

Note by Robert A. "Bob" Christiansen, 11 Sep 2015: James D. "Jim" Iversen kindly E-Mailed me this file, entitled "DAHS – Last Ten Years.doc", on August 24th. I have converted Jim's file to DOCX format, renamed it "DAHSHistory1998-2008.docx", saved it as a PDF file, and established a link to Jim's file from the **The DAHS > DAHS History** page of the DAHS's new website, **danishheritage.org**.

Please note that Jim has already provided a file containing the earlier history of the DAHS, also available at **The DAHS > DAHS History**.

Otherwise, other than adding this cover page, I have made no changes to Jim's report.

DANISH AMERICAN HERITAGE SOCIETY
The Last Ten Years (October 1998 to October 2008)

By
James D. Iversen

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. That 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 (West Coast) board at their last meeting at the home of Arnold Bodtker in Junction City, Oregon on August 7, 1998.

Arnold and Edith Bodtker, their son Egon Bodtker, and Gerald Rasmussen and Karen N. McCumsey were the incorporators of the Society on April 11, 1977. They started publishing **The Bridge**, a journal of Danish American history and culture in 1978, and that publication continues today. Arnold was the first President, and 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 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. Those who have served since then include Egon Bodtker*, Anne Ipsen, Susan Jacobsen*, Timothy Jensen*, Federal District Court Judge Inge Prytz Johnson, Royal Danish Consul Lowell Kramme, Birgit Flemming Larsen*, Helle Matthiasen, Sheri Kleinwort Muller*, and James Peterson*. Current members of the board are designated with an asterisk.

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 was replaced by Peter Petersen in 2003. John Christianson took that position again in 2008. John Mark Nielsen became Editor of the *Newsletter* in 1993, and continued in that post until 2002, when Linda Chimenti took up the challenge. Signe Nielsen Betsinger is the current editor. The makeup of the current board of directors ensures that close ties exist among the Danish American Heritage Society, The Danish Immigrant Museum, the Danish Immigrant Archive at Grand View University, and the Danish American Archive and Library at Dana 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. Bodtker Fund for the purpose of supporting historical research. In 2001, the Fund received a \$50,000 boost from Arnold Bodtker's estate. An additional significant bequest of \$10,000 was received from the Caroline Olsen estate in 2006. The investment interest from this Fund has been used to establish "The Edith and Arnold N. Bodtker Grant for Research or Internship". A primary purpose of the Bodtker Grant is to foster research or internship at the Danish American Archive and Library at Dana College and the Danish Immigrant Archive at Grand View College and at The Danish Immigrant Museum. The first recipient of the Bodtker Grant was Torben Tvorup Christensen, who was 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. Since that time, another ten students have been awarded grants. These include Marianne Paasch from the University of Aalborg; Tine Pallisgaard, Anders Rasmussen, and Anders Bærholm from the University of South Denmark (Odense); Pia Viscor and Freja Gry Børsting from the University of Copenhagen; Nana Mikkelsen and Jon Gade Jeppesen from the University of Aarhus; Hanne Pico Larsen from the University of California, Berkeley; and Kirstin Bouwsema from the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Some of the recipients have performed their research at other North American sites of historical and cultural interest. These students have been and are contributing greatly to research concerning Danish-North American history and culture.

The first issue of **The Bridge** was published in 1978. The first 30 volumes (1978 through 2007) contain 321 articles written by 217 different authors (including 43 translations). 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. In the first 30 volumes, through 2007, there were 109 book reviews written by 53 different reviewers. The first *Newsletter* was published in July, 1977, and *Newsletter* #60 was published in June, 2008. The Danish American Heritage Society currently has a mailing list of more than 700 addresses. These include 25 libraries, 18 organizations, 8 museums, four archival repositories, 2 periodicals, the Royal Danish Embassy in Washington, DC and the Royal Danish Consulate in New York City.

The Society has also begun a tradition of hosting international conferences. The first of these took place in Omaha, Nebraska, on October 10-13, 2002. Chaired by John Mark Nielsen, this fantastically successful conference was titled "Danish-North American Relations Since World War II. The primary speakers were Ambassador Bo Lidegaard, Ambassador Edward Elson, and American-Scandinavian Foundation General Secretary Ed Gallagher. The second conference was held in Des Moines on October 13-16, 2005. This conference "Danish Culture, Past and Present; the Last Two Hundred Years", was also very successful, with primary speakers Ambassador Friis Arne Petersen, and National Gallery Curator Philip Conisbee. Other speakers included Joakim Garff, Aase Bak, Henrik Wigh-Poulsen and Torben Grøngaard Jeppesen. Helle Mathiasen and Carol Bamford were the co-chairs for this conference, attended by 420 people, about 20 more than in Omaha. Proceedings Volumes from these two conferences are still available for purchase. Information about these volumes and future conferences can be obtained by accessing the Society's website: www.danishamericanheritagesociety.org.

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 Conferences in Omaha in 2002 and in Des Moines in 2005, the Bodtker 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 Bodtker and his associates in 1977. After long tenures as President by Arnold Bodtker, Gerald Rasmussen, and Jim Iversen, it is most fitting that, after Iversen's 10 years at the helm, Arnold's son Egon Bodtker has taken over as the fourth President of the Danish American Heritage Society. 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 University in order to aid in the continuation of efforts to preserve the cultural heritage of Danish immigrants and their descendants.