

Summer 2002

Newsletter

Danish Heritage Preservation Society
P.O. Box 386
Danevang, Texas

It's Harvest Time in Danevang !

These are exciting times for residents and visitors. First, the Milo maize and the corn is harvested then followed closely behind by the cotton. This yearly cycle which is so dependent on the weather is a testimony to God's hand in all things but also a tribute to the patience and trust of the farmers and their families. And to realize that there have been over 100 of these cycles in the life of Danevang is awesome. Our ancestors were subject to the same vagaries of the weather as today and subject to the post-harvest price fluctuations which determined the quality of life for the community. In earlier times the insects were more of a threat than today, but, conversely, the cost of farming was not as great. Equipment, which had been horse drawn was not as expensive, certainly. There wasn't the cost of fertilizer or insecticides. But yields were not as much as today, so the over-all gamble was just as great.

A few weeks ago we had a visitor to the museum who wants to do a television piece for European television about Danevang. When he saw the exhibit dealing with cotton farming, he immediately grasped the concept that these Danes had left their homeland, eventually to embark on a life of cotton farming which was foreign to them. This cotton farming industry is, likewise, foreign to the Europeans of today, so he wants to return during the height of the cotton harvest to capture the frenzy which follows the months of dealing with the enemies of cotton, particularly, insects and weather!

We will keep you advised on the progress of this documentary! Next we may introduce our film maker to the rice farming in our area which is another exciting story.

Also, in your Museum, there is a new exhibit which deals with the monster weather problem, HURRICANES. Emphasis has been placed on two major hurricanes which affected Danevang, namely, the 1900 storm which was noted for its devastation of Galveston, but which also had a serious effect on the new settlement of Danevang, and the 1945 storm which destroyed the church building. Official tracking charts have been posted so everyone can see the paths of these two terrible storms, which came before hurricanes had "names". Newspaper articles and local photographs are also included. Plan to see this timely exhibit! Among other things, learn about the "naming process"!

Grundlovs Dag, Danish Constitution Day Celebrated in Grand Style (but on June 1)

On June 5, 1849, Denmark adopted a new constitution which made sweeping changes in the area of assurances of freedoms. That constitution prescribed freedom of assembly and provided for equal rights between men and women (including the right to vote, which the U.S. didn't get around to for 71 years, through the adoption of the 19th Amendment on August 20, 1920). Consequently, June 5 is an important Danish National Holiday. In Danevang, for ease of "assembly", we celebrate Danish Constitution Day on a Saturday near June 5. This year it was on June 1, that we marked the 153rd anniversary of the adoption of the original "*Danmark's Riges Grundlov*", which also provided that Denmark's government should be a Constitutional Monarchy, putting the legislative power in the joint hands of the king (or queen) and Parliament, and the judicial power with the independent courts. That's probably enough out of the history books (and websites) for now. But, it's fascinating "stuff".

On the subject of "websites" I commend to you one from Denmark, <http://neff.homepage.dk/dk-links.htm> His "links" are interesting, but you have to find a subject with a British flag to access "English". TRY IT! IT'S FUN!

The day began with the Annual Meeting of the members of the Society, presided over by President Irvin Wind. Committee reports were given by:

Elsie Christiansen	Publicity
Kenneth+ Mickey Christiansen	Finance
Helena Lauritsen	Historian
James Petersen	Building & Grounds
Lawrence Petersen	Museum
Kermit Westerholm	Fund Raising
Leo Westerholm	Events

Ramona Harton Lesak and Darlene Juhl Miksik were elected as new Board Members, serving 3 year terms. Homer Smith; Harvey, Kermit and Leo Westerholm, and Irvin Wind were re-elected.

The Special Guest of the day was Sybil Duus Needham of Tucson, Arizona, daughter of the late Rev. Vagn Duus, former pastor of the Danevang Church (1942-1947). Sybil shared with us her considerable talents in several areas. First, she led and accompanied the singing of folk songs, both old and new. The songs were taken from our recently-donated Joy of Song books. Next, Sybil shared with us her remembrances of childhood days in Danevang. She was especially thrilled that her fourth grade teacher, Zella Hansen was present to be acknowledged for the wonderful contribution to the community as a dedicated educator. Finally, Sybil left us on a playful and humorous note by sharing some favorite Danish Folk Tales.

A catered meal followed by enjoyable fellowship made for a festive day!

Long May They Wave!

In a recent newsletter we put out a call for flags. We are now “in fine shape” for flags. Jorgen von Holstein of Dallas responded with a flag which can fly at the granite marker at the Meeting House. We were able to buy

Danish flags in Copenhagen at a very favorable quantity discount. Then, the best news of all is that Michael Brodsgard has arranged for a never-ending (we hope) supply of U.S. flags. He also will see to it that our flags are rehung when they get “wind-worn”. Carl Larsen has been our faithful “flag steward” over the years.

During a recent trip to the Immigrant Museum in Elk Horn, Iowa (well worth the trip), prior to Sunday afternoon opening a man on a tractor drove up and proceeded to hang the flags. I couldn't help but think of all the times Carl Larsen did that (without the tractor) in Danevang.

One of Carl's latest projects at your Museum has been the installation of over 800 feet of water lines. Part of the impetus for the project, we're certain, was the need for water to the Wildflower Project along the highway which was spearheaded by Carl's daughter, Sherry Green. The wildflowers there and the Bluebonnets at the east side of the museum did quite well and added a lot to the effect of the Museum. They've run their course and have been mowed, with expectations for “next year”.

Speaking of Mowing

James Petersen, Property Chairman and Merle Jensen from Houston, a recent “official” member of that committee, have faithfully mowed the grass and edged. They just refuse to let the grounds look “shabby” and now they can ride “in style” under the canopy designed and built by James.



Carl Larsen, Kenny and Mickey Christiansen, Irvin Wind and Al Jensen get involved with “projects” inside the museum, particularly when we get frequent ideas about “adding to”, “reconfiguring”, “relighting” and “rearranging” the exhibits. Such recent events included the addition of the Harton Families' Exhibit, the Hurricane panels, the Post Office exhibit and the early “downtown Danevang” panels.

Another Timely “Writings from the Past”

Each issue we attempt to include something written during the early days of Danevang. The following excerpt seemed timely for harvest season. This is from a longer article written in Danish by H.P. Hermansen, the first Postmaster of the colony. The full article was published in the December 1908 issue of *Julegranen* and was later translated by Verner Petersen.

“The pioneer’s hope and faith was put to a great test, and it required a strong will together with the Danes’ tough perseverance and patience not to become tired under the struggle and then abandon the hope to develop a Danevang in Texas, in the word’s best meaning. Some left under the severe times, but some individuals returned.

“Far the greatest number came with few possessions, depending on the beliefs that in the sunny south it did not require a great deal for life’s necessities and the rich prairie soil only waited on the willing and working capabilities of strong muscles to provide a rich yield. Here we had the first disappointment; the heavy, tough soil required much more horse power and other types of crop equipment than the ones they had brought with them. Likewise, it took a longer time before the soil was in shape to give production, that is to say, with respect to the heavier soils.

“The first year practically nothing was raised and no other type of work was to be had, whereby an income could be earned. All the land was owned by large cattle raisers and their cattle grazed on it. (*Editor’s note: This makes the barbed wire museum exhibit more meaningful—free range law said farmers needed to provide fencing to keep range cattle out of their fields!*) The second year the colony was struck by a malignant epidemic among the horses which caused a loss of 60 to 70 percent of the imported horses. Many of the cows died the first year of the so-called Texas Fever. A few lost their entire herd.

“These then were almost unbearable times, but just the same, there are bright and beautiful remembrances from these days; we needed one another’s help and encouragement and soon felt as one large family that had come a long distance from home. When we gathered at our church services in the Meeting House, to our picnics in the woods, or at the different homes, there the singing and speeches sounded sympathetic and peaceful, even under these short comings. Now we have better times to which well-cultivated fields with pretty and well kept dwellings, fruit orchards and groves of trees have given proof. Danevang is famous for its closely populated area and its most skilled agricultural district, not only in Wharton County, but on the whole Gulf Coast. Can it always be said that

it is good times when self confidence and our self assurance become conspicuous so we no longer need others? Do we dare to be doubtful, that togetherness, agreement and friendship not always stand in relationship to good times?

Editor's note: There was a long description of the planting and cultivating of cotton for the benefit of the mostly northern readers of the Christmas magazine, followed by a colorful description of harvest: "Picking begins sometimes in July, but generally not until August. This is a busy period on the farm. When it is cotton picking time everyone, children and adults, alike, take part. Children 12 to 14 years of age at this time earn a good day's wage. Picking is paid at the rate of 50 to 60 cents per hundred pounds as long as the yield is good. When it decreases the price is increased. The cotton is picked into long sacks which are dragged with a strop over each shoulder, and can hold about 60 to 90 pounds. Each sack is weighed twice every half day. The farmer must have someone present to administer the weighing and note each individual amount. The Negro is very skeptical and afraid of being cheated out of an extra pound and watches the scale very closely although most of them cannot read the scale nor keep accurate records on the book. There is generally one in the group who has extra dexterity and can vouch for the group's interest. When the wagon which holds 1500 to 1800 pounds is full, the farmer hauls it to the cotton gin where the seed is

extracted from the lint. (*Ed. Note: Now cotton is transported in the form of "modules" which contain 14 bales/load, or about 20,000#.*) In general, 2/3 is seed and 1/3 is lint. The seed price this year has been from \$12 to \$15 per ton. (*in 2001=\$80 per ton*) Last fall, for a short time, the cotton had a price of 14 cents per pound. (*in 2001=55 cents per pound.*) A lint yield from _ to _ bale to the acre is considered fair. A small acreage did produce 1 bale to the acre. (*Average yield in 2001=1 1/2 to 2 bales/acre*) A standard bale of cotton weighs 500 pounds.

"The entire crop for Danevang last fall was 1100 bales. (*Total ginned in 2001, by Danevang gin, but in larger market area 54,350 bales*) There is a cost of \$3.50/bale (*in 2001=\$46.75*) to process the cotton for market. Corn and oats were grown a few years ago, but since the price of cotton has increased to over 10 cents per pound it gives a greater profit and the price of other commodities has declined. There is a small attempt to grow alfalfa, as there are other areas in the country where it has proven very successful. If the growing of alfalfa becomes general there is a good possibility for a creamery. (*Editor's note: This never came to pass.*)

"Fruit production consists of figs, peaches, pears and grapes. In the woods wild grapes are found in abundance. Also, on the prairies, especially along the creeks, are dewberries which ripen in April."

Meeting House Receives Historic Marker

Thanks to the generosity of Myrtle Waldman, the tenacity of Helena Lauritsen and the muscles of Irvin and Alfred Wind, the Danevang Meeting House now has a real Texas Historical Commission Marker. Dedication will be October 13, 2002.



Our New Neighbor Is Not In An Historic Building , But.....



We Welcome Ed's Bar-B-Que Across the Road From The Museum!!!!!!

Eddie and Betty Vacek are serving up some delicious Bar-B-Que cooked in an "Engineering Marvel" with a lot of tender care. The "back porch" opens onto the "fishing pond". Eddie and Betty have been a great help to the Museum so we encourage your help in their new venture! After church or while visiting the Museum (or at any time) drop in for a great sandwich or plate dinner



DANEVANG COMMUNITY HALL (Danevang Forsamlingshus)

THE DANISH COMMUNITY OF DANEVANG (DANISH FIELD) WAS FOUNDED IN 1894, AT THE HEIGHT OF DANISH EMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES. THE *DANSK FOLKESAMFUND* (DANISH FOLK SOCIETY), ORGANIZED IN THE MIDWEST IN 1887 TO PRESERVE DANISH CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION, ARRANGED FOR LAND FOR A SETTLEMENT HERE AND CONTACTED DANES LIVING IN THE NORTHERN AND MID-WESTERN UNITED STATES TO ESTABLISH A COLONY IN TEXAS.

AFTER THE FIRST COLONISTS ARRIVED, THE SOCIETY HELPED FUND A BUILDING THE COMMUNITY COULD USE AS A GATHERING PLACE. COMPLETED IN 1895, THE DANEVANG COMMUNITY HALL (*FORSAMLINGSHUS*) LATER WAS DONATED BY THE SOCIETY TO THE COMMUNITY, ALONG WITH 45 ACRES OF LAND. UNTIL THE FIRST CHURCH BUILDING WAS CONSTRUCTED ABOUT 1908, THE COMMUNITY HALL SERVED AS BOTH CHURCH AND ASSEMBLY SPACE, AND PROVIDED LIVING QUARTERS FOR THE DANISH LUTHERAN PASTOR ON THE SECOND FLOOR. THE DANEVANG SCHOOL, ALSO DATING TO 1895, HELD ITS FIRST CLASSES IN THE BUILDING.

OVER THE YEARS, ADDITIONS AND MODIFICATIONS WERE MADE TO THE DANEVANG COMMUNITY HALL TO ACCOMMODATE THE NEEDS OF THE COLONISTS. ALL MAJOR SECULAR AND SACRED FESTIVALS WERE CELEBRATED HERE, AND THE BUILDING BECAME A CULTURAL LANDMARK FOR THE COMMUNITY. TORN FROM ITS FOUNDATION IN A 1945 HURRICANE, THE *FORSAMLINGSHUS* WAS REPAIRED AND CONTINUES TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY, WHICH REMAINED LARGELY DANISH AMERICAN AT THE TURN OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

Reunions, Reunions!

This spring has been a great time for reunions; chances to renew heritage awareness.

Recent family gatherings:

Jens Peter Andersen

Mads Andersen

Carl Harton

Peter Harton

George Ingvarsen

Carl Peter Michaelsen

Typically, the families gathered and socialized and then came to the Museum. Elsie Christensen did a masterful job of coordinating and providing docents!

The Harton Families were the first to display their Family Collections (loaned and/or donated) as part of the special temporary display area in the Museum. We plan for this family recognition to be an annual event. If your family, with or without a reunion, wants to put up, with our help, a display for the spring of 2003, or a later year, please call Lawrence Petersen at 979-543-3005. Reserve your space NOW.

Visitors from Afar

The Family Reunions have produced visitors from Europe and South America, and then every once in a while, foreign visitors drop in. One such group which just "dropped in" was World Bank's Torben Larsen and family, all from Denmark, who had learned of Danevang by word of mouth. Luckily, Marilyn and Martha Chappell just happened to be working in the museum. It will be a grand day when we can have the Museum open every day!

Honors/Memorials

In the last issue, we spoke of the opportunity for donations to the Honors/Memorial Fund being able to "keep going" by earning interest as part of the Endowment Fund. That is true, but we failed to point out that if an Honors/Memorial Donor has a special project fund he/she wants to specify as the recipient, this is OK, too. In our haste we failed to give "the whole story".

We're pleased to report that this spring the following special gifts have been received:

In Memory of:

By:

Andrew Berndt	M/M Ray Allenson
	M/M O.V. Christensen
	M/M Alvin Jensen
	M/M Leonard Lauritsen
	M/M Curtis Reece
	Myrtle Waldman
	M/M Harvey Westerholm
	M/M Irvin Wind

Andrew	
& Emma Berndt	M/M Elvin Berndt
Melvin Hansen	M/M Leo Westerholm
Wayne Hansen	Beverly Burmeier
	Dorothy McConachie
	Annette Waldman
	Myrtle Waldman
Bill Ricketts	Dagny Sisco
	Gerda Stuart
	M/M Gunnar Thyssen
	Holger Thyssen
	Ingeborg Williams
Emil Swendsen	M/M Leo Westerholm
Max Westerholm	M/M Leo Westerholm

In Honor Of:

By:

Joshua/Jordan Conway	Nancy Conway
M/M Larry Burmeier	Annette Waldman

Installation of Rev. Vagn Duus Exhibit

While Sybil Duus Needham was here for the Grundlovs Dag Program (see earlier article) we dedicated a display to the memory of her father who was a former pastor of the Danevang Church (1942-1947). In 1972, the mayor of Los Angeles wanted to have a city-wide memorial service on the occasion of the death of Danish King Frederick IX, and he wanted a pastor who could conduct part of the service in Danish. His aides located the Rev. Vagn Duus! Sybil donated the pastoral robe worn on that day and a friend of Danevang, Rev. Kirsten Drigsdahl of Allerod, Denmark donated the traditional pleated clerical collar and cuffs. Marilyn Chappell and Elaine Wind “dressed” the mannequin. Sybil was touched by the ceremony and commented that “he” looked just like the young Vagn Duus!



Agerskov Church Ties



In South Jutland, Denmark there is a small village, Agerskov. (P.J.A. Petersen came to Danevang from there). The pastor of the Lutheran church in Agerskov is Rev. Anne Mette Wind Gundersen. Her husband, Hans, does an amazing job at being “in charge” of the home (and is the Town Crier). Her cousins Irvin and Ellis, (l-r), with wives Elaine and Mary Ann were present at our Danevang Museum installation of a commemorative poster issued at the recent 800th anniversary of the church in Agerskov. The subject of the poster is a picture of a statue of the Virgin Mary from the days of the church being Roman Catholic. In one of the many wars, the Germans “appropriated” the statue. For the Anniversary, the German museum “allowed” the statue to be temporarily returned to the church building, but held Anne Mette responsible for a potential \$2 million liability.

Upcoming Events

During the early part of harvest season not a lot of events have been planned, but from the latter part of September through October the Event Calendar gets more filled!

- Sat. Aug. 31, 10:30 am
Board Meeting, in
Museum
- Sat. Sept. 28, 11am
Community Fire
Department Program
Displays and a program
By Eddie Corral,
Houston Fire Marshal and
noted fire expert
- Sun .Oct. 13,
Dedication of Meeting
House Historical
Marker
10 am Church
Service, Rev. Rob Moore,
Asst to the Bishop will
preach and will have a
Question/Answer Session
after the Service.
12:30 Potluck Meal
2 pm
Marker Dedication
(The General Public is invited
to the complete Sunday
schedule, but attendance at
the 2 pm Historical Marker
Dedication is highly
encouraged!!!)

Mark Your Calendars!!

- Sun. Oct. 20 3-5 pm
Wild-Life/Hunting
Photography Show/Sale
Of Works by
Grady Allen, of El Campo,
Nationally Renowned
Outdoor Photographer
- Sun. Oct. 27 5-7 pm
(in Meeting House)
Danevang Church
Halloween Carnival
Food & Games
(for all ages)
- Sat. Nov. 30 2-5 pm
Museum's Second
Annual
Aebleskiver Fest
And Craft Workshop
(designed for Mothers and
Children where the father of
the family has gone hunting.
But anybody, old or young, is
welcome!)

Grady Allen Wild-Life Photography Show and Sale

Grady is a resident of El Campo and a graduate of ECHS, but in this very “backyard” we have a very well known (and viewed) photographer! Grady, many times, has had his photography on the covers of almost all of the “outdoor” magazines published in this country! Grady, in his quiet manner, does not make a “big deal” about his fame, and, consequently, has never had an artist-showing of his work. When the idea for a show came up, Lawrence Petersen volunteered to talk to his high school “classmate”. These conversations were fruitful and the Danevang Museum is honored to have his show, but also, the Museum will be able to benefit monetarily. Grady is donating the value of his time and skill which will allow buyers to benefit from a great price and will allow the Museum to raise needed funds!

Plan to be in Danevang, Sunday, October 20 from 3 to 5 to meet old friends, nibble on some cheese, drink some wine, see fantastic photography of wild-life, and buy these one-of-a-kind works of art if you wish.

Please Renew Your Membership If You Have Not Done So!!!!

Membership Year runs from June to June because of the timing of our Annual Meeting, but don't be bothered by the fact it's past June. Dues are only \$10 per person! As we have said many times, funds raised by membership fees don't come close to fulfilling cash needs of the Society, but they help ! Families and Friends of Danevang amount to a small group, but we need this group to be interested and involved. Membership is one of those ways of showing interest! Please Join!!!

Write a check (\$10 per person) payable to The Danish Heritage Preservation Society and mail it with this bottom portion of the page to:

Mickey Christensen
P.O. Box 386
Danevang TX 77432

Names:
Address:

Phone:
Email

We are pleased that we have this opportunity to share with you some information about an organization with a name very similar to ours and with similar lofty goals. This organization is Danish American Heritage Society. They publish a journal *The Bridge* (100 pages or so) and a Newsletter twice a year, all mailed to members. These are excellent publications. We like what they say and how they say it, therefore, we quote from *The Bridge* as follows:

“Many Americans are becoming aware of a desire to perpetuate their cultural heritage. Although some early immigrants wanted to blend into American society and did not emphasize their cultural traditions, succeeding generations of Americans of Danish and other descent have discovered an interest in their intellectual, cultural and social heritage. DANISH AMERICANS have an opportunity to participate in two cultures. However, because of a rapid blending into American society, few enjoy the completeness of this dual heritage of Danish and American traditions. Fortunately, many individuals are now discovering that their interest in Danish culture is shared by others.” (*Underlining added by editor*)

Membership in three categories are available General @\$30; Associate @ \$50; Patron @ \$100, all individual or family, by sending check to:

Danish American Heritage Society
c/o Grand View College
Third Floor West Old Main
1200 Grandview Avenue
Des Moines IA 50316-1599

FYI: The President, Jim Iverson, and Board Member, Barbara Lund-Jones, separately, visited Danevang a few years ago and gave us support and encouragement, but this “piece” is unsolicited! We just like their organization and publications.

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