



**Spring 2005
Newsletter**
Danish Heritage Preservation Society
P.O. Box 386
Danevang, TX 77432-0386



Tourism: An Opportunity for Danevang

At our upcoming **Constitution Day Celebration and Annual Meeting on June 4th**, the featured speaker will be Roberta A. Ripke, Director of the Area Fund of Communities Foundation of Texas since 1985. Roberta is one of the area's leading authorities on activities relating to tourism, local history, and historic preservation. She will share with us a full description of what is happening in the area, now called the "Texas Settlement Region" and the "Texas Independence Trail". She has among other activities assisted Texas A&M University in developing the Discovery Tours program, and the development of the Great Texas Costal Birding Trail-Mid Texas Coast Site Map (see our museum's upstairs display).

It is now time that the Danish Heritage Preservation Society of Danevang join with other entities of the community and other local groups to maximize the effectiveness of our programs and offerings to the public. Roberta will bring to us new thoughts and challenges along these lines.

The annual meeting may be an occasion for members to revisit the Mission Statement of our Society:

- To preserve a record of a culture that is disappearing as a result of mechanization, technology, and economic imperatives.
- To teach about the dedication and sacrifices made by the Danevang Colony settlers.
- To offer instruction on the Danish language, customs, crafts and skills that sustained generations of farmers in Danevang.

Annual Meeting 11 a.m.
Meal Noon
Speaker Following Meal
MAKE YOUR RESERVATION TODAY

H. C. Andersen Bicentennial Festival

Thanks to good weather and a host of hard working volunteers, festivalgoers had a fun time in Danevang on April 9. The photos on page 3 only capture some of the scenes of the day. The HCA exhibit and gift shop drew people inside the museum; movies of Andersen's tales and life drew people inside the Church; and food of Dansk Deli drew people inside the Community House. Outside, music, drama, and dancing entertained people under the big tent; the hotdog stand offered food and drink; and the children's table provided face-painting.

The Heritage Society is most grateful for all of the help and cooperation of the Danevang Farmers' Coop, the Volunteer Fire Department and the Danevang Church. Countless volunteers helped on the days immediately around the festival and especially on the festival day itself. There are too many of you to list here, but you know who you are. Thank you!



Even Hans Christian Andersen himself (Laird Engle) joined in the dancing! Photo by Carl Wind

Newsletter

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Annual Meeting is held in conjunction
with Grundlovsdag Celebration,
first Saturday in June

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Funding	Kermit Westerholm
Gift Shop	Elaine Wind
Museum	Vacant
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Bridget Jensen Howard

H.E. B. Grant Funds

H. C. Andersen Education Project

With a generous grant of \$1500, the H. E. B. Foundation has given a major thrust to the Heritage Society's Bicentennial of Hans Christian Andersen's Birth project. The objectives are to promote appreciation of literature and to encourage original artistic and creative writing by students in area schools.

To begin this outreach, our own Hans Christian Andersen (Laird Engle, assisted by his storyteller wife, Winnie) will be visiting the Tenie Holmes School in Bay City the entire school day of May 13. The inspiring story of Andersen's life from the dire poverty of his childhood, through his youthful dreams and his perseverance to become a writer will no doubt be an inspiration to the youth who hear it.

The grant has allowed the Society to purchase books to be given to school libraries and fund the outreach program which will continue throughout the year 2005. The books which have been chosen as the school gifts contain 38 favorite Andersen tales. The edition purposely does not contain large color illustrations as one of the goals of the project is to encourage students to create their own art work inspired by the vivid word pictures of Andersen's writings. We thank H.E.B. and pledge to make full use of their funds to bring the timeless wisdom of these stories to the next generation.

Mange Tak for Museum Maintenance

Many thanks to Larry Karasek, Elvin Berndt, & James Petersen for working on the water heater in the museum. Replacing the anode rod, draining the tank, etc. hopefully has corrected the odor that was almost unbearable when the hot water was turned on in the kitchen sink.

Recent Noteworthy Acquisitions

From Jack & Inge De la Grange:
A special Hans Christian Andersen plaque and
An original C. D. of Danish Songs cut by Jack

From Peter Hansen – cousin from Denmark of Ralph and
Lawrence Petersen and Al Jensen:
The 1999 Bing and Gronhdahl Christmas plate, filling
out the wonderful collection from Jette and Homer
Smith.

Hans Christian Andersen Bicentennial Birthday Celebration

Photos by Helena Lauritsen (pictured in lower left corner)



Writings from the Past

Though this feature of our newsletter usually recounts the often difficult life of the Danevang settlers in the earliest decades after their immigration, this article tells of a difficult time in Denmark faced by those who were in their homeland. It is fitting that we run this article at this time to remind us that, although we spent this past April 9 celebrating the 200th birthday of Hans Christian Andersen, that date is one of somber significance to Danes, the day of the German occupation in 1940. J. Ben Hansen recently sent this record of his memories of that day to Mickey Christensen who is passing them along for our readers. In order to directly represent the memories of Mr. Hansen, I have taken the liberty to edit the original article that was written 40 years ago by another author who had interviewed Mr. Hansen.

April 9, 1940 - I was a youth of 12 years living in Songbook, Denmark. Upon my arrival home from school, my father had me sit down with his arms around me. When I looked up into his face, I was shocked to see tears streaming down. He was so serious as he said, "Son, - ALWAYS remember that you are and AMERICAN citizen and try some day to go back there!"

A little earlier at school, I had learned from the lips of my teacher the news of the invasion that had been received by radio. We had been told of the plea issued by Denmark's King Christian X that there be no resistance since the Danish people were so far outnumbered by the invading Germans.

Life on that Island of Bornholm, which is a part of Denmark, was not too bad during those five years of German occupation. My parents and my brother, W. T., who was two

years older than I, had returned to my father's homeland in 1935 from New York City where the Depression had made it impossible for my dad to make a living in the carpentry trade. Since his father was still living on the Island of Bornhold, we joined him there. The island is small – not as large a San Patricio County (where J. B. Hansen lives in South Texas, editor's note) and only a few miles off the mainland of Denmark. The town where we lived, Snogebaek, had a population of perhaps 350.

The things that I remember as being the most unpleasant during those was years was the evidence of hatred for Americans that was shown toward my brother and me. The youths were unmerciful in their ridicule of us because we were different. For instance, they made fun of how we dressed. Such treatment left an impression that has always made it easy for me to understand just how persecution can affect a human being – especially a youth.

Also, I have not forgotten the enforced blackouts. We grew accustomed to them after so long. Rationing affected us in that we had to use artificial coffee and never had enough sugar and spice. Bread was not always plentiful either. However, we never went to bed hungry. We raised our own vegetables and meats.

The Red Cross offered to help get my brother and me back to America but we chose to stay with our parents who had taken up Danish Citizenship upon their return there in order to vote in the democratic type of government in Denmark (the King was only a figurehead). Therefore, they were not entitled to protection by the American government like their sons were as natural born U.S. citizens.

We were able to hear every few years from my sister who lived in the States by way of the Red Cross. It was usually only on important events like announcing the arrival of a new baby in the family when the messages got through to us.

I remember seeing the sunlight glittering off the forms of American airplanes as they flew over “the island” enroute to bomb Berlin. Some of our friends hid Americans who were shot down in their barns.

Even though World War II officially ended May 8, 1945, it was not so for the Danish people. There were some stubborn, hostile Germans who did not give up very easily to the Russians who were to “take” the island where we resided. It was really later the fighting stopped for that area. A female Russian commando fighter pilot “peppered” the area in which several German ships were anchored to bring the surrender of the die-hard Germans. The town of Nexø, five miles from where we lived, was hit hard and it was there that several German ships went down.

Following the war, I found under the sand dunes on the island near my home several German guns and one iron cross left behind by one of them. I managed to bring the cross to the States and still have it as a treasured memento of the war days.

A year after the war, in June 1946, I left Denmark for the USA with my brother and parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Hansen, on a fine Norwegian liner to be united with my sister, Mrs. S. W. Taylor. For the first time, we got to see her family. They had been living in St. Petersburg, Florida and that is where my parents settled upon arrival in the US, which, undoubtedly, my father had thought he would never see again on that April 9, 1945.

Those tears my father shed that day had a lasting effect on me. My dad was trying to impress on me as a youth that being an American citizen was something of which I was to be proud. I often remind myself of my great fortune to be an American citizen. Perhaps I cherish these United States so dearly because I had the experience of living through a war in another country.

Featuring Your Family- Think About It!

For the past several years there has been a section of the museum featuring the family history, artifacts of interest and special sentimental value of a featured family with roots in the Danevang community. So far the families participating in this project are the family and descendants of the Harton brothers, Niels Hansen, and, at present, Peter Christensen/Glen Hutson .

These displays usually remain in the museum for one year, after which the artifacts are returned to the family members or donated to the museum. This project is a great way to bring extended family together. Usually a highlight of the year for the family is a family reunion at which time the exhibit is a focal point. Since gathering pictures and artifacts for such an exhibit is an arduous task, planning a year in advance is almost necessary.

If your family would be interested in being featured in the next few years, let a board member of DHPS know of your wishes. Museum volunteers will help with your display if you so desire. Usually the exhibit time runs from May to May. The challenge for us is to remember and honor those stalwart forbearers who came to Danevang so many years ago.

Plans for Monument to Patriots

Under the dedicated leadership of Sherry Green, plans for the Danevang Patriots' Memorial are progressing. The monument will be located between the flag poles in the "Heritage Park" area. Both Kermit and Leo Westerholm are ably assisting Sherry in this project.

All persons with ties of some sort to the Danevang community are invited to join in to be sure their near and dear have their names included on the inscription. Sherry will be on hand at the annual meeting to share the plans for the monument and will be able to answer any inquiries you may make. We don't want anyone to be left out of this endeavour. We feel just like the Danes who sing a song at their mid-summer festival which begins "We love our land."

International Conference on Danish Culture

Since most of the readers of this newsletter are not on the mailing list of the Danish American Heritage Society, we are taking the liberty to relay information from this national organization about an exciting upcoming event, particularly for people interested in Danish and Danish-American culture:

In celebration and recognition of the bicentennial of Hans Christian Andersen's birth and the 150th anniversary of the birth of Kristian Østergaard and the death of Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish American Heritage Society presents its Third International Conference, Thursday, October 13 – Sunday, October 16, 2005 in Des Moines, Iowa. The conference will focus on the rich tradition of Danish culture as it has been expressed in art, literature, philosophy, music, history, technology and film, with speakers and artists from Denmark and the United States.

The conference opens on Thursday evening October 13, with a keynote address by Philip Conisbee, an expert on the Golden Age of Danish Painting and curator of last year's *Eckersberg* (a Danish art collector) *Exhibition* at the National Gallery of Art.

While several presentations over the next couple of days will cover such notable Danes as Hans Christian Andersen, Søren Kierkegaard, Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen, author of "*Out of Africa*"), and N. F. S. Grundtvig, others will focus on lesser known Danish cultural figures as well as the Danish experience here in North America. Of particular interest to Danish-Texans might be the lecture "*The Lone Dane at the Alamo: Charles Zanco and the Design of the Flag of the Independent Republic of Texas.*"

You won't want to miss the Hans Christian Andersen Parade, a troupe of young actors sponsored by the Hans Christian Andersen Museum in Odense, Denmark, who present a tableau of Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales at the Saturday evening banquet.

Films, songfests, storytelling, musical performances and tours of Des Moines' cultural sites as well as the Danish Immigrant Museum in Elk Horn, Iowa round out the program that has something for everyone to enjoy.

To find out more about this enlightening and energizing conference, please visit www.gvc.edu and click on DAHS icon on the home page. If you have further questions, email DAHSConference@gvc.edu or call 515-263-2800.

Co-sponsors of this event are Grand View College, Dana College, The Danish Immigrant Museum and The Danish Immigrant Archive – Dana College.

Gift Memorials

<u>In Memory of:</u>	<u>Given by:</u>	<u>In Memory of:</u>	<u>Given by:</u>
Vincent E. Birkman Sr.	Dorothy & Mike Nicholson	Lawrence J. Petersen	Andrew & Katherine Jew
Alvin Jensen	Merle & Charlotte Jensen		Bruce & Laurel Lancaster
Leonard Lauritsen	Elvin & Suzan Berndt		Leo & Carol Ofenstein
	Clifton & Barbara Bram		Perry & Margie Pintzow
	Ann Freeman Gullian		Ola M. Sheffield
	Wilbert & Peggy Hansen		Gerda C. Stuart
	Jeanette Hays & family		Kermit & Carolyn Westerholm
	Mr. & Mrs. John Huber		Irvin & Elaine Wind
	Robert & Ramona Lesak	Lillian Roberts	Wilbert & Peggy Hansen
	Michael & Marcia Nichols		Kermit & Carolyn Westerholm
	Mike & Dorothy Nicholson	Clara Stephens	Hans & Marie Jensen
	James Petersen (2)	Stephanie Swendsen	Vernon L. & Norene Swendsen
	Melvin & Maxine Placke	Myrtle Waldman	Ray Allenson & family
	Richard & Beth Schnieders		Clifton & Barbara Bram
	Darrel & Sarah Sless		Elvin & Suzan Berndt
	Ann Starup		Beverly Burmeier
	Gerda C. Stuart		O.V. & Elsie Christensen
	Andrea K. Walters		Tony & Joyce Danna
	Ingeborg A. Williams		Wilbert & Peggy Hansen
Lawrence J. Petersen	Roger & Betty Andersen		Jimmy L. & Carole Harton
	Arliss Treybig		Ralph Petersen
	Myrna Christensen		Virginia Popp
	Patti Hodges		Ola M. Sheffield
	Hans & Marie Jensen	Ellis Wind	Roger & Betty Andersen
	Merle & Charlotte Jensen		Hans & Marie Jensen

RESERVATION FORM for June 4, Gundlovsdag Celebration and Annual Meeting

The meal will be honey baked ham, potato salad, baked beans, tossed salad, dessert, iced tea or coffee. You may pay at the door, but we do need your reservation by June 1.

You may detach this form and mail it to: Danish Heritage Preservation Society
P.O. Box 386
Danevang, TX 77432

You may call 979-543-3332 or 979-543-2106 or You may email irvwind@wcecnet.net

Number of meals _____ Total for meals _____ (at \$5.00 a meal)

Annual Dues for Membership in Danish Heritage Preservation Society at \$10 per person _____

Other Donation _____
TOTAL _____

Please provide your
Names _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____

Home Phone _____
Alternate Phone _____
Email address _____

Our Grundlovsdag Celebration in Danevang will be Saturday, June 4th

The actual date of Danish Constitution Day is June 5th,
celebrating the day Denmark became a constitutional monarchy in 1849.

Other events of note that occurred on June 5th:

- 1741** **Vitus Bering**, a Danish explorer, departs Kamchatka, Russia across what is now known as the Bering Sea, to explore Alaska.
- 1752** **Benjamin Franklin** proves that lightning is electricity (kite + key + lightning)
- 1837** **Houston, Texas** is granted a city charter.
- 1917** **World War I**: Conscription begins in the United States.
- 1947** **Marshall Plan**: United States Secretary of State George Marshall announces the commitment of the United States to give economic aid to war-torn Europe.
- 1968** **Robert F. Kennedy** is shot at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, CA for Sirhan Sirhan. He dies the next day.