this experience a part of the historical record. At the suggestion of Ed and Gerda Sundberg we named it **The Bridge**, “the bridge over which we may walk to find out and experience our past and bring it into the future.” The first issue of **The Bridge** was published in May 1978.

It took a little doing to get underway. We knew that funds would be scarce for a while, requiring some volunteering. Gerald, Egon and Karen had full time jobs, and since I was a retiree it seemed that I might be able to contribute a bit. With the help of Ted Kulongaski we had filed for non-profit mailing privileges and tax exemption for contributions and membership dues, and were successful. We made arrangements for a printing firm in nearby Eugene to do our printing and help with the design of our publications. The owner and operator of this firm was a third generation Danish-American, as was his wife – Ivan and Betty Gribskov. Ivan donated an addressograph with plates which was installed in our garage. Money could be saved if we stuffed and addressed envelopes for the *Newsletter* and **The Bridge**. One of the most time consuming jobs was proof reading, with which I got much help, especially from Karen and Edith. Karen had expertise with office equipment, which I relied upon as I fumbled with the addressograph, etc. Remember, this was before the, presently ubiquitous, Word Processor, and accompanying equipment. There was much correspondence. To each new member I wrote a letter of appreciation and responded to their comments and question when joining. There was correspondence with contributors to our publications, sometimes quite extensive. However, it was all rewarding, and all of us were pleased.

We had encouragement from many: Kenneth Bjork of the Norwegian American Historical Society provided helpful counsel, and encouragement, as did Arnold Barton of the Swedish-American Pioneer Society.

Although the resources of the Society are limited, and likely always will be, there were other endeavors with which we were concerned in furthering the objectives we had set forth. Early it was decided that the Society should sponsor the **Pacific Northwest Danish Cultural Conference**. That endeavor, by itself, has had an interesting history. Its twentieth anniversary will be celebrated in 1998.

If the experience of the Danish immigrant is to be understood, and if it is to take its rightful place in our country's history, what has been written by the immigrant and about the immigrant needs to be located and cataloged so that scholars, teachers, writers and others can have access to it. In cooperation with Grand View College, Des Moines, Iowa, the Danish American Heritage Society sponsored a project called the "Danish Immigrant Archival Listing (DIAL)." The listing tells us what materials exist and where they are located. The project was under the leadership of Thorvald Hansen, who was archivist of the Danish Immigrant Archives at Grand View College. It is interesting, but not entirely surprising, that the immigrant left many tracks that as yet have not been uncovered. As we proceed with the exploration we are confident that much of value will be found.

At the suggestion of the Board of Regents of Dana College, Blair, Nebraska, the Executive Board of the Danish American Heritage Society appointed a committee to explore the desirability and the possibility for a Danish immigrant museum. This committee functioned with ability and dispatch with the result that the Danish Immigrant Museum at Elk Horn, Iowa, is a reality.

**Where are we now?** Membership has been at the same level for the last four to five years. New memberships have barely kept up with the attrition (those who are deceased and those who have lost interest). There are over 500 individuals and families who receive our publications, as well as libraries, historical associations, news media, etc., some with which we exchange publications.

**The future as I see it.** First, I believe that the history of the immigrant is relevant to us as Americans. We are a nation of immigrants – an immigration that took place over a relatively short span – 400 years. The big migration occurred in the last 150 years. The way we live and perform as Americans and as citizens of the world will be enhanced in acquiring a knowledge and understanding of our history, besides bringing enjoyment and satisfaction. As American history is being written, the history of the Danish immigrant should have a place in the record. It would seem that those of Danish lineage would like to see this happen. More than that, however, the opening up of the history of the Danish immigrant complements the history of all immigrants and thereby enriches the lives of all of us. In the words of Oscar Handlin in **The Uprooted**, “No one moves without sampling some of the immigrant’s experience.” Though ethnocentricity is feared by some in the exploration of ethnic history, viewing our Danish heritage as Americans cannot but broaden our field of vision.

Danish immigrants are interesting people. It seems that they are in many respects more cosmopolitan than others. It has been said that they integrated more quickly into the American mainstream. This characteristic may be true or not, but exploring it seems challenging. In some ways our membership reflects that this observation may be so, as do many of the articles published in *The Bridge*. In the short span of 20 years we have barely scratched the surface of the history of the Danish immigrants, and it is too soon to judge what, if anything, is special about their experiences. Those of us in the leadership of the Danish American Heritage Society are aware that we are not the sole explorers of the Danish immigrant experience. There were many who came before us whose contributions are recognized and to whom we are everlastingly indebted. Of major importance is the two-volume work, **Danske i Amerika**, by C. Rasmussen Publishing Company, Minneapolis and Chicago, 1907, under the authorship of Professor P.S. Vig and others. This work still provides seemingly endless leads for further exploration. Recent works about Danish Americans that merit attention and should stimulate further research include: **The Danish Americans** by George R. Nielsen, Twayne Publishers, and **The Danes in America** by Peter L. Petersen, Lerner Publishing Company.

There are some areas of the Danish immigrant experience largely unexplored, e.g., the Danish immigrant women, the recent immigrants, and the immigrant’s descendants. In the latter area, it would be worth trying to find out how and to what extent Danish heritage is carried forward in children and grandchildren.

We are not purists to the extent that we are unconcerned about present day Denmark and its cultural contributions. We have an interest in Denmark’s history, at least to the extent that it explains the emigration to this country. The Pacific Northwest Cultural Conference attests to that. From time to time, we publish in **The Bridge** and the

*Newsletter* material that will give a glimpse of contemporary Denmark and a taste of Danish culture, which often illuminates the immigrant experience.

We don't expect everyone of Danish descent, or with Danish connections, to join us. That would indeed be presumptuous. However, we appreciate the opportunity to explain our purpose and we invite those who feel what we are doing is worthwhile to join us.

## **5. Epilog, Years Twenty to Twenty-Five**

It is quite unusual for an organization to suddenly change its entire board of directors, the officers, the location of headquarters, and the editor of its primary publication. This change for the Danish American Heritage Society did take place, however, on October 15, 1998, in Elk Horn, Iowa. The new members of the Board of Directors were elected by the previous board at their last meeting at the home of Arnold Bodtker in Junction City, Oregon on August 7, 1998. The following resolution was passed by the board at that meeting:

“At this our last meeting we recognize and thank Arnold for his contribution in founding the Danish American Heritage Society. We have built upon the foundation he created. We believe the Danish American Heritage Society has the viability to continue for a long time as the major promoter and publisher of the history of the Danes in North America. We pass the gavel in confidence that our successors will, with this joint effort between the Danish Immigrant Museum, Dana College and Grand View College, preserve and perpetuate this historical society.”

The board of directors earlier in 1998 had revised the Constitution and By-Laws of the Society (later amended by the new board) so that it now reads:

“The Board of Directors shall consist of twelve members: six called members at large shall be appointed by the Board of Directors and six called representative members shall be appointed two each by the Presidents of The Danish Immigrant Museum, Dana College and Grand View College. Terms shall be for six years with eligibility for reappointment. The Board of Directors and the participating institutions respectively shall continue to be the appointing authorities. The institutions named will replace their appointees when they leave the board.”

The people elected at large by the board in August of 1998 were Signe Nielsen Betsinger, Borge Christensen, John R. Christianson, Thorvald Hansen, Sybil Duus Needham, and Peter L. Petersen. Those appointed by the three institutions were John Mark Nielsen and John W. Nielsen, representing Dana College, Rudolf Jensen, and Thomas Thomsen, Grand View College, and James Iversen and Barbara Lund-Jones, representing The Danish Immigrant Museum. Since October of 1998, when the new board took office, Royal Danish Consul Lowell Kramme has replaced Thomas Thomsen, and Helle Mathiasen has replaced Sybil Duus Needham. The officers elected on October 15, 1998, were James Iversen, President, John W. Nielsen, Vice President, Peter Petersen, Secretary, and Rudolf Jensen, Treasurer. John R. Christianson was appointed Editor of **The Bridge** and has continued the outstanding tradition started by Arnold and Egon Bodtker. John Mark Nielsen became Editor of the *Newsletter* in 1993, and continued in

that post until 2002, when Linda Chimenti took up the challenge. Peter Petersen joined John Mark Nielsen and Rudolf Jensen as Assistant Editors. The makeup of the current board of directors ensures that close ties exist among the Danish American Heritage Society, The Danish Immigrant Museum, and the Danish Immigrant Archive – Dana College and Danish Immigrant Archive – Grand View College. This arrangement has worked very well since October, 1998, and provides for a continuity of purpose among the four institutions.

The previous board at a meeting in Seattle on March 21, 1998 had officially created the Arnold N. Bodtke Fund for the purpose of supporting historical research. In 2001, the Fund received a \$50,000 boost from Arnold Bodtke's estate. The investment interest from this Fund has been used to establish "The Edith and Arnold N. Bodtke Grant for Research or Internship". The specific purpose of the Bodtke Grant thus far is to foster research or internship at the Danish Immigrant Archives at Dana College and Grand View College and at The Danish Immigrant Museum. The first recipient of the Bodtke Grant was Torben Tvorup Christensen, who is a graduate student in history at the University of Aalborg, Denmark. He spent three months in early 2002 at the Danish Immigrant Archive – Dana College in his research on Danish immigration.

The first issue of **The Bridge** was published in 1978. The first 49 issues (through Vol. 25, #2, 2002) contain about 240 articles written by about 170 different authors. These articles have been about the history and culture of specific individuals, organizations, and communities as well as translations of articles and stories written previously elsewhere in the Danish language. There have also been a large number of book reviews. The first *Newsletter* was published in July, 1977, and *Newsletter* #48 was published in January, 2002. The Danish American Heritage Society was founded to encourage research in the life, culture, and history of Danish Americans and Danish Canadians and to serve as an agency for the publication of such research. The support of the International Conference in Omaha, October, 2002, the Bodtke grant, and the publication of **The Bridge**, *Newsletter* and books are means toward these objectives.

The members of the Board of Directors are determined to continue the important work started by Arnold Bodtke and his associates in 1977. Preservation of our cultural heritage takes not only hard work but also financial support. We encourage membership in The Danish American Heritage Society as well as support of The Danish Immigrant Museum and the Archives at Dana College and Grand View College in order to aid in the continuation of efforts to preserve the cultural heritage of the Danish immigrants.