



Board members Sune Frederiksen (top) and Tova Brandt attended the board's April 6 meeting in Covington, Kentucky. Frederiksen also was convention chair of the Rebild National Park Society's concurrent annual convention in Covington.

NEXT BOARD MEETINGS

The DAHS board's next meeting is expected to be held in October, possibly in Minneapolis, Omaha/Blair or Des Moines. The spring 2025 meeting will tentatively be held in conjunction with the Rebild National Park Society's annual meeting in San Diego, California.

YOUNG SCHOLARS

A Young Scholars Grant program launched by the DAHS board last year is looking promising, said Julie Allen, a professor of comparative arts and letters at Brigham Young University and editor of *The Bridge*.

Allen has at least 10 students committed to writing a publishable article for a special issue of *The Bridge* after studying in Denmark this spring. Topics must deal with comparing aspects of Danish and American societies. The pilot program provided a \$500 stipend each for up to 10 students.

BRIDGE: GENDER ROLES

The next issue (47-1) of *The Bridge*, the DAHS journal, will focus on gender roles in Danish literature and society. It is expected to be mailed in May. The journal is published twice a year.

Older issues of *The Bridge* can be found online in ScholarsArchive at Brigham Young University: <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/thebridge>. Hard copies of some past issues are available for purchase from Grand View University. Contact Sheri Muller at smuller@grandview.edu.



EXECUTIVE BOARD

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SPRING 2024 BULLETIN

DANES & SLAVE TRADE

A British-Ghanaian archaeologist/anthropologist received a \$5,000 Bodtker Grant to help fund her research and fieldwork on the history and legacies of the Danish transatlantic slave trade.

Dr. Rachel Ama Asaa Engmann is director of the Christianborg Archaeological Heritage Project in Accra, Ghana. Christianborg Castle was the Danish administrative headquarters in West Africa during the slave trade. As the site of incarceration and deportation, the castle was the last point at which captive Africans were trafficked to enslavement in the Americas. Slave ships transported captive men women and children to the Danish West Indies, today the U.S. Virgin Islands. The castle was so vital to the Danish economy that coins between 1688 and 1747 depicted an image of the castle.

Engmann is a Ghanaian descendent of Carl Gustav Engmann, Danish governor of the site in 1752-1757.

Bodtker Grants are to support scholarly and creative research into various aspects of Danish heritage and the Danish American experience. Each recipient is required to submit an article for publication in *The Bridge* within one year. Although Engmann's proposal did not fit the traditional grant model, her little-researched topic intrigued the board.

Deadlines for submitting applications for a grant are March 15 and September 15. For more information about the program, please refer to the DAHS website at www.danishheritage.org.

BOARD TERMS REVISED

The DAHS board revamped how many terms its members may serve in a move to help create relationships, find roles and contribute effectively.

Board members may now serve as many as three three-year terms, instead of two three-year terms. The by-laws now read: 'Terms shall be for three years with eligibility for reappointment for two additional three-year terms. After a third three-year term, there shall be at least one year of ineligibility.'

President John Mark Nielsen said at the board's November 2023 meeting that limiting members to an optional second three-year term after serving their first term seemed too short to build relationships and expertise. The board only meets twice annually, usually in person but sometimes via Zoom. Board term limits were originally established in 2015.

The changes came after a board study group (Tova Brandt, Carol Svendsen and Sheri Muller) studied options for board reorganization and term limits during the winter.

The volunteer board may have 12 members. The Danish American Archive and Library, Grand View University and Museum of Danish America each appoints two members to the board. The board appoints six at-large members. Members serve at their own expense. They receive no remuneration for their services.

SOCIETY FINANCES

Some of the surplus from DAHS's successful fundraising campaign for its seventh international conference last year in Elk Horn, Iowa, has been transferred to the organization's Bodtker Grants Fund. The board moved \$25,000.

Historically, Bodtker Grant funds come from withdrawing from the organization's endowment when needed, or moving money from the Conference Fund to the General Fund.

The board left some money in the Conference Fund to seed fundraising for the organization's planned 50th anniversary conference in 2027.



Singer Anita Lerche, a native Dane who now lives in America, looks over the DAHS display at the Rebild convention with her husband, Soren Hjorth, and their son Alex. Lerche performed at the Rebild group's banquet.

DAHS BOARD LOOKS TO THE FUTURE AS 50th ANNIVERSARY LOOMS

The world of Danish America has evolved since the founding of the Danish American Heritage Society in 1977. Now only three years from the organization's 50th anniversary, the DAHS board is setting its sights on ensuring that the society's mission to explore and record the history and heritage of Danes in North America endures.

The board agreed at its April 6 meeting in Covington, Kentucky, that it needs to explore talks with other national Danish organizations on enhancing each organization while continuing to work together. "We all swim in the same pool with parallel lanes," said John Mark Nielsen, board president.

Other groups include Danish American Archive and Library, Danish Sisterhood of America, Museum of Danish America, National Foundation for Danish America and Rebild National Park Society.

Nielsen said he was concerned about declining DAHS membership, the source of future leadership and the future of academic journals, such as *The Bridge*.

DAHS had 550 individuals and institutions at peak membership years ago. The society currently has about 275 members on its rolls, but only 120 have paid their dues this year.

Anders Sand said the challenge is seeking out Danish Americans actively engaged in learning about and preserving their ethnic stories and culture — a pool he estimated at 2,000 people nationwide — and raise

awareness of DAHS and its mission.

The ongoing trend of downsizing, merging or closing of university Scandinavian departments and course offerings is troubling, Nielsen said. All of DAHS's founders had links to Grand View University in Des Moines, a school started by Danish immigrants. It houses the Danish Immigrant Archives. Most DAHS board members have come from Grand View, the former Dana College or Nordic programs at major universities. *The Bridge*, the society's biannual journal, has tried to be a "bridge" to a broader audience interested in Danish American heritage while maintaining academic integrity and tone.

To begin addressing the issues, the board will develop an outline of concepts behind the benefits of coordinating efforts with other organizations for presentation to the Rebild Society's business meeting in Denmark in July. Presentations to other organizations could follow. The board continued discussions about changing its July 1-June 30 membership year to a less-confusing calendar year. It heard a vision of bundling membership with other organizations. Tova Brandt suggested assigning a board member the job of membership management or consider outsourcing it. The board also heard of challenges in regularly updating the website.