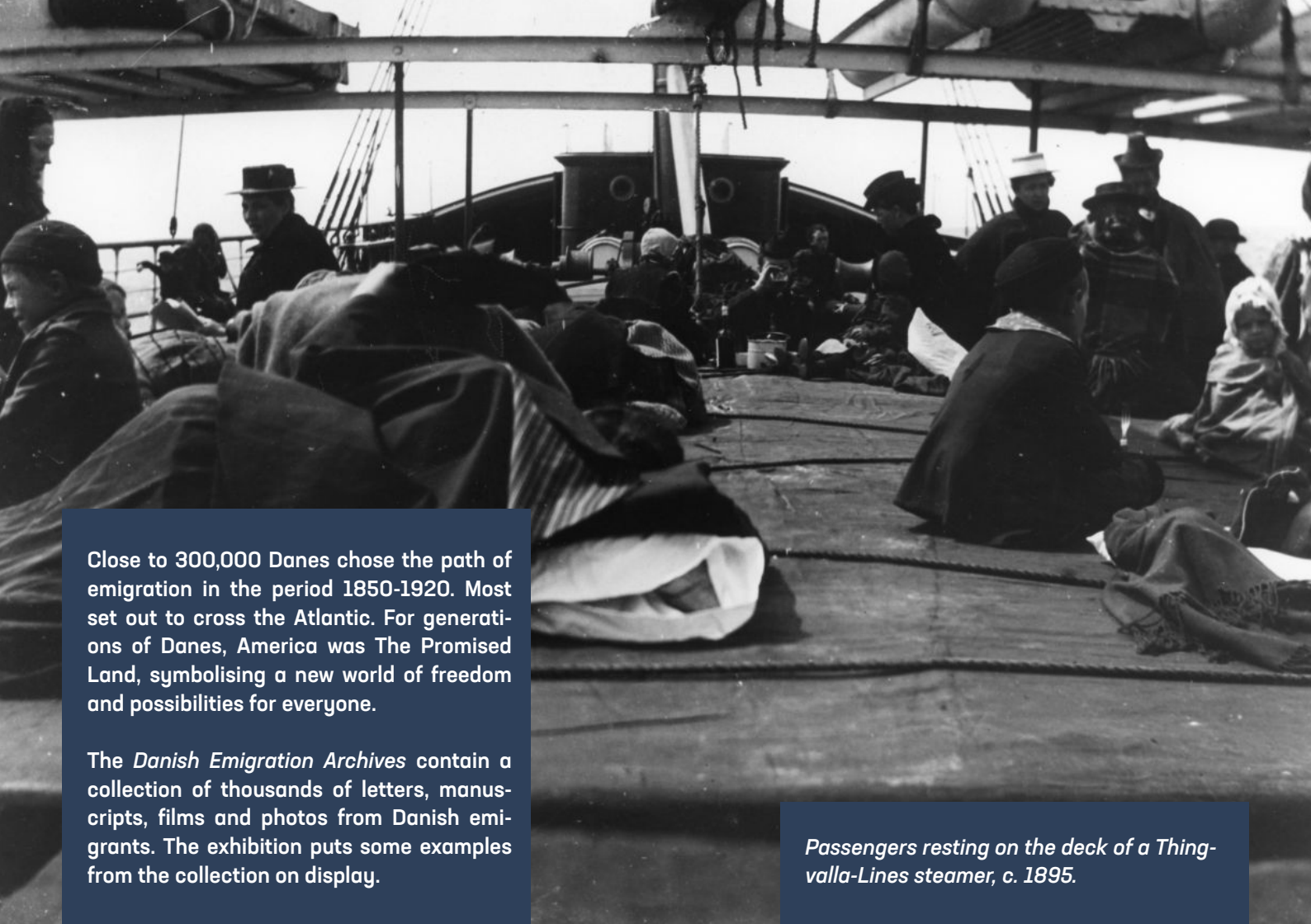




FROM THE NEW WORLD

AN EXHIBITION ON DANISH
EMIGRATION, JOHANNES V. JENSEN
AND AMERICA



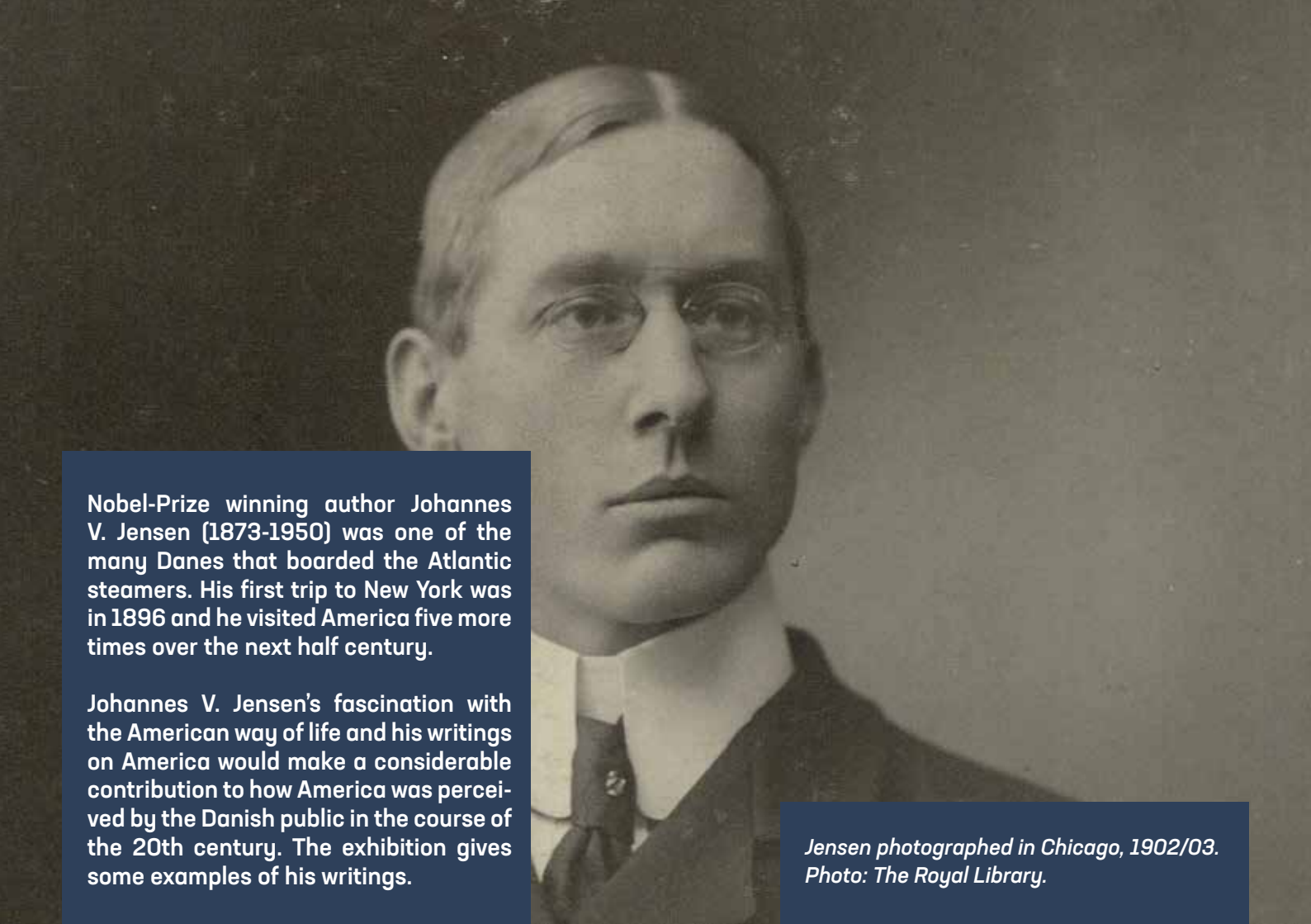
Close to 300,000 Danes chose the path of emigration in the period 1850-1920. Most set out to cross the Atlantic. For generations of Danes, America was The Promised Land, symbolising a new world of freedom and possibilities for everyone.

The *Danish Emigration Archives* contain a collection of thousands of letters, manuscripts, films and photos from Danish emigrants. The exhibition puts some examples from the collection on display.

Passengers resting on the deck of a Thingvalla-Lines steamer, c. 1895.

*No boat that I ever since have been on swayed its way quite like 'Norge', sliding up and down the **abysmal Atlantic waves**. The Atlantic that I got to know at that time has since been lost, simply because nowadays, on the tall modern ships, you look at the sea from above. At that time, you saw it from below, barely above the surface, and in rough weather the waves would rise tall forming a narrow **horizon of watery mountains** with transparent bottle green peaks looming over the boat deep down in the trough between them, and when the boat would ride the wave, you could gaze upon ranks of Niagaras, one after the other. For weeks the deck was flooded with water and the entrance to the lower decks, where hundreds of Scandinavian emigrants were quartered, had to be kept shut. Imagine the sea-voyage they had!*

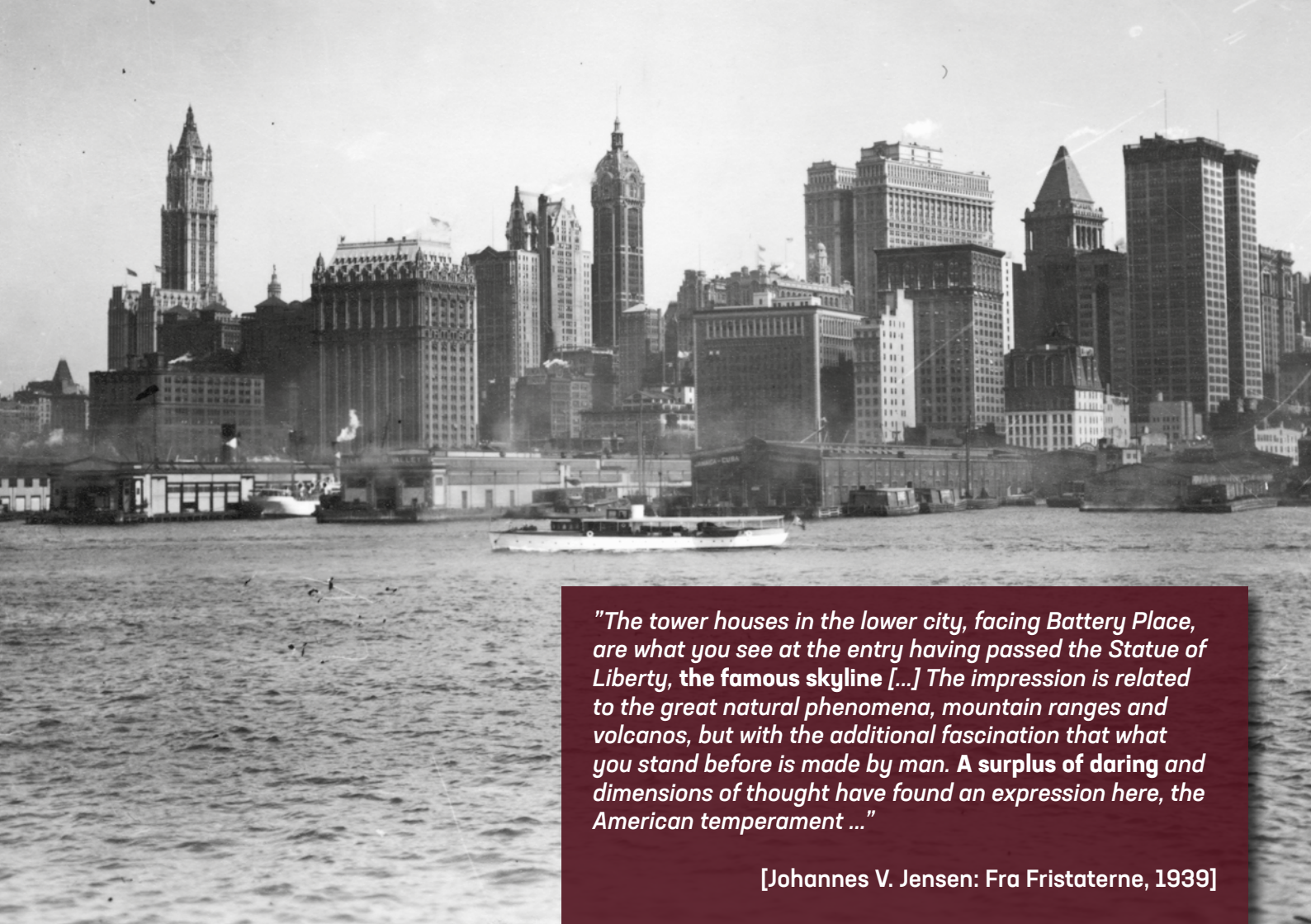
[Johannes V. Jensen: Fra Fristaterne, 1939]

A black and white portrait of Johannes V. Jensen, a man with light-colored hair parted on the side, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

Nobel-Prize winning author Johannes V. Jensen (1873-1950) was one of the many Danes that boarded the Atlantic steamers. His first trip to New York was in 1896 and he visited America five more times over the next half century.

Johannes V. Jensen's fascination with the American way of life and his writings on America would make a considerable contribution to how America was perceived by the Danish public in the course of the 20th century. The exhibition gives some examples of his writings.

*Jensen photographed in Chicago, 1902/03.
Photo: The Royal Library.*



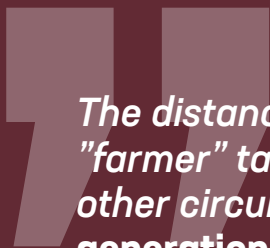
"The tower houses in the lower city, facing Battery Place, are what you see at the entry having passed the Statue of Liberty, the famous skyline [...] The impression is related to the great natural phenomena, mountain ranges and volcanos, but with the additional fascination that what you stand before is made by man. A surplus of daring and dimensions of thought have found an expression here, the American temperament ..."

[Johannes V. Jensen: Fra Fristaterne, 1939]



Emil F. Madsen's farm in the Danish settlement Dagmar, Montana o. 1910.

DAGMAR, MONT.



*The distance separating the Danish peasant from the American "farmer" takes more than one lifetime to travel regardless of all other circumstances. Necessity demands the **sacrifice of one generation**. How many have not voluntarily set out across the Atlantic, eyes blindfolded, sailing towards their own annihilation, losing themselves as Danes and seeing their children, at best, become Americans, and disappearing into another class.*

[Johannes V. Jensen: Fra Graabølle til Chicago, 1909]



A sod house in Nebraska. The woman on horseback is Else Mumgaard, who emigrated in 1901.




*"When American farmers, that once emigrated from Denmark, meet with Danish farmers at the summer meeting in Rebild Bakker, the reunion can give them a lot to think about, the old country, so odd and small [...] The sum of their experiences will have to be something like, that the poor conditions they left behind eventually became the **reason for their progress** in the new country, for without the frugal costumes they brought with them, they would never have become settlers."*

[Johannes V. Jensen: Dansk-Amerikaneren og den Danske Bonde, 1928]



"... there are homes in Jutland, where now only the old sit left behind fumbling with letters from Minnesota and the pretty cabinet cards with white dresses, side-partings and children on the lap, small new faces carrying the familiar traits but with a new world in their eyes."

[Johannes V. Jensen: Emmigranten, 1909]



*Lust for life is the characteristic, that first comes to mind, if one is to give a quick description of the American. Lust for life and a basic vitality are the dominant traits, from which I believe all other American strengths, and some weaknesses, spring, a bright and enterprising atmosphere, **freed impulses**, sanguinity, all traits that have their roots in the traditions of the American people and have been potentiated by a large, condensed population of different national origins. (...)*

***America emits shocks** as if from a battery, and one can imagine all the United States being elements in it. The effect is generated by the blend of multiple ethnic groups into one nation of peoples, that in Europe are spread across several; many magnets have been arranged in the same direction. A climatic factor is present, all climates are found on the widespread continent. Here is the charge, here is where the spark springs from.*

[Johannes V. Jensen: Fra Fristaterne, 1939]



New York, 1939. The Chrysler Building is seen in the central background. Photo: Johannes V. Jensen. The Royal Library.



*"From 23rd street the automobile moves down Broadway. Approaching Manhattan's south tip, the street grows more and more like a long deep canyon with towering houses on both sides and thundering traffic at the bottom. A living amalgam of **all the worlds peoples** flow on both sidewalks. They wander. Nowhere else is the pace set by errands like on this broad street leading from work and to work. No one can be identified by his boots like the New Yorker. They resemble a new type of hoo-ves, wander-feet, bruised and dusty from the **grit they tear off the street**, coal dust, metal and stone particles that wear of a city, they look like mountaineers, and so they are, every day they cling on to the stony ridges of the modern city, they advance over ground vibrating from traffic like a volcano, they breathe the poisonous air, fertile with the electricity of a thunderstorm; they manoeuvre their way between lavastreams of people that are constantly rallying with trams and trains over their heads and underground, they listen in a noise that is more isolating than silence, a sedative street-blast, a rockslide where **airwaves are simply crushed**. This is the high pressure they must go through; this is the way that leads across New York."*

[Johannes V. Jensen: Den nye Verden, 1907]



Solvang, California, 1918. A Danish settlement made famous since it began cultivating its Danish roots in the 1950s.



Sculptor Carla Christensen's bust of Max Henius, 1937. For decades Henius played a central part in shaping Danish-American relations.

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AAGE OG JOHANNE
LOUIS-HANSENS FOND



U.S. Embassy & Consulate
in the Kingdom of Denmark



**Aalborg
Kommune**

Knud Højgaards Fond

• GRUNDLAGT 1944 •



Det Danske Udvandrerarkiv



VESTHIMMERLANDS
KOMMUNE

- lyset til at gøre en forskel

The exhibition is curated by The
Danish Emigrant Archives and
Johannes V. Jensen & Thit Jensen
Museum.

All photos are from the collection
of The Danish Emigration Archi-
ves if not otherwise stated.

www.fra-den-nye-verden.dk

JOHANNES V. JENSEN
JENSENMUSEET
THIT JENSEN



**DET KGL.
BIBLIOTEK**

The wake stripe of the Atlantic Liner *Normandie*. Photo: Johannes V. Jensen, 1939. The Royal Library.