



# DANISH SISTERHOOD *of* AMERICA

*Connect with Your Danish Heritage*

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## Tracing Your Danish Roots

### *Genealogical Resources*

Many people have a great interest in their Danish heritage and roots. This interest leads many people to join the Danish Sisterhood of America to learn about this wonderful culture that we share as Viking descendants. Our members are often inspired at some point to trace their Danish heritage to find out where in Denmark their family is from, to find out when and why they might have immigrated, and to connect themselves with their rich family history and sometimes even long-lost relatives in Denmark. This is completely understandable; Denmark is made of hundreds of islands with unique subcultures and histories unto themselves, making each family's story very unique. Though it can take some time and some research, genealogy, even for the novice, can be accessible and attainable for most.

Denmark is the smallest of the Scandinavian nations, but our people have a long and well-documented history. We are lucky that with modern technology a lot of information is available at your fingertips online. Though the Danish Sisterhood of America does not offer professional genealogical research services, we can share with you how to begin tracing your Danish heritage and online resources to assist you in your search.

### **BEGINNING YOUR GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH**

1. Start with the person you know the most about: you! Then, work backwards by conducting individual or group family interviews. Begin with living relatives and work back in time. Contact your family members via personal visits, phone calls, letters, or email. Ask relatives if they know about or have any family Bibles, photographs, diaries, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, obituaries, letters, family records (birth, death, and marriage certificates, wills, land deeds, property titles, war records, ship passenger lists, etc...). Use genealogical/family interview questions to get started and if possible, record the interview with the person's permission.
2. Complete a Family Group Sheet (<http://www.ancestry.com/trees/charts/familysheet.aspx>) and Pedigree Chart (<http://www.ancestry.com/charts/ancchart.aspx>) starting with you. It is helpful, but not necessary, to use a software program such as Family Tree Maker ([www.familytreemaker.com](http://www.familytreemaker.com)). Always document your sources including the name and contact information for people who gave you the information and the name of any publication used along with the publication information. Use the standard genealogical format for recording information and use a workbook to keep everything organized.

➤ Standard recording format:

- Last names in Capital Letters, (example: Ditte OLSEN)
- Maiden names are always used for women
- Date format: day, abbreviated month, year (ex: 13 Jan 1925)
- Place format: city/township, county, state/province, country
- Publication documentation: author, title, publisher, copyright date, edition, page number.

Organize your workbook by using a large 3-ring binder. Put the Pedigree Chart in the front of the workbook. Behind the Pedigree Chart, use a color coded divider tab for each generation. The first tab will be for your generation and your immediate family's information, and you would be considered the last generation. The last tab in your workbook will be the oldest ancestor you've found and they would be considered the first generation. For example: Ditte OLSEN is the daughter of Frederik OLSEN, who is the son of Johanne OLSEN (nee Andersen). Ditte would be in the first tab, as the 3rd generation. Ditte's father (Far), Frederik, would be in the 2nd tab as the 2nd generation, and Ditte's grandmother (Farmor), Johanne, would be in the 3rd tab, as the 1st generation. In each tab section, complete information for their entire immediate family they were born into should be listed, including siblings. So, using our example, Frederik's three siblings would be listed on the Family Group Sheet with their parents, Johanne ANDERSEN (don't use her married name of Olsen, she was born as Andersen), and Kristian OLSEN in the 2nd tab.

## Tracing Your Danish Roots: *Genealogical Resources, continued*

3. Locate library, internet, local, state, federal, and international resources.

- › At the local and state level: check school, church, and county courthouse records for information. Many churches in Denmark have old birth and marriage records for their community. In addition to birth, death, and marriage, and other civil records, also look for deeds, wills, land, or other property conveyances at the county courthouse. Write to the Bureau of Vital Statistics, usually in the state capital to order copies of birth, death and marriage certificates, or divorce decrees. Include the name of the individual, date and place of birth and your relationship to that person. State governments did not keep birth and death records until the turn of the century, about 1890-1915, so searches in state records for ancestors who were born or died before that time may be limited. Birth, death, and marriage records can frequently be ordered online or by phone as well. Search in publications of city and county histories. Old city directories, phone books, maps, the State Archive holdings of land records, and state mental hospitals are also good places to search for information and documentation.
- › At the library: local and county libraries often have genealogical research material and databases. Researchers can also contact genealogical organizations, historical societies, and others private institutions with private libraries. For example, The Family History Centers are branch offices of the Family History Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This private institution contains a large collection of genealogical documents that may be useful in research.
- › At the federal level: the US federal government took census records every ten years since 1790 and it is a good source of information. Census records from 1790–1920 are available on microfilm in the National Archives' regional branches. They also have military and service related records and special censuses.
- › On the internet: There are many popular online databases. Some states have online digital archives that allow you to search for vital records and download them for free. State genealogy projects are also good places to look. Since any person or family can enter unverified family information in public databases such as ancestry.com and familysearch.org, keep in mind that information found in public databases should be considered leads and not as facts until the information has been verified by supporting documentation. You may find information shown on these websites which you will later find shown to be false when you actually see a birth, death, or marriage certificate. Keep in mind this is not a comprehensive list of resources, but the best places to start your search. The Museum of Danish America has a great list of additional online resources if you've exhausted your search in these databases.
- › Additional Online Resources:
  - Ellis Island Foundation [www.ellisland.org](http://www.ellisland.org)
  - Association of Professional Genealogists [www.apgen.org](http://www.apgen.org)
  - Multiple genealogical databases [www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com)
  - Public genealogical database [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)
  - Public genealogical database [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- › Danish Resources
  - The Danish State Archives: <http://www.sa.dk/content/us/>
  - The Danish Emigration Archives: <http://www.emiarch.dk/home.php3>
  - Denmark's Official Website: <http://denmark.dk/>
  - The Museum of Danish America: <http://www.danishmuseum.org/library-and-genealogy.cfm>
  - Danish Genealogy Forum: <http://www.slaegtogdata.dk/>
- › If you still need assistance in piecing together your family history, there are professional genealogists who can assist you. We recommend consulting with your local genealogical or historical society to get a good recommendation or finding a Genealogist through the Association of Professional Genealogists in the link above. We wish you much success in your personal journey of family discovery!