



Winter, 2004 Newsletter

Danish Heritage Preservation Society

P.O. Box 386

Danevang, TX 77432-0386

Planning for the Future to Honor the Past

Much interest has been growing in the museum's collection of vintage farm equipment. In the past few years, donations of several pieces of significant farm equipment have been made with the possibility of adding more. Interested members have begun discussions as to a means of protecting this equipment from the elements.

At a recent board meeting, President Irvin Wind appointed a committee composed of Lawrence Petersen, chairman, Wilbert Hansen, and O.V. Christensen. Chairman Petersen plans to expand the committee and to seek consultation from Laird Engle in formulating a needs assessment and from Kermit Westerholm who will explore funding options for the project.

Since Danevang was and is basically a farming community, the board feels it is within the purpose of the Society's commitment to preserve

tools and equipment used by early settlers in establishing their farms.

Picture from east side of museum shows early equipment in current collection.



Queen's Birthday Celebration, April 17

Our annual celebration of Queen Margrethe's birthday will be held Saturday, April 17. Registration will begin at 10:30 a.m. The Scandinavian Folk Dancers of Houston will perform from 11:00 – 11:45 a.m. Our singing session, accompanied by Bob Olsen at the piano, will be from 11:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. The noon meal, **for which reservations are a must** (see form on the last page), will be served from 12:15 until 1:00 p.m. We will then hear a short review of Danish and U.S. relations since World War II by our Royal Danish Consul in Houston, Ray Daugbjerg. Following his presentation, Ray will lead us in our toast to the Queen, which will end our formal program. An informal time will follow for card and domino games, a horseshoe tournament, croquet or just visiting. Afternoon coffee and pastry will be served at 2:30 p.m.

New Brochures

Our handsome new four-color brochures are off the press! Our first order was for 5,000, one of which is enclosed for you to pass along to a potential visitor. Thanks to our president, Irvin Wind, eleven of the Texas Travel Information Centers now have a supply of the brochures on display. If you know of a location where these brochures would generate visitors to the museum, please help us place them.

Mark June 5 on your calendars for the
Grundlovsdag Celebration!!

Newsletter

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And is available through Annual
Membership, June to June

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

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Looking for Lost Treasure

We are looking for lost treasure! It may be in your bookcase or a box in your closet. The treasure: old 8 mm or 16 mm home movies taken in Danevang or of families who had some connection with Danes in Texas.

Some of you may have already put such film into video cassette or DVD form. If this is the case, the museum would very much like to borrow your video cassette or DVD to copy. A "script" or description of what your video is about and the persons in it would be very helpful in cases where there is no sound with the film. Your cassette or DVD WILL BE RETURNED TO YOU except in those cases where you want to make it a gift to the museum.

Things are not so simple if you find old 8mm or 16mm film that has not been put on a video cassette. Due to our climate (heat, moisture, etc.), much of this film is often brittle or damaged in various ways so that much of it cannot be saved. Your museum still would like to have it to be professionally processed to save as much of it as possible. The museum will pay for this process, but if the donor would like a copy of the finished product, we would ask that you bear the cost of producing an extra copy of the video cassette.

An example of the interest and joy such a gift brings is the video given us by Sybil Duus Needham of the years the Duus family was in Danevang (1945-1947). Also, Lawrence Petersen obtained for us copies of interviews done by Wharton County Junior College of his father and Mrs. Naomi Chappell.

The museum has had Laurance Jensen video tape several interviews and events in the past few years. Since some of the "old timers" who were interviewed have already passed away, we are so glad to have some of their memories preserved on tape.

So be a true treasure hunter and participate with us in this project which helps us preserve our unique history.

Heritage Holidays

Events for Heritage volunteers kept them busy, productive, and filled with a happy spirit for all they did during the holiday season.

Æbleskiver Fest

The first event was the third annual Æbleskiver Fest, always held the Saturday afternoon after Thanksgiving. Besides our local participants, a group from the Rebuild Society in Austin made the trek. Our skilled cooks included Irvin Wind, O.V. Christensen, Myrna Thyssen and Darleen Miksik. Elaine Wind did duty both in the kitchen and at the gift shop. Other double duty folks included Elsie Christensen and Cathy Christensen Dylaba at the registration table and at the gift shop. A real hit of the day was the craft table ably staffed by Delores Guedin, assisted by Marilyn Chappel and Annette Waldman. Winnie and Laird Engle were on hand as museum docents.

It was significant that two of our third generation members were on hand working and getting to know about our annual events, namely Cathy Dybala, granddaughter of C. J. and Marie Christensen and Michael Wind (photographer), grandson of Olaf & Lillian Hansen and Lars & Dora Wind.

Mark your calendars now for Saturday, November 27th, 2004.



Helping Chefs: Darleen Miksik, Mickey Christensen and Irvin Wind. Photo by Michael Wind

El Campo Christmas Mall

The Heritage Society presented a colorful and attractive booth at the El Campo Christmas Mall, held at the Civic Center, December 6th and 7th. Besides giving the Society and the Museum great exposure, the endeavor was quite profitable. Much muscle, time and hard work was donated to this successful effort. Our thanks go out to those who set up and staffed the booth: chairperson Elaine Wind, Marilyn Henderson, Myrna Thyssen, Ramona Lesak, Elsie Christensen, Glenda Christensen Kurten, Darleen Miksik, Rick Schulze and Irvin Wind.



Christmas Mall volunteers: Elaine Hausen Wind at the register and Glenda Christensen Kurten, 3rd generation native of Danevang.

Christmas Program & Tree

The Annual Danevang Church Christmas Program and Tree are always an occasion for extended family and friends of the community to gather. Renewing friendships, extending loving greetings, and remembering the many Christmas' past has become a most meaningful tradition in many families. No doubt, the toddlers of today will have in their memory bank visions of dancing around the tree as we have carried on the tradition.

Writings from the Past

In recent issues, we have included writings dating from the 1890's or early 1900's from your Museum's archives. This time we're going to depart from those "rules" just a bit and we've elected to include an *El Campo News* article from "more recent times" (1960) dealing with "Early Life in America," as told to Della Swanson by Thyra Westergaard (Mrs. Niels) Strarup. Mrs. Strarup had just celebrated her 82nd Birthday at the home of her daughter and son-in-law, Gertrude and Marius Hansen, and Della found her story interesting. The article was recently given to the museum along with other items by Frances Strarup (Mrs. Curtiss) Reece, which are excellent examples of "gems" most of us have stashed away. So "Mange Tak" to Frances and others who are coming forth!

Enjoy Mrs. Strarup's Story, "My Seventy-Two Years In Texas":

"When I was 10 years old, my oldest brother, John, wrote for us to come to America – to Hutto, in Central Texas near Austin.

No, we didn't come because of war like so many did. We had just had a misfortune. We owned a big farm with many cattle in Orem, Denmark and had a good living, but about this time, our cattle got tuberculosis. We had to kill an average of 30 cows and calves a day. Not only were the cattle killed, but also anything that drank the milk. So we had to kill all the hogs and chickens too; we lost everything. To start over was expensive, so we decided to go to a new land. We sold the farm and bought tickets for America.

My parents, two other sisters and I (the rest stayed in Denmark) left from Copenhagen and, after 13 days and nights of sailing, landed in New York. Then we took a boat from New York to Galveston. Here, we boarded the train for Hutto, where my brother John was working.

Impression of Texas

When we arrived December 6, 1889 in Hutto, which was out in the open prairie, - oh, the sight we saw! There were no sidewalks, only a few houses, and the weeds were growing 6 feet tall and higher around the depot. My father remarked: "If this land grows weeds like this, what couldn't it do if it were cultivated? If the soil that we will farm is this good, we should grow good crops."

My brother had rented a three room house at the outskirts of Hutto. Living conditions were bad because the rats, mice, rattlesnakes, and rabbits were plentiful under this house and in the neighborhood. One day, my father borrowed a cat from a Swede who lived three miles away. What did the cat do? We put her on a chair and the cat went to sleep. My mother shook the cat to wake it up and catch the mice as they ran by, but the cat was so full, it didn't care and went on sleeping. We sent the cat back since it didn't do any good because it was so full.

One day, while my father was breaking land, he plowed up four kittens in tall grass. He put them in a box under the barn and fed them milk. After 24 hours, the mother cat came. With five cats, the rat and mice situation got better.

After living here nine months, we built a new house in the Frame Switch community, east of Hutto, where we bought a farm. We thought \$20.00 an acre for open prairie land was too much, but so many other settlers came, the value of the land kept rising.

At that time, there were plenty of wild cattle, so we took steers to break the land since gentle horses were too expensive and the others were too wild. We had twelve steers that were trained. Each had a name. We'd holler at them and they'd turn when working in the field.

Since there weren't many houses in the country, our house was used as head quarters. We had a water well so the travelers in covered wagons would stop for the night and camp.

School

Two years after we lived on our farm, the Frame Switch School was built. We had 5 pupils. The teacher was a high school girl. We had school only three months and we paid \$1.50 each to go.

I was very disappointed in the school. Since I had started school in Denmark when I was five and attended eleven months of the year, I already had 4 _ years of education before coming to Texas. In Denmark, they had such good schools. Penmanship was important; we couldn't pass if we didn't write well.

Life in Frame Switch

As I said before, our house was used as headquarters for travelers before the turn of the century. First, there were only trails through the prairie; then with roads, they continued coming – covered wagons, immigrants, horse traders, and such.

Crops grew well. We had plenty of corn, plenty of cows, plenty of chickens, and plenty of hogs. A cow and a calf sold for \$15.00 – if they were sold at all. Eggs were five cents a dozen, but to get fresh eggs – that was another story. Farm wagons would peddle fresh meat for sale. Since we couldn't get anything for corn, my brother John thought it a good idea to buy horses.

A drove of 50 to 100 wild horses would come through regularly, so we'd get about 8 at a time. I helped John train them. We fed the horses cheap corn, kept them tied, and worked them to get them gentle and trained. Then we'd sell them for \$50.00 to \$70.00 each (quite a fortune in those days) and then we'd buy more.

I was the youngest of the 10 children of Soren and Marie Westergaard and I helped wherever I could. I had a horse and a gig so I could run many errands for my family.

My mother was an instructor in sewing in Denmark, so she made all our clothes. Calico sold for five cents a yard. To keep the material from fading, it was always placed in vinegar or salt water to set the color. We had to make our own soap. (Thanks for the modern method – the detergents).

Square dancing, with music by accordion and fiddle, and picnics were entertainments in those days. We never did get to Austin, 30 miles away. That was too far away.

More and more immigrants came, so after 3 years, the Danish colony grew to be quite large. In Denmark, a young man hires for a half year and the contract cannot be broken. The "hired men" work for 6 months before they are paid, twice a year – in May and in November. After receiving pay, many of these boys left for America, usually in the fall. These young men would find work on the two big ranches: Hutto ranch and Brushy Creek or the Frame's ranch.

In the early 90's, the boys who worked on Frame's ranch had the experience of seeing many wild hogs. Yaeger (Frame's brother-in-law) would ride a horse through the pasture and shoot the wild hogs. He only used the ham and bacon and let the rest lie in the pasture. Since it was hard for immigrants to see that food go to waste, it was brought home so a plentiful supply of fresh meat was always on hand.

Wild hogs along Brushy Creek would attack the horses.

Love and Marriage – Horse and Gig

As a teenager, about once a week I was sent to Hutto to buy groceries: flour, sugar, coffee, and molasses. We had potatoes and meat from our farm. We learned to eat the new American vegetables: beans, corn, and black-eyed peas, which we also grew.

It was on one of these mornings to the grocery store in 1897 that the store clerk told me that another immigrant had come in and that I should go by the depot to pick him up and take him along home. This I did. On the way home, he was scared to drive with me. He thought I drove too fast and, besides, the wheels on the gig were too thin. (In Denmark, he was used to dray horses and thick heavy wheels on carts). Well, I got him home safely but I lost the jug of molasses on the way.

The next year, at 17 years, I went to work as a housekeeper for Judge Key in Austin. I was paid \$15.00 a month, but I got a good education staying with them. My "scared friend," Neils

Strarup, also went to Austin and went to work as a gardener for Judge Calhoun. We each bought a bicycle so we saw each other often.

On August 25th, 1989, Niels and I were married and moved to a farm southeast of Austin in the Creedmoor community.

It was here that we lived through the 1900 Galveston storm. I remember the wind got so strong just before night and remained strong all night with lots of rain. That was one night I did not sleep. During those years, flies and mosquitoes were real pests. We used that sticky fly paper for the flies and mosquito bars for each bed. Often we put kerosene on the children's hair to keep mosquitoes away so they could sleep. At that time there were no screens. Typhoid and malaria fever were common.

In 1912, my parents wanted to move to a Danish community where they could attend Danish church services. So, my parents, Niels, and I, and our five children: Gertrude, Marie, Knud, Anton, and Martin, moved west of Danevang where we bought a farm. I lived there until my husband passed away several years ago. Now, I enjoy living with my children.

Just lately, I celebrated my 82nd birthday. Both my parents lived to be 82 years. All the ten children, except one brother who died of pneumonia at 24 years, have lived to be 80 years or more. One brother lived to be 91 and a sister 92. I have only one living sister and she is Mrs. Knud Starup, who is 85.

During my 72 years in Texas, I have lived through many ages: covered wagons- the horse age- trains-automobiles-airplanes-jets- and now the space age.”

Mrs. Strarup lived to be 89 years old and has been followed by a long list of descendants. (We're not brave enough to attempt to go beyond the "Grandchildren Level"). Granddaughter Frances and her brother Leroy were joined by other Strarups; Martin Jr., Barbara, Shirley, & Kenneth and Carl Marius Hansen and George, Robert & Ron Moers.



This picture was taken December 1919 of C. M. Hansen, Knud Starup, Anton Starup and Martin Starup

Gifts and Memorials

We remind you that we have a program of receiving contributions in honor or in memory of someone. If you wish to contribute in such a way, donations are to be sent to:

P.O. Box 386
Danevang TX 77432

Unless the donor specifies a purpose or project, the funds go into our Endowment Fund whose interest pays for operational needs. In this way, Honorary and Memorial contributions "live on".

We offer our thanks for the following remembrances:

In Memory of **By:**
Alfred Jensen M/M Al Jensen

In Memory of
Herbert and
Emma Ladewig M/M O.V. Christensen

In Memory of
Olaf and Lily
Hansen M/M Tony Danna

In Memory of
Joyce Nichols Denise Brodsgaard

In Honor of Al and
Bridget Jensen's
50th anniversary Jetta Westerhom

In Honor of Myrtle
Waldman Dorothy McConachie

In Honor of Annette
Waldman Dorothy McConachie

In Honor of
Larry and Beverly
Burmeier Dorothy McConachie

In Honor of Jens
Christoffersen's
90th birthday M/M Al Jensen

Also, we give thanks to Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and our agent Ben Powell for providing matching funds for our educational programs.

Reservation Form for Queen's Birthday Celebration

Please make your reservations for the April 17, 2004 Queen's Birthday Celebration by **April 7**.

Either detach and mail this form to Kenneth Christensen P.O. Box 386 Danevang TX 77432
Or contact Elsie Christensen by phone: 979-543-2106, fax: 979-543-7205, or email: irvwind@wccenet.net

Reservations are \$10.00 for each adult and \$5.00 for each child under 12 years. This includes the noon meal and afternoon coffee. Beer will be available for a \$1 donation and soda for \$.50.

If you mail in this reservation form, you may include your check payable to DHPS.
Otherwise you may pay at the door, provided you have made appropriate reservations.

Have you paid your dues of \$10 per person per year? Do we have your correct address, telephone number and email address? We especially need email addresses to keep you up-to-date on special announcements.

_____ Adults @ \$10.00 each = \$ _____

_____ Children @ \$5.00 each = \$ _____

Total for Queen's Birthday \$ _____

Dues (if including) \$ _____

Total (if adding dues) \$ _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____



Make your reservations today for
our April 17 celebration of Queen
Margrethe's Birthday!!

Danish Heritage Preservation Society
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