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LETTERS FROM HAMPTON

By

James Iversen, Birgit Flemming Larsen, Berry Johnson, and Doreen Petersen

A unique house filled with memories and memorabilia stands on the west edge of the Franklin County Seat town of Hampton, Iowa. The house and barn and 12 acres, situated in a pleasant & picturesque semi-rural setting, was the home of the Christian Nielsen and his wife Anna, born Jensen, from the time of their purchase of the property in 1920 until the death of their youngest daughter in 2001.

Danish Immigration to the Hampton Area

The history of the Anna and Christian Nielsen family is part of a history of a group of Danish immigrants that survived economically and socially after being transplanted to the United States of America. These Danes settled over years in the Latimer and Coulter area near Hampton in Franklin County, Iowa. In the late 1860s two Danish real estate salesmen came to the area to sell land. They advertised in Danish-American newspapers as well in newspapers in Denmark.

It turned out that there was an interest among Danes to come to this part of Iowa to farm. Some came directly from Denmark; others came from elsewhere in Iowa and from the states of Illinois and Wisconsin.

A Danish Colony

A strong Danish colony began to form. Latimer was a station along the Iowa Central Railroad Line. The railroad was a lifeline for many small rural communities and provided a means of transportation to neighboring settlements. Coulter was a station on the Chicago Great Western Railroad Line and got the name *Little Denmark*, placed as it was in the middle of a fairly large rural settlement. Two Danish congregations were formed only four miles apart. *The West Church* known as *St. Peter's Danish Lutheran Church*, and *The East Church* known as *St. John's Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church*. In the beginning neither of them had a church building. Services were held in schoolhouses and private homes. The former erected a church

building in 1893 which was destroyed by lightening in 1899. A new church was built in 1903. Because of decreasing membership the congregation was dissolved in the early 1920s. The latter built their church in 1888 and a parish hall in 1897.



St. John's Church. 2007

Sunday school was organized from 1885, and a Ladies' Aid Society started already in 1883. In 1902 the Young People's Society was established to serve the needs and the interest of the young people of the congregation. The society got the name *Dannebrog* and had programs of music, song, lectures, readings, summer picnics, dance and gymnastics.

A schism in the Lutheran Church in Denmark had also influenced the church life in Danish churches in the US. A new congregation was born in the area in 1902, named the *Nazareth Danish Evangelical Lutheran Congregation*, and a church was built south of Coulter.

In 1905 the Danish Brotherhood Lodge no 221, *Atterdag*, was established in Latimer and had from the beginning about 30 members. The purpose was to support each other in case of sickness, distress, unemployment etc. Being in a new country and

in a new community the immigrants felt the need to support each other. The Danish Brotherhood Hall became a social center for Latimer with many events such as wedding dances, plays, travelling shows and Danish folk dance. In 1911 the Danish Sisterhood Lodge no 124 *Dannebrog* was started.

A growing number of Danes came to this area and among those members of the Nielsen and Jensen families.

Presentation of the Nielsen and Jensen families

Christian Nielsen was born on the farm Kisum Overgaard, just outside the city of Skive in Jutland, Denmark on July 4, 1878, the sixth of eight children of Niels Jensen and Mette Nielsen Jensen.¹ In the 1890s he served his apprenticeship with a cabinetmaker in Skive and after that journeyed to several places in Denmark. One of his jobs was located in or near Haslev, a town about 50 km (30 miles) southwest of Copenhagen on the island of Sealand.

Anna Petrea Nielsine Jensen was the eldest of four children of Peter and Marie Johanne Jensen.¹ She was born on March 22, 1882, in Simmendrup in the parish of Førslev near the town of Haslev. Anna went to school in Haslev and after her confirmation in 1896 she went into service in Haslev from 1896-1898, part of the time at a baker and confectioner. For a year she served at a large farm near Ørslev and returned to Haslev where she stayed until October 1900. In 1899 she became engaged to be married to Poul Christian Nielsen. Soon after she moved to Copenhagen and served at different places until her marriage in 1902.

As noted three of Christian's siblings immigrated to the United States in the 1890s. This pull of family members already living in the United States near Hampton, Iowa became the incentive for Christian and Anna when they decided to emigrate. So, even though he was doing well in his chosen profession in Copenhagen, they left Denmark in March 1905, and joined the relatives in Franklin County, Iowa.

Christian did not work as carpenter in the New World, but started out as a farmhand, working for other Danish immigrants in Franklin County. After several years he had accumulated enough money to buy farmland, and bought and sold several times until buying a tract

of land on the west side of the County Seat town of Hampton. The house had been built in the late 1800s by the town doctor, O.B.Harriman, and the house and acreage had been sold to Danish immigrants, Henry and Cathrine Skow, in 1905. The Nielsen's purchased the house and acreage from the Skows in 1920, paying \$15,500. The property includes a second, smaller house across the street, which Dr. Harriman had built for his son.



Christian and Anna Nielsen on their wedding-day in 1902



The Harriman-Nielsen property. 2007

Anna and Christian had two daughters, Petrea, who was born in 1908, and Nielsine, born in 1911. The two girls never married, so what is now known as the Harriman-Nielsen property was the family home until Nielsine died at the age of 89 in January, 2001. Nielsine had been an active member of the Franklin County Historical Society, and since there were no other descendants of the Christian Nielsen family still living at the time of her death, she willed her property to the Historical Society.

The Letters

The Franklin County Historical Society appointed a special committee to oversee the newly inherited property. The Harriman-Nielsen board members and other volunteers have since spent countless hours in examining the property, recording the vast number of artifacts and documentary materials, and repairing and reconditioning the property for public use as a museum. Among the surprising materials found on the estate is a series of letters, about 2,300 in all, of which about 2000 are written in the Danish language. Christian and Anna brought their old correspondence written from 1897 to 1905 across the Atlantic when they left

Denmark in early 1905, which means that the collection of letters covers a century of life, from 1897-1999.

The Harriman-Nielsen Farm is historically important, not primarily because of its distinctive architecture and the natural beauty of the site, but, to a greater degree, because of the artifacts and the archival materials saved and left behind by the Nielsen family. The letter collection is important, not only because the family members were well-known citizens of the community, but because the surviving letters and documents typify the immigrant story in a very detailed way.

Most of the 2000 letters in the Danish language were written to the family by relatives and close friends. Most are from Denmark, but there are quite a few from close relatives and friends who lived in other parts of the United States. The two daughters, Petrea and Nielsine, probably grew up speaking only Danish until they started school. In 1920, after the purchase of the acreage just west of Hampton, the family went on an extended trip to Denmark. After three months in Denmark, both girls were quite fluent in spoken Danish. In the summers of 1928 and 1929, the girls each attended one summer session at the Danebod Folk School in Tyler, Minnesota, and that is where they learned to read and write in Danish, so that most of the letters written by or to Petrea and Nielsine after the late 1920s are also in the Danish language. About that time, the girls started keeping copies of the letters that they wrote, so that in many cases, both sides of the correspondence are in the collection.

The letters and other kinds of archival documents constitute a historically important body of material for historical research. The letters chronicle the developments in the life of an immigrant family, and the letter set constitutes a real treasure for those who might be interested in exploring more of the personal history of a family who suddenly found themselves in a foreign country on the other side of the Atlantic.

Early Letters, 1897 to 1905

The impetus for this article came from a program that the Harriman-Nielsen Farm Board of Directors presented at a dinner in Hampton on April 20, 2008. Board Member Berry Johnson and his associates

presented a reading of several early letters, written from the years 1899 to 1906. There are 64 letters in the collection, which date from 1897 to early 1905, before Christian and Anna made the long trip from Denmark to find their fortune in the New World. Many of these letters were written by Christian's sister and his two brothers, who were already in Franklin County, to their brother they left behind in Denmark. Thus, there is material in these letters about life and conditions in Franklin County in the years around the turn of the century. Some of the letters from this period have been translated into English, and extracts of some of these translations follow¹².

May 22, 1899. One of the first letters in the collection was written by Christian's younger sister Petrea. She has served at a Mrs. Wolfe in Hampton since her arrival. After some introductory remarks about her health she continues:

I received a letter from our cousin Metthea and Jens Chr. in Denmark for my birthday, 8 days late..... They wrote that all of them had been out visiting Father. He was in a good mood and very happy. I was glad to hear that. He had that photo of your girlfriend. We really must congratulate you with your engagement. Dear Brother – it was really early that you became engaged, but of course, you do not have to get married for some years yet. Now you need to save up some money. You wrote you would send her photo to us. What kind of a girl is she? - And what about her father and family? Write to me a little about that.

We are fit and feel good. We could not be better off in Denmark than we are here. I feel good here, now I have overcome the worst language problems. Now I can speak just as good English as Jens could when he went back home. I have been an American now for 4 months. I get paid 2 dollars a week. I am serving on a farm outside the town of Hampton, which is our market town..... Niels told me to send you greetings from him. He was here last Sunday and will come again Saturday afternoon if nothing interfere. He will take me out to visit with some of the Danes, and Sunday we will attend services at the Danish Church. That will be a nice outing. It is now a

month ago we were to church there. Last Sunday was Pentecost. I don't think many Americans pay any attention to that. Niels gets 22 dollars a month, which is a good salary. I will have to stop for now. It is late, and we get up early at 5 in the morning. But now I am used to it, it doesn't seem so early now. Warm greetings from us – your brother and sister Petrea Nielsen.

My address is:

C/o Mrs. Casper Wolfe

Hampton, Franklin County, Iowa, North America.

We will probably not write to you for your birthday, the 4th of July, and therefore I will wish you good luck now for the year to come. You will maybe remember that I had my 17th birthday now in May. Goodbye and write to us soon. We promise to write to you soon again.

January 8, 1903. A short letter written by Marie Jensen, Christian's stepmother in Kisum to the young couple just after their wedding. They are still living in Denmark:

Dear son and wife, Kristian and Anna

Thank you for your letter. We look forward to your next letter. We really got a lot of letters and photos from America. Niels's wife wears a white silk dress; she is a beautiful woman. As beautiful a picture as that of Petrea cannot be found anywhere. She is a wonderful person too. She also sent a picture of a young man, and we were supposed to express our opinion, and then she would tell us who he is. She wants us to send her address to you, which is:

Petrea Nielsen

Box 394 Hampton

Iowa North America

Warm greetings to all of you from my husband and myself

Write again, soon! Marie Jensen

June 19, 1903. Letter from Jens Nielsen to Anna and Christian in Copenhagen. Jens Nielsen was the eldest of Christian's siblings and was the first of the brothers to emigrate. He farmed for some time in the Latimer-Coulter area before he bought a farm of his own. Jens

Nielsen married the girl Anna Mand from Salling in 1903. In 1912 Jens Nielsen and his wife decided to return to their homeland with the two girls Signe and Jenny.

Dear brother Kristian and wife

It is a long time since we have heard anything from you. As it will soon be your birthday I wanted to send you a few words. But when I was looking for the stationery, there wasn't any left. And as I wanted you to get a letter before the 4th of July I had to use something else to write on. I send you my warmest congratulations for your 25th birthday anniversary. I hope you will continue to have happiness and good health, and I wish you a long life. I do hope we will see each other again some time. And I do also hope that you did not take any offense at my latest letter. It is not that I did not want you to come over here, and if you really would like to come, you will be more than welcome, and we would do whatever we can to help you. As times are now, however, you will not be able to earn as much money over here as you do in Denmark. I am glad to hear that you earn enough money for your family living expenses, and to enjoy your profession. I am glad that you learned that even if it was a difficult lesson..... Maybe Father has visited you lately and perhaps you have had many visitors. You can also expect a visit from us in a few years. I wish that all of us could live to meet once more at father's house in Kisum. He would be very happy to see all his children gathered around him.

Things are the same at our place over here. The crop seems to be all right, but now we are getting so much rain again, I do hope that it is not going to be too much. We got a lot yesterday, and today it is raining again. It is difficult with all these wet years..... Last Sunday we visited Petrea. She is very well now, and so is Niels. My wife sends her congratulations. Love to you and your wife from your brother Jens Nielsen.

August 19, 1903. Letter from Jens's wife Anna who invites them to Petrea's wedding:

Dear Brother-in-Law and wife

I do not really know how to write to total strangers even though they are part of the family. I am Jens's wife. I hope you have received our photograph, and then you would have seen what I look like. I am from Salling. I want to tell you that I am happy to be in America, and I do not wish to go back to Denmark. We are so happy here, that is the most important thing. You will receive a somewhat longer letter from Jens and me as soon as Jens gets the time. He is so busy, there is so much to be done the first year you move to a new farm, but it will get better.

Many greetings from your Brother and his wife. Do come to the wedding, you are welcome.

August 19, 1903. Petrea is going to marry Nis R. Christensen, a merchant in the small town of Coulter, about 8 miles west of Hampton and writes about her coming wedding:

Dear Brother and Sister-Law.

You might wonder why you never hear from me. That is easy to explain. I have said to myself that I would write for over a year now— nothing came of it. You yourselves have had the experience to be engaged – at that point you only think of writing to your beloved and only think of your future together. One day precedes the next. But I promise that from now on, I will be a frequent letter writer, because now I will not have to write love letters any more. We have decided to get married September 2, and the wedding will be here at Jens and Anna's. I am out here now working on my trousseau. I hereby invite you to come over to our wedding and spend a wonderful day with us. Dear Brother – when we were kids and ran around in Kisum, we never thought of moving so far away from each other. I do not regret coming over here. But you will have to excuse me for not having the time to delve into these matters. After the wedding I will send you our wedding picture and write you a somewhat longer letter.

I will finish my letter now and hope that you will receive this before September 2, and then you might drink a toast to us at your home.

Please greet Dorothea and Niels Hansen (note) and tell them that they are invited too. Warm greetings from me and my fiancé.

Sister Petrea Nielsen
Goodbye and write soon.



Petrea's wedding picture. September 1903.

Early January, 1904. A letter from Brother Jens to Christian:

Dear brother Kristian

As we now have left the old year behind and have entered the new one 1904, I would like to wish you a Happy New Year and I will wish for you that you have a good year, and that you will be well, and that you won't run out of work. As long as you have work and good health then I will know that you are doing well. That is the way I feel, as long as I have my good health and can work every day and my wife is well, then I feel good. But as soon as something is

wrong, then everything gets more difficult. My wife was very ill in the fall for a week. We had to call the doctor a couple of times – there was something wrong with her stomach, but she recovered.

Father wrote that you had been ill too, I don't know whether you are fully recovered or not, but I do hope you are so that you can keep your job. I know you are a master apprentice in a workshop. Maybe you won't have to work as hard with that position as before, but at least you have to work. Do you get paid more? Please write and tell me about it, dear Kristian, we should contact each other more often. I have been very busy this summer. Every day of the week, and then on Sunday we went to church or had visitors. It is only three weeks ago that we finished picking corn, you can see it has been a long harvest season. I have been thinking so many times that I should write to you, but then something always came up, and the time got away. I thought that you must have Sundays off, but we never received a letter from you. Let us be a little better to write to each other from the beginning of 1904. Please tell Niels and Dorthea that I think it is their turn to write. I hope you got our picture. At that time I did not have time to write. Our crop was not so big last summer, but it is enough to feed the cattle during the winter, but there will be no wages for all the work we have done, nothing else than the food, but we will hope for a better year this year. But it looks to be a little better, as we have not had rain for several months. The last two years were very wet. Niels got a little girl about two months ago, and she has been given the name Rosa Alvilda Jensen. Petrea is well. She lives in a nice little home.

I will finish now hoping that you are well and that we soon will hear from you again. We are very happy to have received your wedding picture, which is very fine. Everybody says so. I think that you take more and better pictures in Denmark than we do over here in America. Warm greetings from my wife and myself, Jens Nielsen.

January 14, 1904. Letter from Petrea to Christian and Anna. After complaint of missing letters and remarks about illness and weather she continues:

Dear Brother and Sister-in-Law!

.....Yes, dear Brother, now we all are married and each of us has our own home. It is always nice to be in one's own home, it is not always that way when we have to live with others. You have also tried that, dear Brother, since we left the farm at home. You have not always seen days with sunshine, but we have learned to always see the good in things, so that it always goes well with us. We should always hold to what we learned in our childhood, so that we not only do well in this world but also be ready for death, as it comes quickly to so many, we just don't know when that will happen for us.

I will tell you a little about our wedding. That took place at Jens's. We were thirty people in all, and we had a very jovial time. We received as wedding gifts six forks and knives, six teaspoons, a large fruit spoon, sugar bowl, and cream pitcher, a table centerpiece for fruit, and a centerpiece for placing visitors' cards, all in silver, and a picture that can be placed on a stand in a corner. On Sunday after the wedding we were surprised by the Young People's Society with a coffeepot and sugar bowl and creamer and one to put teaspoons in, they were also all of silver. I also got a cake-pan, if only now you could come and visit us, so you could believe that I could decorate a very fine table for coffee for you. It is so sad that we are so far apart. I wish that that great body of water did not lie between us, so that we could meet together again. I long so often that I could speak with you. But perhaps we will come home some years from now. Together with this letter I enclose two of our wedding pictures, would you please give one to Dorthea, because I am not writing to her this time.

Many hearty greetings to you from your sister Petrea Christensen and brother-in-law. Our address is N.R. Christensen, Coulter, Franklin Co., Iowa, America.

February 19, 1904. Jens Nielsen writes from Hampton to Christian and Anna in Denmark. After comments of his wife's health he continues:

Dear brother and wife

.....I think you have an excellent annual income. That is more than we can earn here in America. Hard times are coming. There is much unemployment here. Many families have gone back to Denmark since early in the fall because there were no jobs. In one day 60 families from Chicago left for Europe. We read in the papers that one factory after the other closes down or go bankrupt. There are several 1000 unemployed. I know very well that at one time, I would have liked to have you over here. But times have turned different now during the last two years. I do not think you should come over here. And apparently you can earn so much more back there. You see dear brother – from the 1500 Danish Crowns you can earn you might be able to put some aside and finally be able to buy your own business. If better times should come here in America, you might consider coming over to farm – by that I mean to rent a small farm. You would not need as much money for that. My wife said to me when she read your latest letter: "They earn much more money than we do; and they will probably also be able put some aside. That is more than we are able to".

I will be honest with you – you do not just pick up gold off the street in America. You have to be a hard worker. For the last year I have lost money despite all the work I have put into it. I do not wish for more years like that, or I soon will stop farming. We read so much in the papers about the war; will that come to Denmark as well? If so then you will be one of the first ones to go into service. Or will it just be paper talk? You have not written anything about it, so maybe it is only talk. We have read in the papers that Danish soldiers have received orders to be on 24 hours notice.write to us soon again if the story about the soldiers is true. Love to both of you from my wife and your brother, Jens Nielsen.

July 31, 1904. Letter from Christian's oldest sibling Ane, who lives near Balling, just a few miles northwest of Skive:

Dear Brother and Sister-in-Law

You should have had a letter for your birthday, dear brother. I wanted to postpone my writing until I was alone at home. It is easier to write when one is alone. The older folks are in

Dronninglund to visit their daughter. They have been away for 14 days, and this is the first day I have found the time to finish my letter. I have been in the field every morning to help with the hay. Today it will be three weeks since Father and Marie were here to visit. Father had a good time here, and I wish that you did not live so far away from us. Have you not considered moving to another town, if it becomes more difficult to find work in Copenhagen? What about a big town like Aarhus? I am so sorry that you are thinking about going to America. I think it is a pity that you will sell all your things, and maybe little Kristian – it might be that the climate in America does not suit you. You are so fragile. I would like all of you in Copenhagen to come to visit us next summer. I do know that travel is expensive.

I have a small birthday gift for you little brother. I hope it will be bigger next time. Goodbye!

July 31, 1904. This is an extract of a letter written by Christian's father and stepmother, Niels and Marie:

.....I have been thinking and have talked with Marie about whether you might consider coming home and taking over my smallholding. It is worth 10.000 Danish Crowns and the debt only comes to 4.000 Danish Crowns.....I know that it would please Niels and Jens very much if you would take over my home.

Marie Jensen, the stepmother of Chris continues:

Dear Kristian and Anna

Just a few words from me. Both my dear husband and I would be delighted if you and your wife could come to Kisum and take over the home. My husband and I will then move to a smaller house. And Kristian you can be sure that your dear father will come and work for you every day. It would be wonderful, should that happen. Write to us soon. Many warm greetings to all of you from us. Farewell and Goodbye, Marie Jensen.

August 15, 1904. Nis Christensen writes from Coulter to his Father-in-Law Niels Jensen at Kisum, telling about the birth of Niels' grandson and his daughter Petrea's death:

Dear Father

When you receive this letter and you see who wrote it, then you might think that something over here is wrong. And as God in Heaven is my witness, I would wish it were not so. Petrea and I had only such a short time together here on earth. Dear Father you must have guessed, by now that your dear daughter and my loving wife have gone to God in Heaven and left me and our little baby. A baby was born August 12 on your birthday dear father; the baby was a little boy. Petrea was ill for about 4 days before the baby was born, after the birth she seemed to recover. That was last Saturday, and that night she became ill again, and the next day at noon she died. Dear Father! I did everything I could to save her, in order to keep her. We had so much to live for and we loved each other so much, but she was too good for this world.

We had also our new little baby, who during her last hours, took up almost all her thoughts and work. One of her last thoughts was of you, dear Father. She wanted that you could have her little boy. The doctor was at her side almost day and night, and the last day there were two doctors and they hardly left her, but everything was in vain. God had decided that she had to go. I would have given everything on this earth to save her. Thank God in Heaven that she had the power to act like she did. She arranged everything herself. She comforted me and asked me not to grieve. If it was the will of God that she should die, then she was willing to follow Him. She very much wanted to be with me, anyway. She asked for the pastor and our little child was baptized, then we had Communion and sang a couple of hymns, and Petrea sang also, even as the doctor asked her to be silent and not to exert herself. She answered that once they had finished with her, then it would be too late to sing. And she was right. Her mind was so lucid, and she knew it was the end. After the song she asked the pastor to take her child. He comforted her and promised to do everything for her and the child. It has been very hard these days, Father and much is still unreal for me. I

cannot clearly see that last day. The grief can sometimes kill, if not physically then mentally. It is a large and depressing grief. Can He be my God? Petrea asked me to turn to God and find strength with him. Maybe we will meet sometime again on the Day of Judgment. When you call me to reckon for your daughter, I will answer you. And Trea will be at my side again and bid me welcome. The last hymn we sung – the one she asked us to sing – was “Skriv dig, Jesus, på mit hjerte (Jesus, write upon my Heart)”. She also gave the child a name herself. Born on your birthday, Father, he should be called Niels, and the name of my father is Peter. How it is just like Petrea! So very thoughtful! So she gave the child the name Niels Peter Christensen. Anna held the baby, and she also asked to have it, but Petrea asked me not to it to her. Not that she did not like Anna, but she did not dare to give Anna her last memory. The pastor then took him, and with great pleasure. And he has gotten a very fine home. Petrea also asked me to see to it that the child would be well-behaved in a home of God, and to be a child of God. If it is God’s will, I will try to fulfill all her wishes.

Yesterday at two o’clock she was buried. In all that grief her funeral will always stand as something both dark and light. Few people will have a funeral like Petrea’s. There are many Danes here in this neighborhood. All of them came, although it was in the middle of the busy time of the harvest. But not only Danes, also Germans and Americans came, even those from far away. It was the largest funeral anyone has ever experienced here. The church was decorated in black and white and everything was covered with flowers. We bore her casket from her home to the church and from the church to the cemetery and everywhere on that long tour there were flowers strewn. The coffin was covered with flowers when it was interred and her grave is covered with them. There is something great and comforting and yet very sad to see all this, everyone who served her and loved her. She was so loveable and good. We bore the coffin ourselves on her last journey – Niels, Jens, Martin, Peter Madsen, J. Jørgensen and myself.

Dear Father – one of these days I will forward to you a last memory of Petrea, a flower taken from her breast in the last minute in the church. May God help you in your grief, when you pray to God for

yourself and Petrea then do not forget her grieving husband and child. They will also need God's help. And one more thing, dear Father, although Petrea has passed away, I will still be your dear son, the man who has loved your daughter and been faithful to, and who will meet with her again. Please do not forget to write to me. And may God be merciful to us and comfort us in our grief.

Love for all of you,
N. R. Christensen.

January 8, 1905. This is an extract from a letter written by Niels Jensen's wife Ingeborg from Hampton to Christian and Anna in Copenhagen:

Dear Brother-in-Law and Sister-in-Law

Many thanks for your letter, which we received a short while ago. We are all well. Even if I do not know you I must say I feel sorry for Christian and for you, dear Sister-in-Law that you are not feeling well. We do hope you soon will be healthy and strong again.

----- Petrea's boy is healthy and is growing fast. Nis intends to travel home to Denmark next fall and take the boy with him. We understand from some letters from Niels's father and Marie that they are ready to take him anytime and would be extremely happy to do so. We would like that to happen, and then the boy would be in his dear mother's family. We are sending you two pictures of our house and "Den Danske Ungdomsforening (Young People's Society)" here from the Danish colony. Actually it is not a very good picture of the people, it did not turn out well. I am sure you can find Niels on the photo, but I am not sure whether it is worth looking for me – the dog is lying in front of me, but the photographer left off the head of the dog in the photo, so it is not a very good photo. The picture of the house is better. It is fairly big, we have 9 rooms and kitchen and a kind of laundry which we use as a room for washing and for the pump. We collect rain water in a big reservoir and we use that water for washing clothes. Drinking water we fetch from the windmill.

Love to all of you from all three of us
Your Sister-in-Law Ingeborg Jensen

Write to us again soon.

February 4, 1905 Christian and Anna have decided to come to America, and Ingeborg gives them some good advice concerning the trip:

Dear Brother-in-law and Sister-in-law

I am sure you are longing for a letter from us, and it is certainly the time to write now if we want to reach you before March 8. We have had a hard week with a lot of snow, so Niels has not been able to get to town. He wanted to go today, but now it is snowing again. I would like him to go anyway. It is a bit of a long ride, but during the summer it is not so bad when the road is dry. I have done it myself in an hour or an hour and a quarter.

I have started to write, should Niels be able to get started into town. Should this letter reach you before the ship leaves, then you can go by the English line which is much quicker and with so much better food. That is what Niels says. I was on the ship "Hekla", when I came over here, but Niels has both times gone by the Dominion Line. The crew is all English, but that will not be a problem, as there will be other Danes onboard. When you arrive at New York, however, it will be the American language all the way to Hampton. Niels intends to go to the bank to find out whether it will be cheaper to send the tickets instead of money. I suddenly realize that the full name will be wanted on the ticket. We do not know your wife's full name, therefore it might be better to send the money. When you arrive at New York, you will have to go through many different sections, but there will be people there to assist you. They will ask you how much money you carry, and I would think that you should have some. But anyway should you buy through tickets it would be no problem. Should anything happen, there ought to be a Dane in the building to help you to send a telegram to us, and we would be able to help you through. It is stricter now than it was seven years ago when I came. I had only two dollars, but I had a through ticket all the way out to my sister, so I managed. So will you, when you have a brother here and a ticket all the way from Denmark to his place. They asked me whether I was supposed to pay back the

money for the prepaid ticket. I said no! This is actually not allowed. I do not know whether you will get the same question. I got the ticket from America; it might be different if you buy the ticket in Denmark.

Please tell us when you will leave, so that we can know when you will arrive. You can also write to us, when you have arrived, then we can find out when the train is expected at the railway station. We can also have a man in town drive you out to Jens, and Jens could drive you out to us. That will be all for now.

We will look forward to seeing you. Niels tells me to write to you that if you have some very nice carpenter tools then you ought to bring them. Many times you would probably wish that you had them. If the tools are not new, there would be no customs duty. But there will be customs duty on silverware. Now I will finish. Warm greetings to both of you and to Dorthea and Niels Hansen as well from

Your brother and Sister-in-Law

Ingeborg Jensen

Ingeborg continues: Unfortunately Niels was not able to get to town yesterday. We had a major snowstorm, and the road was not open. Today it is somewhat milder. Niels asks me to remind you to visit your father before you leave. And if you travel by the English Line then you can leave from Esbjerg.

When you get to Hampton please ask for Ole Hansen. He is a Dane, and he lives fairly close to the station. If it is not too much to ask, would you please visit my father also, before you leave – that is if you have the time to do so.

Love from Ingeborg

Niels Jensen continues in the same letter:

Dear Brother Kristian – I am now at the bank in Hampton, and I have bought tickets for both of you. It is 50 Danish Crowns cheaper and I will forward 40 Danish Crowns for the travel. The agent here says that you ought to have that much

Eventually Christian and Anna were registered as emigrants on March 11, 1905 and went by the Dominion Line via England.

February 5, 1905. Letter from Christian's sister Mette Larsen, from Skovsbo (near Svendborg):

Dear Brother and Sister-in-Law

Thank you for the letter we got. It was unexpected news that you want to go to America. If I may write truthfully, then I really do not think that you should go that far away. You young people could easily earn your living if you help each other, no matter where you are. You have just got such a nice home. It is really a shame to move everything away. It is a really long way to go for just a few years. And when you get back you will have used all your money for the tickets, and then you will have to start all over again. But it is for you yourselves to decide if you really want to go. God be with you. God bless you.

February 10, 1905. One more letter from Mette:

Dear Brother and Sister-in-law

We received a letter from you yesterday. We learned that you really have decided to go to America. Well do it if you must! Take care that you have all your papers ready so that you can enter the country over there. They say that it is more difficult now than it was earlier. You will also have to carry a certain amount of money; otherwise you will not be allowed to disembark. You probably already know all that. Bring our warm greetings to all of them from us. Ask Petrea's husband whether we can have his little boy. Ask if I may be his mother. We live in the hope that we can get him over here. Do not forget to write to us and tell us what America looks like, and how everything is there. Please ask brother Niels to write and ask him to send their pictures.

You wrote about the pendant lamp in wood, we want to buy it. Also the dinner set and the large pot. Do you have a lid also? Should you have a frying pan, we would like to have that also. The washtub, the coffeepot, and if you have a meat tenderizer we could use that too. Also the seven pairs of cups, the tray and the glasses. We do not need the sugar bowl and the creamer, but we might take them also.

Please tell us how much it all will cost. Should you have a chest of drawers and a mirror, we will take that too. We heard that the washstand was sold; we would have liked to have that also. Do not keep back the sideboard; I don't think we want it.

Warm greetings from Mette and Mads

Maybe you will come round to see us. Otherwise we will send the money when we have received everything. Please be careful when you pack it!

March 9, 1905. Extract from a letter from Ane from Balling to Christian and Anna and Dorthea and Niels Hansen:

My dear beloved brother and sister-in-law.

Many thanks for your dear letter which we received today. Once again a deeply felt goodbye to you, may God be with you and do not forget to pray. I will always think of you and pray for you and hope that we will meet again as God wills.

It was too bad that the parcel went astray; there was a letter from Niels. Then you might have stayed a few more days. It is very good of Niels to send the tickets. I am sure he will do everything he can for you. Please greet my dear brothers and their wives and Petrea's husband. Has he considered sending the little boy to Denmark?I am sure there will be room for little Niels Peter. It would be easier for me to have him, if I did not have the elderly to care for. I would gladly take him for the sake of my sister, however. My husband is very fond of children, therefore I would be happy to have him.

..... We will hope to see each other again, God protect you and all of us! We are happy to hear that your travel went well..... Yesterday evening my husband and I talked about that now you were departing then, but now I realize it will not be until Tuesday. You will always be in our thoughts. Please write as soon as you can. I promise to write to you also. Although we live apart from each other, we will live in each other's thoughts.

Warm greetings to you my brother and Anna. Farewell and Goodbye and many warm greetings for you sister, Niels and Axel also.

Conclusion

This article only deals with the letters from the years 1897-1905, the time around the emigration of Anna and Christian Nielsen, as an introduction to a comprehensive story of a Danish-American immigrant family