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## Foreword

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## Foreword

by Helle Mathiasen, Conference Chair

Since its founding in 1977, the Danish American Heritage Society (DAHS) has encouraged and supported efforts to research and preserve our ethnic heritage in Canada and the United States. The Society believes in the intrinsic value of building bridges between ideas and people on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. An additional goal is the promotion of fellowship among those with an interest in events relating to Danish life, culture, and history.

In 2006, the Society took an important step in this direction by sponsoring an international conference, "Danish Culture, Past and Present: The Last Two Hundred Years," held at Embassy Suites Hotel and Grand View College in Des Moines, Iowa. This Conference was under the protection of His Royal Highness The Prince Consort of Denmark, and by the Governor of the State of Iowa. Co-sponsors for the Conference were Grand View College, Iowa; Dana College, Nebraska; the Danish Immigrant Museum, Iowa; and the Danish Immigrant Archive-Dana College, Nebraska. The event was attended by 420 individuals representing 30 of the United States, and Denmark.

This was the third and largest conference promoted by the DAHS, and a commemoration of the bicentennial of Hans Christian Andersen's birth and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Kristian Østergaard and the death of Søren Kierkegaard. The program consisted of a broad survey of important facets of Danish and Danish-American culture during the last two hundred years as well as a number of social events. The wide-ranging topics included scholarly analyses of literary lions, great philosophers and theologians, immigration issues, and Danish technology, music, art, and film. Speakers included invited scholars from China, Denmark, and the United States as well as specialists in the various areas. Live happenings embraced song, a piano recital, poetry reading, storytelling, and a show of costumed child actors from Odense illustrating characters from Andersen's fairy tales. Among the

scheduled presenters were historians and librarians, a documentary filmmaker, a photographer, museum curators, literary scholars, writers and composers, a storyteller, an agronomist, and a pianist. A Doctor of Medicine and two graduate students (University of California, Berkeley, and Indiana University, Bloomington) presented papers.

As was the case with the Society's 2002 conference in Omaha, Nebraska, all speakers were invited to submit their papers for publication in the Conference Proceedings. The thirty-three submissions in this volume, many of them illustrated, have been expertly selected and edited by Birgit Flemming Larsen and Linda M. Chimenti. All the major program categories are represented, offering abundant evidence of the variety and depth of the presenters' learning. The fourteen topic sequences follow the Conference program: Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen), Danish Immigration, Danish-American History, Søren Kierkegaard, Danish and American Communities, Danish Technology and Global Community, N.F. S. Grundtvig, Danish Literature, Danish Musical Culture around the Globe, Hans Christian Andersen, Danish Painting and Sculpture, Danish-American Literature (the largest section), Danish Film Then and Now, and Danish Song and Storytelling.

The Danish American Heritage Society is pleased to offer this volume as a chapter of its history.