



DANISH HERITAGE NEWSLETTER
DANEVANG, TX
SPRING 2001



The General Says "I Shall Return!"

Our President, General Homer Smith, is reporting improvement, though slow, following his back surgery in December and later complications. He said he felt up to getting this newsletter out, but his Privates and Corporals relieved him of that duty, temporarily. Homer is hopeful that he will be able to join us at the upcoming celebrations~

Report of Board Meeting, March 17, 2001

Vice President Irvin Wind ably conducted the meeting which was well attended. Committee reports were given and then new matters were addressed. One significant development is that the Society Membership will be asked, at the annual meeting, June 2, to change the name of the Society to "Danish Heritage Preservation Society of Texas" with the understanding that letterheads and publicity, when possible, will include "in Danevang, Danish Capital of Texas", or words to that effect, as a explanatory "sub-title". The thought is that our Society represents efforts of all Danes in Texas to preserve our heritage and we certainly need the support of the larger Danish Community.

It is imperative that we increase our base of support and one of those ways is to spread the word about our celebrations! It was decided that the Board Members will each be given at least 10 additional invitations to the June 2 Celebration to send to friends or relatives. All Society Members and E!;i~~c~~n4s are asked to jot down ideas for invitees. Sherry Larsen Green and Gerda Thyssen Stuart are the "Keepers of the List" so mail names and addresses of proposed invitees to:

Sherry Green
4800 Park View Place
Austin TX 78731
or email Skglarsen@aol.com

It can't be emphasized enough,

Your Society Needs Your Help!

UPCOMING CELEBRATIONS/MEETINGS APRIL 21 & JUNE 2

On April 21, 2001, we are celebrating the Queen's Birthday. (Ordinarily we celebrate her birthday on the Saturday closest to her birthday, but this year there was a conflict with the Easter weekend.) At 11 am the activities will begin at the Meeting House for young and old. "Activities" will include a Lego contest with pHzes suitable for teens as well as younger, volleyball, horseshoes, washers, dominos and cards. At 12:00 we will have a meal of pork loin and all the trimmings prepared by a group headed up by Elaine Wind, Joyce Danna, and Darlene Miksik.

The program will begin at 1 :30 with greetings from Pastor Torben Poulsen of the Danish Seamen's Center in New York City and greetings from Denmark by Ulrik Damm of Randers. Ulrik will have a short presentation on Danish songs and their connection with celebrations in Denmark. Ulrik is the organist and "bell player" at St. Morten's Lutheran Church in Randers. He is "on tour" again just as he was last year when he assisted one day with the Summer Church School in Danevang.

The meal will be paid for by "free will offering" but the committee hopes to get an idea ahead oftime as to the number so please take the time to fill out and return the enclosed sheet at the end of the newsletter.

On **June 2**, 2001 we will celebrate Grundlov's Dag (Danish Constitution Day) and will have our opening of our new Museum! The annual Meeting is for members paid up to June 2, 2001, members paid up in advance up to June 2, 2002, and those intending to "sign up" that day. (How much more inclusive can we be?). The meeting will start in the church at 11. At noon, we will have a simple meal centered around Danish Hot Dogs using sausages specially prepared by a San Antonio Butcher from a real Danish recipe. (Again, the committee needs to get a handle" on the number of people attending the lunch.) Note, the general public is not invited to the meal, but is only invited to the dedication of the museum which is scheduled to begin at 1 :30 at the museum site. There will not be a lot of speechmaking! The emphasis will be on getting the museum open! Added attractions will include a performance by the Scandinavian Dancers from Houston and, if their schedule permits, a group of costumed "Vikings". We are expecting a large group of interested persons for this dedication so we here will be shuttles from the co-op parking lot and transfers from the meeting house lot. (Please remember to send Sherry Green your list of people 0 whom you want invitations mailed.) This is a great chance for us to get recognition of our heritage preservation efforts beyond our present membership!

nominating Committee Report

subsequent to the board meeting, the Nominating committee has proposed a slate of Directors to be toted on June 2 for a 3 year term. Those proposed are:

Sherry Larsen Green
Kenny Christensen
Al Jensen
Laurance Jensen
Helena Lauritsen
Carl Wind

The " hold-over" Directors are:
(Terms expiring June 2002)

Gilbert Nelson
Homer Smith
Harvey Westerhom
Kermit Westerholm
Leo Westerholm
Irvin Wind

(Terms expiring June 2003)

Mickey Christensen
Hans Jensen
James Petersen
Lawrence Petersen
Gerda Stuart
Ellis Wind

Major Traveling Exhibit In Conjunction With Museum Opening

For two months we will have on view a major exhibit entitled "OCTOBER 1943 The Rescue of the Danish Jews from Annihilation". This exhibit has been organized by the Museum of Danish Resistance 1940-1945 (a part of the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen) and is on loan to us from The Danish Immigrant Museum in Elkhom, Iowa. Funding has been provided locally by friends of a Danish Jew.

Special Postal Cancellations

The Danevang Postmistress approached us about the possibility of having special postal cancellations in connection with the opening of the museum. A special cancellation stamp has been designed just for that day. These items are great "collectors items" but also give all of us the opportunity to send something special to our family and friends. Either bring envelopes addressed (and maybe with postage stamps affixed) ahead of time or bring your address book and send out letters and post cards from the special post office to be established that day within the museum. We plan to have special picture post cards showing the museum as well as stamps and envelopes on sale at the museum.

Memberships

Please take advantage of the enclosed form to renew your membership. Memberships run from one June to the next so now is the time to renew! If you don't get around to renewing before June 2 or if you have family or friends who want to join there will be a special table within the museum, June 2, manned by Sherry Green.

Some of you may be "hooked" on M&M candies and are familiar with the two candy characters on the package arguing about the company's cash giveaway. One says it's a "prize" and the other grumpily calls it a "bribe". Call it what you want, but we're going to have a giveaway at the museum opening. Anyone who gets on the membership list for 2001-2002 before June 2 (and is present) or signs up that day will get a chance to win one of several door prizes. A sample is Astros tickets with parking (donated by Lawrence Petersen). We'll have other valuable "prizes" or "bribes" which will give you added value for your membership.

Our Newsletter on the Internet

We don't have our own website yet but we're working on that. In the meantime, the Danish Club of Houston is allowing us to be "link" to their site. We invite you to go to <http://www.dkhouston.org> and view what they have and "click on" "Latest News From The Danish Heritage Society" to read this newsletter. We recognize that recipients of this letter in the mail don't need to read it again, but it's an opportunity for you to email family or friends to send a copy without costing you the postage. It's also an opportunity for all to see what Houston Club is doing. It will require an installation of Acrobat Reader but there are instructions for downloading (for free) if you don't already have it installed.

Capital Funding Still Necessary

The Society still needs funds for construction and operations. Construction did not stop when available funds had been expended because the Society has been the recipient of a no-interest loan. A major part of the over-run of construction cost was the approximately \$30,000 additional cost to revise the foundation design to accommodate the poor soil conditions. Someone suggested that we could just have proceeded with the original design and let the ' carpet hide the resulting cracks. We think we wisely rejected that suggestion!

We also project that we need an Endowment Fund of \$500,000 to allow the interest from that fund to pay for the yearly operations. Presently the cash in that Fund is approximately \$50,000, so we have a long ways to go before we can be comfortable about the yearly operations being paid for. We know many of you have already given generously but we appeal to all of you to consider going the "next mile". Contributions will be accepted by Sherry Green at her Membership Table or you can send your contributions or additional pledge to our Treasurer, Mickey Christensen at P.O. Box 386, Danevang TX 77432-0386.

Construction Report

Construction is proceeding so everything can be ready for the start of display by mid-May. Carl Larsen and James Petersen have been diligent in keeping a clean work site (which is a continuing job). With Mickey Christensen running the mower and James Petersen manning the weed-eater and Gunner Thyssen spraying the clover we have managed to have a well-kept site throughout the construction process. Lawrence Petersen has been on his Maintainer on a regular basis filling in ruts from construction trucks, sloping everything to try to drain off some of the water from our excessive rains this Spring, and pulling out trucks stuck in the mud. Recently, several ladies, young and old, painted the bright red and white Danish flag on the side of the museum. *The*

El Campo Leader-News ran a good picture of this volunteer activity.

Who Are We?

Each year there is a five day or so Danish Folk Meeting in Tyler, Minnesota. this year it is being held August 22-26. Attendees include people who have been to Danevang either as pastors (and wives) in connection with the old Fall Festivals, just visitors or former residents such as Sybil. Duus Needham. Attendees have remarked after being at the meeting that they now know who they are! They know what it means to be a "Happy Dane". Maybe this has sparked a desire in one of you to attend!

If so, please contact:

Peter D. Thomsen
408 Danebod Village #2
Tyler MN 56178

Phone 507-245-4167

To assist in answering the question "Who Are We?", we are borrowing from a book, Oregon Danish Colony by Gerald Rasmussen and Otto Larsen, as follows:

"Why would anyone want to leave Denmark? Today, it would be hard to believe that anything could provoke a Dane to be uprooted from the contentment of a caring, advanced, and civilized society. But that is now. What was it like over a hundred years ago when thousands of Danes set out to find a new life in the far distant land of America?

"The statistics are dramatic. In the great flood of immigration into America between 1840 and 1914, about 35 million Europeans came to the United States. Up until World War I, the flow from Denmark, while relatively only a trickle, did bring some 300,000, meaning that about one in every ten Danes set out for America. The Danish emigration

reached its high point in 1882, when 11 , 618 arrived. During that decade, 88,123 Danes arrived.

"Danes were not driven to this choice by famine such as that which propelled the Irish when more than half of the Irish population emigrated to America in the 20 years after 1 846. Nor were the Danes responding to failed revolutions like those that spurred the Germans, or to political or religious repression which drove people out of Central and Eastern Europe. but the Danes were like other emigrants in one major aspect. They, too, were captivated by a vision of America as a land of opportunity where they could make a better life for themselves.

"Through most of the 19th century, Denmark was among the poorer countries of Europe. Denmark was under-developed. Low wages, high land prices and generally poor economic conditions led to disillusionment. Thus the single most important factor driving Danish emigration was the pursuit of economic well-being. In some instances there were political problems such as those between Denmark and Germany involving the province of Schlesvig in southern Jutland.

"While economic and political factors provided the primary rationale for leaving Denmark, these were not the only reason for moving. Social issues also played a key role

Two major factions developed in Denmark regarding religion. One orientation was a devout orthodox approach to religion and emphasized the Bible as the direct word of God, and stressed that personal salvation was a prerequisite of church membership. It also placed a high value on church activities to the virtual exclusion -of other social activities. Its adherents frowned on drinking, smoking, dancing and lodge membership. In general, they viewed the secular world with some distrust.

"In opposition to this religious orientation stood the followers of the Danish leader N.F.S. Grundtvig, a man of impressive energy directed

toward a wide range of interests, Grundtvig was a pastor in the state Church of Denmark. He was a theologian and a prolific writer on religious themes who also wrote extensively and convincingly about history, mythology, philosophy, education and politics. (Many will remember the hymns with 11 or 12 verses which were favorites in Danevang.) Grundtvig developed and introduced the concept of the Danish Folk High School. He also played significant role in the convention that wrote the Danish Constitution of 1848 which established a constitutional government for the first time in Danish history. (*This probably was one of the reasons Danevang strongly celebrated Danish Constitution Day.*)

Grundtvig fervently believed that since all human activities--social, economic, political, intellectual cultural--were part of God's creation all should be cultivated with that in mind. For Grundtvig, God's spirit was everywhere. It could be found in a gathering listening to a good lecture. Grundtvig's belief in the scope of God's Creation encouraged his followers to celebrate their entire cultural heritage, including the secular. That embraced pleasure giving aspects of life as in folk dancing, singing, gymnastics, and theatrical performances."

There is no doubting the fact that Danevang was settled by followers of Grundtvig. At the Tyler Folk School the philosophy of Grundtvig was simply stated that all of creation is from God and should be enjoyed, probably applies to most of you reading hence the term "Happy Danes" as opposed to the pietistic "Holy Danes". In the prologue to the book quoted above there was information from another book, one about the settling of Askov, Minnesota. Because of the relevance to Danevang the following background, goals and guidelines are quoted from that book:

DFS Background

"In 1887 the Dansk Folkesamfund (Danish Folk Society or DFS) was founded to foster, among other colonies in America. In 1894, Danevang, Texas was the first colony sponsored by the DFS

(emphasis added), followed by Askov, Minnesota in 1905-06; Dagmar and Volmer, Montana in 1906; Solvang, California in 1911; **Dalum, Alberta, Canada** in 1917; and Granly, Mississippi in 1930.

DFS Goals

1. We wish to experience the unity of a colony of Danish-Americans that will preserve and enhance their Danish spiritual inheritance, not just for themselves, but for this land to which they are now bound with such strong ties.

2. When we, here in America, continue to be Danish, since we neither can nor ever will give power over our hearts, it is our conviction that we can benefit the land to which we now belong.

3. When we, from another land, assemble here and meet in the Danish language, then by preserving our national background we will have the best opportunity to know each other and appreciate each other's good work.

4. For this to occur, the people should preserve the Danish language because only in this way can they continue to draw nourishment from the trunk from which they grew.

5. The Samfund (DFS) shall look after the interests of Danish-Americans except for the church's affairs.

DFS Guidelines

1. The purpose of the community shall be to promote an assembly of Danes in a community in order to foster a strong Danish spirit.

2. It shall establish Danish-speaking schools.

3. It shall establish an expanded folk high school (on the Danish model) with provision for versatile "all around" education.

4. It shall hold meetings of colonists.

5. It shall establish homes for young people in cities.

6. It shall cooperate with other Scandinavian societies without surrendering its own objectives."

It is interesting to note that N. F.S. Grundtvig's son, Rev. Frederick Lange Grundtvig, visited Danevang in the early years.

Our Publicity Reaches to South Carolina and California

Elsie Christensen recently arranged for an article in the *Victoria Advocate*. The young lady who wrote the article initially was very 'hazy' about her European geography, but she ended up writing an excellent article! for one thing it prompted a letter from Mary C. Lund (Mrs. Carl Sr.) P.O. Box 394 Pendleton SC 29670-0394 and we quote:

'A nurse at the hospital where our son is a doctor recently gave him an article in the Feb. 11 *Victoria Advocate* which reported the wonderful work at Danevang! My husband's grandparents came here from Denmark in 1869-1870 and settled in Kansas. Our son has a beautiful home on almost 100 acres near Anderson, SC and he has named it Danevang!'

"Currently I am attempting to trace my husband's family back in Denmark. The war between Denmark and Germany at about the time of the Civil War in the U.S. resulted in the relocation of some of the area from Denmark into Germany which really slows my search. The area Schleswig-Holstein appears often in the very scant information I have received--some of my inquiries have been answered in German which I do not read but am receiving help to transcribe."

"It was a ~ pleasure to learn about Danevang in Texas and we certainly hope that someday after the Danish Cultural Center is opened in June we may be able to visit!"

If you folks come our way it would truly delight us to meet you. Best wishes for the speedy completion of this very important project."

Also, we recently heard from our Virginia Andersen Hall that her Aunt Jeanette Jurkovich in Fresno, California was very involved with a group attempting to save from demolition by the City of Selma CA the historic St. Ansgar's Church (*yes, the same name as the original Danevang Church*). It was built in Traver in 1884 and in 1896 it was moved to Parlier where it housed a congregation until 1978. It was then moved to "Pioneer Village" in Selma where it now stands alongside an old school building, a train depot and the "Rasmussen Barn". The City of Selma has been approached by developers who have offered a lot of money for the land on which these structures stand.

Some members of our society wrote letters to the City Council in support of saving Pioneer Village and the group at least has gained a reprieve. In this process as they were pleading their case they reached back to the words of our speaker at our last June celebration which had been quoted in our newsletter. The summation of their case stated:

"As Dr. John Boles of Rice University put it, "Today, with interstate highways, television and the Internet, powerful forces of homogenization are flattening out all the ethnic and cultural particularities of the nation. Our children will grow up in undifferentiated, bland, rootless parts of a mass society unless we make special efforts to connect them with these older traditions. We need to collect, preserve and teach the stories. read the letters, utilize the family recipes of our forefathers ""

These words say it all for Selma, California and for Danevang!



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please enroll me (us) as member(s) of the **DANISH HERITAGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP **\$10/PERSON** \$ _____

I would like to support the Danish
Heritage Preservation Society
with an additional contribution of \$ _____

Names _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

email _____ fax _____ phone _____

Send membership dues and/or contributions to 0. V Christensen, Treasurer, Danish Heritage Preservation Society, P.O. Box 386, Danevang, TX 77432-0386. Dues and Contributions are deductible for income tax purposes.

Number of people attending April 21 _____

Number of people attending June 2 _____

I am willing to help with (please check)

- 1) Newsletter
 - a) Supply news
 - b) Stamp, fold, help with mailing

2) MUSEUM WORKER< ONCE A MONTH

Preferred Day _____

3 Catalog accessions (This would involve a training session and then you could do this as you are able on an unscheduled basis)

- 4) Help with Celebrations
 - a) Children's activities
 - b) Set up for adult activities i.e. volleyball. Horseshoes, washers.....~
 - c) Help arrange for programs speakers,music, entertainment
 - d) Food arrangements
 - e) Volunteer to work on the day of the event
 - f) Help with publicity

5) Maintain address list

6) Help with physical upkeep of building and grounds

MANGE TAK for being an active member and for your generous support

DANISH HERITAGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY
p_o. BOX 386
DANEVANG, TEXAS 77432-0386
(The Danish Capital of Texas)

