



# The Beech Tree



The Official Newsletter of the National Danish-American Genealogical Society

Volume 25

Number 4

[www.danishgenealogy.org](http://www.danishgenealogy.org)

Date: Oct-Dec 2024

## From the Editor

As temperatures begin to drop, daylight grows shorter, and we will likely be seeing family throughout the upcoming holidays, we can say that we are also entering “genealogy season.” We hope that you will find inspiration and many helpful ideas to use in your research in this edition of *The Beech Tree*. Perhaps being indoors more during the winter will give you time to finally pursue some unexplored websites, head down a forgotten branch of your tree, or tackle a roadblock. It’s a good time to re-read back issues of *The Beech Tree* too; you may remember a tip or story that you forgot to look into! One handy idea is to create a Document File named Beech Tree on your computer and download them to it right away when you get them. Wishing everyone a safe and happy rest of 2024!

NDAGS Officers

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## Above our Ancestors’ Heads

by Cathy Kristiansen



*Farm with thatched roofing, by Peter J. Larsen, 1852*

Most of our Danish rural ancestors in the 18th and 19th centuries had homes topped with thatch, a style of roofing that dates back thousands of years. The material used was straw – whether from rye, wheat, or oats – packed down and secured onto wooden framing. It insulated well in all seasons and kept wind and water at bay. Skillfully-made roofs lasted as long as 50 years, if maintained periodically to remove accumulated moss and to patch any trouble-spots.

Making a durable roof required particular skills, and specialized craftsmen became known as thatchers (tækkemand in Danish). Among the tools of their trade were hooked mini-ladders, mallets, reeding pins, and leggets.

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*Thatching underway in 1914, showing the timber framing*

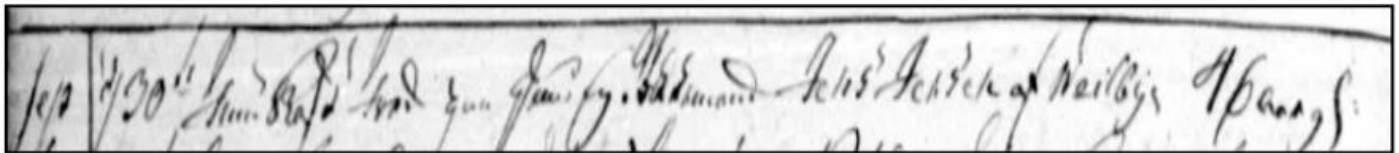
*Thatchers in Lem by Niels Sørensen, arkivdk.png*



*Thatching tools of old, minus a long ladder*

Please see References for a link to descriptions of the tools' uses.

Thatchers, working at height and on slopes that were necessarily steep so water would run off, were at risk of falling. Jens Jensen, a parishioner in Vejlbj parish, Fyn, suffered an untimely death on a summer weekday in 1803, leaving behind a wife and several children. Jens was only 46 years old and no one else died around that time, so it is not unreasonable to wonder if he was mortally injured from falling off a roof.



*1803 summer death of thatcher (tækkemand) Jens Jensen of Vejlbj, 46 years old*

Residents in thatched buildings faced a number of roof-related hazards, especially fire. If sparks from an indoor stove reached the dry straw, the whole roof could quickly go up in flames. Danger came from nature, too. A teacher near Silkeborg, Jutland, wrote this account in his diary: "On the night of October 31, 1863, [our parish] experienced a devastating hurricane that damaged most buildings. That evening, lightning struck and burned down Jakob Hedes's two new houses in Engesvang Mark."



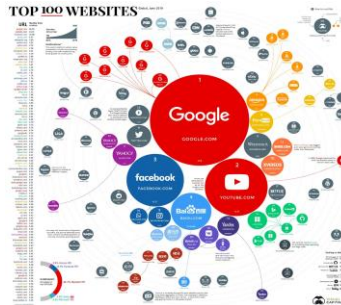
*Burning Farmhouse by Hans Smidth, undated, Hirschsprung, CK.png*

In towns, the density of dwellings exacerbated the fire risk. Copenhagen burned extensively in 1795 under drought conditions and in 1807 due to a British bombardment. These experiences helped drive a change in Denmark's roofing regulations: a ban on any thatch in towns.

At that time, many of Denmark's finer structures, like palaces, manor houses, and churches, already had more resilient roofing made of tile or metal; their sponsors able to afford the higher cost. But with the new law, red tiles became the most common roofing in towns and to this day still attractively

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# NEW “SITES” TO SEE



By Heather Nelsen

No doubt that your genealogy research has you spending more time online than ever before. How can it not? With the vast number of records being added all the time, so many websites to choose from, and the ease of researching at 2 a.m. in your PJ's, it's impossible to not log time on the Internet. Sometimes we get in a rut though, returning over and over to our “heavy hitter,” tried and true websites like FamilySearch and Ancestry. Of course they are exceedingly valuable (they're giants for a reason), but sometimes it is nice to find a few new gems. The following is a list of suggestions that are definitely worth a look: ones you may not have thought of to look at, or didn't know existed. These sites are applicable for general genealogical content as well as relevance to helping find information on our Danish ancestors, even though they aren't Danish-specific sites. Best of all, they are ALL FREE TO USE!

## **Atlas of Historical County Boundaries:**

<https://digital.newberry.org/ahcb/>

For each state in the U.S., this site has a clickable map which shows how the state's outer boundaries changed over time and how the county boundaries developed and changed. This can very helpful when searching for records held at the county level. It can be very frustrating to not find records for a certain county when in reality it was under the jurisdiction of another county for the time period you are looking for. On this site you can also click on *County Name* to see name changes/dates of boundary control changes; timelines and a bibliography of sources. Also interesting is a map and timeline of how the United States boundaries changed over time.

## **Conference Keeper:** <https://conferencekeeper.org/>

The most complete source of what genealogy conferences and programs are coming up. Search by *Calendar View* to see what's happening on a specific day, or search by topic. Other filters include searching for virtual and in person events and you can see if an event is free or costs money. Yes, you'll even see NDAGS events posted here!

## **Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court: Naturalization Declarations of Intent:**

<https://services.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org/NR/>

A great many Midwesterners filed Declarations of Intent to become a naturalized citizens in Cook County, Illinois, the county that Chicago is in. Even if you don't think of your ancestor as settling in the Chicagoland area, this could be a good place to check, especially if they settled in a smaller town in the area. Records cover 1871-1929, a prime time in Danish immigration, and Chicago was a major location for Danes to either settle in or at least start their time in America at.

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## NEW “SITES” TO SEE

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**FamilySearch Full Text Search:** <https://www.familysearch.org/en/labs/>

The indexed records on FamilySearch are just the tip of the iceberg of their full holdings. Only a small percentage of records are searchable though due to the enormous amount of volunteer hours needed to index records. One of their new “Experiments” is a searchable database of over 100 million records that have been processed by Artificial Intelligence and are now searchable by keyword or name. While not 100% accurate or complete, it gives access to an enormous amount of new records that would have been too big to page through one by one. The records in this collection include: US Land and Probate Records, Mexico Notary Records, Australia Land and Probate Records, New Zealand Land and Probate Records, and US Plantation Records. (Note: you will need to Sign In or Create a free FamilySearch account if you don’t already have one) When I tried this section out, I found a land record dated January of 1867 for my great-great-grandmother’s second husband Hubert Zaun. This was the earliest proof of arrival date in Minnesota for them that I had found so far, which was especially exciting because I had been trying to trace their path from Wisconsin for quite some time.

**Linkpendium:** <https://linkpendium.com/>

With its simple looking format, this site may seem obsolete and outdated, but rest assured, this oldie is worth a revisit, especially to see what records are available for each state. Scroll down to *States*, click on a state, then *County*, then click on *Record Type*. For example, I chose the *Wisconsin County Naturalization Records* link which routed me to FamilySearch, but conveniently narrowed records enough for me to find my great-great-grandfather’s Naturalization Papers. Previously, doing searches of his name directly on the FamilySearch website had left me overwhelmed and empty handed because the enormous volume of search results that weren’t even close to his name.

**RootsTech Tutorial Videos:** <https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/>

Watch over 1,000 different videos of lectures offered at past RootsTech Conferences, the major yearly genealogy conference in Salt Lake City. In the top right, click the *magnifying glass* to Search for a specific topic/region/ethnicity. For Danish genealogy, try both *Denmark* and *Danish* separately as key words, they will bring up slightly different results.

**Recollection Wisconsin:** <https://recollectionwisconsin.org/>

Many of us with Danish or German ancestry had ancestors who settled in Wisconsin, or at least started their lives in America there. For those of you with Wisconsin ancestors, you’ll want to explore the digitized archives of Recollection Wisconsin. This site has images of towns (like main street of your ancestor’s hometown), town timelines, images of people, county histories, city directories, maps, historical newspapers, books, original images of marriage records, and more. All are searchable by keyword, or just browse the collection...there’s no telling what you’ll find! I got lost for hours browsing *Recollection Wisconsin* while writing this article. I even found a “Guide to Summer Resorts in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan” from 1875 that was a hoot, you can see it yourself at:

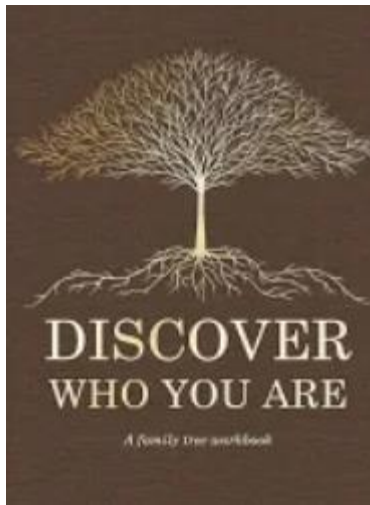
<https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/tp/id/53046>

Another tip, remember to Bookmark these websites in your web browser to easily return to them for later searching! ▀

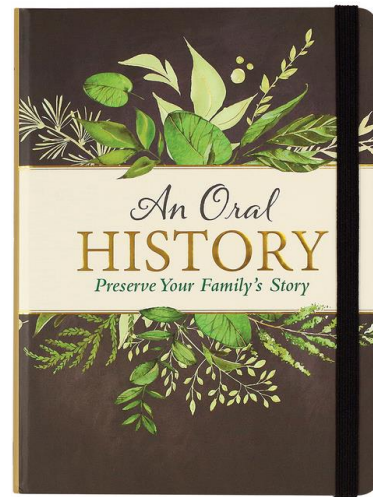


# Book Review: WORKBOOKS: DO THEY WORK?

Review by Myra Madsen



Piccadilly (USA) Inc. Del Mar, CA: 2018



by Paula Spencer Scott, White Plains, NY: Peter Pauper Press, Inc.: 2018

Both ***Discover Who You Are*** and ***An Oral History*** focus on the importance of personal interviews in collecting family data for one's own use and for ensuring that the information collected will be available to future generations. With that focus in mind, someone in the beginning stages of research would most benefit from these workbooks. Also, considering the emphasis on interviewing skills, the 2018 copyright dates are not worrisome.

Piccadilly Inc. has several dozen products available online, including hints and prompts for journaling and self-exploration. This company also has a line of books of interest to artists and creative nonfiction writers. Spencer Scott's book is one of a dozen she has written, with special interest paid to family, health, and communications. In her Introduction, she states, "This journal is designed for an adult child to record the story of a parent or grandparent. (You can also use it to record someone else's oral history.)" Her focus on interviews includes suggestions for creating the setting, encouraging detailed responses, organizing queries, and zeroing in on key events. Among her suggestions for triggers to elicit responses are: food, heirlooms, school, career, ceremonies, philosophy of life, photographs, extended family, childhood, and grandparents. There are so many suggestions and questions that the person being interviewed would provide the interviewer with ample material for a book.

While the workbook from Piccadilly stresses interviews, it also asks the reader to explore his or her own life and then to develop Family Group Sheets. Similar to Spencer Scott, the editors here point out that careful notetaking is essential. Both workbooks suggest that interviewers need to be prepared for sensitive topics to arise. Some topics in Piccadilly are cursory, particularly in discussing DNA and in offering clues to successful cemetery research. It has been said that each person has a book within them, and these workbooks reinforce that observation. If anyone would like to acquire one or both of these books, please contact me at [myraemadsen@msn.com](mailto:myraemadsen@msn.com). ■

## 2025 DUES RENEWAL



As we conclude a great year of programming for 2024, we are eagerly anticipating even more fantastic events for 2025.

We hope that you will all join us as continuing NDAGS members in 2025, enjoying great benefits such as high-quality speakers and speaker notes, access to videos of our programs, our one-of-a-kind newsletter *The Beech Tree*, admission to the Minnesota Genealogical Center Library, and being part of a community of like-minded genealogists.

**NDAGS has experienced *significant* cost increases in the past few years, in terms of the doubling (or even tripling) cost of speaker fees and the significant cost of maintaining our website.**

Because our goal is to make programming and education available to as many people as possible, the NDAGS Board has again voted to not increase yearly dues this year. In fact, we haven't for a great many years.

**But that means it is incredibly important that all our members renew their membership for 2025 so we can continue to provide this quality and unique programming.**

To all those who have already renewed their NDAGS Membership for 2025, we say *mange tak*. If you haven't yet had a chance to renew your membership, you can renew either online or by mail on our website at:

<https://danishgenealogy.org/membership>

Don't forget that an NDAGS Membership makes a great gift for your relatives too, as does our genealogy guide ***Searching for Your Danish Ancestors***, available at:

<https://danishgenealogy.org/publication> ■

## 2025 Officers' Election



With a tremendous salute of gratitude, we thank our 2024 NDAGS Officers Barbara Heenan Andersen, Jaymie Middendorf, Barbara Bahnson, and Myra Madsen for all of the hours of service they put forth in 2024 to make NDAGS the great organization that it is. As we look forward to 2025, we once again have our yearly Officers' Election for the posts of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. If you would like to put your name on the ballot for any of the above positions, or for more information on what that role would entail, please email us at [ndagsmembers@gmail.com](mailto:ndagsmembers@gmail.com)

Voting for NDAGS Officers' positions will take place in December. You will receive voting information by email. Members who do not have email will receive a ballot by mail.

## ARTICLES WANTED!

Don't be shy! During your genealogical research you have undoubtedly experienced exciting triumphs, frustrating roadblocks and much more. Other NDAGS members want to hear about your journey, both the insights and advice as well as the tricky areas yet to be conquered. We can all learn from each other! You never know what bit of advice can help someone else overcome a stubborn roadblock, or explore an area they hadn't considered. NDAGS welcomes your article submissions to *The Beech Tree*, big or small! Let us know about a cool website, a strategy you used to break through a brick wall, educate us about a town in Denmark, or submit a profile about an ancestor. Send content to: [tillygenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:tillygenealogy@gmail.com)

# UPCOMING EVENTS



## **Monday November 25, 2024 at 6:30 pm: Danish Adoption Records**

Finding birth records and biological parents' names can be daunting, or even out-right dead ends, especially when you are searching records that aren't in English. But don't despair, with the right guidance and helpful instruction, you too may find success in uncovering these records for your Danish ancestors. Experienced Accredited Genealogist Charlotte Noelle Champenois, native Dane and now long-time resident of Utah, will guide us through the world of Danish Adoption Records.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87943912640Program>

## **December: No NDAGS Meeting**

## **Monday January 27, 2025 at 6:30 pm CST: "Virtual Fieldtrip:" 135 Years of Genealogy Gems- Chicago's Newberry Library**

The stacks of Chicago's Newberry Library bulge with maps, family papers, genealogies, railroad archives and much, much more. Learn what is available for your U.S. and European forebears and how to access it in person or from a distance. The talk will include some highlights of Danish-American material.

Grace Dumelle is a longtime staffer in the Local and Family History section of the Newberry Library in Chicago. Guiding people to discoveries about their families is something she greatly enjoys. She is an alumna of the Institute of Genealogical and Historical Research and the author of *Finding Your Chicago Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide to Family History in the City and Cook County*.

*Zoom link coming soon*

## **Monday February 24, 2025 at 6:30 pm CST: Creating an Afterlife File for Genealogy**

Ensure your genealogical legacy is preserved and accessible with an "afterlife file." This program will help you organize and safeguard your valuable research, logins, and documents for future generations. You will learn about: what an afterlife file is and why it is essential, discover the types of information to include, explore strategies for organizing your information, learn how to keep your information secure and accessible, and hear real life stories and the impact of these files. Expert genealogist Bert Jones will guide us on this lecture.

## Above our Ancestors' Heads

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dominate parts of the skyline.



*Christiansehavn.jpeg August Fischer, 1892*



*Red Rooftops in Copenhagen 2014, Tony Webster, Wiki CPH.png*

With rising demand for hardier roofing, small kilns that already existed around Denmark expanded and new operations also sprang up. Tiles became cheaper and owners of rural buildings began switching over to tiles as well. Then the industrial revolution took hold and factories mass-produced tiles and also metal-sheet roofing from tin, copper, and zinc.



*Handicraft tile/brick operation on Møn Island, by C.W. Eckersberg, 1809*



*Cathrineminde brick and tile works, about 1860, artist unknown. They*

*shipped roof tiles to Copenhagen, especially after the severe fires in 1728, 1795, and 1807*

While thatch was still in its heyday during the 1700s, residents in a remote part of Denmark – the island of Læsø--struggled to produce enough straw to cover their dwellings and barns. So they resourcefully turned to the plentiful supply of shoreline vegetation, specifically eelgrass (*zostera marina*), often misnamed seaweed.

Læsø (sometimes translated as Laeseo) lies off the northeastern coast of Jutland. Many of the island's men were frequently away at sea, so it was primarily the women who gathered plant strands, dried them out for six months, then wove the material into thick rope.

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Red arrow indicating Læsø Island



Eelgrass

world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity.” The application also includes Læsø’s historic salt works, dating from medieval times. Islanders found that the groundwater had salinity of an average 12%, compared with seawater’s 3%, and they boiled out high-quality salt crystals, a practice that continues today. UNESCO votes on new sites each July.

Denmark is nowadays experiencing a renewed interest in straw roofing, with homeowners attracted by its aesthetic appearance and use of environmentally-friendly materials, even in the face of higher insurance premiums and extra fire protection steps. About 55,000 thatched buildings exist around the country.

Currently, the straw piping preferred for thatch comes mainly from China, but a Danish project is underway to revive domestic production of both straw and eelgrass. Perhaps it would bemuse our ancestors if they could see how their old roofing traditions are appreciated anew in modern times, despite the invention of many practical alternatives in the meantime!

*Cathy Kristiansen is a first-generation Danish-Scottish immigrant to the U.S. and has been a NDAGS member since 2016. She lives in Silver Spring, Maryland. She shares periodic posts about Denmark on her public Facebook site, [www.facebook.com/DanishAncestors](https://www.facebook.com/DanishAncestors) and offers Danish genealogy services at [www.danishancestors.org](https://www.danishancestors.org)*

References continued on page 10

This was then packed onto timber framing, which itself came from the shore in the form of driftwood from tree debris and wrecked vessels. Astoundingly, some of the island’s roofs have lasted 300 years. But in the 1930s, a fungus attacked growing eelgrass plants and today only 19 of once-250 buildings still have these characteristic roofs.

To help preserve this special Læsø tradition, through special funding and attracting tourism, Denmark in November 2023 applied for the island to receive a UNESCO Heritage Site designation, given to a “cultural and natural heritage around the



Læsø buildings with eelgrass roofs, in 1930, via arkiv.dk



Home in Birkerød with a new thatched roof, by C. Kristiansen, 2023

Farm with thatched roofing, by Peter Julius Larsen, 1852, via Denmark's National Gallery

<https://open.smk.dk/artwork/image/KMS3373?q=KMS3373&page=0>

Old farm house with large harvested stack, by Peder Mørk Mønsted 1911, via Wikimedia

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peder\\_M%C3%B8nsted\\_-\\_Gammel\\_Bondeg%C3%A5rd,\\_%C3%98rnebjerg\\_-\\_1911.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peder_M%C3%B8nsted_-_Gammel_Bondeg%C3%A5rd,_%C3%98rnebjerg_-_1911.jpg)

People up roofs, thatching: <https://arkiv.dk/vis/2737818> 1914, by Niels Sørensen, via arkivdk

<https://arkiv.dk/vis/3853333> 1913, by Søren Sørensen, via arkivdk

Thatching tools, Museum of English Rural Life: <https://thatchinginfo.com/thatching-tools-equipment>

<https://merl.reading.ac.uk/collections/strawcraft-and-thatching-objects/thatching-tools/>

Death record for thatcher Jens Jensen:

<https://arkivalieronline.rigsarkivet.dk/da/billedviser?epid=17138711#181887,30879110>

Farm fire by Hans Smidth, undated, at Hirschsprung Gallery, Denmark, photo by C. Kristiansen

Copenhagen ablaze in 1807, by CW Eckersberg, Museum of National History, Frederiksborg Castle

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Natten\\_mellem\\_3\\_og\\_4\\_september\\_1807.jpg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Natten_mellem_3_og_4_september_1807.jpg)

Red rooftops in Copenhagen, 2014, by Tony Webster of Minneapolis, via Wikimedia

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Copenhagen\\_Rooftop\\_Skyline\\_%2822990331869%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Copenhagen_Rooftop_Skyline_%2822990331869%29.jpg)

Courtyard and roofs in Christianshavn, by August Fischer, 1892, via Mutual Art

<https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Backyard-scene-from-Christianshavn-->

Cope/1910B886B1E4AC6DA18629C6EB46449F

Tileworks on Møn, 1809, by CW Eckersburg <https://open.smk.dk/artwork/image/KKSgb4041?list=KKS10094>

Cathrineminde Teglværk (Tileworks), 1860, by Anon, via Wikimedia [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Web-cathrinesminde\\_1860\\_b.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Web-cathrinesminde_1860_b.jpg)

Farm with roofing of metal and thatch, 1900-1911, via arkivdk <https://arkiv.dk/vis/1018317>

Eelgrass drawing 1917-26, by C. Lindman, Wikimedia [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zostera\\_marina\\_nf.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zostera_marina_nf.jpg)

Læsø buildings with eelgrass thatch, by B. Melchiorson, via arkivdk <https://arkiv.dk/vis/3153866>

Decaying Læsø building in 20 th century, by L. Remmer, via Kgl. Bibliotek

<http://www5.kb.dk/images/billed/2010/okt/billeder/object794756/da>

Scientific paper: Læsø's salinity, 2002 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0009254101003928> ▪

# Recipe: Fish Soup/Fisk Soppa

By Barbara Heenan Andersen



Fish Soup has been a common meal for centuries in Scandinavia. The Vikings, living on and by the ocean, often ate Fish. At that time, with their cooking equipment, soup was easy to make. This is a recipe that I used when I was a Viking Age Re-enactor. It has also been well received by friends and family. I like to use salmon and cod, but any fish you have available will be good.

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 liters fish bouillon
- 4 carrots
- 4 parsnips
- 2 leeks
- 2 pounds fish filets/can be mixed species
- 2 cups fresh peas or today we would use a 10-ounce bag of frozen peas
- 2 bay leaves
- Salt and pepper
- Chopped parsley

## METHOD

1. Heat bouillon to boiling
2. Add vegetables and bay leaves
3. Simmer covered until almost tender
4. Add sliced fish
5. Simmer covered until fish turns opaque
6. Add peas (if frozen) and salt and pepper
7. Sprinkle with chopped parsley