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THE BRIDGE is a semi-annual publication of the Danish American Heritage Society. *The Bridge* contains articles, book reviews, and review essays dealing with all aspects of the Danish experience in North America.

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# The Bridge

*The Bridge: Journal of the Danish American Heritage Society* appears twice a year and contains articles and book reviews dealing with all aspects of the Danish experience in North America. Past issues of *The Bridge* have also contained Danish-American memoirs, essays, short stories, collections of letters, and historical documents. Book reviews and review essays in *The Bridge* deal with Danish life and history and the broader Scandinavian experience in North America as well as the Danish-American experience. *The Bridge* occasionally reprints previously published material.

Manuscripts submitted to *The Bridge* should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Please submit an electronic version of the manuscript as an attachment via email in MS Word or Open Office, with illustrations in a separate file. It is the author's responsibility to obtain permission to publish any illustrations included in an article. Include a brief, 50-100-word author's biography suitable for the journal's "Contributors to This Issue" section.

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## Editorial Statement

On the inside of the front cover of *The Bridge* is a statement about “many Americans,” “Danish Americans,” and “the Danish American Heritage Society.” It was most likely composed in 1978 when the first issue of *The Bridge* was published. It is probably time for a reconsideration of that statement and perhaps a re-writing of our goals and ideas of 30 plus years ago.

Some of this is made clear by the topic of the 2009 and 2013 Danish American Heritage Society conferences. Both are titled *Innovation: the Danish Way*. We obviously include innovations by Danish Americans. The implication is that we are looking at the late 20th and early 21st centuries for relevance of the Danes and Denmark and Danish Americans to the contemporary world.

An article in this issue by Signe Sloth on “Danish American Cultural Identity” calls upon us to reconsider how “Danish” and how “American” is “Danish American.”

Anton Gravesen’s narrative of his trip to Denmark in 1928 is a nice complement to Signe Sloth’s consideration of Danish Americans in America. Half a life in Denmark and half a life in the USA and he can say to his friends and relatives in Denmark that his “journey was meant the whole time to lead [him] back home...It was America where we found peace now.”

In the formative years of the DAHS there were concerns about how we could avoid becoming just an organ for Danish Lutherans. That, fortunately, did not happen. Other denominations—and non-denominations—participated. Our publication of the translation of Max Henius’ *Danish Born Americans* in 2012 prompted Robert Olsen, a long time member, to contribute about other church denominations.

This combined issue of *The Bridge* includes material that should have been published in 2013, but is being shipped mid-way through 2014. This issue has been edited by Egon Bodtker, Julianne Haahr, and Jim Iversen. We are confident that you will enjoy it. The first issue of volume 37, a commemorative war-themed special issue, should be sent out by August 2014.

## Contributors to This Issue

Signe Sloth has a B.A. In History from Aalborg University and an M.A. In the Study of Religion from Aarhus University. She has been an intern at the Danish Emigration Archives in Aarhus. She was a recipient of a Bodtker Grant from the DAHS in 2012 and investigated “the contrast between being American and living by American myths...and on the other hand being an immigrant with roots in a different culture.” We are confident that you will find her article thought provoking.

Robert Olsen has been a member of the Danish American Heritage Society (DAHS) since the earliest days. His Master of Church Music thesis was entitled “The Hymnody of Denmark—A Historical Study.” As he stated in one letter “I had always thought of Danes as Lutherans, so I was amazed at what I found!” The publication of the translation of Max Henius’ book *The Danish Born Americans* last year prompted his article on the non-Lutherans among the Danish Americans.

Anton Gravesen’s narrative of his trip to Denmark in 1928 was first published in *Ugebladet* in 1928. It gives us another view of what it is to be Danish American. The article was translated by a granddaughter, Barbara Robertson.

Zizanie Bodene-Yost graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2011 with a degree in German Studies and Scandinavian Languages “with a passion for all things Scandinavian.” Her comparison of the folk high schools in the US and the success of Highlander provides some more food for thought about Danish Americans and others.

Rolf Buschardt Christensen is a native of Copenhagen and for many years was the Press and International Relations officer for the European Commission to Canada. He is a co-founder and long time president of the Federation of Danish Associations in Canada. He has a Master’s Degree in International Affairs from Carleton University in Ottawa.

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# The Bridge

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# On Danish-American Cultural Identity

By  
Signe Sloth

In 1967 an article was published which kick-started a discussion that is still going on among sociologists today. The subject of the article is American civil religion and the writer is the American sociologist Robert Bellah who claims that every nation and every people has a religious self-understanding. He advocates an American civil religion that is separated from other denominations and established religious institutions, but just like them demands recognition and understanding. Bellah defines this Civil Religion as "... A genuine apprehension of universal and transcendental religious reality as seen in or ... as revealed through the experience of the American people.<sup>1</sup> His main argument is that in every inaugural address by any American president you can find a reference to God. This is not a specific god, but because God is a concept that almost everyone can relate to, whether it being the Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Jewish god, it is a reference that leaves no one out. And that is the main point of the concept that Bellah named American civil religion: To find a common ground that will help to unite the people of a nation. And this is part of the theme of this essay.

By using a variety of different inaugural addresses Bellah proves his point by highlighting how all of these speeches draw on a clear tradition for praising the historical phenomena that express American national values. In other words; the beliefs, symbols and rituals of American civil religion are grounded in the nation's history even if they do draw on Christian symbols.

Behind the civil religion at every point lie Biblical archetypes: Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, Sacrificial Death and Rebirth. But it is also genuinely American and genuinely new. It has its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and places, its own solemn rituals and symbols. It is concerned that America be a society as perfectly in accord with the will of god as men can make it, and a light to all the nations.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian archetypes that Bellah addresses here are all recognizable in American history: Among the people who founded the nation were religious refugees, fleeing from a Europe that had no place for 'disbelievers.' America quickly gained its nickname as the Promised Land, a New Jerusalem to be the light for other nations to follow; a city upon a hill. The sacrificial death and rebirth was added with Lincoln's martyr death for the nation that would rise again as a result of the Civil War. American civil religion is found in the nation's myths: The American myth of origin with the Founding Fathers, the Declaration of Independence as a sacred script, the president as the nation's father (Obama was even called a prophet by some), the national holidays, and the rituals and ceremonies connected to these. All this is sacralized in Civil Religion with the single purpose of uniting the collective identity of the society.

It is up to the individual to do or don't when it comes to believing in the concept of Civil Religion. Nonetheless the concept gained new life with the election of president Barack Obama in 2008. More than any of his predecessors Obama draws heavily on the American history and myths in his public speeches. And he does more than that; he even verbalizes the concept, talking openly about Civil Religion, and with that partakes in pulling it from the academic realm into everyday media. This is even visible in Danish media. But by making it tangible for all of us it raises a question; how can Civil Religion unite a people as diverse as the Americans? And further; how does such a diverse people relate to myths established long before most of them came to this country? With no clear definition on what constitutes being American you can't expect everyone to adhere to the doctrines of Civil Religion. That some seek a subcultural anchor outside or alongside the national identity is therefore understandable.

In the fall of 2012 a new show aired on Danish television. The show 'Alt For Danmark' (all for Denmark) invited the viewer to follow a competition between a group of Americans with Danish heritage on their knowledge of Denmark. 14 Americans from different regions of the US are joined in their ancestors' country, one they have never seen but only heard of through family stories. On the show we learn the contestants' stories as to how they are connected to Denmark and we are introduced to each of their views on the impact this connection has on their lives. It is clearly an emotional journey for the contestants as they each try to be more Danish than the other in order to win the

competitions and be introduced to their Danish relatives. The show helps to testify to the timeliness of my study. The first episode aired the day before I left for the US to do my research on this exact topic; how Danish-Americans view themselves as both one and the other.

Throughout my studies I have had a special interest in American history and have worked thoroughly especially with the subjects of politics and religion. The combination of the two is so very far from Danish ways and standing outside looking in it is fascinating how the American society, the mixture that it is, is bound together by what seems to be a strong and proud history of a fight for freedom that took place long before the massive migration from Europe and thereby also long before more than a tenth of the Danish population uprooted their lives in Denmark and crossed the Atlantic in search of a better life.

Through an internship at The Danish Emigration Archives in Aalborg it appeared to me that there must be a contrast between being American and living by the American myths that the country is founded upon, and on the other hand being an immigrant with roots in a different culture. Since I can trace my family back through 400 years of Danish history I've never had to deal with the issues that are present in immigrant families. I am 'just' Danish. Thus I found myself wondering how immigrants and their descendants perceive themselves as belonging to more than one place, one culture.

Looking through the archives of immigrants' personal letters one rarely comes across an expression of how it *feels* to go through this transformation in national myths and traditions that the experience of integration must have been. The immigrant stories are plenty and the descriptions thorough but it is difficult to get a sense of how the road towards being American and keeping track of one's background was kept in balance. In a letter from the early 1900s an immigrant describes to her Danish relatives the differences between Danish and American Christmas traditions as follows: "We Danes around here keep our old custom of celebrating Christmas. The Americans keep only Christmas day." She goes on writing that in spite of the differences they also join in celebration. She reminds her relatives of how long she has been living abroad and on the thought of ever going back to Denmark concludes:

"I think I might miss America as much as I now miss Denmark"<sup>3</sup>

Despite this remark she still considers herself Danish and there is a clear sense of an us-and-them sentiment throughout her letters. Though they speak Danish at home, she tells her relatives that her two youngest children won't learn to write Danish and that the oldest one is forgetting how to. In describing the mixture of people in her neighborhood she writes: "It is almost like the Tower of Babel" and of her children she writes: "We have had a lot of pleasure and happiness from our children so far but they are Americans." From these few quotes a picture is provided of how the woman writing the letters experiences Danish vs. American traditions, how her new country starts to feel like home and how her children are American before they are Danish. Especially the last point repeats itself again and again in the stories of the people this essay is written about.

It is generally known that the Danish immigrants spread out more widely than their Scandinavian neighbors. This caused for a rapid assimilation through loss of native language after the first generation, marriage out of the group, and also through the division of the Lutheran church.<sup>4</sup> I started out writing this essay while situated in Elk Horn, Iowa. One doesn't have to stay long to realize that this place is one of the exceptions to that general knowledge. Here is a vast claim for the population's Danish heritage, visualized throughout the town, and at the Family History and Genealogy Center you will often hear the claim "I'm Danish" spoken in a very distinguishable American accent by the visitors who come here to do some digging on their ancestors.

In terms of cultural identity the individual draws his or her affiliations from a variety of parameters. Where cultural identity can be seen shaped in the community, big or small, when the individual imitates and follows the social norm and learns from the group, an essential point can be made in reference to the individual belonging not just to one but several groups and therefore partaking in different cultural identities, some of which may even contradict each other. This is what I aim to explore through my interviews with some of those Americans who still consider themselves Danish alongside their being American.

I graduated from Aarhus University in 2011 with my final thesis engaging with the way in which American Presidents have used Civil Religion to evoke certain sentiments in the American public, and thereby create a feeling of unity. As previously mentioned Civil

Religion can be defined as a symbol system with the purpose of uniting members of a society through joint myths and rituals and the idea of a transcendent power, and sociologists will argue that the phenomenon is very visible when looking at some American Presidents where Civil Religion becomes a celebration of a unified people, in spite of the differences.

In my thesis I concluded that Barack Obama is distinctively aware of the civil religious tradition he is maintaining, and his evident use of the American myths has moved the debate on civil religion from the academic realm to the public; this can now be witnessed throughout the written media when the subject is religion. Even the Danish media highlighted the connection between Obama's inaugural address and American civil religion, emphasizing further the importance of this study; particularly how the concept of civil religion is received by those Americans who still hold onto their Danish roots.

My hypothesis aims to explore the apparent paradox of, on one hand identifying oneself as American, yet partaking in the traditions of a Danish subculture and heritage. Within the context of Civil Religion, my research aims to explore how the Danish Americans experience the attempt by their President to embrace all Americans under one etiquette, eliminating any difference, and thereby unifying the population. Obama does this in a very visible manner but is far from the only American president to do so. This is of course especially interesting among those who fight to maintain their foreign roots. How are the American myths perceived by people with Danish heritage, with myths of their own? How do these people react to civil religion as it is used in politics? And how do they relate to the American myths in general?

Contrary to the contestants on the Danish TV-show, the Danes I spoke to in Elk Horn have all been to Denmark at least once. Some have visited recently, some earlier and some of them more than a few times. It seems to be equally important to these people to be able to say that they have in fact visited their parents' or grandparents' birthplaces. To some, the trip to their ancestors' native country has made them even prouder of their Danish heritage, and in our conversations I immediately sensed that it is certainly a trip you have to take in order to be a true Danish- American descendant in the Danish Village of Elk Horn.

On the question of their upbringing in a Danish home the standard answer is that even though their parents spoke Danish they weren't interested in passing on that part of their identity. Most parents would only speak Danish when they didn't want the kids to know what they were talking about! And those kids that did speak Danish when they started in school quickly learned that it was easier to fit in if they spoke English. Most parents would encourage their children to speak English and make it clear that they were Americans. One woman told me that when she started school she was teased because she could barely speak English and to her Grandmother who never learned English she made it very clear that: "I'm NOT talking Danish to you anymore." There seems to have been a desire from the parents of the people I have talked to, to make sure that their children were well integrated into the American society, and from the children as well to fit in as Americans and thus letting go of whatever might separate them from the other kids. They agree that their generation were more Americanized because there wasn't a desire from their parents to teach their children about their Danish roots. Because of this the children weren't aware of the ethnic upbringing they would end up having anyway; People in Elk Horn agree that what has been passed down as relevant today are recipes. On the question of whether they spoke Danish growing up the participants would answer: "We ate Danish." Everybody in the area grew up eating *æbleskiver*, *frikadeller*, *rullepølse* and *rugbrød*. And they still do. But for most of them it wasn't until later in their lives, when someone outside of the Danish community would ask them about it, they realized that this wasn't common American. One woman tells me of her first visit to the Danish village Solvang in California; while she was looking over the menu excited to see all the dishes she remembered from her childhood, her friend who wasn't of Danish descent was looking confused as if the menu was written in a different language. And while this woman's friend thought the waitress spoke with a strange accent, she herself was familiar with the Danish sound of the waitress' voice. It wasn't until this point she realized that she must have had a somewhat ethnic upbringing after all, seeing her friend being unfamiliar with the things that she hadn't even thought about; "I felt like I was at home and she was totally estranged."

Despite their parents not doing anything conscious to teach their children Danish culture it somehow became important later in their

lives. The awareness of belonging to a culture separate from the American turned out to be of significance in a way that fits the sentiment of Elk Horn well. Even though none of the participants of this essay moved to Elk Horn because of its Danishness, they all say that the place caused them to be more conscious about their background.

They all agree that the interest in their background is something that has become important later in their lives. None of them were particularly proud to be anything but American growing up. In spite of this, many of the people participating in my interviews believe that this awareness of one's background is important to their children more than it was when they themselves were younger. With today's easy access to genealogy studies, an interest in digging up one's family history is created. And today they won't hesitate to call themselves Danish. On the question of whether they are American first, they will answer yes, of course they are. But they will still call themselves Danish; "there is something neat about that." It is clearly difficult to put into words exactly why, but it becomes clear that the connection to Denmark matters in terms of how one characterizes oneself; being proud of being Danish equals looking up to the hardworking ancestors who gave up everything and fought their way through an ungrateful existence in a foreign country, most of them without ever being able to go back. So this is what it comes down to; the Danish moral and work ethic. I have come across people saying that they are happy their family originated in Denmark and not in Italy or Germany; "the Danes are trustworthy and have a high moral standard. I'm glad to know that they are behind us."

The people participating in my study in Elk Horn are almost all third generation immigrants. Studies show that it is common for this generation to pay more attention to their historical background than it is for second generation immigrants. While the children of parents who migrated did what they could to assimilate and become one with the surrounding culture, the next generation is more likely to dig up old traditions in a return to their family's previous ways of being. While the first generation kept to their own ways of doing things, mostly because they settled among fellow countrymen, the second generation would turn towards American ways of living, and the following generation would seek backwards to pick up old traditions. That shows among the Danish-Americans in Elk Horn and

the stories they have shared with me. When asked about the contrast I expected to find in this way of living by both Danish and American values a lot of them couldn't follow my drift. I kept getting the same response over and over again; "This was how we were brought up." They didn't see the trouble in being both a patriotic American and a dedicated Dane. That their homes are decorated with Royal Copenhagen, that they will dance around the Christmas tree singing the Danish Christmas song '*Nu har vi jul igen*', and that they can show off a well used *æbleskiver* pan, doesn't make them any less American. In reference to the American myths and my question on how that is relevant to them another general answer kept meeting me; "This IS my history! It is our history." Still their lives circulate around the Danish elements as well and that comes natural in Elk Horn; "The things we do are the things everybody does here. It isn't anything we think about. There is just something about it that pulls you to it."

Outside Elk Horn the tone is quite different. It is safe to say that there is always an exception to the rule and in this case that exception is firmly grounded in the difference in being third generation immigrants as my interviewees in Elk Horn or first generation immigrants as the couple I met with in another Iowan town. Opening with the question on to which degree they consider themselves American I am met with the answer; "Absolutely! We don't have a foot in each camp like some immigrants have." Here is nothing of wanting the best of both sides. It was agreed upon when they decided to move that they were to become American. This separates them from the original first generation immigrants, but it is natural that circumstances change over time. These two immigrants didn't decide on putting an ocean between themselves and their homeland because the situation there forced them to. They came because they wanted to. But the fact that they chose not to participate in the variety of Danish societies that surrounded them makes them unique to my study. "We were going to be Americans. We were not going to be different." So they blended right in, surprised to see the Danish communities of Askov, Solvang, Tyler and Dannebrog among them, not having known about these settlements beforehand; "They were probably more Danish than we were." That is in terms of making an effort to keep traditions alive, because what is clear to someone born and raised in Denmark is that these traditions "...are a hundred years old." But even living as Americans, a conscious decision or not,

they admit to celebrating Danish traditions after all. A few Danish hymns around the Christmas tree are in order just as is *ris a la mande*. Like someone told me; "You haven't celebrated Christmas until you have done it in Denmark." It becomes clear that these two people have experienced difficulty fitting in to the Danish societies in their neighborhood because of the outdated and modified traditions that these societies maintain. They have learned to keep quiet even though "They sure don't do anything that we consider Danish."

By geography they are American. For the simple reason that this is where they chose to settle and this is where their children are. But when it comes to define one's nationality in terms of history the question is not as easy to answer. This is actually something that has been an issue in more than one way; it is not just a question of personal history, it can be a tricky thing as well when you are filling out official papers. To be an ethnic Dane but a US citizen can be confusing when the system asks about your nationality. Is it a matter of where you were born or where you belong? But for these two, as confusing as it might have been to begin with, they always put down 'US' when asked about nationality, thinking that it must have had to do with citizenship. So when asked if they consider themselves Danish or American they don't hesitate to answer that they are American; "it is simpler to just belong to one place." Here you don't feel the need for anything outside of the general society to help define you. Actually they find it strange when people consider them to be Danish; "A friend would introduce us as 'our friends from Denmark,' we have been here 50-60 years, and you would think we just got off the boat." Despite that remark they admit to looking differently at some of the things they are presented with in the US because of their Danish background. It isn't everything in society that is as easily understood as it is for older generation Americans.

As much as this particular couple stands firm on their American ground I am struck by the distinct Western Jutlandic accent that colors their perfectly fluent English. Some things are not as easily let go of.

On another note, returning to the issue of American civil religion and its unifying purpose, I am met with opposing opinions on whether or not the myths of the nation will keep their relevance to the citizens of the multicultural melting pot as one of the participants calls the United States. In Iowa a woman tells me that she is not sure

if the people of the nation are ever going to be unified. She doesn't believe that her holding on to her Danish heritage is something that is standing in the way of that and describes it as a process that is still evolving. She identifies as an American; "We are all Americans because this is our nation, this is what we are part of. That doesn't take away from the fact that we all came from somewhere else and that we are still proud of the connection to those groups." But she recognizes the difference between living in an old Danish settlement and being in a mixture of several different nationalities. For the latter it is going to be difficult to identify with one cultural background and therefore they will consider themselves all American. Without a specific family history all you have is the American history. But even with a strong Danish heritage to identify with there is no issue connecting to American values also; "American society is a mixture. It's always going to be a mixture. It's never going to be one thing. Maybe in a thousand years, but at this point we are still a new country." When I ask her about history she firmly states that her history is the history of the United States. And when I argue that this is not where her family is from she quickly responds that it doesn't matter, this is where she belongs, despite her Danish heritage. She points out that the American history is a history of immigrants. People who came, blended in, and helped to build the country. And this is the ongoing process; Mexican holidays are celebrated all over the United States but that doesn't mean that the people celebrating them don't consider themselves to be Americans. Introducing the subject of Civil Religion all I get is "When you think about those puritans, oh my God, who wants them for ancestors?" She might agree that there is a lot of religious symbolism in politics, but it isn't anything she takes to heart. Even if she believes that her history is the history of America she still thinks that keeping track of your roots is important and when asked why the Danish subculture still thrives around the nation she answers that at this point it is still part of people's history. "We still identify with our ethnic groups because we have no definite American culture to hang on to." She admits that there might be a little but it is not celebrated unanimously. "As far as stories from hundreds and hundreds of years ago, where are we going to get them? We have to go to some other country so we go to the country we came from. We are preserving the multiculturalism and that's part of being American." She does however have some reluctance towards the authenticity of the Danish

subculture in her community. People participate in the celebrations because it is fun. Not because it's particularly Danish; "The *æbleskiver* and the Christmas hearts aren't real culture. They are the trappings of a culture, the decorations of a culture. We use those things to relate to a culture which we are not a part of ourselves." She doesn't mean this to be a bad thing, that's just how it is.

In California I get another opinion on the issue of American civil religion and the relevance of the national myths. The first couple I meet here stands out by having recently moved to the States from Denmark after having spent half a lifetime going back and forth. They have chosen to keep their Danish citizenship not because they don't want to be American but because Denmark is one of the few countries that doesn't allow dual citizenship.

This couple believes that the American myths of origin, the story of The Founding Fathers, will keep its relevance because it has to! "It is the only history that the Americans have, even if it is not a real history. The American history is nothing but a family feud. How can that be the pillar of this gigantic country?" They hope that that history after all will keep its relevance because it is the only thing that will unite the country. Without it The United States wouldn't be a unified country with anything in common. The differences across the nation are too great. But even so they are not convinced that this bit of history is enough. Only weeks before the presidential election these two people express that they have never experienced the country being as divided as it seems to be this fall of 2012; "There is a growing need in society to express your affiliations outside American society. You don't just say your name when you introduce yourself. There is always something following, race, religion or some other indication on what and where you belong to." As an example, when it became politically incorrect to call people with African heritage black, they were to become Afro-Americans instead, ignoring the fact that most of these people had never had anything to do with Africa; "They don't have that background. They are building an Afro-American background on the same very thin basis as the first Americans built America on." Because these two people have a present perception of their background they don't feel a need to be a part of the Danish communities because their experience is that what is introduced to them as their background isn't true; "Everything has been twisted. You don't experience a current interest in updating things." They don't

see it as a possibility to ever take the Danish out of them, should they choose to become American citizens; “You can’t remove the heritage you bring with you.” Be it Latin-American, Afro-American or Danish-American it is important for people to say both because you can’t just take away the history you bring with you. “That heritage won’t change because you choose another citizenship. That doesn’t change your nationality.” This goes for first generation immigrants more than it does for people born and raised in the US of course.

Down the Pacific coast I am met with the same sentiment, in Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, San Diego and even Solvang the people I talk to are of the same opinion; the country seems more divided than ever, and politically, people are lashing out at each other from each of their political, religious, and ethnic groupings. Some might believe that American civil religion needs to survive for the country to survive as a nation and not just as a group of united states. But far from all believe that it will. The Danish-Americans might not have trouble finding a way to relate to American history and its myth of origin because our society and culture are not that different from each other. But a lot of the migration into The United States today comes from far different places around the globe and as some of the participants in this study have explained their easy integration on their Anglo-Saxon background, this is not the case of the majority of the immigrants today. As one woman told me; “I think that with the influx of immigrants into the United States today we are gonna have a difficult time keeping our national myths relevant to the citizens of the United States because there will be fewer who can actually identify with them.” Be this as it may, the melting pot that is the United States leaves room for patriotism facing both forward and back in time. No one I have talked to, of the Danish-Americans joining in both Danish and American culture, feel conflicted in celebrating both the 4th of July and June 5th. An Independence Day and a Constitution Day can be equally celebrated even if they are rooted in two different countries. And they are both equally important to the celebrators as part of their history.

Important as it may still be for most of the people I have talked with in writing this essay, who is to say how time will treat the old Americanized celebrations of Danish culture? If American civil religion doesn’t succeed in its purpose of uniting the American people, who knows, the subcultural minorities around the country might again get

to bloom, but for now, the two high school football teams formerly known as Danes and Vikings are merged into Spartans and as much as the people of Elk Horn wish for their Danish culture to thrive among the inhabitants of the small Danish Village, they agree that it is going to be on a touristic level and not a communal. Luckily, in the foreseeable future the Danes of Elk Horn will still gather around the Christmas tree to sing *Nu har vi jul igen*, they will eat their *æbleskiver* and *rullepølse* and share stories of times long gone, and I am grateful that they have shared these stories with me and by that shed some new light on a little bit of our mutual history.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus*. 96 (1967): 12.

<sup>2</sup> Bellah, "Civil Religion," 18.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, Agnes, trans., *I Remember Mama - Letters from Bertha Johnson Rasmussen to Family in Denmark, 1903-1926*, (Elk Horn: The Family History and Genealogy Center).

<sup>4</sup> Torben Grøngaard Jeppesen, *Skandinaviske efterkommere i USA*. (Odense: Odense Bys Museer, 2010).

# Non-Lutheran Denominations Among the Danish Immigrant Churches

By  
Robert A (Bob) Olsen

## Introduction

The combined 2012 Issue (Volume 35) of "The Bridge" was a translation of Max Henius' "Den Danskfodte Amerikaner" (The Danish-Born American), published in 1912. It is a fascinating addition for the English speaking "Danes" dealing with many aspects of the lives of the approximately 300,000 Danish-born that emigrated to the United States in the years prior to that time. It discusses many aspects of Danish-American life at the time, ranging from schools, societies, the Danish press, old people's homes, organizations and churches. Unfortunately when it comes to schools, churches, and newspapers there is barely a mention of anything outside of the Lutheran Church with the exception of a mention of the existence of some Baptist, Methodist, and Adventists churches in Jim Iversen's comments on the translation, none of the lists include any further data. The State Church of the Motherland was/is Lutheran but it is usually estimated that barely 25% (some historians estimate an even smaller percentage) of all Danes coming to America remained faithful to the church. Waldemar C. Westergaard notes in his article about Danes in Cass County, North Dakota that "Though the state religion in Denmark is Lutheran, there is hardly a member of the settlement who now professes the old faith" and "...the immigrants have gone through their period of severe discipline in the catechism of the Danish Lutheran Church...and...many on their arrival express freely their dislike for the compulsory religious study" and "have never been in any haste to join any new church organization in this country." And even though the Danish Constitution (Grundlov) was changed in 1849 to grant religious freedom (section 67) and forbid religious persecution (section 70) it still existed, particularly for Baptists and adherents to the proselytizing of the Mormon Church.

Another factor making it more difficult to determine the number of Danes in churches in the United States was the fact that they came in

much smaller numbers and considerably later than their Norwegian and Swedish counterparts. It is also likely that many Danes may have lost their "Danish" identity among the Norwegians who had already established numerous settlements where the Danes could and did feel comfortable, primarily due to the heritage they shared as well as the language. The ties between the two countries were very close, going back to the Union of Calmar of 1397, which had brought together Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in personal unions. The relationship with Denmark and Norway remained even after Sweden left the Union in 1523. The 1814 Treaty of Kiel forced Denmark to cede Norway to Sweden but in 1905 Norway declared their independence from Sweden and after a public vote approved not only a monarchy over a republic but also chose a Danish prince (Prince Carl, younger brother of the future King Christian X) as their king. Christian and Carl were sons of King Frederick VIII and Carl was married to his first cousin, Maud, the daughter of King Edward VII and his queen consort, Alexandra. King Frederick and Alexandra were brother and sister, children of King Christian IX. Carl took the name Haakon V as king and his son, born Alexander, was named Olaf and followed his father to the throne over 50 years later in 1957.

The only church denomination besides Lutheran that actually established a conference of Danish churches was the Baptist church. Numerous "branches" of the Mormon church, particularly in Utah, which in 1890 had more Danish-born residents than any other state in the Union, likely used the Danish language and were by far the largest foreign speaking group of immigrants in the state, but were also encouraged by the church leaders to adapt to the English language as quickly as possible. The Seventh-Day Adventist church never had a "formal" organization for foreign speaking congregations but did extensive "Scandinavian" work, which was predominantly Danish (in comparison to the Norwegian and Swedish churches established).

Norwegians always outnumbered Danes in the Methodist, Free Church, as well as the Moravian Church, but the "Scandinavian" Moravian Church was served mainly by Danish ministers. Norwegian-Danish conferences existed in both the Methodist and the Free Church. Danish pastors only accounted for approximately 10 percent of the ministers in the Methodist Church and a relatively small percentage of ministers within the Norwegian-Danish Free Church Association (which would also include the early Congregational churches, as the

early workers in this church were trained at the Chicago Theological Seminary by P.C. Trandberg, a Danish minister who taught there from 1884-1890 when he was dismissed and established his own "Lutheran Free Seminary from 1890-93). The sole Presbyterian church using the Danish language was originally called Dano-Norwegian Presbyterian Church until a name change after the turn of the century to Golgotha. The Cragin #12 Corps of the Salvation Army in Chicago and the sole Friends meeting were most likely almost entirely Danish.

Always proud of my Danish heritage but not having grown up in a Danish area, I have long desired to make some contribution to preserving some aspect of my Danish heritage. Personal connections to Danish ancestors include my father's mother (Anna Matilda Hansen Olsen) who was born, baptized, and raised in the Fredsville Danish Lutheran Community just west of Cedar Falls, Iowa. My grandmother's first cousin Anna Botilda "Tillie" married Axel Bent Kjolhede, son of Peter and Caroline Amalie Brandt Kjolhede (Peter was a former president of the Danish Lutheran Church) and Axel was a brother of Mrs. Soren Rodholm, a well known minister and hymn writer and translator in the Danish church. My father's father (Grant Henry Olsen) was born near Independence, Iowa, where a Danish Baptist congregation (Pine Creek) had been established in 1879. My great grandfather (Christian) had a twin brother (James) who remained a Baptist and one of his daughters married a minister of the Danish Baptist church. My grandfather's family, however, moved to Cedar Falls sometime in the 1890's where even though there was a Danish Baptist church, somehow became involved with Bethlehem Lutheran Church there. My grandfather's brother (Arnold Olsen) was married to a daughter of one of the leaders of the community of Quakers called "Little Copenhagen" near the present day Randall, Iowa and were active Friends after their move to West Branch, Iowa (also the birthplace of the Quaker President of the United States, Herbert Hoover (their farm bordering the Presidential Library).

My research began while working on my Master of Church Music degree in 1983. In one of my classes I began researching items such as the "lur" and the Danish hymn writer N.F.S. Grundtvig for short class projects. At the urging of Carl Schalck, a noted hymnody scholar and my instructor, it was suggested that there was a lack of research done on the hymnody of Scandinavia and this ultimately resulted in my thesis devoted to the study of Danish hymnody, but from a 99 percent

Lutheran perspective. In 1985 I was invited to make a presentation at the West Denmark Family Camp in Luck, Wisconsin and afterwards extended my trip to include a trip into Minnesota. It was there that I discovered a book at a used book store that really “sparked the fire.”

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century the United States Government also conducted religious bodies census reports in 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936. The first two of these were more detailed than the latter and listed the number of congregations, by denomination, that used a foreign language, either exclusively or in addition to English, in the conduct of their worship services.

I soon discovered that not only Baptists, but Methodists, Free Church, Seventh-Day Adventists, Moravians, and other denominations conducted missionary work among these Danish immigrants, often with rather significant results. This did not even include the work of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon), which had sent missionaries to Denmark as early as 1850. Some estimate that as many as 45,000 Danes left Denmark to come to “Zion,” their new home in the state of Utah.

The following chapters will give you a brief description of the denominations known to have ministered to Danes after they arrived in America. Without doubt the Mormon Church was the most successful in the effort, with the exception of the Lutheran Church. It is, however, more difficult to determine the full extent of the use of the Danish language within this denomination. The use of the English language was greatly encouraged making it more difficult to determine how much the Danish language was used, particularly in the Religious Bodies Census mentioned earlier. It is also however very obvious that the Mormon “Zion” brought many Danes to Utah, as still today the total percentage of persons of Danish ancestry in that state is more than double the percentage in any other state in the Union and second in total “Danish” population (behind California).

The source of information concerning non-Lutheran “Danish” churches comes from a variety of different places. Some of the data is conjecture on the part of the author. When accurate data and “proof” are not readily available some of the data reported may be assumptive in nature, based on suggested or known facts but with no authoritative proof.

Every attempt has been made to make the information reported here as accurate as possible for the same time period as the translation

of the Henius book but it has not always been possible to guarantee complete accuracy. The bibliography at the end of the congregational listing will identify the source of the information used but unfortunately without full documentation in some cases some finding may be more or less an educated “guess” based on the information that is available.

And lastly the reader must keep in mind that beyond the Danish Lutheran and Danish Baptist denominations the likelihood of the listed congregations of being “totally” Danish is unlikely as many were “Scandinavian” or “Dano-Norwegian” in nature and no records indicate full memberships of any of the nationalities.

A bibliography of materials and sources used in researching this article will be found at the end following the congregational listing.

*Enjoy!*

Robert A (Bob) Olsen  
Houston, TX  
2013

## Danish Baptists

As stated in the introduction the only other denomination to establish a conference in America specifically for Danish congregations other than the Church of Denmark, which is Lutheran, was the Baptist Church. Loosely-knit organizations formed as early as the late 1850's but the Danish Baptist General Conference was not formed until September 1910 in Harlan, Iowa.

The first Danish Baptist church was established by Julius Kobner in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1839. Kobner, born to Jewish parents in Odense in 1806 came under the influence of Gerhard Onchen during his journeys to Hamburg, Germany where he was baptized in 1836. Within a few years Kobner was able to find like-minded people on the island of Langeland and in Copenhagen and established congregations there. Even though the Grundlov of 1849 brought religious freedom and tolerance there was still persecution and in 1856 a group of Danish Baptists came to the United States and established a congregation near Germania, Pennsylvania, which had been established a year earlier by German immigrants. This, however, did not result in a permanent settlement and two years later most of this group moved further west and settled in southeastern Wisconsin where the first permanent Danish Baptist church in the United States was founded near Raymond. The congregation still exists today and was a part of the Danish Baptist General Conference when it was formed in 1910 but left the conference shortly thereafter (1914) and became Americanized. There were also early churches in Chicago and other places but the "mother" church of Danish Baptists would have to be considered the congregation at Clarks Grove, Minnesota. In time there would be 84 Danish Baptist churches established in the US and the Baptist Church was one of the truly "Danish" churches on American soil, besides the Lutheran Church.

This church near Raymond west of Racine was organized on November 10, 1856 and the first pastor was Soren Larsen, who left in 1858 to pastor the church in Waushara, Wisconsin (the second Danish Baptist congregation established) when the Raymond congregation became divided over the role of women in the church and Pastor Larsen chose to remain neutral on the issue. Lars Jorgensen, a gifted teacher, then came but was not ordained until February 1859. Over the

years at least ten other Danish Baptist churches owed their beginning to this congregation, including the one in Clarks Grove, Minnesota.

By the time the Danish Baptist General Conference was formed in 1910, seventy-six Danish Baptist congregations had been established. Within the next twenty years eight more congregations were born (one in Canada). However, by the time the conference disbanded on August 29, 1958 at the 30<sup>th</sup> and last session of the Conference held at First Baptist Church in Clarks Grove there were only fourteen member churches remaining. Approximately 31 of the congregations had disbanded with another 39 either merged or consolidated with American Baptist churches, which the remaining 14 did when the conference closed. The need for seminary training, periodicals, hymnals, and preaching in the Danish language continued to decline over the years particularly as the young people were born and raised as English-speaking Americans. While many remained proud of their Danish heritage the use of the mother tongue no longer existed and thus a separate conference was no longer needed as well.

Most likely the Methodist and Mormon denominations were larger but the Methodists were still primarily Norwegian rather than Danish and no records are available to indicate Danish branches of the Mormon Church. However, based on the immigration records, Danes accounted for the majority of the “Scandinavian” work done by the church and the large presence of persons of Danish ancestry in Utah (as well as parts of Idaho) today would indicate the likelihood of many Danish-speaking services.

There are congregations that still honor their Danish heritage and the Baptist Memorial Home in Harlan, Iowa remains today as a testament to these Danish pioneers who took upon the difficult task of building this facility, which was first dedicated on August 24, 1950.

Originally the archives of the Danish Baptist General Conference were held at the Home in Harlan, until they were transferred to the Clarks Grove, MN church. In time the archives became a part of the collection at the American Baptist – Samuel Colgate Historical Library in Rochester, New York. In an attempt to unite the American Baptist archives across the United States under one roof this collection found a new home at the Atlanta (Georgia) campus of Mercer University in September 2008.

## Danish Episcopalians

While the 1906 Religious Bodies Census of the United States reports only one Episcopal church using the Danish language to conduct some of their worship services it may be difficult to determine which congregation that is. There are however two strong examples of the work of the Episcopal church among the Danes in America, one in Wisconsin and the other in New Denmark, New Brunswick, Canada.

According to Rasmus Andersen in his book *“Banebrydere for Kirken i Amerika”* (*Pioneers for the Church in America*), the oldest Danish congregation with a Danish pastor was St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Waupaca, Wisconsin. While it is known that at least a portion of this congregation was served by Martin F. Sorensen, a son of the emigrant agent Rasmus Sorensen, from 1856 until 1870, there is little to support the fact that it was a purely Danish congregation. Sorensen was the ninth graduate of the Episcopalian Nashotah Seminary, ordained by Bishop Kemper on June 25, 1848. He began serving the Scandinavian population around Ashippun, Wisconsin.

Interesting is that in light of the 2000 “Called to Common Mission” statement, giving full communion to the Episcopal and Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America, a unique and important event had also taken place at the 1847 convention of the Episcopal Church. Two Lutheran churches from the area near Waukesha, Wisconsin were present, having been accepted into full union with the Diocese of Wisconsin by Bishop Kemper. St. Olaf’s, Ashippun, and Scandinavian Parish, Pine Lake (Nashotah Village), fully intended to remain Lutheran, while having a full union relationship with their Episcopal neighbors. These parishes were served by the Swedish Rev. G. Unonius who had been the first graduate of Nashotah House. The author Wagner states, “Here we have recorded one of the most unusual and singular facts in the history of the American Church. If this is not the only incident of its kind in the American Church, it is a rare one – two congregations who announce their purpose of remaining Lutheran in doctrine and practice, and yet are being ministered to by an Episcopalian priest and are in full union with an Episcopalian diocese.” St. Olaf ultimately remained Lutheran and still exists today. The Nashotah Parish split in the 1850’s. One group took the records and registers of the church and founded St. John’s English Lutheran Church, Stone Bank. The other retained the log church and

cemetery, and became Holy Innocents Episcopal Church, Nashotah. More than 100 years later, during the mid 1960's this parish merged with Grace Episcopal, Hartland, Wisconsin to form St. Anskar's Episcopal Church, the name of the Apostle to Scandinavia reflecting the Scandinavian heritage in that area.

Similarly the small village of New Denmark, New Brunswick Canada founded by Danish immigrants in 1872 shares a common story. This area also included a Scottish "colony" and was served by an Anglican priest from Perth-Andover, New Brunswick named Leopold Hoyt. However for several years neither churches nor schools were established in the colony. Some of the Danish settlers wrote to Pastor Vilhelm Beck in Denmark seeking a minister to come to New Denmark. Requesting \$800 per year to come to the colony Hans Mikkelsen Hansen eventually accepted an offer of only \$200, even though he had a large family which included eight children to support, and came to New Denmark. Unfortunately after they arrived there was no support offered. On the verge of returning to Denmark Hoyt suggested Hansen contact the Anglican bishop in Fredericton. It was arranged for Hansen to be accepted and ordained a catechist and within a year a priest in the Anglican Church. He was, however, still allowed to use Luther's Catechism and the Danish hymnal. Over time the church split into congregations of both denominations which still exist today.

### **Danish Free Church (Congregational) (Norwegian-Danish Free Church Association)**

The first churches in what became the Norwegian-Danish Free Church Association began on both the East and West Coast about the same time in 1884. The first was the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Free Church Association organized in Tacoma, Washington. The second was the Scandinavian Congregational Church of Boston, Massachusetts, which began in 1884 but was not formally organized until a year later. This church, however, has long been considered the "mother church" of the denomination. The third congregation began in 1886 in Wesley, Iowa and was also called the Scandinavian Congregational Church and was comprised of Norwegians, Danes, and Swedes from its early days. The Congregational church had seen the need to minister to these immigrants when Superintendent

Marcus Whitman Montgomery wrote "A Wind from the Holy Spirit in Sweden and Denmark" which declared the need to minister to the many Scandinavians, particularly in the Chicago area. That year both Swedish and Dano-Norwegian departments were established as part of Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS). Peter Christian Trandberg, born on the island of Bornholm in Denmark in 1835 was chosen to lead the Dano-Norwegian Department, a position he filled until 1890 when he was dismissed for being "Lutheran." In those six years he had taught a total of 48 students (24 Norwegian and 24 Danish), who would pursue many different careers after graduation. Many would serve either the Danish or Norwegian Lutheran Churches and numerous other church denominations, including some prominent leaders of what would become the Norwegian-Danish Free Church Association. After Trandberg left CTS he conducted his own seminary for about three years. This school, called the Lutheran Free Seminary, educated an additional 16 students (14 of whom were Danish) and mainly served the Danish Lutheran synods, however, several served Norwegian synods and one even became a Baptist minister.

As the Free Church membership grew some felt a need for their own school and established the Norwegian-Danish Free Church Bible Institute and Academy at Rushford, Minnesota in the fall of 1910. In early 1916 this school was moved to Minneapolis. The department at Chicago Theological Seminary remained active for a number of years after this as well.

It was not until 1910 that a formal church association was established. By this time one of the prominent churches in the organization was Salem Evangelical Free Church of Chicago, which had been founded in 1887. The majority of the founders of this church were Danish but the congregation was heavily Norwegian during most of its history. This church still exists today but after the Norwegian work ceased it ultimately began serving the Spanish speaking people in the area and with the merger of the English- and Spanish-speaking congregations is now known since 2003 as Good News Bible Church, and still affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church.

As language became less of a barrier talks began (in the late 1930's) between the N-D Evangelical Free Church Association and the Swedish Evangelical Free Church, which resulted in a merger in 1950. Talks of merger had begun many years earlier, as early as 1905 and again in 1921. The pivotal point in this union was a vote taken by the

two groups at their annual conferences in 1949. The “Swedish” group meeting at Medicine Lake, Minnesota voted 196 to 13 in favor of the merger and the Norwegian-Danish group meeting at Britt, Iowa voted 73 to 5 in favor. The last step was a polling of all congregations and a final vote of approval at the 1950 conference. By March 1950 only 2 of the 207 churches that responded indicated their disapproval of the plan but by the time the joint conference was held in June 1950 those two churches changed their vote and the final tally was unanimous in favor of merging the two groups. Their respective schools (the Norwegian-Danish school in Minneapolis and the Swedish school in Chicago) had merged in 1946 and relocated to Chicago, where it was known as Trinity Seminary and Bible College. This school moved to the northern suburb of Deerfield in 1961 where it became Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Trinity College. In 1995 those two institutions and several other Free Church-affiliated colleges merged to become Trinity International University (TIU).

The Swedish branch of the church was much larger than the Norwegian-Danish branch when it merged in 1950 and the first president of the newly formed church was Dr. E.A. Halleen, the last president of the Swedish branch, unanimously elected to a one-year term and Dr. Arnold Theodore Olson, the last president of the Norwegian-Danish branch and chairman of the merger committee, was elected to the office of Vice-President. In 1951 he assumed the presidency, an office he held for 25 years until his retirement in 1976. The chapel at TIU is named in his honor.

The archives of the church are housed at the Roling Memorial Library on the campus of Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois but some records can also be found at state historical societies, and particularly the Minnesota Historical Society.

The Evangelical Free Church today is one the fastest growing denominations in the United States. The word “Free” refers to the church governance where each congregation is an independent autonomous unit.

### **Danish Friends (Quakers)**

Persons familiar with Scandinavian Quakers are undoubtedly aware of the 1825 voyage of the sloop “Restoration” from Stavanger, Norway to the United States. The sloop departed Norway on July

5, 1825 and landed in New York on October 9 of the same year. The group of 52, many of whom were Norwegian Quakers, was led by Cleng Peerson and was commonly referred to as the "Sloopers." They originally settled in New York and some eventually made their way to the Fox River Settlement in Illinois and Peerson ultimately moved to a small Norwegian settlement known as Norse, Texas where he is buried!

By the late 1850's some Norwegian "Friends" began to settle in central Iowa, just south of present day Le Grand and the "community" was known as Stavanger, one of the few and by far the largest Norwegian Quaker meeting in the United States. By 1890 the Stavanger Meeting numbered 222 persons.

In 1888 this group submitted a plan for a school which opened in the fall of 1891 with one teacher and a matron in charge. Enrollment quickly grew to approximately 40-50 students. There were undoubtedly some Danes among this group and at least one of the headmasters, Nicholas Larson, was Danish.

There was also a small settlement near the town of Randall, Iowa, which was known as "Little Copenhagen," which over time grew to approximately 50 families. The leader of this settlement was Christian Paulson Christianson, who was influenced by the lay Danish preacher, Mogens Abraham Sommer, an itinerate minister who traveled to many areas of the United States preaching doctrines akin to Quakerism.

There was never a Quaker meeting organized here and when Christianson's father died he was buried on the land of one of the Danish farmers, with Sommer officiating.

Most of the meetings were likely held in homes and no "church" was ever established. A number of these people organized a philosophical "club" which was more inclined to Quakerism and Unitarianism. The gifted Norwegian Unitarian minister Kristofer Janson also addressed the group on occasion. Some of the more conservative-minded joined the local Norwegian Lutherans and the more pronounced Quakers left and settled in Cedar County, Iowa, near Springdale and West Branch, the birthplace of President Herbert Hoover.

Based on correspondence and some personal family history it is my belief that the Danish-language "Friends" meeting as reported in the 1916 US Religious Bodies Census was most likely in the Springdale/West Branch area. (There was also a Danish Lutheran church in West Branch).

Another connection dealing with Danes in and around the Springdale/West Branch area is the reference to the only Danish language agricultural magazine in America being published out of West Branch.

The only thing that remains from the original “Little Copenhagen” settlement is the cemetery, known as the “Old Danish Cemetery” and sometimes as the “Old Randall Cemetery,” which lies across a gravel road north of Mt. Olive Cemetery about a mile north of Randall, Iowa; however, there are no markers to indicate the name of this cemetery. Here are buried many of the “founding fathers” of the little community who remained in the area when others moved on to Cedar County, Iowa. Most of those remaining ultimately associated with the Norwegians in the area.

### **Danish LDS (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (commonly called Mormons) was founded in New York State in 1830 by Prophet Joseph Smith. By 1847 many of these persecuted people had moved from New York to Ohio then Missouri, back in to Illinois (where Joseph and his brother Hyrum were murdered) and ultimately settled in the valley of the Great Salt Lake in what would become the state of Utah. After the death of Smith the people of Nauvoo, Illinois were led to Utah by Brigham Young, who had felt the call as prophet.

Among the original pioneer company to cross the plains and arrive in Salt Lake City was one Dane, Hans Christian Hansen, who had embraced the beliefs of the church in Boston in 1842. The following year he moved to Nauvoo where he assisted in the building of the temple there. His brother, Peter Olsen Hansen, arrived in the United States in 1844 and was baptized into the church by his brother. Peter Clemensen, had been the first Dane to be baptized but later left the church. The first party to Utah, which included Hans, arrived on July 24, 1847. Peter would soon follow, arriving in September of the same year.

The general conference of the church held in October 1849 called a number of missionaries to go out from the “Valley” and preach the restored gospel in foreign lands. Peter O. Hansen was among that first group and along with Apostle Erastus Snow, was called to fill his mission in Denmark. Snow had been ordained a member of the

Quorum of the Twelve earlier that year. Hansen arrived in Denmark on April 8, 1850, followed a week later by Snow. He began to work immediately to translate the Book of Mormon into the Danish language. He also published the first foreign language hymnal of the church, as well as being the translator and writer for the Danish language publication *Skandinaviens Stjerne* (which after several name changes is still published today as *Liahona*, the LDS magazine published in over 50 different languages between one and 12 times annually by the church).

Denmark was second only to Great Britain in the number of immigrants encouraged to immigrate to “Zion” as they called Utah. The “Perpetual Emigration Fund” (PEF) was established in 1849 to assist those who could not afford to pay for the journey to borrow the funds with the condition that they would re-pay the fund when they reached Utah, allowing others the same opportunity. This fund was disincorporated by the Edmund-Tucker Act of 1887, passed by the U.S. Congress, on the grounds that the fund encouraged polygamy.

This did not stop the efforts of the church which in some years sent as many as 100 missionaries to Denmark alone and it is believed that over 14,000 Danes came to the United States in the years from 1850-1926. Statistics indicate that over 26,000 Danes were baptized during those years, thus over half of them left the motherland and came to the US. This is evident also in the US Census reports that show two Danes in Utah in 1850 but 10 years later there were more Danes in Utah than any other state in the union. In the next two census reports (1870 and 1880), Utah remained second (only to Wisconsin) in the number of Danes. By 1890 Iowa was the most Danish state but Utah still ranked sixth. With the 2010 Census data Utah now is second only to California in number of people claiming a Danish ancestry and claims twice as many Danes (than any other state) in percentage of the total population. Over six percent of the citizens of Utah claim Danish ancestry.

Before the first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869 that connected the Eastern United States to the West the Mormon Church initiated 10 handcart expeditions that began in Iowa City, Iowa and ended in Salt Lake City. These expeditions were conducted between 1856 and 1860 and approximately 3,000 “Saints” made the journey. Several of these expeditions had disastrous results. The fourth and fifth companies, known as the Willie and Martin Companies left

too late from the Winter Quarters, on the north side of present day Omaha, Nebraska, and experienced great loss. Almost 15 percent of the Willie party did not survive the journey and almost 30 percent of the Martin company was lost. The seventh expedition was known as the "Scandinavian" Company, which was comprised of many Danes who had left Copenhagen on April 18, 1857 and via Britain and Philadelphia arrived in Iowa City on June 9. They left there four days later and arrived in Salt Lake City on September 13 having lost only approximately six of the 330 in their company.

Many settled in Salt Lake City but a large number of them, many of them farmers in Denmark moved further south and established many towns in central Utah, an area that to this day is called "Little Denmark." Sanpete and Sevier Counties were particularly Danish and the town of Elsinore reflects that heritage, named for the town containing the Kronborg Castle (in Shakespeare's Hamlet).

Today small towns in this area account for many of the most Danish places in America based on 2010 United States Census data.

It is very likely that services were conducted in the Danish language but the Church as a whole advocated a speedy transition to the English language. Thus reports of Danish language worship are likely not completely accurate in the Religious Bodies Census of 1906 and 1916. The Danish language church newspaper existed until 1935 and there was still a Danish branch within the Liberty Stake in Salt Lake City as late as 1984. Celebrations were held in both 1900 and 1950 in honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the missionary work in Denmark.

One Dane, Anthon H. Lund, rose to the rank of First Counselor in the First Presidency in 1918, a position he held until his death in 1921. He also served as Church Historian from 1900-1921. Another Dane, Andrew Jenson was appointed Acting Church Historian just prior to Lund's appointment and served as an Assistant Historian for almost 45 years. He was, without a doubt, one of the most prolific writers in the history of the church. Jenson also served as President of the Scandinavian Mission. His publications spanned a period of time of almost 60 years. C.C.A. Christensen, educated at the Royal Danish Academy of the Arts, is best known for the "Mormon Panorama," a series of 23 oil and canvas paintings (each measuring 6.5 feet tall and 9.5 feet wide, that tell the story of the early church). These paintings were sewn together and Christensen would travel throughout Utah

to local congregations rolling the painting out, almost as a motion picture, while telling the story depicted in the paintings. He also wrote many hymns of the church, some of which can still be found in the current day Danish language hymnal, along with the hymns of Grundtvig, Ingemann, Brorson, and Kingo, as well as translations of other LDS hymn writers.

## **Danish Methodists**

The oldest Scandinavian Methodist church in the world is Willerup United Methodist Church in Cambridge, Wisconsin (very near to the historic Norwegian settlement in southeastern Wisconsin known as Koshkonong), incorporated on May 3, 1851 with 52 members and dedicated on July 21, 1852. There is, however, evidence of earlier gatherings of Scandinavian Methodists, such as in the Fox River Valley in LaSalle County, Illinois, near the present village of Norway. In discussing Scandinavian Methodists, one must separate the work into two groups, Swedish and Norwegian-Danish.

While the majority of the members of the Norwegian-Danish Methodist church have always been Norwegian, the founder of the first church was a Dane named Christian B. Willerup. Born in Copenhagen on October 6, 1815 he came to America at the age of 17 and was converted by the American Methodists around Savannah, Georgia and joined a congregation there in 1839. In 1850 he had been asked to go out as a missionary and was ordained an elder by Bishop Janes on October 20, 1850 and transferred to the Wisconsin Conference. Thus began the work of the Methodist church among the Danish-Norwegian immigrants, particularly in the upper Midwest. Willerup later returned to his homeland where he is also known as the founder of Methodism in Denmark

The Norwegian-Danish Conference of the Methodist Church was established in 1880 and remained active until 1943 when it was absorbed into the English speaking Methodist Episcopal Church. The organizing and concluding annual sessions were both held at Trinity Methodist Church in Racine, Wisconsin, a church also established by Willerup after leaving Cambridge in 1854. Over the years churches were established particularly throughout the Midwest and the Norwegian-Danish Conference of The Methodist Church was divided up into several "districts." The largest and longest lasting were the

Chicago and Minneapolis Districts but there was another called Red River Valley District as well as the Eastern District, which had begun as "The Norwegian-Danish Mission in the Eastern States." There was also a loosely bound conference for Norwegian-Danish Methodism on the West Coast.

The beginnings of the West Coast work began when Rev. and Mrs. Carl J. Larsen moved to Oakland, California where he was a foreman for the large carving and designing factory. They had been members of the First Norwegian-Danish Methodist Episcopal Church in Chicago under the leadership of J. H. Johnson. Finding like-minded Scandinavians who had also come west the group started meeting in homes until they were able to rent a Seventh-Day Adventist Church for Sunday worship. By 1880 they were able to build a little church on Market and 24<sup>th</sup> Streets, becoming the first Scandinavian Methodist Church on the west coast. In time the Swedish members separated and organized into a separate group and the church became Norwegian-Danish. Within a few years congregations were established in Oregon, Idaho, and Washington states and in 1888 by authority of the General Conference these churches were organized into a Mission Conference. The conference continued to grow with churches in California, Utah, and Montana. In 1939 the Western Norwegian-Danish Conference was dissolved and reunited with the American Conference, chiefly due to the decrease in Norwegian-Danish immigrants and the fact that most congregations were then worshipping in the English language.

Scandinavian Methodism on the East Coast began in New York when a Swedish minister, O.G. Hedstrom, was secured and a ship was purchased and harbored at Pier 11 on the East River. The ship, named the "John Wesley but called "Bethelship" by everyone was geared to resemble a church and held its first meeting on May 25, 1845. It would minister to many an immigrant as they passed through the port. Over time the Norwegian, Ole P. Petersen, and Buriel Smith, a Dane also began ministering and were both considered the founders of Norwegian-Danish Methodism on the East Coast. On October 26, 1874 the first Danish Methodist Episcopal Church was established in Perth Amboy, New Jersey with Buriel Smith as its Pastor. These churches were organized as a "Disciplinary Mission" in October 1924 but dissolved six years later and joined the Norwegian-Danish Conference. Ten years later in 1940 this district was dissolved and the

existing churches became a part of the Conference where they were geographically located.

Barely 10 percent of the ministers of the N-D Methodist Conference were Danes and it is difficult to speculate the percentage of Danes within the congregations. Many of the locations where churches were established began as Norwegian settlements but others have a more Danish character to them. With the entwined history and heritage of the two countries it is not surprising that two nationalities lived and worshipped in many of the same locations.

Although archival materials may be located at several locations, such as state archives and The Norwegian-American Historical Association on the campus of St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, the primary archives are housed at Garrett Theological Seminary Library on the campus of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

### **Danish Moravians**

Wisconsin is a state of many “firsts” with the establishment of Scandinavian congregations, including not only the first Scandinavian Methodist Church in the world and the first Norwegian and Danish Seventh-Day Adventists congregations but also the first Scandinavian Moravian congregation which was organized on August 26, 1849 in Milwaukee. Leadership was provided by A.M. Iverson, a Norwegian who together with twelve Norwegians, four Danes and two Swedes organized that day. By 1853 this group had relocated to northeastern Wisconsin where the village of Ephraim was established in Door County and a church was built and Ephraim became a distinctive Moravian village.

Iverson spent the next ten years not only ministering to the people of Ephraim but to others in the vicinity and as far away as Chicago. The strenuous work forced him to retire in 1864 and the congregation sent a request to the Unity Elders’ Conference for a Scandinavian minister. Accepting the call was Brother Hans Jensen Groenfeldt from Christiansfeld, Denmark, a Moravian town founded in Southern Jutland in 1773 and named for King Christian VII. Groenfeldt arrived in July 1864 and immediately got to work among the people of both Ephraim and nearby Sister Bay where another congregation had been organized. Shortly before leaving Denmark and his arrival in Wisconsin

Groenfeldt had married Marie Elisa Loding and several children were born to this union including John (born in 1865 and later anglicized his name to Greenfield) and Samuel (born in 1867), who both became ministers of the church. In 1873 a fourth Danish Minister arrived from the Mission Training school in Niesky, Germany and became pastor of the Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin congregation. Another minister of the Scandinavian Moravians was Anders Petterson, a Swede whose wife, Anna, was born in Denmark.

At the turn of the century there were six Scandinavian Moravian ministers, four of whom were Danish, however the membership appears to have one more Norwegian, but often times a mix of the two. Several of these congregations remain today and still include a significant proportion of congregants of Norwegian and Danish heritage.

The son of Samuel Groenfeldt (grandson of Hans Jensen Groenfeldt) rose to a high leadership role in the Moravian Church, where he served as President of the Provincial Elders' Conference, the governing board of the Northern Province from 1966 until his retirement in 1982. He had also served as the editor of the denominational magazine, *The Moravian*, from 1974-1967. His uncle John Greenfield also edited a Danish language Moravian newspaper for a number of years.

## **Danish Presbyterians**

The 1906 Religious Bodies Census of the United States listed one Presbyterian church using the Danish language in conjunction with the English language in conducting worship services. With almost 100 percent certainty that would be Golgotha Danish Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, located then at 196 Thomas Street.

This church was originally known as Dano-Norwegian Presbyterian Church and it would appear that this church existed for at least 25 years from the early 1890's until perhaps in to the early 1920's. The first resident pastor in 1893 was Matthias N. Andreasen, a graduate of the Danish-Norwegian Department of Chicago Theological Seminary and who four years later joined the United Danish Lutheran Church organization. He served that organization as its president from 1921-1925.

The second pastor at Golgotha was Andreas Christian Tychsen, born in 1870 in Danish Schleswig-Holstein and a graduate of the Danish-Norwegian Department of the Chicago Theological Seminary

(CTS) and under whose pastorate the church edifice was built. The church was then served by a pastor ordained by the Norwegian Lutheran Synod before the first Pastorate of Niels Peter Gross, another graduate of CTS and later a pastor in the General Synod of the Lutheran Church. Gross served the church on two occasions.

Others to serve Golgotha were Peder Lund Bjerre and Alexander Marlowe (born Axel Madsen) and Jens H. Pedersen, another Danish born graduate of CTS and later editor of "Evangelisten," the Norwegian-Danish church publication of the Norwegian-Danish Free Church Association, formally organized in 1911. Reports from the Statistics section of the Annual minutes of the General Assembly contain data for the congregation from 1904 until 1919 when it appears to have disbanded. Nothing is known about the church or its congregation after that date.

The only other connection with Danes and the Presbyterian Church can be found in the earlier days of the Mt. Pleasant, Utah area, where many Danish Mormons had settled and where the Reverend Duncan J. McMillan established not only a church but a school for educating the young people in the area. It is believed that services were conducted in English, Danish, and Swedish and that Dr. McMillan even had small hymnals published in all three of these languages for use by his congregants, but no proof of this exists today. The school he established in 1875, however, does still exist today. It was founded in the Sanpete Valley of central Utah (often times still referred to as "Little Denmark") for the improvement of the lives of the people in that area. After 100 years of support from the Presbyterian Church it parted ways. Today Wasatch Academy is Utah's only independent, coeducational, college preparatory school in the state with approximately 300 students. Wasatch claims a 100 percent acceptance rate of its students to colleges and universities.

### **Danish RLDS (Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints). (Since 2001, Community of Christ)**

The Reorganized Church began in 1860, sixteen years after the death of Joseph and Hyrum Smith in the Cathage Jail near Nauvoo, Illinois where the Mormons had settled. Brigham Young believed he was called to be the new prophet and led the people from Nauvoo to the Great Salt Lake Valley beginning in 1848. It was not until several

years later that the young Joseph Smith III finally accepted that he was indeed called to be the new prophet and follow his father in the leadership of the church. The reorganized branch was never as big as the Utah branch but did manage to send missionaries overseas, with their first group of missionaries to Denmark in 1875.

Some of those disenfranchised with the Utah group and believing that the true prophecy of the church existed in the son of its founder quickly began to congregate and establish worship places. With the large number of immigrants coming from Denmark it was not unusual for conclaves of those settlers to congregate in the western part of Iowa and eastern Nebraska not far from the Winter Quarters just across the Missouri River in what is now the northern portion of Omaha.

The earliest missionaries to Denmark were Magnus Fyrando and Hans Nels Hansen, who had been born in Denmark in 1850 and along with his family, had come under the influence of the Mormon missionaries, travelling to America in April 1864. It was a very difficult journey but by October the family found themselves in Salt Lake City. Within a few years rumors began to circulate about a reorganized church called "Josephites." In April 1867 Hansen with many of his neighbors joined the reorganized church and within a month approximately sixty families left Utah and began the eastward trek back to Missouri and Nebraska with intent on settling in western Iowa.

At the conference held in Council Bluffs, Iowa in the fall of 1874, Hansen was ordained an elder by Joseph Smith and accepted his call to return to Denmark, arriving there in early 1875. It was here that another young Dane came under the influence of Elder Hansen.

This man was Peter Andersen, who left Denmark and came to Iowa where he was baptized by Brother Hansen in the church at Weston in December 1880. Andersen was ordained a priest in 1881 and was appointed (1882) to return to the motherland with his message. Upon his return to Iowa he was ordained an Elder at Crescent, Iowa in 1883. He began a Danish language newspaper *Sandhedens Banner* in Lamoni, IA (where the Prophet Joseph Smith III lived) in 1884 for the Danish speaking people. Eventually the college of the church, Graceland, would take root in Lamoni as well, north of the eventual headquarters in Independence, Missouri. Far western Missouri had also been one of the early settlements of the Saints and was situated

between the two places. Scandinavians, and particularly Danes, came together to create churches in Weston, Hazel Dell, and Council Bluffs (known then as Kanessville), Iowa as well as Omaha, Nebraska.

Pottawattamie County, Iowa and Douglas County, Nebraska have both always had large Danish populations and while there was never an official organization of Danish RLDS congregations, descendants of these pioneers are still active in local branches of this church (which has been known since 2001 as the Community of Christ), particularly in Western Iowa. Many of the early branches have merged with others, one in particular, the Hazel Dell branch, is now part of the Underwood church. However, the original church building is now used as the Hazel Dell Township Hall.

### **Danish Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army was begun in London in 1865 by a one-time Methodist minister named William Booth. By 1880 the work had been expanded to the United States as well as to Sweden (1882), Denmark (1887), Norway (1888), and Finland (1889). In New York in 1887 there were four Swedish laundry women who once they found a Salvation Army Corps started gathering other Scandinavian speaking persons to attend meetings. By Christmas that year they were successful in opening the first Scandinavian Corps in that city, thus being the third corps opened in the United States.

Their success soon spread to other cities and Scandinavian Corps could be found coast to coast. While the majority of the corps were Swedish, the Norwegians were also responsible for establishing corps, particularly in larger cities such as Chicago and Minneapolis, where large numbers of Norwegians could be found.

There were several prominent Danes in the organization as well but as best as can be determined there was only one corps that had a specific Danish character to it. That was Cragin #12 founded in the Humboldt Park area of Chicago where many Scandinavians had settled. The name of the organization also gives some clue to the hierarchy of the "church" as well. The international leader of the Salvation Army is called the General and lower level leaders are known as Colonel, Lieutenant-Colonel, Major, Captain, Major and so forth.

One of the Colonels of the Cragin Corps was Christian Dragsbak, born in Copenhagen in 1899. In his retirement he lived in Rockford,

Illinois where the author had the privilege of meeting him and speaking of his experience in the Corps.

While this was the only “Danish” Corps with the “Army” there were numerous other Danes who played an important role in their work. To mention a few would include Brigadier Emil Marcussen (whose grandson Paul worked in the Chicago Territory), Harald Madsen, active on the West coast, Major L. M. Simonsen, and composer Emil Soderstrom.

In the 1950’s the Cragin Corps merged with the Kedzie Avenue Corps, which was a predominately Norwegian Corps. The Salvation Army in Chicago today still includes descendants of many of these Scandinavian Salvationists.

### **Danish Seventh-Day Adventist Church**

The Danish Seventh-Day Adventist Church was the second largest Danish church denomination “born” on American soil. The largest was that of the Methodist church. Both were, however, more Danish-Norwegian or in the case of the Methodists, Norwegian-Danish. The Danes outnumbered the Norwegians in the SDA church while Norwegians dominated that branch of the Methodist church in the USA. There was never a separate conference for these ethnic churches within the SDA because the founder and spiritual leader, Ellen White felt it would divide the church. However while there was no formal association there were gatherings of the Danish-Norwegians. The Methodists, on the other hand established a conference for Norwegian-Danish congregations in 1880 which remained in existence until 1943 when it dissolved and became part of the greater Methodist church in the US. (See the chapter on Danish Methodists). The two largest denominations among the Danes were obviously the Lutheran Church, the national church of Denmark and the Baptist Church which actually had roots in Denmark as early as 1839, but due to extreme persecution, particularly prior to the Grundlov of 1849, resulted in many Baptists leaving Denmark for the freedom of religious expression in America. (See the chapter on Danish Baptists).

The Danish-Norwegian publication *Evangeliets Sendebud* on November 30, 1910 reported almost 60 Danish-Norwegian congregations in the United States and Canada and the 1916 United States Religious Bodies Census report indicated that 32 SDA

congregations in the US reported the use of the Danish language in at least a portion of their worship services, four of those reporting the use of Danish exclusively. The 1906 Census report indicated 20 Danish language churches of which ten used only the Danish language.

The Danish Baptists provided many of the early converts to the Danish Seventh Day Adventist group. The early missionary work both in the United States and in Scandinavia (particularly Denmark) was led by one man.

John Gottfried Matteson was born in 1835 in Tranekær, on the island of Langeland, off the coast of Funen in Denmark. In 1853 John had taken a position as a postal clerk in Tranekær, the main town on the island and a little south of his hometown. When he was 19 years old he convinced his family to immigrate to Wisconsin where others had already settled and more were interested in going. In his own words they arrived in Wisconsin in July 1854. They settled in the town of New Denmark, southeast of Green Bay. A very musical young man he was also slightly handicapped which did not allow him to participate in sports at the level he desired. He became a voracious reader and the Bible was one of his favorite books. After several years he was inspired by a local Danish Baptist minister and left for Chicago where he enrolled in Douglas University, a Baptist institution and forerunner of the present day University of Chicago. He arrived in Chicago with little more than the clothes on his back. During summers home from school he would preach at Baptist congregations in the area and they quickly grew to enjoy his spirited nature and requested his service as pastor even prior to his completing his schooling. A lack of finances saw his return to Wisconsin where a group of Baptists at Brushville (an unincorporated village currently located in the town of Bloomfield in Waushara County, Wisconsin) called him as their pastor so his formal education was never completed.

Adherents of the Seventh-day Adventist church were also preaching in the area and had contacted Matteson in an attempt to “show him the light.” He agreed to meet with Philander Cady to discuss the issue of the Sabbath confident he would be able to sway Cady to the “right way of thinking.” It was however, Matteson, who was “swayed” and afterwards chose to begin “keeping the Sabbath” on Saturday as he had come to believe was the true Sabbath.

Many of his “flock” at the Baptist congregation at Brushville were eventually convinced as well and followed him as Adventists, leaving

the Baptist faith. Word spread of Matteson and he was soon traveling and preaching at many locations throughout Wisconsin and even other states.

The Seventh-Day Adventists at Oakland, Jefferson County (near present day Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin) soon heard of this Danish-speaking pastor and quickly called him. These men and women were a part of the large Norwegian settlement around Koshkonong and had at one time been ministered to by the Danish born Methodist minister, Christian B. Willerup, who had established the first Scandinavian Methodist church in the world at Cambridge, Wisconsin in 1852 and they had been known for a time as Seventh-Day Methodists. They had formed a church in December 1861, thus holding the distinction of being the oldest Scandinavian SDA church in the world. The Methodist congregation in nearby Cambridge where Pastor Christian Willerup ministered to his "flock" as Seventh-Day Methodists had been established in 1851 and also has the distinction of being the "Oldest Scandinavian Methodist Church in the World." Both congregations still exist today and are located approximately five miles apart. The belief of the two groups was very similar with the exception of which day to observe the Sabbath. Willerup proposed a compromise that they could "keep their Jewish Sabbath but they would keep the Christian Sabbath also." Ultimately English-speaking Adventists began to minister to the Norwegians and when they decided to be baptized by immersion they were disfellowshipped by the Methodists for heresy. This group of Norwegian Adventists originally had to rely on English speaking ministers and often had the younger generation, who were learning and speaking English, translate for them. Learning of the Danish speaking Matteson brought great joy to this group as now they could hear the word spoken in their native tongue. He first visited them in the summer of 1864, shortly after establishing the Danish congregation at Poy Sippi, Wisconsin in 1863. This congregation was established as two separate congregations, one English-speaking and the other Danish. These congregations were incorporated at the courthouse in Waupaca on December 12, 1863.

The Oakland Adventists wanted Matteson to live near them and soon called him to be pastor. To insure this the congregation built a cabin for Matteson and his wife and three children in 1865, which became his "home base" for 11 years but he continued to travel extensively to serve the needs of other Scandinavian Adventists. Matteson's travels

continued to increase leaving his wife, Anna, alone for long periods of time to raise their ever-increasing family. Eventually in 1877 he left for Denmark where he established congregations there and in Norway.

Slowly his work began to see others become interested in the work among the Danish-Norwegian speaking people of the Midwest. While there was never an official Danish or Norwegian SDA conference there was a loosely knit group of churches that formed an organization within the structure of the national church.

In 1871 he had been invited by a group of Adventists in Chicago to come and minister to them. Enough were gathered together that they were able to build a small chapel on Eire Street. When people in the neighborhood saw work being performed on Sunday and not Saturday it was not well accepted. It was also during this time that the great Chicago fire occurred, fortunately causing NO damage to the little chapel. This was the first effort of the SDA church to establish missionary work in a large metropolitan area as the church had traditionally been a rural church.

Matteson also saw a need for educating new ministers for work within the congregations forming throughout the Midwest as well as a publication to keep these adherents "connected." Meeting with the matriarch of the church, Ellen White in 1871 he requested money to begin a Danish language newspaper for the people. Ms. White knew there was no money for such an undertaking and certainly no one familiar with the language to be able to set the type for such a newspaper. Matteson of course volunteered not only to write and edit the newspaper but also to personally set the type.

Training conferences were held for Scandinavian Adventists but there was never any formal organization of Scandinavian congregations. The Adventist Church had Scandinavian departments at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska and Walla Walla College in College Place, Washington, as well as a school in Hutchinson, Minnesota but the primary archives for the church are found at the James White Library on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. There is the home of the Center for Adventist Research.

## LIST OF NON-LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS

### ALABAMA

Silverhill Seventh Day Adventist

### CALIFORNIA

Eureka Methodist

Fresno Seventh Day Adventist

Los Angeles Methodist

Modesto Baptist

Oakland Baptist

Oakland Free Church

Oakland Methodist

San Francisco Methodist

San Pedro Methodist

Selma Baptist

Watsonville Baptist

### CONNECTICUT

Bridgeport Danish-Norwegian Free Mission

Hartford Free Church

New Haven Baptist

New Haven Our Savior's Danish Free Mission

New Haven Free Church

### IDAHO

Blaine Methodist

Moscow Methodist

Woolmer/Troy/Bear Creek Methodist

### ILLINOIS

Chicago Baptist

Chicago - Bethel Baptist

Chicago - Salem Free Church

Chicago Free Church

Chicago - Bethel (Logan Square) Free Church

Chicago - Silo Free Church

Chicago - Bethany Methodist

Chicago - Bethel Methodist

Chicago - Emmaus Methodist

Chicago - First and Immanuel Methodist  
Chicago - Kedzie Avenue Methodist  
Chicago - Maplewood Avenue Methodist  
Chicago - Moreland Methodist  
Chicago - Cragin #12 (Salvation Army)  
Chicago - Erie Street Seventh Day Adventist  
Chicago - Rockwell Street Seventh Day Adventist  
Chicago - Bethesda Free Church (Pullman)  
Danway Free Church  
Dwight Methodist  
Evanston Methodist  
Kankakee Baptist  
Lee/Leland Methodist  
Norway/Stavanger Methodist  
Waukegan Baptist  
Waukegan Methodist

## IOWA

Alta Baptist  
Atlantic Baptist  
Britt Free Church  
Britt - Upper Flat Free Church  
Cedar Falls Baptist  
Cedar Rapids Baptist  
Council Bluffs Baptist  
Council Bluffs - Scandinavian Reorganized Church Jesus Christ  
of Latter Day Saints  
Council Bluffs Seventh Day Adventist  
Crystal Lake Baptist  
Cuppy's Grove (Altamont) Baptist  
Denver Methodist  
Des Moines Baptist  
Des Moines Methodist  
Elk Horn Seventh Day Adventist  
Elk Horn - Oakfield Baptist  
Evergreen Baptist  
Exira Seventh Day Adventist  
Forest City Methodist  
Forest City Seventh Day Adventist

Gilmore Baptist  
Harlan Baptist  
Hazel Dell Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of  
Latter Day Saints  
Humboldt Baptist  
Jacksonville Seventh Day Adventist  
Lake Mills/Glenville/Palmer Methodist  
Marshalltown Baptist  
Merrills Grove Baptist  
Missouri Valley Baptist  
Missouri Valley Methodist  
Newell Baptist  
Quasqueton - Pine Creek Baptist  
Ruthven Seventh Day Adventist  
Rutland Methodist  
Sioux City Baptist  
Springdale/West Branch Friends  
Ute Seventh Day Adventist  
Wesley Free Church  
Weston Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

## **KANSAS**

Jamestown Baptist

## **MAINE**

Falmouth Seventh Day Adventist  
Portland Bethlehem Free Church

## **MARYLAND**

Baltimore Methodist

## **MASSACHUSETTS**

Boston - Scandinavian Congregational (Free Church)  
Boston - Methodist  
Concord - Trinity Congregational (Free Church)  
Concord Methodist

## **MICHIGAN**

Bear Lake Baptist  
Calumet/Ishpeming Methodist

Edmore Baptist  
Ludington Baptist  
Ludington Methodist  
Manistee Methodist  
Marinette Methodist  
Muskegon Free Church  
Muskegon Methodist

## MINNESOTA

Albert Lea Baptist  
Albert Lea Seventh Day Adventist  
Alden Baptist  
Artichoke Seventh Day Adventist  
Bath Seventh Day Adventist  
Belvidere Methodist  
Bemiji/Clifford/Lake Park Methodist  
Blooming Prairie Baptist  
Brighton Methodist  
Brown County (Cobden) Baptist  
Canby Methodist  
Clarks Grove Baptist  
Crookston Methodist  
Duluth - First Methodist  
Duluth - Bethany Methodist  
Elbow Lake Methodist  
Ellis Baptist  
Fergus Falls/Tordenskjold Methodist  
Foldahl Seventh Day Adventist  
Gilchrist Seventh Day Adventist  
Halstad Methodist  
Hazel Seventh Day Adventist  
Houston - Bethany Free Church  
Hutchinson Seventh Day Adventist  
Hutchinson/Lake Lillian Methodist  
Kasson Baptist  
Lake Johanna Seventh Day Adventist  
Louisburg Baptist  
Mankato Baptist  
Milan/Watson Methodist

Minneapolis - First Scandinavian Free Church  
Minneapolis Free Church  
Minneapolis - Salem Free Church  
Minneapolis - Bethlehem Methodist  
Minneapolis - First Methodist  
Minneapolis Seventh Day Adventist  
Morgan - Golden Gate Seventh Day Adventist  
Newburg Methodist  
Newfolden Free Church  
Owatonna Seventh Day Adventist  
Richland Methodist  
Richmond Baptist  
Rushford - Bible Free Church  
Rushford Seventh Day Adventist  
Sherbourne Baptist  
St. Paul Methodist  
St. Paul - Golgotha Danish-Norwegian Presbyterian  
Stephen/Warren/Thief River Falls Methodist  
Stillwater Baptist  
Stordan Baptist  
Thief Rivers Free Church  
Tyler Baptist  
Tyler Seventh Day Adventist  
Virginia Methodist  
Walworth Baptist  
Westbrook Baptist  
Winona - Lakeside Free Church

## **MONTANA**

Butte Methodist  
Great Falls Methodist  
Helena Methodist  
Kalispell Methodist  
McCabe (Sheridan) Baptist  
Mona Baptist

## **NEBRASKA**

Abdal Baptist  
Dannebrog Baptist

Dannebrog Seventh Day Adventist  
Denmark Seventh Day Adventist  
Fremont Methodist  
Lime Grove Baptist  
Omaha Baptist  
Omaha Methodist  
Omaha Scandinavian Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter Day Saints  
Omaha Seventh Day Adventist  
Osco Baptist  
Plainview Seventh Day Adventist  
Turtle Creek Baptist  
Wallace Baptist

### **NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Berlin (Mills) Methodist

### **NEW JERSEY**

Hoboken Free Church  
Jersey City Free Church  
Jersey City Methodist  
Orange - Calvary Free Church  
Perth Amboy Methodist  
Perth Amboy Seventh Day Adventist

### **NEW YORK**

Bronx - Central Methodist  
Brooklyn Norwegian-Danish Free Church  
Brooklyn - Bethelship Methodist  
Brooklyn - Sunset Park Methodist  
Brooklyn Seventh Day Adventist  
Corning Methodist  
Jamestown - Zion Free Church  
Queens - Bethel Methodist

### **NORTH DAKOTA**

Coopertown - Saron Free Church  
Coopertown - Bethlehem Free Church  
Donnybrook Baptist  
Fargo - Bethel Free Church

Grand Forks Methodist  
Hillsboro/Blanchard Methodist  
Kenmare Seventh Day Adventist  
Landa/Minot/Kenmore Methodist  
Litchville - Elim Free Church  
McVile/Romness Methodist  
Minne Lake Methodist  
Rosso Baptist  
Rugby/Devils Lake Methodist  
Valley City/Daily Methodist  
Wheelock Seventh Day Adventist

## **OHIO**

Cleveland - Bethel Free Church

## **OREGON**

Astoria Methodist  
Lebanon Seventh Day Adventist  
McMinnville Baptist  
Monitor Seventh Day Adventist  
Portland - First Norwegian-Danish Methodist  
Portland - Vancouver Avenue Methodist  
Portland - Albina Methodist

## **PENNSYLVANIA**

Philadelphia - Methodist

## **RHODE ISLAND**

Providence - Methodist

## **SOUTH DAKOTA**

Beresford Seventh Day Adventist  
Dell Rapids Baptist  
Lodi (Wakonda) Baptist  
Millard Baptist  
Puckwanna Baptist  
Spink Co. (Conde) Baptist  
Spring Valley Baptist  
Swan Lake Seventh Day Adventist  
Turkey Valley Baptist

Viborg Baptist  
Viborg Methodist  
Viborg Seventh Day Adventist  
Webster City Seventh Day Adventist  
Woonsocket Baptist

## **TEXAS**

Clifton (Norse) Seventh Day Adventist

## **UTAH**

Brigham City Seventh Day Adventist  
Salt Lake City - Latter Day Saints  
Salt Lake City - Iliff Methodist

## **WASHINGTON**

Aberdeen Methodist  
Bellingham Methodist  
Cedar Home Seventh Day Adventist  
Cove Methodist  
East Washington Baptist  
Everett Methodist  
Ferndale Seventh Day Adventist  
Fragaria/Olalla Methodist  
La Center Methodist  
Port Townsend Methodist  
Poulsbo Seventh Day Adventist  
Rockford Methodist  
Seattle Free Church  
Seattle - Emanuel Methodist  
Seattle -First Norwegian-Danish Methodist  
Seattle Seventh Day Adventist  
South Bend Methodist  
Spokane Methodist  
Tacoma - Elim Scandinavian Congregational (Free Church)  
Tacoma Methodist

## **WISCONSIN**

Ashland Methodist  
Bone Lake (Luck) Seventh Day Adventist  
Cambridge - Willerup Methodist

Camp Douglas Baptist  
Chippewa Falls Seventh Day Adventist  
Chippewa County Baptist  
Clintonville - Bethany Free Church  
Cumberland Seventh Day Adventist  
Deer Park Methodist  
Diamond Bluff Methodist  
Eau Claire/Colfax Methodist  
Ephraim Moravian  
Eureka Baptist  
Oakland Seventh Day Adventist  
Grantsburg Methodist  
Green Bay Methodist  
Green Bay (East and West) Moravian  
Hartland/Martell/Viking Methodist  
Hayward/Washburn Methodist  
Kenosha Methodist  
Kenosha Seventh Day Adventist  
LaCrosse/Arkdale Methodist  
Madison - Bethany Free Church  
Emmanuel Free Church  
Milltown Baptist  
Milwaukee - Ebenezer Free Church  
Milwaukee Methodist  
Milwaukee Seventh Day Adventist  
Navarino Bethesda Free Church  
Neenah Baptist  
Neenah Seventh Day Adventist  
Neenah/Whittenberg Methodist  
New Denmark Baptist  
Ogdensburg - Bethany Free Church  
Oshkosh Baptist  
Poy Sippi Seventh Day Adventist  
Racine Baptist  
Racine - Bethany Methodist  
Racine - Trinity Methodist  
Racine Seventh Day Adventist  
Raymond Baptist  
Raymond Seventh Day Adventist

Sheboygan/Manitowoc Methodist  
Sister Bay Moravian  
Stoughton/Whitewater Methodist  
Superior Free Church  
Superior Methodist  
Suring - Maple Valley Free Church  
Underhill Seventh Day Adventist  
Union Grove Baptist  
Washington Island Baptist  
Waupaca Baptist  
Waupaca - St. Mark Episcopal  
Waupaca Methodist  
Waushara Baptist  
Welcome Seventh Day Adventist  
Westby Methodist  
Wisconsin Rapids - Saratoga Moravian  
Wittenberg Free Church

**ALBERTA (CANADA)**

Calgary Baptist  
Harmatten Seventh Day Adventist  
Olds Seventh Day Adventist

**BRITISH COLUMBIA (CANADA)**

Vancouver Methodist

**NEW BRUNSWICK (CANADA)**

New Denmark Anglican

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# A Journey to Denmark in 1928

by  
Anton Gravesen

– Printed in *Ugebladet*, a Danish-American Weekly Newspaper, in 1928 over a two week period. Translated from Danish by Barbara Robertson.

It is now just 3 months ago that I packed my valise and said good-bye to Askov to make a journey to Denmark. It was with some mixed feelings. Half my life I have lived here and my other half over there in the old country.

Ah, but off on the “steam horse” I went to Minneapolis where my daughter, Astrid, and I paid a visit to the Scandinavian-American Line’s Office and were received very kindly by Mr. Ellingsen, the line agent. He gave me a lot of good advice and recommendation letters to take with. That night we traveled on to Chicago where we arrived the next morning. I belong to the D. F. S. (Danish Society), the Danish Lutheran Church in America and Danish Young People’s Association. We had been given identifying badges so that those in our party would know each other. It did not take long after our arrival in Chicago before we met several others who also belonged to our group, and before evening, when departure from Chicago was to take place, we were over a hundred total, all of whom belonged to our party. Agent P. A. Paulson of Chicago and all his staff were very active in helping us to make the best travel decisions. At 7 o’clock in the evening, after having spent the day touring Chicago, we boarded a Lakawanna special train, which would take us to New York. The next day at lunch time we arrived in Buffalo, where our train stopped until 7 PM. We took another train up to Niagara to see Niagara Falls. There was an “electric car line,” which took us over the river. We drove down to the bottom of the Falls, a distance of several miles, to take a look at the powerful shower. This trip was included in the Denmark trip. After eating dinner our train went on, and the next morning at 7 o’clock we arrived in New York where we met the company’s people who transported us on a bus down to the dock where the S. S. “United States” lay waiting for us. There was a swarm of people. Around 600 were scheduled to departure on the ship and of these about 200 were in

our group. There were thousands of other friends and acquaintances who had come to say a last farewell before departure.

Soon our papers were checked, and at 11 o'clock in the morning we sailed out of the harbor to the open sea, where we would spend a dozen eventful days. After a few hours we lost sight of land, and then we got busy making preparations to make everything as comfortable and enjoyable as possible. The weather was mild and warm. People were in a good humor, food was good and plentiful, and the service was excellent. All looked well for a good journey. Our group was so large that we could set the tone. All around was singing and talking and forming new acquaintances. No one thought of seasickness, storm or other adversity. But as these things occur in nature, after a few days of pleasant weather, the wind began to blow and it got cold and, for many, spirits fell. Lines of people stood along the rails and provided for the fish. As the days went by it became worse and worse. Many went to bed and the dining tables were very sparsely occupied. Well, days went by, and after a few more the dining tables again began to fill up. Soon everyone was back. You could hear jokes being told. Singing and playing could once again be heard across the liner.

Our group, as I said before, was big enough to set the tone and we did. In the morning, devotions were held and a homily read and sometimes there was a discussion by some of the ministers, practice of songs, folk dances and comedy plays. It drew attention to us as not infrequently our little shows and performances were attended by both the ship's officers and passengers from the first cabin. They were curious about us and admired our American-born youth in that they could speak, sing and read Danish. An American on board could not understand it. He asked an older farmer born in Nebraska if he spoke Danish at home and the older gentleman replied that he did when he knew that those he was speaking to could understand him. Well, time went by and we had sailed along Scotland's green coast where a dove came aboard and stayed with us to Copenhagen. We had to put in at Kristiansand, Norway, and on the 11th day at 7 P.M. we sailed into the port of Copenhagen.

Thousands of people stood on the quay to welcome us to Denmark. They waved and cried out welcome. People were singing on board and there was singing on the quay too. We looked into the crowd for faces known to us. Now and then, one was discovered and there were shouts of "good day" and "welcome home," but I looked

in vain. It was a disappointment, but perhaps there still was one in the swarm who would be glad to see me. One is always hopeful. Next it was time for the papers to be checked. Quite a lot of royal officials came on board and we had to line ourselves up in rows. It was quite easy. One got the feeling that it did not always go so well. My papers consisted only in a conduct book. It was stamped and I was allowed to keep up with those who had better papers. By the gangway a couple of policemen stood. I showed my conduct book to one of them.

“Do you not have other papers?” he asked. “No.” “Well, have you done your last musters?” he asked. “No, but I have been an American citizen for 30 years.”

Well, yes, then I could go ashore. We came down to customs where our things were to be checked, but it was late and the customs officers probably preferred to be at home, so a note was stuck on each piece of luggage. Then we could go. Outside the door in the crowd I caught sight of my wife and her sister who were standing there waiting for me. All was good. Now I felt that I had come home, and that I was welcome. So we hired a cab for four Kroner that took us all away from the harbor out into Frederiksberg.

The committee at home had done a very fine job in planning and taking care of everything for us in the best way. They all deserve thanks and appreciation for their work. I am afraid that we were so absorbed with our own tours and travels while we were at home that we completely forgot to thank them for all their sacrifice, yet I hope that they were in a position to see our bright, smiling faces and that their work to make us comfortable and happy was greatly appreciated.

The next day festivities began in Copenhagen with a prayer in the Marmor Church where Pastor Morten Larsen and Pastor Wagner spoke. Bishop Ostenfeldt should have preached but was prevented by illness. Then we entered the cars for a tour around the city so that all participants would have an opportunity to see the beautiful buildings and engineering feats, as there are so many in Copenhagen. We stopped at Grundtvig's Church. Only the tower had been built but there was still plenty of room for everyone. Pastor Sorensen, who is a minister there, welcomed us to Denmark and told us briefly of the church's history.

After touring for about two hours we all gathered at Wivel, a famous restaurant at the entrance to Tivoli Gardens Amusement Park, where we had a delicious lunch. Next we were invited into the

Town Hall of Copenhagen, where we were received and welcomed to Denmark and in particular to Copenhagen by one of the mayors, after which we were led around the Town Hall which is one of the most beautiful buildings in Europe. In the evening we paid a visit to Tivoli, which is famous for its concerts and its buffoonery. The crowds abounded. Everywhere one looked there were places where for 10 or 25 Øre one had the opportunity to win 'gold and green wood.' There were plenty that wanted to try their fortune, but only a few got the big prizes. The losers may have thrown in the sponge too soon or perhaps their purses were empty before the big win came. There, our first day in Denmark ended and we went each to our quarters to rest. The next day we toured the lovely cities alongside the Øresund and then our journey continued to Roskilde and Aarhus, Aalborg and Rebild. I could go on quite a lot about what we saw and experienced but in the end how much this matters? It would after all be only a dim glimmer of life's movement.

Wherever we went we got an impression of the country's ancient culture and riches. We had always heard and remembered from our childhood that Denmark is a small poor country. But now we got the impression that Denmark is a small, rich country where it literally flows with milk and honey. Everywhere stood fertility straightforward and eloquent; there was no place on earth where one could find more than there was here. The houses were well kept with lime and paint and seemed to be mounted in a frame of fences and flowers, particularly roses. Never in my life have I seen so many lovely roses. In town and country one saw roses and again more roses in full flower. At the edges of the towns were thousands upon thousands of farms each with its little house, painted white with a red roof and the Danish flag waving on the summit. Here come father and mother and all the toddlers out on Sundays and evenings after work hours to spend some enjoyable hours drinking coffee, reading the newspaper, smoking a pipe of tobacco and weeding and cultivating their small farms, which gives a considerable amount of family entertainment.

After *\*Rebildfesten* the various planned tours of Jutland and the Islands began. I was not along but those who attended spoke very highly of the management and enjoyment of them. My wife and I traveled up to Skagen and stayed there for several days. Here we found beauty even between the dunes where my early education tells me there should have been more sand and lyme grass. A large part

of the dunes are now overgrown with pine and spruce and tucked in between them are farms and houses with fertile fields. Skagen, the new Skagen, is a city which does not lack for beauty and modernism. There are no farms around the city but most houses have a garden behind as in small towns and cities in the country. The streets are paved and clean. Skagen has a large fishing harbor where many fishing-boats lay at anchor. The city also has several painting collections and many of the walls in private homes are hung with lovely paintings. Skagen is rich with painters. After the season is over and one must pay for food and lodging the painter has nothing but his productions with which to pay and, in this manner, many of the local people have become owners of real works of art.

Our journey lead us south with Askov as our goal. We were invited for a 2-day stay. On the way down, we paid a visit to Pastor R. R. Vestergaard, former principal at the Des Moines School (*Grand View College*). The years have whitened him, but otherwise he's the same interested, lively, active man who still follows our journey over here in the West and carries the message of everything we do. He and his wife have a lovely home in Elling Præstegaard and I would look long and hard to find a more guest-friendly people. We spent an unforgettable day with them. Then we traveled to Sindahl, where we visited with Niels Hjort, one of \*Vendsyssel's brightest and most well known farmers. There we learned a great deal about conditions among the Danish farmers. "Things are not what they seem" was to be at the heart of the subject. The war has caused irreparable harm to the Danish peasants due to the abundance of money that was brought into the country. Values of houses rose unreasonably high and trade went wild. Each day you woke up much richer than when you went to bed. It was not only the money they already had that they used to speculate with but also they mortgaged and borrowed against house and home and personal property to get more money. They signed promissory notes for neighbors and friends, bought shares and German Marks and so on. And then the war ended as suddenly as it had begun. The things they had invested in were almost worthless. Finally, the Kroner rose in value and prices dropped further, but debt which had been incurred remained the same. Value of farms and movable property fell by half; mortgage debts, which are intended to be 50% of the farm's sales price were now 100% and payments were expected to be in Kroner measured in gold and the same was true

with taxes and bills. But nowadays the outlook is slightly brighter, better prices, and perhaps we will make a go of it.

## **Second installment**

Danish farmers where ever they are seem to be able to conjure up the value of top soil. They know their land, they know what to give it to produce high yields of corn and beets and they know what cows need and know how to look after their pigs and they do it. Denmark can be proud of its farmers. But compared to the Danish farmers, our American farmers seem somewhat behind.

Saturday morning we came to Askov, and before noon there were about a hundred Danish-Americans overall in this memorable, historic place. So many of the ministers and teachers who have come to America to help us in our churches and schools came originally from Askov. Superintendent Appel welcomed us and expressed the wish that we might gain something from our Tour of Denmark, not only for our own sake, but also for those at home. He believes that Denmark has received more from us in America than they have given back to us. In Askov we spent a few rich days of speeches and song and short excursions to historic places, of which there are many in the surrounding area.

On Sunday, Morten Larsen preached at the Independent Church after which there was Communion and many Danish-Americans participated. Saturday afternoon we all went walking in \*Skibelund Krat to see the many beautiful memorial stones found there. Then we rumbled southward into the Kongeåen River area where the old border between Germany and Denmark was located for so many years. School Superintendent Kristian la Cour Pedersen was all the while telling us the history of the Krat, woven in with events during the war and how he had helped "his boys" safely flee from Germany when they came up into Denmark. Most of these boys were just kids from homes beyond the river.

Sunday afternoon a multitude of cars arrived. We drove by a circuitous road to the old \*Skamlingsbanken. The area was hilly and the road was narrow with limited line of sight on both sides. It intertwined and twisted but the surroundings and the small villages we passed through were lush, luxuriant and beautiful. After a good hour's drive we reached Skamlingsbanken where we looked at the

many memorial stones. Of particular interest was the column which was erected in 1863 for the defenders of the Danish cause. There are twenty-five square blocks one laid on top of the other. In 1864 the Prussians blew up the tower and blocks lay spread out over the area. They were picked up by the neighboring population and in 1866 they again built the column with the recovered stone. Some blocks bear a trace of the explosion.

Pastor Nordentoft had come along with us and gave a brief overview of Skamling's history. There were many visitors that day at Skamlingsbanken, among them was a large group of deaf people. It was strange to behold and moved us to thank the creator that we had been given the great gifts of hearing and speech. The government officials of Kolding and Pastor Nordentoft's congregation had invited us for a visit to their beautiful city. Kolding is a friendly and idyllic place tucked under the forest along Kolding Fjord. We drove on Kongevej Road which was completely overshadowed by the crowns of the mighty trees that grow along it and at about 4 o'clock we arrived in Kolding. We drove up in front of the town hall where the mayor received us, assisted by town council members.

The mayor held a beautiful but short welcome address and we refreshed ourselves with the wine and cake that was provided. Then we inspected the beautiful old town hall. Marius Krog gave thanks from the Danish-Americans everywhere for the beautiful and cordial welcome which Kolding City through its representatives had given us. Afterward we walked up to look at the old Koldinghus which is now in ruins, but in spite of this stands imposingly over the surroundings. In one wing of the castle there is a museum where antiquities and historical records and some recent items are housed. These have all been found or given to the museum by residents in Kolding and the environs. There was one person in our party who by accident had sprained an ankle, so she had to use crutches. She had difficulty walking and permission was given to Marius Krog to drive his car into the courtyard to pick her up along with my wife who could not walk on the rugged stones either. It was said that it was the first time since the castle was built that a car had been allowed to drive into the courtyard. But Danish-Americans have to do what they will. The mayor had indeed given us the keys to the city.

From the castle we went into the reception hall where we were received by smiling female faces and found well-laid tables waiting

for us. It was reported that the city brewers had donated beer and the entire population had helped with gifts of food. The beer and food were good and disappeared into the hungry mouths. Then we made speeches and sang and before we knew it was 10 PM and we had to be once again on the move to Askov, where we were to spend the night. We all followed along with Nordentoft into his magnificent church where we arrived after midnight. Principal Appel and Mrs. Appel sat and waited for us with coffee. Appel was leaving the next morning before we could gather and so took the opportunity to bid farewell. The next morning at the breakfast table Mrs. Appel gave a beautiful farewell speech and thanked us for visiting. It might well have been us that did the thanking and so we each did before the cars drove us to the road where we boarded the train again, this time for Odense.

We arrived in Odense at noon where we were received by Th. Knudsen. We were all taken down to the school where we dined and then we went into town and paid a visit to Sankt Knuds Church, Hans Christian Andersen Museum and several other places. In the afternoon we boarded a special train at the South Fyn Railway, which took us to Ryslinge. Rail tours by the South Fyn Railway were probably the finest we had in Denmark as all coaches were second class. On the state railway we had to settle for third class. In Ryslinge we were received at the højskole, where Principal Monrad welcomed us. Then we ate supper and afterward listened to a talk given by Monrad on Ryslinge's history. Finally, we were welcomed by our hosts who had come to take us home for the night.

The following day our special train was once again at the station, and we rode to Ollerup Folkehøjskole near Faaborg. It was not the fastest way to get there but we were better off not to come home later by a shortcut. School Superintendent Bækthøj and wife received us and bid us welcome and gave us permission to move freely about the place. That afternoon at the school Bækthøj told us the school's history from Mads Hansen and Anton Nielsen days until current times. Then we went over to visit Niels Bukhs' Gymnastics School, as a team of 150 girls was there practicing. Then we went down to the great magnificent pool and back to the station to board our special train and off we went to Svendborg. From there, we took a boat trip on the Sound. Fyn has perhaps Denmark's most beautiful coast and sailing among the islands of the Svendborg Sound is unforgettable. At 7 o'clock in the evening, we arrived once again at Ryslinge Station.

The girls from the school were there waving Danish flags as they had come to receive us with a song. We all marched in ranks down to the school where festivities continued until late in the evening. The next morning we left Ryslinge and South Fyn and went our separate ways around the country. We had spent some unforgettable days in Askov and Ryslinge and felt that a bond of the heart had been formed. More flowers were merged into the memory's wreath. The next few weeks we visited with family and friends. There is much to write about but I must be brief so I'll just say that we felt most at home with the ministers and their families who had been in America; our second family. With the exception of siblings, others were strangers and it only took a few hours to exhaust the topics that interested us on both sides. They wanted to know all about the material conditions where we live at home and such things. And we - yes, it was well nigh the same as far as our interests went about them. Both sides were happy when it came time to part after food had been eaten and coffee drunk. There were some that seemed to pity us that we would soon return to America. I tried to explain to them that while we were happy to come on this trip, our journey was meant the whole time to lead us back home. When we really should say where our hearts were, it was America where we found peace now.

After visiting around Jutland we left Esbjerg late in the evening on a sleeper car and awakened the next morning in Copenhagen. The evening before in Esbjerg, a large steamer came in with a party of around 300 British tourists who had come to see Denmark, Norway and Sweden. They were all with our train to Copenhagen that night. They figured, of course, that Copenhagen was Denmark and that there was nothing else in this little land worth seeing. After a few days' stay in Copenhagen we went over to Vestbirk Højskole where we had been invited for eight days. The only Danish-Americans staying there were my wife and brother and I. However, there were Schleswigers and a good many Københavners who spent their holidays there, in total around fifty. We spent some rich, enjoyable and educational days with them at this famous school where Grønvald Nielsen has worked his entire adult life. We were received most heartily by Superintendent Nørgaard and wife, Grønvald Nielsen himself, and teachers Budde, Lund and Bidstrup. Not many hours passed before we felt at home in the large family circle of teachers and students. Mornings were used for lectures and singing, afternoons for trips to various places

in the neighborhood, such as the \*Ejer Bavnehøj, Villing Skov near Bryrup, Himmelbjerg, Rye and Silkeborg. Teachers accompanied us and informed us of the historical events, showed and explained to us the many monuments that are raised over the area, and led us to places where there were grandiose views.

Danish-Americans who travel to Denmark for a visit should try to put in their travel plans some time for a school stay. It has been demonstrated that nowhere in the old country does one get as good a reception and such good information. You get so much in return for the time spent at these schools.

But time passed, as I said, too quickly. We could easily have spent a month or two more without being wearied of touring and admiring this small seemingly rich and happy land. But we had to go with S. S. "Hellig Olav," which sailed from Copenhagen on August 15th. Our tour group was not scheduled to sail until the 22nd but we had not made a reservation in time and this was our only opportunity as all ships in the Scandinavian-American Line were booked completely through to October. It would have been nicer to be traveling home on our return voyage with all our good friends we had made, but there is nothing so bad that it's not good for something and it turned out to be a very nice group on the "Hellig Olav." The weather was good, so there was very little seasickness on the trip home.

After 11-days sailing we reached New York after putting into Halifax to disembark passengers for Canada. In the end, I would like to thank the Scandinavian-American Line representatives and ships' officers and crew for the excellent care, helpfulness and friendliness that we got from captain to cabin boy. Many seem to think that the journey across the sea takes a long time, which is not at all the case. The routes out of England are probably a little faster over the Atlantic, but when one considers the journey across England and then the North Sea, only exceedingly little time is saved and there are a great many annoyances avoided with the direct route. I do not think there was anyone who was tired of life aboard the Scandinavian-American Line. There were several passengers who expressed a wish that it might have taken several more days. I had the same sentiment.

*\*Rebildfesten* At the turn of the century Max Henius, a wealthy Danish-American biochemist, began to be interested in Danish-American organizations in Chicago. Funds were being raised by Danish Americans to purchase 200 acres (0.81 km<sup>2</sup>) of heather-covered

hills, located in part of Rold Forest (Danish: Rold Skov), Denmark's largest forest. In 1912 Max Henius presented the deed to H. M. King Christian X as a permanent memorial from Danish Americans. Rebild National Park (Danish: Rebild Bakker) is today a Danish national park situated near the town of Skørping in Rebild municipality, Region Nordjylland in northern Jutland, Denmark. Every July 4th since 1912, except for the two world wars, large crowds have gathered in the heather-covered hills of Rebild to celebrate American Independence Day. On the slope north of Rebild, where the residence of Max Henius was once located, a bust is placed in his memory.

\***Vendsyssel** is the northernmost traditional district of Denmark and of Jutland. Being divided from mainland Jutland by the Limfjord, it is technically a part of the North Jutlandic Island.

\***Skibelund Krat** became a national meeting place after the defeat in the war against Prussia and Austria in 1864. This was where pro-Danish people from the north and south of Kongeåen River met. A meeting place with seating for about 4,000 people was set out on a south-facing slope. The highlight of the year was the Constitutional meeting. The theme was always democracy and Danish patriotism. A number of memorials for people who had taken active part in the national fight for a Danish identity in Southern Jutland were erected around the meeting place and in the nearby countryside. In about 1900, two national pieces of artwork, Magnusstenen and Modersmålet, were added to the memorials.

\***Skamlingsbanken** is a large hill located in Vejstrup Parish, Jutland, Denmark between Kolding and Christiansfeld. With a peak rising to 113 metres (371 ft) above sea level, it is the highest point in Southern Jutland.

Several major historic public meetings took place here during and after the disputes over the territory of Schleswig-Holstein. When peace returned, there was an exchange of territories between the kingdom and the Duchy of Southern Jutland. As a result, eight non-Jutland parishes in the northern part of Tyrstrup Herred, including Vejstrup Parish were transferred to the kingdom and Skamlingsbanken thereafter fell within the borders of Denmark.

During the 16th century, Skamlingsbanken belonged to Frederick II of Denmark as part of his hunting ground which stretched all the way to Vejle. The area remained under crown ownership for many years, but in 1764 the monarch began to sell various areas. One area,

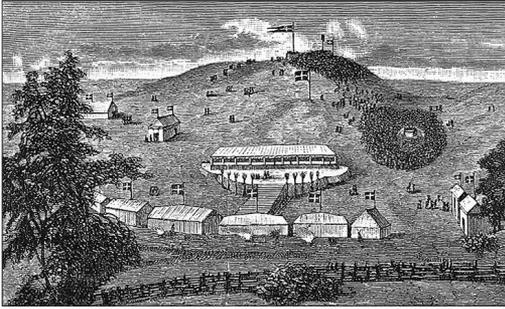
Grønninghoved Strandskov, remained under crown ownership and is currently state forest. Over many centuries, cultural historical sites such as mounds, depressions and dykes have developed in the wild forest. After the crisis in 19th-century Schleswig-Holstein, a desire to retain and strengthen the Danish spirit and the Danish language in South Jutland arose. A meeting in Stændersalen, Rendsburg in December 1842, caused a great stir when grocer Peter Hiort Lorenzen from Haderslev, Nis Lorentzen, Lilholt and Posselt from Københoved, spoke Danish. The Germans regarded this as an insult, while Danish-minded Schleswigers saw it as a patriotic victory to be celebrated. This resulted in a celebration held on 21 February 1843 at an inn in Sommersted where farmer Laurids Skau gave a speech and ended with the words;

“Like our ancestors, we empty a cup of oath. We will not promise so much, that we will turn our backs to German officials, who speak German to us, nor that we within three years will hunt Duke of Nordalbingia out of the country, but we will promise and keep – within three years to gather to feast again”

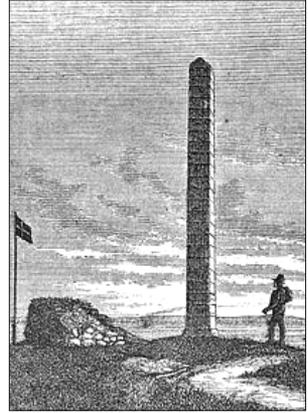
Whereupon Hans Ivar Staal shouted, “We will meet within three months.” He went on to explain that the patriotic men of his district had decided to celebrate on 14th May, to commemorate the royal decree introducing the Danish language in a number of public offices. They chose Skamlingsbanken where they had secured a place to gather. The surprised and enthusiastic participants immediately created a committee which would collect the 440 silver Thaler required to purchase the hill, which was raised within a few weeks. Skamlingsbanken then officially came under the association’s ownership in 1854, following confirmation by the king’s signature.

There is a 16-metre (52 ft) tall memorial column dedicated to 18 people who have contributed to the Danish cause in Schleswig-Holstein on Skamlingsbanken’s highest point, the *Højskamling*. Made of 25 granite blocks, the column was raised in 1863. The monument only stood for five months before its destruction on March 21, 1864 by occupying Prussian forces during the 2nd Schleswig War. The Prussians had difficulty destroying the monument, and after several unsuccessful attempts forced a local stonemason to drill blasting holes into the stone. By the evening of that day the Prussians set off a large

mine, which caused the pillar to fall in a southeasterly direction. On April 16th, the stones were sold at auction. Local farm owner Raaben had two locals buy the stones, thus keeping the Prussians in the dark. These were dragged into hiding in neighboring fields. After the war, the stones were recovered, and in May 1864, the pillar was raised again.



*The first meeting at Skamlingsbanken  
18 May 1843*



*Drawing of the memorial  
on Højskamling at  
Skamlingsbanken*

**\*Ejer Bavnehøj** is the third-highest natural point in Denmark (170.35 m). It lies in the southern part of Skanderborg municipality, between the villages of Riis and Ejer. At its summit is a 13 m tall tower, built in 1924, commemorating the reunion of the south of Jutland with the rest of Denmark after the First World War.

Historically Ejer Bavnehøj was mostly known as a site for a beacon where signal-fires were lit in order to warn the military and local population if the enemy were on the way. Ejer means owner. The second part of the name, "Bavnehøj," can literally be translated into Bavne meaning Beacon and Høj from the Old Norse word *haugr* meaning hill.

# **The Danish Folk High School and its Presence in the U.S.:**

## **The Failure of the Danish-American Folk High Schools vs. the Success of Highlander Folk School**

by  
Zizanie Bodene-Yost

The folk high schools remain an important part of Danish culture over one hundred and fifty years after their birth. Although Denmark, and the world, is very different now than it was in the nineteenth century, this unique form of education is still an effective model. On the one hand, it would be a mistake to suppose that the folk high school cannot be relevant outside of the culture in which it originated. However, it would be equally wrong to suppose that the folk high school has not changed or evolved over time, or that it can be transplanted to a new environment in exactly the same form as it takes in Denmark. Even within Denmark, the folk high schools are very diverse, and many have diverged considerably – in curriculum, structure, student body demographics, etc – from the original form.

The case of folk high schools in the United States illustrates both sides to this question of the potential for folk high schools outside of Denmark. The earliest and most obvious examples are the schools founded by Danish immigrants, all but one (Danebod in Minnesota) of which did not survive past the 1930's. Their failure has sometimes been interpreted as proof that the Grundtvigian model cannot be transplanted. However, as will be discussed later, Mortensen and others argue that their failure was not directly caused by the conditions of their new environment, but was rather a result of their inflexibility and failure to adjust to this new environment.

On the other side, that of greater success, are the schools established by “non Danes” as Mortensen put it, which nonetheless were inspired by the Danish or Grundtvigian model. The most significant of these endeavors is the Highlander Folk School. Myles Horton founded the school shortly after his return from a visit (lasting nearly a year) to Denmark. While Highlander incorporated certain important characteristics of the Danish folk school, the content or focus

was always oriented toward the immediate needs of the community it served (which, needless to say, were vastly different from those in Denmark).

The school was very much involved in the labor movement of the 1930s, the civil rights movement, and then in the 1970s and '80s working with the poor, rural populations of surrounding Appalachia. Of these three movements, the second is the most outstanding. While Highlander's efforts during the labor movement eventually reached across the South, the results cannot be said to have had as dramatic an impact on social conditions as did the Citizenship Schools. To aid workers in exercising their rights is admirable, but to create a program by which a marginalized population could gain access to rights previously denied them is remarkable. The role of Highlander in the civil rights movement is often overlooked, but upon closer inspection it is quite significant.

The general consensus seems to be that while there were certain factors specific to Denmark at that time, which contributed heavily to the formation of the folk schools and cooperatives, this does not discount the importance of the similarities (chiefly the struggles of poor rural farming communities) and the value to be found in the folk school model. Rather, following Mortensen, there is a need for appropriate adaptation to the new environment, but the folk high school – its basic principles and structure – can serve as an effective model.

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While the folk high school owes its existence primarily to the personal genius of Grundtvig, there are several factors in Danish history that created fertile ground for its establishment and success. One might trace the intricate peculiarities of the Danish nation as far as antiquity (Manniche 1969, 20-32), but such an exhaustive approach is not necessary to gain an understanding of the forces behind the origins of the folk high school movement. For this purpose, the critical period begins with the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Having sided with Napoleon, Denmark suffered greatly from the French defeat: with the loss of Norway to Sweden, the Danish territories were severely diminished; the British navy decimated the Danish fleet and inflicted serious damage on the city of Copenhagen; the country went bankrupt; yet for Grundtvig “even more disastrous was the concomitant crisis of

the spirit which left its people in a state of stupor and hopelessness." (Mortensen 1977, 10)

The small size of the country, economic crisis, the prevalence of small to medium-sized farms, and external pressures of the foreign market all contributed to shaping an environment in which co-operation was the tactic most beneficial to individual farmers. (Manniche 1969, 59-84) In this context the folk high school becomes significant. The success of the co-operatives was "largely due to the influence of the folk high school, which not only supplied the pioneers of the movement but educated the whole peasantry to an understanding of their problem and a trustful appreciation of their leaders." (Manniche 1969, 81-82)

Yet another major challenge arose for the farmers in the 1880s, when the United States, Argentina, and Russia gained control of the international grain market. The Danish farmers, who previously had achieved economic success exporting grain, now were forced to switch to production of butter, bacon, and eggs. Due to the influences of the co-operatives and the folk high schools, by now securely established, the farmers were well prepared for the "vigorous activity" required to make the necessary changes. (Manniche 1969, 59-60)

It has been argued that the developments in the farmers' co-operatives would not have been possible without the reforms (in support of peasant farmers) initiated by certain "high-minded noblemen" beginning in the latter half of the eighteenth century. (Manniche 1969, 32) As reforms of this particular nature were not found elsewhere, this argument suggests that the Danish situation was too unique to be compared to conditions in other countries at other times, and that this uniqueness prevents the folk high school from being relevant outside of Denmark. However, when one considers the diverse forms the folk high school has assumed within Denmark (that is, without losing its basic principles), there is little reason to suppose that this flexibility would not transfer to contexts outside of Denmark. Furthermore, there are sufficient commonalities, parallels that may be drawn to certain other situations, to support the potential usefulness of the folk high school. The depression in the United States in the 1930s presents a useful example. Despite the cultural or historical differences, the farmers and other working class people suffered from the same lack as the Danes of the 1830s: the need for education and internal leadership. The depression had hit the people of Appalachia

before the stock market crashed. The people – already living in poverty – now faced starvation. Furthermore, the uneducated workers were routinely exploited by their employers. Thus, just as the folk schools educated the farmers in nineteenth century Denmark, helping them to form co-operatives and organize their own leadership, so could the folk high school help to educate and organize the lower-class, “common man” of Depression-era America.

The folk high schools in Denmark (and throughout Scandinavia) have long since ceased to serve a primarily rural, impoverished, farmer class of students. Many schools now (and since the early twentieth century) function in an urban setting, with well-educated students. In addition, the schools are often supplementary to university education, in contrast to their original purpose as an alternative to the university.

In other countries the folk high school has expanded to address the needs of the urban poor and minority populations. However, most importantly, the folk high school model continues to be used effectively in rural agricultural settings. For developing countries in particular, the original form and historical basis for the folk high schools is more relevant today than its current manifestations in Denmark.

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Now that the historical context of the folk high schools has been established, it is necessary to discuss their “father,” as Grundtvig is so often called. Although Grundtvig never created his own school, it is nonetheless his ideas that inspired the first folk high schools, and which throughout their existence have continued to form the basis for these schools’ philosophies. An understanding of Grundtvig is absolutely essential to an understanding of the Danish folk high school. It is also necessary to examine Grundtvig’s personal background, his experiences as they are specific to the time in which he lived. His ideas, broad and varied as they are, can be difficult to understand, and are easily misinterpreted. Thus it is helpful to understand how Grundtvig was influenced by historical events.

It has been argued that Grundtvig is not more widely known outside of Denmark due to the fact that, in Poul Georg Lindhardt’s words, “His works are difficult to understand, and even more difficult to translate.” (Fain 1980, 52) In numerous English-language works on Grundtvig and the folk high schools, there is an effort to translate the meaning of certain phrases, which have found varying expressions in

English. Take for example, the words “folkelig” and “oplysning.” The former, meaning something like ‘of the people,’ has a connotation that is not entirely clear out of context, and has been mis-translated, if you will, as “popular.” The confusion surrounding the latter comes from Grundtvig’s usage of the word in two senses, both “enlightenment” and “education.” (Bugge 1983, 216) The interpretation of these two words becomes important in understanding Grundtvig’s idea of “folkelig oplysning.” As Mortensen states, it is “a mistake to think of **folkelig** enlightenment as popular education, a term nowhere found in Grundtvig’s writings.” (Mortensen 1977, 19) The idea, central to the folk high schools, was a form of education “which would ‘promote, encourage, and develop the inherent, historic, and cultural values of the people.’” (Mortensen 1977, 20)

This idea of the ‘folk’ leads to another issue of misunderstanding, which can in part be explained by the historical circumstances. First of all, Grundtvig was influenced by National Romanticism, which was an important movement in Scandinavia at the time he lived and wrote. Following the spirit of this movement, the national culture and history found a central position in Grundtvig’s ideas. Grundtvig’s emphasis on the Danish character, his “boundless love toward his homeland, its history and its language,” has been misinterpreted as nationalistic. (Mortensen 1977, 19) However, according to Henningsen, Grundtvig was a “universalist.” (Henningsen 1993, 289) More specifically, he believed in the importance of a people’s culture and history, but this did not mean he was antagonistic to other cultures, rather “just as he treasured his own culture, he was more than willing to let others enjoy and treasure theirs.” (Mortensen 1977, 19) This is significant, since it may be concluded that the (mis)understanding of his ideas as nationalistic are partially responsible for the assumption that the folk high school can only function within Denmark. The clarification of Grundtvig’s ideas as more universal implies that the folk high school can indeed apply to other cultures besides his own.

As it is difficult to understand Grundtvig’s writings, it is also difficult to deduce a unified ‘theory’ behind his ideas, as his writings are vast, not particularly organized, and can also be contradictory. K.E. Bugge states,

Grundtvig was not a *theoretical* educationalist in the sense that he was interested in developing an educational system

or programme. On the contrary, his educational thinking was not very systematic at all. The ideas are not put together in any particular order or developed logically. He refuses explicitly to present a new educational programme and he does so with the characteristic explanation that life cannot be described before it has been lived. (Bugge 1983, 211)

This lack of a rigid system lends a certain flexibility to Grundtvig's educational ideas. That is, it is not necessary for a school to follow an exact model or program in order to retain the basic principles of the folk high school.

There are, however, a few basic points which were central to Grundtvig's idea of the folk high school, and which have remained important not only to the later manifestations of the folk high schools in Denmark, but also to adaptations of the model outside of Denmark. First, Grundtvig insisted that the appropriate age for schooling was after 18, as opposed to childhood. Most pupils at folk high schools were (and are) between the ages of 18 and 25. Another feature of the folk high school was that it should be residential. From these two points, it has been said that an "important facet" of the folk school idea is "residential adult education." (Larson 1980, 192)

K.E. Bugge summarizes very well Grundtvig's ideas behind the folk high school. A few are particularly worth discussing here. The first is the idea of 'interaction' or "vekselvirkning." (Bugge 1983, 217) Folk high school lessons were often based on lectures, the "living word" (another central idea in Grundtvig's teachings), but there should also be discussion. The importance of the "living word" and "interaction" meant that the student should also be involved in the educational process; there should be conversation between teachers and students. Bugge goes on to say that this "interaction" should also be characterized as "free, living and natural," but that the "supreme importance was attached to the actual function, the actual life as it unfolds, not what all this might eventually lead to." (Bugge 1983, 218) That is to say that the environment at the school should be 'free, living, and natural,' and the nature of the education itself was more important than an external goal, except that it should "serve 'the common good.'" (Bugge 1983, 218)

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In order to effectively explain the successful adaptation of the folk high school by “non-Danes,” it is necessary to discuss the failure of the schools established by Danish immigrants to the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As in Denmark, the folk high schools in the United States (that is, those associated with Danish-Americans) were closely linked to the Danish Lutheran Church. The folk schools were only established after the first ministers – trained at folk schools in Denmark – emigrated to the U.S. Before 1872 (when the first Danish Lutheran church was formed), many Danish immigrants belonged to Norwegian or Swedish congregations. (Larson 1980, 175)

In spite of, and also because of, the pressures to assimilate into the American culture, there were strong efforts within the Danish communities to hold on to their culture and native tongue. Mortensen points out, “It is not without significance, that while Swedish and Norwegian immigrants founded academic institutions as their first centers of learning, the Danes established folk schools.” (Mortensen 1977, 21) The folk high school held a special place in the Danish cultural tradition, and thus was a natural choice of institution to help preserve Danish culture in America.

The first Danish folk high school in the U.S. was established at Elk Horn Iowa in 1878. It was situated in an area highly populated with Danes. Even so, the school opened with only nine students, though it gained seven more later on in its first session. (Mortensen 1977, 23) The school did attract more students and increase its staff over time, but the numbers never reached great proportions. As soon as 1880, frictions arose due to the principal’s (Kirkeberg) “uncompromising nature,” and he was forced to resign. (Mortensen 1977, 26) The school was closed, though for a short time. This seems to be the first instance in a pattern that can be seen throughout the individual and collective histories of the Danish-American folk high schools, where the schools are overly dependent on the personality of their principal.

Elk Horn experienced various changes, alternately decreases and increases in enrollment, along with quite a few changes in leadership, until it ceased to exist as a folk school in 1894. (Mortensen 1977, 28-34) The second Danish-American folk high school was established in 1882 at Ashland, Michigan, but only two years later, “the future looked bleak for the school.” (Mortensen 1977, 39) The school’s founder, H.J. Pedersen left in 1888 to establish Danebod folk school in Tyler, Minnesota. After struggling to stay open, the school at Ashland

closed following the death of its principal in 1895. There were later attempts to revive the school, but not in the original form. Another school opened at Nysted, Nebraska in 1887. (Mortensen 1977, 58) The situation at Nysted seriously declined as a result of the Great Depression, and its “final chapter” began in 1931. (Mortensen 1977, 72) As stated earlier, Danebod in Minnesota was founded in 1888. It is the longest surviving of the Danish-American folk schools. After 1941, the buildings at Danebod stood empty until in 1945 Mortensen, pastor since 1943, “made a motion to restore [the folk school].” (Mortensen 1977, 94) Since then Danebod has been used for various Danish-American cultural gatherings or events, but it was never revived as a folk high school.

Ironically, it seems that in some ways the attempts to maintain their “Danishness” actually resulted in pushing Danish-Americans to assimilate. For instance, as the folk high schools continued to insist on the almost exclusive use of the Danish language, this became more and more impractical for the students, who required a knowledge of the English language in order to function in their new American surroundings.

The failure of the Danish-American folk high schools, according to Enok Mortensen, “has been interpreted by some people as proof that an American folk school is visionary, quixotic and unrealistic.” (Mortensen 1977, 131) Yet Mortensen argues that this failure (in addition to very limited funding) was due to “inflexibility and nostalgia” and a lack of necessary adaptations. (Mortensen 1977, 125) Chester Graham criticized these schools for, in focusing so obstinately on certain traditions, actually working against Grundtvig’s philosophy, “The very principle of Grundtvig that the school should be ‘folkelig’ means that the life of the school grows out of the life of the people. An American folk high school grows out of the life of the American people.” (Larson 1980, 189)

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Perhaps the most successful example of the ‘transplantation’ of the Danish folk high school is Highlander Folk School (now Highlander Research and Education Center) formerly located in Monteagle, Tennessee. For Myles Horton, founder of the school, a trip to Denmark became the final step in his long search for an alternative model of education.

Myles Horton grew up in Tennessee, where he would later found Highlander. His parents instilled in him a value for education, but at the same time a respect for “uneducated” or illiterate people. (M. Horton 1998, 2, 8) They taught not by lecturing him, or forcing him to adopt certain beliefs, but rather by example. Regarding education, they had both been school teachers (although not highly educated themselves), and even moved to a new town in order that Myles could attend high school.

Horton first began actively looking for a new type of school after an experience in Ozone, Tennessee. In 1927, the summer before his senior year of college, he was working for a vacation Bible school in the small town. Horton states, “I wanted to deal with some of those problems that I was becoming aware of, so what I did was to pass the word that I’d like all the parents and other adults to come to a meeting.” (M. Horton 1998, 22) His methods at this, and subsequent meetings were to be similar to his later work with Highlander. He asked the people what they wanted to talk about, what problems they experienced and would like help with, what questions they would like answered. What he learned was that, as the leader of these discussions, “You don’t have to know the answers. The answers come from the people, and when they don’t have any answers, then you have another role, and you find resources...” (M. Horton 1998, 23) At the time, Horton thought of this as an experiment, and according to Adams, “having been in traditional schools all his life, he could not trust this way of learning. He promised to come back when he had something to offer.” (Adams 1980, 215) From this point onward Horton searched for a model of a school that could serve the needs of communities like that in Ozone.

After finishing his studies at Cumberland University, he went on to study at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Regarding his new educational interests, Horton states,

I was no longer interested in organized religion...What I was interested in was social responsibility, so I started exploring politics, sociology, many different fields... I began to read everything I could find about solving human problems. (M. Horton 1998, 28)

When he got to “Union” as he calls it, Horton says “it was very tough, but thanks to one of my professors, Reinhold Niebuhr...I got

along." (M. Horton 1998, 34) Adams states that Niebuhr encouraged Horton to pursue his "dream" of a school for mountain people. (Adams 1980, 216) While at Union, Horton wanted to explore all sorts of new ideas that he encountered, to discover whether they would be useful when he returned to Tennessee. (M. Horton 1998, 36) He attended religious and political meetings, "workers' education classes," strikes, rallies, and demonstrations. (M. Horton 1998, 36-37) Horton also briefly describes his reading at the time, including Lenin, Marx, many works influenced by Marx, books on literature and history, and lastly Dewey, "one of the few people [in the 1920's and 1930's] who had progressive ideas about education." (M. Horton 1998, 44) This last reference is interesting; considering that Dewey has sometimes been discussed in relation or comparison to Grundtvig, this early interest of Horton's seems to indicate a progression towards the Danish or Grundtvigian schools.

In 1930, Horton's idiosyncratic methods of educating himself (he attended several institutions without pursuing a degree, but merely to study whatever he wished – see Glen 1966, 16) led him to the Graduate School of Sociology in Chicago. Horton went to Chicago with the intention of studying with Robert Park, who "had the reputation of being one of the greatest sociologists in the country." (M. Horton 1998, 47) In Chicago, Horton says, "I spent my time...reading and studying sociology, and finding out what people were doing to solve social and economic problems." (M. Horton 1998, 47)

During his time in Chicago, he met Aage Møller and Enok Mortensen, both Danish-born Lutheran ministers, who encouraged Horton to go to Denmark and study the folk high schools. (Glen 1996, 16) Horton describes the events as follows,

I told them about my educational goals and how I was having trouble finding a model school. They suggested that what I had in mind was a Danish folk high school. These schools sounded so interesting that I read every book on the subject I could find...[However] I could not understand how the methods described could ever achieve the results claimed for these schools.

I decided the only way to find out would be to go to Denmark. (M. Horton 1998, 50)

In 1931-32 Horton traveled to Denmark and remained there for several months. During his stay, he learned Danish and visited numerous folk high schools. Horton at this time was “convinced that looking for a school to imitate was the wrong road to travel,” but he was still looking to the Danish folkehøjskole for some direction in how to “map out the details of what form a school should take and how to get started.” (M. Horton 1983, 26)

Both John Glen and Aimee Horton, in their books on Highlander, claim that what Horton found in the Danish folk high schools was “disappointing.” This is too much of an oversimplification, and rather (unjustly) diminishes the importance of the Grundtvigian model for Highlander. As evidenced above in Horton’s own words, he knew from the beginning of his trip that he was not seeking a model to copy. What he needed was inspiration, he “wanted to learn what was of use,” and this he found. (M. Horton 1983, 26)

In *The Long Haul*, Horton discusses specifically how Grundtvig and the Danish folk high schools influenced him. It is clear from these writings that it would be wrong to conclude, as Aimee Horton has, that Horton was “searching unsuccessfully for an institutional model” while in Denmark. (A. Horton 1989, 256) Horton describes his own feelings on this subject, “It was not only his educational ideas, but Bishop Grundtvig himself, that attracted me. I saw him as a rebel with prophetic insights; a champion and inspirer of the poor and voiceless.” (M. Horton 1998, 52) He goes on to list specific points he had gathered from his studies in Denmark that he felt would be “particularly useful in the future:

- Students and teachers living together
- Peer learning
- Group singing
- Freedom from state regulation
- Nonvocational education
- Freedom from examinations
- Social interaction in nonformal setting
- A highly motivating purpose
- Clarity in what for and what against (M. Horton 1998, 52-53)

As one can see from his notes at the time (the list above comes from his notes towards the end of his stay in Denmark), he eventually concluded that there were several important principles central to the

folkehøjskole that he intended to incorporate into his own school. However, he also realized that the exact form the school was to take would have to arise naturally in response to the needs of its students. This did not entail a complete abandonment of the Danish model, and its influence should not be discounted.

After Highlander opened in 1932, its first major program was in the southern industrial union movement of the 30's and 40's. In this program, Highlander – previously focused on community issues – expanded its scope to become a “southwide center for workers’ education.” (A. Horton 1989, 77) The situation during and immediately following the Great Depression, in which the folk school was used to train leaders for the labor movement, may be compared to the conditions that gave rise to the folk schools in Denmark. Certainly these are two very different times with different issues, but there are nevertheless important similarities. In both cases, the efforts of the folk schools responded to the need that came out of an economic crisis. Although the Danish movement addressed the needs of farmers, and Highlander addressed those of industrial workers, both constitute the “common man,” the less privileged members of the given society. Lastly, both programs aided these communities in developing their own leaders and improving their economic status by co-operative means.

The next major program at Highlander was involved with the civil rights movement, beginning in the 1950's. It should also be noted that Myles Horton attempted to combat racism already in his work for the YMCA during college. He had openly violated the laws that prohibited blacks and whites from eating and drinking together. He sums up part of his philosophy when he says “I made up my mind never to do something wrong just because it was legal.” (M. Horton 1998, 16) This may not seem to be critical information, but it gives further insight into Myles Horton's personality and commitment to acting on his beliefs. His involvement in the civil rights movement is then, not an accidental one brought about only by the requests of participants at Highlander, but a natural extension of his earlier work.

Highlander's involvement in the civil rights movement began with several workshops addressing the desegregation in public schools, the first of which was held in 1953. Rosa Parks attended one of these workshops in 1955, and it was only after she returned to Montgomery after this workshop that she famously refused to give up

her seat on the bus. Of her experience at Highlander, Parks said, "That was the first time in my life I had lived in an atmosphere of complete equality with the members of the other race." (A. Horton 1989, 162) The impact of Highlander on Parks, as Aimee Horton points out, is not that it was responsible for her later action, but that it was one of many "experiences that made her sensitive to racial discrimination and to the possibility of living in a fully integrated society." (A. Horton 1989, 163)

Horton and his colleagues created the Citizenship School Literacy Program, which organized classes for African-Americans living in the South to enable them to pass the voter registration tests. Highlander initiated the project after Septima Clark brought Esau Jenkins to visit the school. Both Clark and Jenkins had worked on John's Island, Clark as a teacher, and Jenkins as a bus driver and businessman. Both had witnessed the inadequate education provided to the black population in the Sea Islands; most were illiterate. Jenkins had tried to "get a group in the bus in the mornings and teach them how to read the part of the state constitution they would have to read to become registered voters." (Adams 1980, 226) When Clark brought Jenkins to Highlander, he asked Horton "if Highlander would set up night schools for adults." (Adams 1980, 226) Horton agreed, and "went down to John's Island and was in and out for almost a year trying to figure out how to help Esau." (M. Horton 1998, 100) The resulting program was not focused only on literacy, which Horton saw as "only one step toward their becoming citizens and social activists." (M. Horton 1998, 100)

In 1957 the first of these schools, led by Bernice Robinson (Septima Clark's cousin) and Esau Jenkins, were established on the Sea Islands, South Carolina. An important feature of the Citizenship School courses was that the teachers were all leaders from the African-American community. The program expanded, eventually becoming the "educational arm of the growing civil rights movement." (M. Horton 1983, 21) In his discussion of this program (for a seminar presentation) Horton quotes Martin Luther King, who said at an anniversary celebration for Highlander, "'You have given the South some of its most responsible leaders.'" (M. Horton 1983, 21)

The Citizenship School program represents a greater divergence from the original form of the Danish folk high school. Rather than focusing on economic issues and an appreciation of a shared cultural

history, the schools worked towards achieving political rights for a minority population, and the transition from segregationist policies to the emerging desegregation and integration. This is particularly significant, because it shows how the folk high school model can be successfully adapted to suit the needs of a completely different community than the one for which it was originally envisioned. This is the sort of adaptation for which Enok Mortensen so highly praises Myles Horton. It stands in contrast to the failures of the schools established by Scandinavian immigrants, which stubbornly clung to the past, due to some sort of misguided sense of loyalty. The adjustments and changes made to the traditional Danish folk high school do not necessitate a rejection of Grundtvig's ideas; they do not represent a betrayal or complete departure from the Danish model, but rather a new application of the core ideas.

There are certain principles from the folk high school present in Highlander and the Citizenship Schools. Returning to the previous discussion of Grundtvig's basic educational ideas, these can be compared to the methods used at Highlander. First, the principle of "interaction." Horton's programs always emphasized the active involvement of the students and the central place of discussion and conversation in the educational setting. As described in a letter written by Reinhold Niebuhr, at Highlander a group of students "above 18 years of age will live with the teachers on a small farm where all will work, study and discuss together." (M. Horton 1998, 61) Here, and also in the Citizenship schools, the focus is on adult education (students above age 18) just as Grundtvig had advocated, and furthermore *residential*, also one of Grundtvig's stipulations. The importance of discussion is in agreement with Grundtvig's belief in the importance of the "living word" – at Highlander, as at the Danish folk schools, the emphasis was never on book learning.

Horton's (and consequently Highlander's) efforts to work toward equality and civil rights are, in their specific nature, entirely outside of and unrelated to Grundtvig's ideas. This is in a way a positive indication of the versatility of the Grundtvigian form. However, despite differences, it might also be said that these efforts are in agreement with Grundtvig's suggestion (even if, as Bugge explains, it was rather vague) that the folk high school ought to "serve the common good."

Andreasen suggests that “in [the Highlander Folk School], the *form* of the Grundtvigian folk school has been retained, while it has been emptied of its content.” (Larson 1980, 191) This statement is misleading. It is, in the first place, dependent on what one considers to be “content” as opposed to “form” or “structure.” It is true that any nation-specific content has necessarily been removed, but it has been replaced by a new content that nevertheless follows the spirit of Grundtvig’s teachings. To paraphrase Graham’s point discussed earlier, it is Grundtvig’s principle that a school should grow out of the people it serves. Therefore, the nature of the content is still in keeping with Grundtvig’s ideas, but appropriately altered to its new setting. The basic guiding principles of the Grundtvigian folk school – more philosophy than mere structure, and thus part of the “content” – have been retained.

Furthermore, that a relatively small institution such as Highlander had such an impact on a historical, nation-wide movement is something that should not be ignored. The central importance of the Danish model to the philosophy of the school may be proof of the potential success or effectiveness of a folk high school in an American context. The institution should not be written off as irrelevant now that its major contributions lie in the past. As Horton described it, the school goes through ‘movement periods’ and ‘non movement periods’. We may now be observing a prolonged ‘non movement period’, but that does not mean that the methods of this school or others like it will not be valuable in the future.

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## Book Reviews

Norman Berdichevsky. *An Introduction to Danish Culture*

Jefferson, NC, McFarland & Co. Publishers, 2011

Reviewed by Rolf Buschardt Christensen

It is always exciting when a new book about Denmark is published, particularly when it is written by a non-Dane, who for that reason naturally brings a fresh, stimulating and different approach to the study of Denmark, and sees things that the natives don't – or take for granted or think not worth mentioning. For instance, already in the first chapter Norman Berdichevsky outlines how Denmark is an island kingdom which for centuries had to rely on ships for communication between the various islands and the Jutland peninsula. He underlines the major improvement in communication when regular and dependable ferry service was introduced between the various parts of Denmark. And again when trains could be driven on to the ferries; eliminating the time-consuming transshipment of goods and passengers from one mode of transport to the other! He ends the first chapter by describing the major tunnels and bridges which now link much of Denmark. In fact, the photo on the cover of the book is a picture of the towering suspension bridge across the Great Belt between the two biggest islands of Zealand and Funen.

In the second chapter he deals with wind power. Wind can power sailing ships, but also wind mills; above all the big wind turbines, which now supply Denmark with 20 percent of its electrical power. The wind turbines are located on both land as well as on the sea, in big offshore windmill parks. We learn that the wind turbines are a major Danish export, supplying 40 percent of the world market.

Staying with the maritime theme the next chapters deal with islands further afield, such as Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Bornholm and the former Danish West Indies, now the U.S. Virgin Islands. At the end of the book he devotes three whole chapters to Slesvig and Danish-German border issues and wars, one of Berdichevsky's keen interests, about which he has written a book. He maintains that in the period 1946-49 Denmark missed an opportunity to regain all of Slesvig. Moreover, one of these chapters deals specifically with the Jewish community and the Jewish Question in South Slesvig

(Germany) in the late 1930s, as well as relations there between the Jewish community and the Danish minority.

One chapter is devoted to Jewish cemeteries throughout Denmark. He calls these cemeteries 'A Cultural Landmark to Tolerance'. He also touches on the rescue of the Danish Jews in October 1943. Needless to say he also talks about the large Muslim community in today's Denmark, which has created parallel societies, or ghettos, which are not integrated into mainstream Danish society. In this connection he discusses the controversy and riots over the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed in *Jyllandsposten* in 2005, which became one of the most exigent foreign policy challenges in Danish history.

To round out this introduction to Danish culture Berdichevsky discusses the development of pedestrian precincts in nearly all Danish towns, the biggest being *Strøget* and adjacent streets and squares in the centre of Copenhagen. One chapter deals with the rivalry between Jutland and Copenhagen. Naturally he also has to touch upon 'hygge', happiness, smørrebrød, beer and akvavit, in addition to 'Janteloven', (which destroys self-confidence and initiative).

Furthermore, the book contains 11 short chapters, devoted to 11 famous Danes, from astronomer Tycho Brahe to the present monarch, Queen Margrethe II. There is a chapter on the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard and of course on N.F.S. Grundtvig, who he calls the Spiritual Father of the Nation, which many would agree with. His favourite Dane is perhaps Hans Christian Andersen, as he makes very favourable references to him throughout the book.

One might question why he included Arne Sørensen, who was the leader of the very small political party Dansk Samling, but who did play a significant role in the resistance movement during World War II. A better choice might have been Henrik Kauffmann, who as Danish minister in Washington during the war defied the government and helped change the course of Danish foreign policy.

Norman Berdichevsky calls King Christian X weak and a puppet, blaming him for the Danish response, or lack of it, to the Nazi invasion and the following policy of negotiation and collaboration with the occupying power, until the Danish government resigned in 1943. Most Danes see King Christian X as a hero, riding on his horse through the streets of Copenhagen during the occupation with no body guards. The people responsible for the Danish response to the invasion and occupation are Prime Minister Thorvald Stauning, Foreign Minister

Peter Munch and later Prime Minister Erik Scavenius, and not the King. These ministers had been elected by the people and were supported by the people – and no demonstrations or riots broke out in April 1940 to protest the course followed.

Norman Berdichevsky could have dedicated more space to Denmark's political system of parliamentarism, responsible government and proportional representation. Likewise, he could have dealt with the concept of the welfare state, above all its role in major policy areas such as welfare, health, education and the re-distribution of wealth. Another interesting focus for foreign readers would have been Denmark's reluctant membership in the European Union, as well as major changes in defence policy and action over the past two decades.

The book contains some spelling mistakes (Middlefart; Kumble). And also some mistakes such as The First Slesvig War of 1848-50 being referred to as the First Dano-Norwegian War; and that the Bonn and Copenhagen Declarations of 1955 were signed. They were not signed; they were declarations that were issued separately by each government.

Norman Berdichevsky finds Denmark intriguing and has researched many aspects of Danish history and culture. As a Danish-speaker he was able to use primarily Danish sources for his book. He lived in Denmark from 1978 to 1985, teaching geography at Aarhus Katedralskole. At present he teaches Hebrew in the Department of Judaic Studies at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. He has earlier published a similar book about Spain entitled "The Dynamism of Modern Spain."

"An Introduction to Danish Culture" gives a quick overview of Denmark, covering a host of topics, and touches upon some of the significant contributions Danes have made to the arts and sciences. By writing this book Norman Berdichevsky has brought Denmark to the English-speaking world and contributed to a better understanding of the Danes. This well-researched book contains photographs, maps as well as a bibliography and index. Above all, the book is informative, very easy to read and hard to put down.

Enok Mortensen. *Plough to the Setting Sun*

Blair, Nebraska: Lur Publications, 2009. Pp. i + 189. \$15.00

Reviewed by Marcus Cederstrom

Published posthumously, nearly 30 years after Enok Mortensen's death, *Plough to the Setting Sun* is an excellent addition to the many Scandinavian immigrant novels that describe the life and times of Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish immigrants to the Midwest and Great Plains. As John W. Nielsen from the Danish American Archive and Library explains, Mortensen first wrote the novel in English in the early 1940s. However, he was unable to find an American publisher and enlisted the advice of Sophus Keith Winther, author of the Grimsen trilogy. While Winther's critiques and suggestions have been preserved, it is unclear whether or not Mortensen took his advice in editing the novel. What is clear, though, is that with little support from American publishers, Mortensen eventually rewrote the book in Danish and published *Den lange plovfure* in Denmark in 1984, creating a new narrative and not a translation, based on the original English text. *Plough to the Setting Sun* is that original English narrative. Preserved by Mortensen's descendants, the well-deserving novel has finally found an American publisher.

*Plough to the Setting Sun* follows the life of Peder Bro, a young Danish pastor who emigrates from Jutland in Denmark to the United States. He believes that he must follow God's calling and that the many Danish immigrants to the United States must be preached to in Danish. This belief leads Peder Bro and his young wife first to Manstown, Michigan. Eventually, though, Peder Bro answers calls throughout the Midwest and Great Plains areas, sometimes moving to new settlements, sometimes serving as a traveling pastor, preaching to Danish-speaking congregations in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Iowa.

Along the way, Mortensen deftly crafts a story that follows the immigrant plight in the New World – from a pastor's perspective. Throughout the novel, Mortensen weaves in aspects of everyday life, such as foodways and holiday celebrations, alongside issues important to early Scandinavian immigrants; Peder Bro and his family, like so many other immigrant families, battle homesickness, death, illness, nature, and, perhaps most importantly in the latter half of the novel, the eventual change in identity from one generation to the next.

Bro's two children, to the pastor's dismay, view themselves as American. Born in the United States, the children embrace the very aspects of life that Bro seems to resent. Yet Bro himself lives nearly 60 years in the New World, holding on to his idea of Danishness while watching as the Danish communities he knows and loves become more and more American. Bro's views on the changing definition of Danishness are especially prevalent in the eventual change in church policy from preaching in Danish to preaching in English. This change is one that Bro adamantly resists, but in the end, as he nears his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, even Bro recognizes the inevitable. These changes – in language, culture, and identity – are eloquently summarized in the final chapter, quite appropriately, by a younger generation of Danish immigrants, ones who consider themselves American, but more specifically, Danish American and says of Bro, “[s]urely he is an American, but a certain kind, just as we all are, and that is the real strength of America.” This identity construction, this shift from Danish to American, is one that comes about slowly, over the course of many years and many trials, but it is one that is similar to Scandinavian Americans throughout the Upper Midwest and Great Plains area.

Enok Mortensen's own story lends credibility to the story of Peder Bro. Mortensen was a Danish immigrant who left Copenhagen as a teenager with the rest of his family. He first settled in Iowa, before eventually becoming ordained in the American Evangelical Lutheran Church. His ordination led him to Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and eventually California where he died in 1984. Mortensen published 12 books on various aspects of Danish-American history and also published three novels. While *Plough to the Setting Sun* was written as a fictional account of just one Danish immigrant, the novel clearly explains many of the historical aspects of Danish immigration and eventual identity construction. From the schism in the Danish-American church, in which Mortensen portrays Bro as a strong adherent to the teachings of Grundtvig, to the question of language in both the church and the home, which is portrayed in the conflict between Bro and his daughter and the eventual church convention of Danish Lutherans, Mortensen uses history to make the story of Peder Bro not just believable, but relatable to so many Danish Americans whose own parents or grandparents lived through similar experiences.

While it is a shame that no American publisher was found until 2009, *Plough to the Setting Sun* is an excellent addition to Scandinavian

immigrant fiction. *Plough to the Setting Sun* portrays the many different challenges of immigrant life, from the physical to the mental, in a highly readable way. The book will appeal to a wide-ranging audience, from a general public with Scandinavian roots who may well recognize the struggles that their immigrant families faced, to professors and instructors of literature, folklore, history, and of course, Scandinavian studies looking for a different perspective on Scandinavian immigration.

Julie K. Allen. *Icons of Danish Modernity: Georg Brandes & Asta Nielsen* Seattle and Copenhagen: U Washington P and Museum Tusulanum P, 2012). 284 pp.

Reviewed by Mark Mussari

In this well-researched and lucidly and carefully written book, Julie K. Allen, associate professor of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, focuses on the lives and works of two of Denmark's most prominent figures in the last 130 years: literary critic and theorist Georg Brandes (1842-1927) and actor and film star Asta Nielsen (1881-1972). Both figures, in their respective fields achieved international fame and notoriety—and knew each other, even sharing an epistolary relationship over the years. Allen opens her work by noting the inventiveness of her enterprise, writing a book about two well-known Danes who are rarely thought of in the same breath; she quickly brushes aside any concerns on that front, however, and immediately constructs a productive lens dealing with celebrity power and meta-cultural influence.

Allen employs a useful discussion about modernity and the resistance to it to help to define the resistance the two figures encountered in their lives. On this front, Brandes and Nielsen become representatives of the effect of public image in developing conceptions of national identity. The author wisely introduces some concepts from diverse theorists, including Habermas, Benedict Anderson, and Greg Urban, in dealing with imagining national communities.

To Allen, the iconoclastic Brandes, in particular, came to embody Denmark's cultural and artistic modernity. Brandes's opposition to religion, his support of women's rights, and his cosmopolitan liberal attitudes—especially appearing in newspaper articles—illustrate how audiences extract meanings about national identity from a nation's cultural production. Both Brandes and Nielsen lived and worked in Germany, where they made names for themselves. Allen's section on Brandes's relationship with Germany, German literature, and his efforts to construct a Danish national identity in letters does a fine job of informing readers—especially those not versed in Scandinavian literary history—of the Dane's achievements on this front and the reaction to those efforts. The author wisely keeps one eye on the often-contentious relationship between Denmark and Germany, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. In her informed discussion of the

German reception to Brandes's major literary achievement, *Main Currents in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (1871), Allen deftly dissects this relationship, epitomized in Brandes's review by the German nationalist newspaper *Deutsche Rundschau* (Brandes also wrote for the paper for some 15 years). Much of this involvement with Germany reaches a head in the section on the Germans' relationship to the concept of "the modern" (die Moderne) at this time: it was Brandes, for example, who introduced Strindberg to German audiences. Still, as Allen points out, Brandes "assisted Scandinavian literature to unprecedented prominence and prestige in Germany" though "such a position was impossible to maintain" (86).

As the leading representative of the Modern Breakthrough in Denmark, Brandes's "radical" nature then gets its own section in which Allen illustrates his political activism as well as his literary contributions and the connections therein. This section is enlightening in its depiction of Brandes's social efforts and his battles against mindless, militaristic notions of nationalism. In World War I, Brandes would see his worst fears about Europe's increasingly militarism come to fruition—as he would in his indictments of Europe for punishing Germany so strongly following the war.

Part Two of Allen's book focuses on Nielsen, "the Danish Diva," who was 40 years younger than Brandes but whose career parallels that of the literary theorist and social commentator in numerous ways, including time spent living in Germany and a mixed Danish reception. Allen traces Nielsen's development as a film actress from her scandalous erotic dance sequence in her first Danish film, *The Abyss* (1910), to such defining moments as her performances as the title characters in the film versions of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* and Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (the prints of both of these films are lost). Her gender-bending turn as a female Hamlet in a German production (*Hamlet: A Drama of Vengeance*, 1920), groundbreaking in its time, receives special attention for its commentary on gender identity and politics as well as nationalism. Most dramatic is Allen's recounting of Nielsen's meetings with Hitler and Goebbels, both of whom basically tried to buy her fealty (which, by all accounts including the actor's own, she firmly resisted).

Allen also does an excellent job discussing the negative Danish reaction to Nielsen's time spent living and working in Germany after her return to Denmark—where she continued to be known,

pejoratively, as “die Asta.” The book’s section on Nielsen is especially fascinating, probably because it is more provocative but also because the Nielsen narrative hews closer to the cult of celebrity we recognize in our contemporary world. In the course of the book, the movement from text (Brandes) to image (Nielsen) seems pointed and especially relevant.

Ultimately, Allen notes that she wrote about the two often forgotten figures “to demonstrate that is the very connectedness of particular celebrities to their historical and cultural contexts that lends them significance for the present day” (230). Curiously, Allen alludes at one point to the firing of lamp designer and cultural radical and theorist Poul Henningsen by the Danish daily newspaper *Politiken* in 1938. Henningsen once observed: “Only art of its own time lives forever.” In *Icons of Danish Modernity*, Julie K. Allen helps to secure the legacies of Georg Brandes and Asta Nielsen by drawing us closer, in myriad ways, to the very time in which they lived and worked.

Thorvald Hansen. *What does Thorvald Hansen Say?: Selected Articles and Postscripts Excerpted from Church and Life*. Edited by Sheri Muller. Des Moines, Iowa: Grand View University Press, 2013.  
Reviewed by Mark Mattes

**P**rolific author Thorvald Hansen is a well-known name among Danish-Americans. He deserves this acknowledgement! This volume, edited by Grand View University archivist Sheri Muller, collects some of the 250 plus articles which Hansen wrote for *Church and Life*, which he edited from 1982-2005. These essays deal primarily with Danish-American church history, op-ed pieces, and autobiographical reminiscences, all grounded in the Grundtvigian-American tradition. Hansen knew that tradition well since he had been raised in it, had served as a pastor in the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, and as a professor of Political Science and archivist at Grand View College (now University) in Des Moines.

These writings document Hansen's engagement of the Grundtvigian-American tradition with crucial issues of our times. Of course, Grundtvigian-Americans never had a completely unified voice, but Hansen's essays certainly reflect the influence of his mentor Søren Damsgaard Rodholm and his senior colleagues, such as Enok Mortensen and Johannes Knudsen. These theologians were apt to push the distinctiveness of Grundtvigianism with respect to other Lutheran traditions—more so, than, say, Ernest Nielsen, whose work invariably sought greater accord with other Lutherans. In any case, Hansen is a first rate thinker on numerous counts.

Several essays present Hansen's assessment of the impact of Grundtvigianism in the USA. He forthrightly asks if the "immigrant church" failed in its mission since it attracted so few members (hardly over 20,000 people belonged to the AELC). He believes the church was faithful in her mission but that it could hardly keep pace with intermarriage among its youth (6). In another essay, he assesses the merits of the *Dansk Sammluttet Ungdom*, the young people's societies of the AELC. These youth groups promoted critical thinking through discussion, folk dancing, gymnastics, and the publication of *A World of Song* (1941) (9). All in all, the church had a strong youth program.

Hansen notes how there existed a "Grundtvig-phobia" among other Lutherans in the United States, particularly Norwegians (though one could add the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod). While

in its infancy as a movement Grundtvigianism had gained a foothold in Norway, it dissipated due to the rise of more conservative Lutheran confessionalism in the mid-nineteenth-century. Such confessionalism reacted sharply to Grundtvig's denial of equating the Bible with the Word of God. On a different Scandinavian-related theme, Hansen looks at Scandinavian utopias in the USA, such as the Swedish experiment in religious socialism in Bishop Hill, Illinois (54ff).

Hansen's op-ed essays range widely over many topics: the teaching of evolution (61), the drop off of worship attendance among Danes (72), prayer in public schools (80), the death penalty (88), TV evangelists (94), the merger of the ELCA (108), abortion (120), the ordination of gays in the ELCA (191), and many other matters. In general, his attitudes reflect that vision of the Great Society, so important to the era of Lyndon B. Johnson. Hansen is clearly a member of what Tom Brokaw has called the "Greatest Generation" and, while he is not remotely naïve about human nature, he holds out hope for a better world. He has misgivings with conservative attitudes but at every step he treats his implied opponents with respect. He ever advocates a more progressive stance in social matters and economics, but, unlike some among those ranks today, he urges modesty (instead of license) in self-expression and personal integrity.

Hansen's work when he served as editor of *Church and Life* was yeomanlike. He is now a senior who knew of the world of the immigrant, so very different from our own, and has mediated this past world into today's context. Few have the passion or insight to be able to do this. For his work all those interested in the Danish-American community and experience can be grateful.



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