



Treasurer **Tova Brandt**, right, took advantage of the society board meeting held in conjunction with the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study to present **Julie Allen** with the DAHS Best Book Prize for 2025. Allen's "The Silent Muse: The Memoirs of Asta Nielsen" is the story of a pioneering Danish silent film star. Allen is a professor at Brigham Young University. The first prize was awarded in 2023.

CIVIL WAR LETTERS

An article by Bodtker Grant recipient Anna Redsand about the letters of U.S. Civil War soldier Sgt. Christian Peter Andersen to his sweetheart, Anne C. Jensen, is part of the year's first issue of *The Bridge* (48-1). Andersen and Jensen were Danish immigrants. Redsand, of Elk Horn, Iowa, collaborated with Anders Bø Rasmussen, an associate professor in American studies at a University of Southern Denmark campus in Odense, to transcribe and translate Andersen's 41 letters.

A future edition of the biannual journal will include papers written using profiles from the Scandinavian LDS Women's database, a multi-year project at Brigham Young University, according to *Bridge* editor Julie Allen.

More than 10,000 women from various Nordic counties converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints between 1850 and 1920 and immigrated to Utah. Their experiences of conversion, migration and settlement were shaped by their cultural heritage and linguistic identity. The BYU database houses their stories and writings.

50th ANNIVERSARY

Preliminary planning continues for a major international conference to celebrate the society's 50th anniversary in 2027.

John Mark Nielsen, a longtime board member and a former president of the organization, suggested "heritage" as a theme for the conference. It would reflect the significance of the half-century milestone, reinforce the society's mission to explore and record the history of Danish immigrants, and stimulate interest and preservation of Danish cultural contributions.

The board plans to host the event in Des Moines, Iowa, the home of Grand View University and the Danish Immigrant Archives. The institution, founded by Danish immigrants, was the alma mater of DAHS founders Arnold Bodtker and his wife, the former Edith Gravesen. The society was founded in 1977 in Junction City, Oregon.

The university co-hosted DAHS conferences in 2005 and 2013.

SOCIETY FINANCES

The society had more than \$363,000 in total assets at the end of March, according to Tova Brandt, treasurer. The funds were distributed between a checking account (\$29,000) and the endowment fund (\$334,000).



EXECUTIVE BOARD

President & Bulletin Editor: David Hendee, Northfield, Minnesota

Vice President: Carol Svendsen, Denver, Colorado

Secretary: Sheri Muller, Roland, Iowa

Treasurer: Tova Brandt, Decorah, Iowa

Laurie Bell, Red Wing, Minnesota

Beth Bro-Root, La Crosse, Wisconsin

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Anders Sand, Miami, Florida

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SPRING 2025 BULLETIN

MURDER MYSTERY

The story of a Danish pastor executed four centuries ago for committing a murder that likely never happened will soon be more widely known, thanks in part to a DAHS Bodtker Grant.

Dr. Paul Lockhart, a history professor at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, will receive \$4,470 to complete research for his book, "Days of Wrath: The Life, Death, and Afterlife of the Parson of Vejlbj.".

The tragedy of Søren Jensen Quist, the parson of Vejlbj in eastern Jutland, is part of Danish lore. The full story is revealed by the significant paper trail left behind in 1625-26 by the legal process around his execution, Lockhart says. He plans to wrap up his research in Denmark in October.

The grant was one of two the DAHS board approved at its April 26 meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Dicte Sønnichsen, a media and journalism student at Aarhus University in Denmark, received \$1,881.66 to fund certain expenses incurred for her photojournalism project, "Untamed Lands."

It is an exhibit focused on the fearless approach to riding practiced by Colorado undergraduate women she followed. Sønnichsen's project will be displayed at exhibitions in Copenhagen and Aarhus this summer. Grant recipients are required to submit an article about their project for publication in *The Bridge*. Sønnichsen wrote in her proposal that the American women she met rode "hard, fast and without hesitation. ...In Denmark, we tend to be more cautious, almost delicate in our relationship with horses."



Carol Svendsen staffs the DAHS table during the April 24-26 annual meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study in Minneapolis. The DAHS board met for its spring meeting in conjunction with the gathering to raise awareness of its biannual journal, grants and book prize among Scandinavian scholars and students. Nearly 200 people attended the SASS meeting at the Marriott City Center.

YOUNG SCHOLARS GRANTS

A young scholars grant initiative that yielded articles from 10 Brigham Young University students in 2024's final edition of *The Bridge* (47-2) may continue if the DAHS board determines a source of funding. Julie Allen, the journal's editor and a BYU professor, agreed to provide guidance to faculty at other institutions who wish to apply for a project on behalf of their students.

Allen led a group of students on a seven-week tour of Scandinavia to explore the topic "Designing a Modern Society." Ten of the group had received \$500 stipends from DAHS for their projects in Denmark. (Allen, as the mentoring faculty member, received \$1,000.) The students wrapped up their research by writing articles on their research topic for *The Bridge*. Allen told the board that the experience gave her students a compelling reason to take an interest in Danish society and history, in addition to helping them afford the chance to get to know Denmark. "The pilot program was a tremendous success," she said. The board expressed interest in continuing the program.

MINNESOTA, WISCONSIN WOMEN FILL SOCIETY BOARD ROSTER OF 12

Two vacant at-large DAHS board seats were filled via special email balloting March 16-19.

Laurie Bell of Red Wing, Minnesota, and Beth Bro-Roof of La Crosse, Wisconsin, were elected unanimously. Nine of the 10 eligible board members participated in the election.

Bell's career was in health care and administration. She retired in November 2024 as director of quality for People Inc., based in Eagan, Minnesota. Born in Luck, Wisconsin, Bell's father was a Lutheran pastor. She attended St. Olaf College, and graduated from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor's degree in physical therapy. She later earned a master's degree in health administration and management from the University of St. Francis. She is a board member of the Sheldon Theatre of the Performing Arts in Red Wing. Her husband's name is Craig. Laurie and current DAHS vice president Carol Svendsen are first-cousins.

Bro-Roof is a former board president of the Museum of Danish America in Elk, Horn, Iowa. She served on the museum board from 2014 to 2020. Bro-Roof has a bachelor's degree in business administration/marketing from Iowa State University. She was special event coordinator for the Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Museum of Art from 2007 to 2016.

Bro-Roof was active with Linn County Master Gardeners, PTA, Linn County Medic Alliance and



Laurie Bell



Beth Bro-Roof

Westminster Presbyterian Church. She and her husband, John, retired to La Crosse in 2021.

The board originally appeared to have three vacancies at the end of 2024. Term limits opened two seats, and member Sune Frederiksen said he would not seek a second term. Frederiksen, however, later decided to continue on the board for a second term.

The volunteer board may have 12 members. The Danish American Archive and Library (Blair, Nebraska), Grand View University (Des Moines, Iowa) 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 service. Society bylaws permit electronic voting for time-sensitive issues.

LETTERS ENCOURAGE MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS, TOUT BENEFITS

Board members David Hendee, John Mark Nielsen and Carol Svendsen devoted dozens of hours in late 2024 and the first weeks of this year to updating the society's membership roster and website. The project continued into May with a focus on mailing lists for *The Bridge* and the *Bulletin*. Hendee and Nielsen sent letters in January to those whose memberships expired in 2024 and had not been renewed. In March, Hendee wrote to current members, thanking them for their support. In both letters, former and current members were reminded of recent activities and future plans. Among them:

- The society's membership year changed to correspond to the calendar year. Gone is the

mid-year membership renewal.

- A major bequest from former DAHS board member Borge Christensen will enable the society to offer more grants to support research into the Danish American immigrant experience. The letters reminded recipients that their membership supports a number of important activities, including publication of *The Bridge*, Bodtker Awards, the DAHS Book Prize and international conferences every three or four years. One hundred nineteen people renewed their memberships during the first three months of the year. Several renewals included donations to the Bodtker Grant program or boosts to the \$100 patron level from the \$30 general membership.