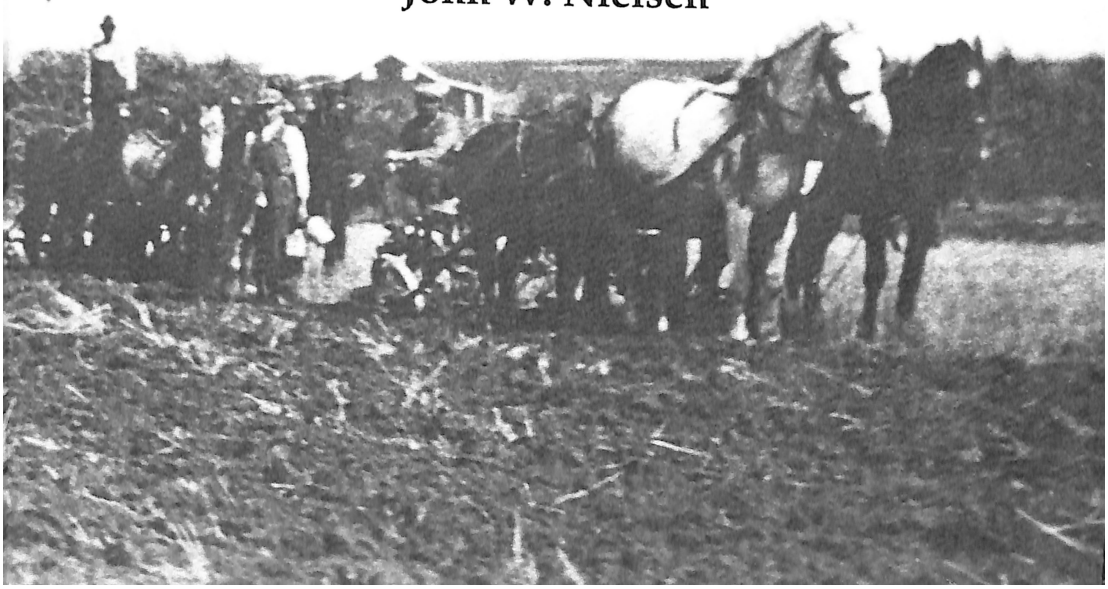
Danes in America

Kansas and Nebraska

Translated by
Ninna Engskow

Edited by
John W. Nielsen



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Danish Immigrant Archive

Dana College

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Editor's Introduction

Although the importance of Danske i Amerika (Danes in America) has been acknowledged from the time of its initial publication (vol. 1, 1908; and vol. 2, 1916), its contents have been available only to those who read Danish. It is to alter this situration that Lur Publications plans to issue much of this extensive work originally prepared and published by Rasmussen Publishing Company of Minneapolis in a series of English language books. The first volume covering the formation of Danish Lutheranism in America is already available.

This second volume is devoted to the accounts of Danish settlements in Kansas and Nebraska. One wishes that the editor/publisher of the original work had established more specific guidelines for that work. As it is, the selections are rather random with many significant Danish settlements such as Argo/Admah, Blair, Fremont Bluffs, Omaha, Plainview and Hampton among others not being covered. On the other hand, one is extremely grateful that the publisher assembled and preserved the material that he did because included in it are personal anecdotes that otherwise could not be recovered at this late date. The accounts of personal experiences and local lore have a freshness and authenticity about them that the sections where the author is consciously writing history do not have.

Because original photographs are almost impossible to attain, this volume reproduces those pictures that appeared in the original volume from that work. Likewise materials have been rearranged so that all the Kansas accounts appear together, followed by those covering Nebraska. Except for one short account all of the material in the book comes from volume two of the original work. For the benefit of those who may wish to check the original Danish, pagination in the original volume is indicated in parentheses in the table of contents. The one exception to this procedure is the biographical entry for Lars Hannibal which appears on page 48. It comes from volume one, page 304 of the original Danish work.

The text of this volume has been translated from the Danish by Ninna Engskow who, besides her linguistic skills, brings a diligence and enthusiasm to her work that is a constant inspiration. Her translation was put on computer disk by Robert Berthelsen. Kaj Nielsen has prepared maps of Kansas and Nebraska for this volume.

The subdivisions of the original text are preserved and are listed separately in the table of contents. To assist the reader in locating references to specific individuals and locations, the book offers an index of persons and one of places.

John W. Nielsen
March 2, 2002

Across the Missouri

Even before they were linked together in the Kansas-Nebraska Bill of the 1850s which largely revoked the provisions of the Missouri Compromise and made the issue of slavery a matter to be determined by the residents of the respective territories, Kansas and Nebraska shared a common history. Across their expanses moved thundering herds of bison, and in their valleys dwelt the Indians of the great plains. Into this territory came Spanish explorers, American adventurers, diplomats from Mexico, rugged mountainmen, and determined traders. First, Kansas surged with the importance of the Santa Fe Trail and the controversy over slavery. Then with the Oregon Trail, Mormon Trail, and the Pony Express, Nebraska gained attention. The initial stream of immigrants to both territories was further encouraged by the Homestead Act providing free land to those who lived on it and the availability of railroad lands at an attractive price.

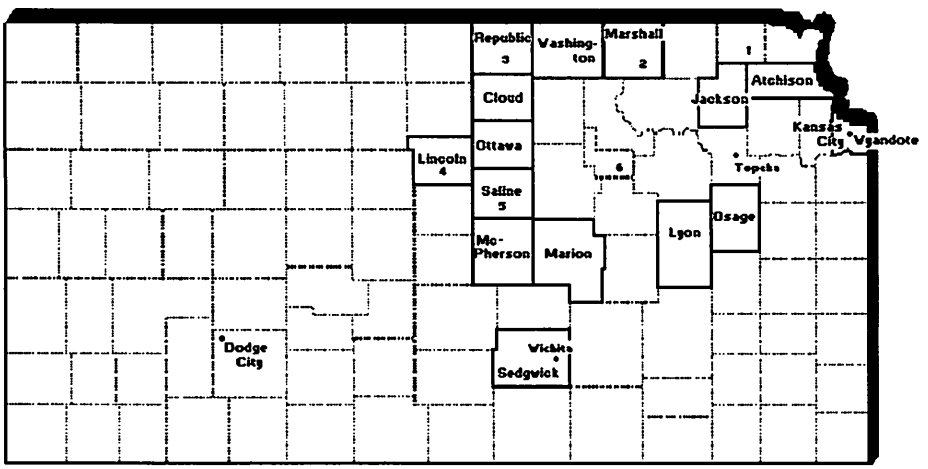
It was against this background that the Danes began to arrive in Kansas and Nebraska, very few before 1860 but in increasing numbers after 1870. The following accounts give some insights into their experiences during the nineteenth century. There is the terrible loneliness of the unending prairie, the hypnotizing sound of the unceasing wind broken only on occasion by the howl of coyotes. Comment is made of the absence of bird songs until trees were planted and grew large enough to provide shelter. The constuction of sod houses is described. Some find coziness and warmth; others, dirt and inconvenience. As rapidly as conditions allowed there is a transition to frame dwellings. One senses the pride of the settlers in the growth of his community -- the stores, churches, schools, hotels and, of course, the coming of the railroad.

In these pages, too, one encounters the hardships of life on the prairie -- blizzards, prairie fires, tornadoes, grasshopper plagues, the absence of wood and in many places, water, but almost always expectation for the future and determination to succeed give even the accounts of these events hopeful undertones.

There are also references to an Indian raid, to religious controversy, to political rivalry, to life as a cowboy, to narrow escapes, and social activity. This is not formal history but raw material awaiting the scholar's attention. In the meantime, it undoubtedly will delight the reader and provide a greater awareness of the presence of Danish people in the panorama that compromises the American frontier west of the Missouri.

John W. Nielsen
Dana College
March 2, 2002

Kansas



Keys to Cities on the Map

1. Hiawatha
2. Irving
3. Scandia
4. Denmark
5. Salina
6. Junction City

The Danes at Upper Walnut Creek, Marshall County, Kansas

By Workman, Julius Johnsen

John Nielsen, Gold Miner

The first Danish settler in Marshall Co., Kansas was without a doubt John Nielsen, gold miner. He was born on Lolland, near Maribo (parish not known) on July 4, 1826. As a youth he went to sea and came to New York in 1847. Then he sailed to San Francisco the next year and went directly to the mining areas, settling in Placerville, Eldorado Co. He dug for gold for six or seven years, and based on his later life he must have had luck because he always had money.

In 1855 he went to Kansas and bought a piece of government land – the Homestead Act had not yet been enacted – near upper Spring Creek, where there was some wooded area. Two years later he took a trip to Denmark, and after two months stay he came back bringing his old mother. She died when they were 15 miles from their journey's end. He also brought his widowed sister with her son and daughter and a brother, his wife and four children. John Nielsen was and remained unmarried, and his sister kept house for him.

In 1874 he deeded his land to his sister's son and went back to Placerville where he had some mining claims. With the exception of a short visit to Marshall Co., he spent the rest of his life at Placerville, probably as a hermit. He died November 4, 1912, cared for by his sister's daughter and her husband, Dr. E.L. Wilson. They brought his body back and buried it in their hometown, Marysville.

John Nielsen was an outgoing and helpful man. The Danish settlers received much support from him, for he could always give them some work and the pay was certain.

The Pioneers

In 1869 Jens Petersen Lund and Hans Mortensen Johansen, both from South Jutland, came from Chicago to live at North Walnut Creek, Marshall Co., northeast Kansas. Soon after, two others arrived: from Falster, Niels Peter Christiansen and from north Jutland, Christen Jørgensen. They had been living in Missouri but now settled about six miles, as the crow flies, from the first two. The next year a fifth Dane from Lolland came driving from Illinois looking for a piece of America. Niels Hansen Hvid found it here and found coun-

trymen as well. He took his piece between the other four so their land made a chain of good Danish life. The chain was so strong that only death could sever it. Their life and work set an honorable reputation for the Danish name in this area.

They were all big, strong men in their best years, and that was good, for the prairie pioneers had many difficulties as did the forest pioneers trying to keep body and soul together. These five were the real pioneers among the Danes in this part of Kansas. They had to be as near to the soil as the animals as far as protection from the elements is concerned. They dug caves in the ground for homes until time or ability let them build something better, and as relatives and friends moved in around them, they shared what they had. Thus they earned the right to be called real pioneers.

Life on the Prairie

H.M. Johnson (Johansen) tells it this way. The reason Lund and I came here was that we had heard about a man named Hansen who reportedly had picked out land around Irving, a town a little further south in the county for a Danish colony. This plan was never carried out. Before that I had signed up as a member of the Scandinavian colony being organized in Chicago. It had founded the town of Scandia, about 70 miles west in Republic Co. I had paid my deposit of $20.00 but wasn't able to go with them. Lund had his family so we rented a little house in Irving when we arrived there by train, until we could find land and our own house.

Of course we needed some firewood, and this gave us a thorough baptism by water into frontier living. We were told that we did not need to buy wood to burn. There was plenty for the taking lying along the Blue River near the town. So we bought a team of oxen and a wagon. The wagon we would need anyway. Neither of us knew anything about this kind of "go-power" and the reverse was also true.

We hitched them up, and all went well till we reached the woods. It was a hot day in June, and when the oxen glimpsed water beyond the trees, they took off. We didn't, of course, why should we walk when we could ride? So there we sat on the wagon, and the animals didn't care what we said. They went straight into the river until the wagon box floated and dumped us out. With a lot of effort we got the back wheels on firm ground, and the oxen brought the front wheels with them, but the wagon box followed the stream. It cost us $15.00 to have another box made.

That summer we had several involuntary baths, and if they had all been as expensive as this one, our dreams of ownership would have been washed up too, but they were often just unpleasant.

Not long after on a trip 25 miles west to look for land, we and two Swedes in a sort of boat tipped into a swollen creek, since none of us knew any more about rowing than we did about driving oxen. The owner of the boat had taken us over in the daytime, but he got tired of waiting for us and went home,

wherever that was. Near the crossing was a little deserted water mill where we had left our wagon. Since we couldn't make a fire, we spent the night in the mill, wet, cold and hungry At first daybreak we started home and soon found people glad to relieve our hunger.

We had a fine ride this time. We had rented a spring wagon and real horses for this trip, but one of them couldn't pull a load so we had to walk up the hills and ride down at full speed. Well, at least we rode half way. We were back in Irving by evening, and one of those beasts kept me from being unable to say literally that I took land, because I had to let others do it for me. The animal kicked one of my legs while we were unhitching, so I was not able to go on the expedition that a few days later went out and found the place for our longtime home at Walnut Creek.

Now we were busy digging a dwelling into the bank of a ravine – sloughs are the bigger, ravines the smaller low places. We even broke a little land, though it was too late for that year. Prairie land should be broken in May before the grass starts growing. That way the sod rots best.

At last we were ready to move out, and we unloaded most of our portable property and rearranged it before the housekeeper and Lund's children arrived. Lund lost his wife soon after we came to Irving. I was not married.

It was a rainy summer, and the river ran high so we couldn't drive over. A Swede, P.S. Lundgren who had joined us, solved the problem for us in a way that with the slightest slip up could have cost us life or freedom. His plan which he helped us carry out was to buy four boards and lay them on the ties of the railroad bridge over the stream. Then we pushed our wagon over; the oxen could swim over controlled by a rope from the bridge. The plan was fine and easy to do, but none of us knew it was illegal, nor had we thought of the danger of the trains. We were really shocked when a train roared by just as we had taken the wagon down from the tracks.

Lundgren walked back to town. We two drove off. The train episode had slowed us some, and we lost our landmark when a heavy thunderstorm attacked us at twilight. The mark was a pole with a rag tied on it set up at the corner of the section which included our land. The shower was heavy, and we had to unhitch the oxen and take shelter under the wagon, but we got soaking wet anyway. When the storm was over and we could hitch up again, it was so dark we couldn't see the faint track in the long grass, and we realized we were lost. We drove around a little, but were more and more confused. We finally unhitched again, shivering in our wet clothes, undressed and wrung the clothes out as well as we could. We did the same with a wool blanket which we fortunately had along. After sharing a pint of whiskey, we rolled ourselves into the blanket as tightly as we could to keep warm till day break. The liquor helped. I think without it I would have had "congestive chills." How I froze! In the morning we found ourselves barely a mile from our cave.

Later in the fall I was lost again at night. I was bringing home a load of cabbage and potatoes I had bought at the Otoe Reservation, but that night I had to be on guard duty all night to keep warm. The prairie was burned off,

and the oxen wanted to eat the cabbage. I gave them the smallest heads but that made them crazy to get the rest. They were hungry and so was I, and never has coffee tasted better than the next morning when I found some people.

Other settlers can tell of similar experiences on the bare prairie. The fire had prevented bushes and trees from growing in many places that now are nicely wooded. In the winter when snow was drifting, it is foolhardy to go out very far. Once Lund almost succumbed. It happened in this way:

About as far northeast of where Marysville now lies as we lived southwest of that town is where John Nielsen , the gold miner, had his home. His sister's son, James Johnson, inherited it from his uncle but later moved to Mesa, Arizona where he became a rancher and stockman. The sister's daughter, Mrs. E.L. Wilson, lived in Marysville. But the first years we were in the area, the miner lived on his land with his relatives. Here was prosperity! Real buildings, (log), and how those people could tell about pioneer difficulties, almost fantastic tales! This home was a good place to be. There was a good piece of wooded land which for reasons I don't understand had somehow managed to beat the prairie. The large oak and walnut trees made good fence posts, and the other trees were good for firewood. We needed both and had permission to cut as much as we wanted for half, so we stayed out here many winter days. One day we had a load ready to haul home, but we decided that I would stay till the next day and Lund would walk home. He often had done this – he was a good walker and the distance was only 14 miles.

It was beautiful weather when he left, but before long the wind turned to the northwest, and it was a real blizzard. The worse the weather was, the more worried Lund became about his four children and his young housekeeper, so he trudged through town and faced the storm which was getting worse. He was three miles west of town when luckily an Irishman got hold of him and took him to his shanty. The right side of his face and leg were frozen stiff, but the Irishman knew how to use snow to take the frost out.

Remembering those days is like a fog in my mind. How we managed to achieve reasonably good circumstances in a few years, for luck was not always with us, is a wonder. Already the next year after we came there the paradise we were in could quickly change into a desert by drought. The year we settled, the blue stem grass was as high as our waists and the slough grass much taller. The latter was good for thatching of houses and barns. The next year we had to creep around with our hand scythes to find spots where the soil for some reason or another had been able to produce grass tall enough to cut. We tried raising hogs, but our grain crop failed and we had to set the hogs on pasture – that is, let them find their own food on the prairie. When a chance came to sell to a businessman who saw the situation, we sold out, and our hog business was set back.

We raised spring wheat, - 15 bushels per acre was a good crop – rye and oats, bought expensive reapers, rented binders if we could for $2.00 per day, or bound at night what we had cut by day, planted corn and molasses cane (sugar cane). The last named was an important item for survival. There were several

small sugar mills where we could bring the cane to have it pressed and cooked for half, if we helped with the mill and delivered the firewood. With pork, bread and syrup we didn't starve. We never worried about the future but worked diligently to improve our home. We exchanged work when we could – well-digging, harvesting and threshing – and did a lot of our building with no hired carpenters. And best of all, we rejoiced sincerely with each other when progress was made. Big game, buffalo and other animals had already been pushed west of the Republican River where hunting parties sometimes went out to get meat and hides – if theirs didn't remain out there. Of a group of seven men from the nearby town of Waterville, six were killed by Indians, the seventh escaped by hiding until the Indians in sudden fright hastily rode off. We were poorly outfitted for hunting. Lund and I had jointly bought an old musket, mostly to prove we had a firearm in the house. It had two bad faults: the trigger would often go off on its own when set at half, and when we occasionally were allowed to depress the trigger, it was not at all sure it would hit the percussion cap. Lund did shoot quite a few prairie chickens from the house door. They came by the hundreds to get food in the winter. Lund's boys were worse enemies of the birds than the musket. They learned to set traps so we had boiled chickens, fried chickens, chicken meat at every meal till we were tired of it. Then we found a way to salt the breasts and then smoke them for use in the summer. You can't do that sort of thing nowadays, but that's probably not the only thing the pioneers don't miss from those days.

So far, Johnson. Both he and another pioneer, N.P. Christiansen have provided many valuable sidelights for the rest of this sketch. Without their help it would have been a lean tale indeed.

The Years Following

There was no rapid influx of Danes, so for several years we were only a few families. H.M. Johnson married, and his wife's father Niels Lausen Skøtt and their children came. Johnson's own parents came. In spite of their few members they stayed together and did not disappear among the Norwegians and Swedes as happened so many places in Kansas.

During the 1870s most of the newcomers came directly from Denmark. The pioneers, C. Johnson (Jørgensen) and N.H. White (Hvid), each took a trip to the fatherland and had relatives and acquaintances with them back. Later, people from eastern Kansas came because land was cheaper in the west. Not until the 1890s could one properly mention the many Danes around Marysville.

Those who in the winter of '74 and '75 came from the east to "The Danes," driving at night from Marysville, might well have thought, "If only I hadn't come here!" Because for eight miles there was no tree, house or fence, and only one light all that way. There were people living around, but they of necessity built whatever sort of houses they had, in the low places where their lights could not be seen. The usual sod houses were not commonly found here, possibly because the grassy sod would not work.

One kind of building they did use was to dig into the banks of a ravine, set stones to bind the hole and put a roof on. When the prairie turned into plowed ground, the ravines filled up with dirt and heavy rains washed into the caves, so it is exceptional to find any still in use.

But when you stepped into the house – it was narrow and barren, but cozy - sat a little to warm up, answered and asked questions, enjoyed the fragrance of a Danish supper cooking, and discovered you were a welcome guest, then you could think, "It was a good thing I came!"

In the morning when you looked out to see where in the world you were, the good humor might have sunk, for the eyes saw the barren walls, but the mood lifted when you walked outside with the owner to see all his achievements, how glad he was for what he had accomplished. North of the house cottonwood (poplar) trees were planted in rows around what was, or was to be, the fruit garden. In the barn you forgot the cold. The Dane has concern for his stock for here the barn's walls were two or three feet thick, made of hay and manure, trampled down between two rows of rods and poles and roofed with long grasses.

Now the barrenness has disappeared. One's eyes see nice houses, windmills, tall trees. Where the paths once went wherever people wanted to go have become roads that follow section lines between barbed wire fences or hedges of osage.

Use of the Land

In the beginning, the prairie rich with grass was the source of blessings. Here was summer feed for the stock and enough for the winter if one could get hay cut and stored. The herds of cattle grew in numbers up to the point that the increasing use of the land for crops limited the grazing to one's own land. In those early days a man's wealth was based on the number of animals he had, because the land wasn't worth much.

A man without land could also raise cattle. Niels Madsen was proof of this. He was a carpenter who arrived after all the land was taken and had no money to buy land. He built a little house on his brother-in-law's farm, had a cow or two, and at the peak of the grazing era, he had as much stock as many of his landowning neighbors. This was his way of supporting himself with his carpentering and exchange work, but at last he had to sell most of his animals, as his neighbors did. He cleared enough from the sale to buy a bit of land, 80 acres at $18.00 per acre. Now he could probably get $100.00 per acre but would need more weighty reasons for leaving his home.

The rise in the cost of land is part of the reason that the number of Danes here has decreased. Some sold out and left farming and moved to towns here and there. Others who leased land moved farther west where land was cheaper.

Little by little there were changes in what was raised. When the land was new, winter wheat could not be raised so there was more spring wheat and less space used. As the ground aged, spring wheat did not do well while winter

wheat seldom failed and paid off more than double. Now it is wheat and corn that are the main crops which allow beef and hog raising. Dairying is far down the line – it has often been tried but always failed. It was not the Danes who made these attempts, but they have their eyes open. When the time comes that dairying can make it, they will no doubt take hold. Alfalfa has been raised here with satisfying results, and the shrinking cattle numbers make it essential to get as much out of the alfalfa as possible.

All the Danes here can present excellent livestock herds, but only one, James H. Nelson, has seen the advantage of a full blown operation. He is the founder and owner of "Maple Hill Herd of Berkshire Hogs" – the frontline operator in the state. He is the son of Niels Nielsen who came from Lundby near Randers where he was a blacksmith. He had performed as a hero in the Three Year War and was honored by receiving the cross of Dannebrog.

J.H. Nelson's farm includes 200 acres. Both the property and its operation are a pride for the area. Nelson is in every way the man of the future and is known far and wide. But he is Danish and has the broad and tolerant view of life which is a characteristic of the Danes. He is the most prominent of the Danes here.

Youth and the Congregation

When the "feeding of the 5000 in the desert" ended because the desert disappeared and their material existence became more certain, the demand of the pioneers for a settled religious life came to the fore, and there was a unanimous vote for a congregation when Pastor N.C. Brun of the Norwegian–Danish Conference sought them out in the spring of 1874. There were a few Swedes and a couple of Norwegians that had settled in the area, so it was not exclusively a Danish congregation. They organized themselves on Wednesday, March 25, 1874 with the name of the "Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Marshall Co., Kansas." The first officeholders were Jens P. Lund, Hans M. Johnson and P.S. Lundgren as directors or trustees, and Martin Skøtt as secretary. Pastor Brun accepted the call to be their pastor and should serve them four times a year. He was to be paid $36.00 and had to travel by train about 90 miles from the easternmost county in the state where he was pastor for a Norwegian Danish congregation. So the congregation had few regular services, but it grew. In 1879 they laid out a cemetery and the next year they build a little church.

Walnut Township Church

Before the cemetery was laid out, there had been only one death among the Danes – the above mentioned Niels Lausen Skøtt. He was buried in the public graveyard in the county seat, Marysville, but his children later moved his body out to the Scandinavian churchyard. Churchyard is the proper name here, for the church and the cemetery both lie on he same two acre piece.

The first to be buried in the new place was Peter H. White, brother of pioneer Niels H. White. He was a master mason from Denmark and died at 35 in his best years. He died of pneumonia Feb. 24, 1879 and was laid in an open grave - that is, boards were laid across the open grave and covered with a little dirt until their pastor came on his regular time the next Sunday to officiate at the service. This death was a great sorrow for all. He was well thought of and would have been a great support for the congregation.

The first and faithful women are not to be forgotten. Mrs. Merredt Hansen, H.M. Johnson's mother, came to the colony in 1873 with her husband, Johan Hansen, and their youngest daughter. Their other children were all in America but only one son in Kansas. Among the Danes she was called Tante (Auntie). She died in 1907 at 86. The other women to be named are Mrs. Anna Larsen, nee Skøtt, Mrs. Johanne Lund, Mrs. Kristine Larsen (sisters), nee Christensen, Mrs. Anne Mark, nee Braasted and Mrs. Inga Johnson, wife of the author.

There was never a large enough group of young people so they could have something for themselves, nor was there a leader. Just once in a short summer, student A.S. Nielsen came from Blair to have religious school in the vacation time. Quite a few of the young learned to read their mother–tongue, and they gathered with joy around Nielsen, while the older ones encircled them. It is sad to think that this new beginning never continued. If it had been possible to keep Mr. Nielsen, the young people might have had their interest in Danish literature awakened, but it didn't happen. Thus the best support for Danish nationalism was never raised among the young.

There was precious little of the best Danish literature available. Ingemann's romances were "in" in the 70s until the books wore out, but the children were too young to understand them. There were a few other books that had been brought along, but they met the same fate. The reading aloud of Danish newspapers didn't interest the young. The need for Danish reading died with the older people.

When fewer adults moved (into the settlement) because land became too expensive and when there were too few young people to carry what seemed to them a heavy Danish load, the word Scandinavian was changed in 1899 to English in the congregation's charter. However its stamp is still Danish. It is mostly Danish men and women who are resting in the little graveyard near the small church, and one often reads or hears it designated as "The Dane Church."

In the 90s it could happen that the church was too small for those attending, but it was not so sure that it would remain a "little Denmark." The older ones depart or move away, and that happens to a number of the younger people too so what is left of the Danish is mostly the inherited stamp of character. This has its value wherever it is found, and who can know its value on the sur-

roundings? If the Danes vanish completely from here, their descendants must know wherever they go that their forefathers once were respected and useful citizens in this piece of their great fatherland.

In 1910 there were 114 Danish–born residents in Marshall Co.; ten years before there were 98 and ten years later there were 76. In 1910 the American-born Danes numbered 81 so that in that year there were 157 Danes including those where only one parent was from Denmark.

Perhaps there are sighs from the older settlers here when they hear and read of the large Danish colonies and when the large settlements go into the American language. The final thoughts for both is, "It's the natural result of the situation."

Though the congregation uses the English language, the Danes are still the leaders. The pioneer N.P. Christiansen has been on the (church) board since 1878, and Paul Petersen who settled in the colony in 1882 has always been one of the best supporters of the religious work. Younger supporters include James Nelson, Fred Christensen, and Hans Hansen, Jr.

As a Citizen and in Daily Life

Lawyers and court officials would earn very little if all the people in the land were as lawabiding as the Danes in this area. In the almost 50 years since the settlement began, there have been no arrests of any kind. Not one person has been sued, and only one court case has been initiated by a Dane. That was begun because his Bohemian neighbor, more by carelessness than by meanness, would not listen when the Dane repeatedly requested that he keep his large herd of cattle off the Dane's planting and fields. Of course, he won the case with $1.00 damages. That's all he expected and all he wanted – enough to give him peace. The costs were a tough lesson for the Bohemian for there were many witnesses and interpreters on both sides. It was the Bohemian vs. the Danes – and the Germans. Here Danes and Germans have always been good neighbors.

For their political efforts the Danes cannot boast. With few exceptions they did not care to take part in party struggles more than to vote, and they were never voting in a bloc so there was no advantage for a Danish candidate. H.M. Johnson almost was elected to a county office a couple of times, and another well known countryman, A.P. Johnson, also almost made it. The first as a Democrat lacked only a few votes, and fate stepped in when a candidate for "president elector" had the same name as the second so he lost many votes.

In the smaller elected posts in town and school districts the Danes have always taken their place and carried their load. They have always dealt honestly in their posts.

In the business world, the Danes have had no part, and in manufacturing there is only one example, but he is a good one. In integrity, ability, and respect he is a heavyweight. He is Peter Andersen from North Jutland. He is a trained miller from Denmark and now C.E.O. for the milling concern of P. Anderson &

Co., Blue Rapids in the southern part of the county.

Several young people, especially the girls, have become teachers in the public schools. Only one, John A. Johnson (see later pages) has gone to the university. In the field of music they have not gone far, but more because of lack of time, money and opportunity in pioneer days than because of lack of talent. Most homes do have an instrument. Carrie Johnson, daughter of above named A.P. Johnson, graduated from music school at Campbell University at Holton, Kansas and taught music. Her voice attracts attention. Quite a few young people have studied at American colleges and agricultural schools.

None of the Danes are rich men. The owner of the most land N.P. Christiansen, never had more than 320 acres. But with very few exceptions, there are no poor. The price of land, about $100.00 per acre, contributes to average good times.

Danish sociability has thrived. In the beginning everybody was invited when there was a party somewhere. That was the best time. But as the colony grew, that custom unfortunately had to be changed. Danish events such as New Years' traditional tricks are still remembered with pleasure.

Of secret societies, Modern Woodmen of America is the only one that numbers Danes among its members.

Short Biographies

J. P. Lund

J.P. Lund

Jens P. Lund was born May 28, 1829 in Hjerndrup Parish, Slesvig, to poor parents so his schooling was the least possible as the times were. He was a soldier in the last year of the revolution but never was in any battles because his company (The Hunters) was with the troops that occupied Femern. He learned the blacksmith trade, and by hard work and his first marriage he was able to buy a small property. That gave him a fair income until after the war of '64. He never was comfortable with the Prussian regime and emigrated to America in May of 1869. He came to Chicago in June and traveled to Kansas with his wife's brother H.M. Johnson, who had been in America about a year.

He rented a small house in the little town of Irving, and on June 27, his wife had a baby girl. Now comes the first blow – his wife died a few days later.

Besides the baby there were two little boys, Peter and Martin, to support, but no home and no mother. There was help in need. A young girl, Valborg Hansen who had traveled with them from Slesvig, dedicated her life to being the helper and comforter to those in need. Even today this is her motivation. She stayed with the little ones and did the housekeeping until Lund got on his feet. Then she took the baby with her until Lund remarried. The child died in her arms when she was 26. She was six times a mother in a marriage that lasted 10 years and was often troubled and difficult.

Valborg Hansen married J.C. Nelson. They live in Greenleaf, Washington Co., west of here. They own a good farm and have a big flock of honest children, some of whom are grown and help their father with the cattle raising. Nelson and his wife are a pair of hearty people that fit so well together. There's something so good about them so that even the sight of them, helps those who need their help.

But going back to Lund, no sorrows nor difficulties could sour this child-like and lively man. All who know him agree on that point, and they are many who have found their way to his open door. The last years of his life he traveled far and wide buying cattle. He had one failing – he tired people out. Danes generally went to him when they came from other places looking for land to buy. Lund was always ready. "We'll walk" he said, "so we can better go cross country." By evening the people looking for land complained bitterly and Lund only laughed at all the good wishes they loaded on him. But the next day they generally rode (instead of walking).

He was a member of the church board from the beginning till he died, and no congregational action was ever taken without his approval.

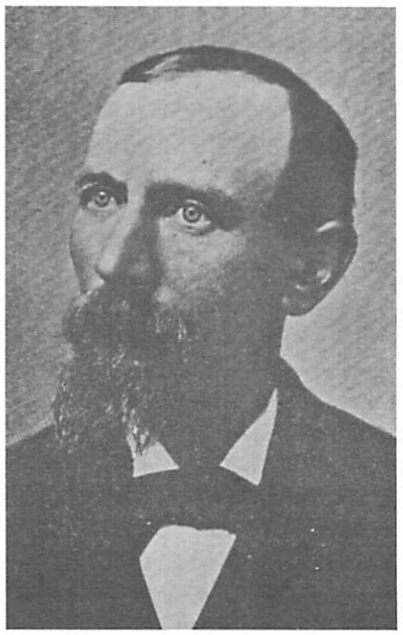
His second wife, whom he married in 1872, died in 1894. This marriage was childless. He lived till February 1901. This lonesome old man was lovingly cared for the last months of his life in the home of the S. Bertelsen family who came from Viborg, Jutland. Just as his life was unique, so was his death and funeral. A snowstorm had closed the roads so the casket had to be placed in a sleigh – the first, and so far the only, casket to be brought to the grave in this way in a land where travel by sleigh is a rare event.

Lund had not been able to pile up money, and that probably had not been his first goal, because of the good land prices and wise decisions by an able administrator, Niels Nielsen, he left about $10,000 which was divided among his own three heirs and a stepson.

H. M. Johnson

H.M. Johnson was born February 12, 1848 in Kaldrup, Bjerring Parish, Slesvig. In 1866 he was drafted into the Prussian army but elected to emigrate, going to Denmark in November of the same year. He stayed there until 1868 when he emigrated to America, arriving in Chicago May 15. The next year he left with J.P. Lund, who was married to his mother's sister, for Marshall Co.,

John A. Johnson



H.M. Johnson

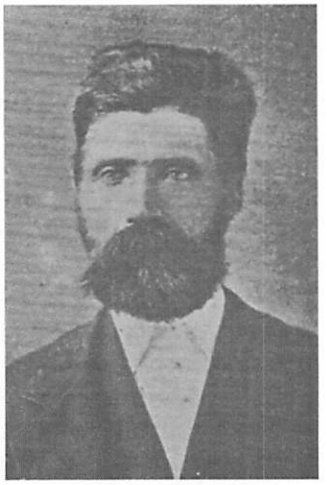
Kansas where he bought a quarter section of government land. He married Mary Skøtt in 1875 and they had five children: two daughters and three sons. They all earned a higher education.

One son, John A. Johnson, was born June 9, 1879. He graduated from Marysville Normal School and Lincoln Business College in Nebraska, and went on to Campbell University in Holton, Kansas, and later graduated from the legal department at Kansas University, in 1905. In his student years he had been commended for his eloquence and had taken several prizes. Even the great orator, W.J. Bryan, had taken notice of him.

He settled in Muskegee, Indian Territory, as lawyer and quickly moved upward. In January 1906, he married one of the Danish girls from his home, the previously mentioned Carrie Johnson. But already in July 30, 1907, he died in Kansas City after an appendectomy. His last greeting to his father said, "Tell my father I can't live to fulfill his expectations for me." His tearful father's answer was, "He has fulfilled them." These words were a short but gripping memorial. According to his wishes he was buried in the church cemetery near his home. A while after his death, a son was born who thus never knew his father.

H.M. Johnson performed considerable work for the start and growth of culture in his home area and won a respected name. He moved with his wife to Hiawatha, Kansas, but kept the connection with the countrymen where they had lived and worked. He died in 1915, 70 years old; his wife was still living in 1916.

Christen Jørgensen



C. Jørgensen

Information about his place of birth is not available. He was from Jutland and was born June 22, 1837. As a soldier he had been private first class but was not in the war of 1864. He was a trained gardener and was a gardener at Holgershaab estate in Falster where he and N.P. Christiansen became friends. In 1867 he followed the latter to America to farm together. They farmed in Missouri near St. Joseph and came out here in 1869. They each took up 160 acre homesteads, side by side, but lived together since neither married.

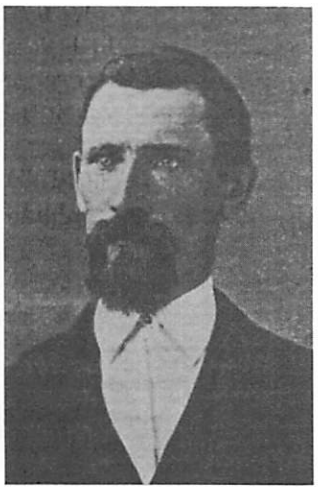
Jørgensen traveled to Denmark in 1879 and brought back a little flock of immigrants. His education as a gardener seemed to set him a step above other pioneers, but he shared with them, and encouraged them to plant fruit trees. He procured from the greenhouse for which he was an agent, trees that could survive.

Jørgensen was of a mild outgoing nature and was generally well liked. When he with all his energy worked for the church and took part in the work himself, it encouraged and inspired many others. He was the church secretary from 1878 till he died. He was eager to get the church built but did not have the joy of using it very long. It was hardly complete inside, when the message came out on November 25, 1880: "Jørgensen didn't make it." Typhoid fever had come into his home and some relatives had been very ill. The strength of this man was used up by nursing them. He had taken a little niece into his home and when she died, his will to live was broken and he followed her into death.

The church had only loose planks for seating. On them his casket stood until the pastor came in a few days so he could be buried. The church honored him in death, him who had worked in life so faithfully for it. His death was a hard blow for the congregation and a heavy message for the colony. For a long time there was an empty place when they were together, whether at church or at other gatherings. He was the first of the pioneers to be called, Christian Jørgensen.

N. P. Christiansen

Pioneer N.P. Christiansen was born in 1844 in Norre Velbe on Falster. His father was a weaver for the town, and the son followed the same craft until he left for America in 1866. The journey was on the dismal ship that took cholera aboard in Liverpool. Many emigrants died. Christiansen also was sick but his strong nature helped him through it. He came to St. Joseph, Missouri, where



N.P. Christiansen

he worked three or four miles east of the town for Norwegian farmers until the next year, when his friend, C. Jørgensen came over. The two men went into partnership on rented land. They farmed for several years and the comparatively poor men made a good start because prices were good on grain and hemp after the Civil War.

They were always the best off of the pioneers near Marysville. They were able to build a real house with two rooms above ground and lived together. The house was on Jørgensen's quarter, but Christiansen had to have a house on his quarter too, to keep the law. This often came in handy for countrymen looking for a home. The house became a parsonage for a few years for Pastor H.P. Berthelsen, the only time the congregation managed to have a resident pastor.

After Jørgensen died, Christiansen bought his part in their joint arrangement and his land. He lived in his old house for a few years and then in 1888 built what is still the biggest farm house in the neighborhood. He has always enjoyed the remarkable trust of his neighbors of all nationalities. Most of them are German mixed with Bohemian and Irish. But he is a very practical man, always ready and willing to give worthwhile advice when he can, so it is not so strange that he has the good will of his neighbors. The result is that he has labored in township offices and as school superintendent until he finally and firmly said "no more." He has been on the church board for years and probably will not get out of that position until he is called away from all his duties.

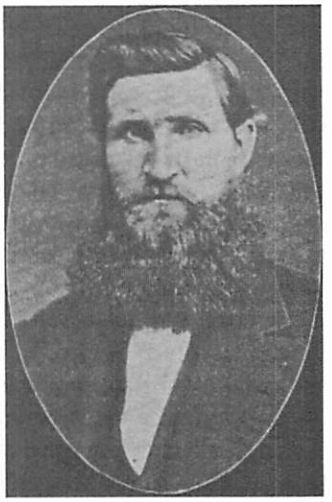
His wife is Caroline, nee Andersen, from Viborg, Jutland, sister of P. Andersen, the miller in Blue Rapids. They have four strong children, two sons and two daughters. As of 1916, he is the only one of the five pioneers still living. His wife is also living.

N. H. White

The pioneer Niels Hansen Hvid was from Lolland and was born May 6, 1841. He was in the war of 1864 and was a Prussian prisoner of war. In 1869 he came here and filed for his homestead. The next year his money was gone, and his filing could not be postponed because his Bohemian neighbors were waiting for the day they could take his rights to the land. But Lund still had some money, so Hvid got the necessary sum, $15.00, and then headed for the land office.

Now he dared to leave his land, which he had not been doing, and went to work for the railroad with his team for some months. He quickly paid back his loan and had $80.00 left. Since then he has never seen the bottom of his purse.

His expenses were small since he lived alone for many years, and he was a model farmer that got the most out of his work. He was no tightwad though, and gladly supported all good causes. A smarter man in dress and action was not found in the land.



N.H. White

In 1882 he married a farm girl from the neighborhood. Her parents were Irish and she was an enlightened and able woman, but the Catholic church to which she belonged had its stipulations for the marriage. The education of the children was to be only Catholic. There were eight children in the family. Three have died and are buried in the Catholic cemetery in Hanover, Washington Co. The father lies alone in a lot near his own church to which he was faithful even after death. Since his family could not bury him in a Protestant cemetery, nor bury him as a heretic in the Catholic cemetery, he asked the congregation to have the funeral. This was done with full support from his survivors. Often a lady dressed in black decorates his grave. He died August 21, 1896.

Gustav Jespersen

Just as this somewhat remote area occasionally received glimpses of life outside, especially in visits by pastors and missionaries, so they were not without shadows of darker skies. Occasionally the Danes have been taken in by wandering countrymen with pitiful tales. Having willingly given a helping hand, they were indignant to discover later that this was a fly-by-night that lived it up with the generous and easily procured charitable gifts.

The above named countryman was not at the bottom rank, but neither was he first class because he openly claimed to be a free thinker. He brought both light and shadows with him – light because of his great knowledge of life outside and his honest and cultured manner. For this he is remembered with good will not only by the Danes, but by whomever he was in contact with. And shadow – because of a secret past in the fatherland into which no one ever was allowed to pry. He was unable to hide his unhappy existence, and so he is remembered with sadness.

He had studied at the University of Copenhagen and was said to be the best chemist that had ever lived in Marysville, (the county seat) where he was perscription clerk in a pharmacy owned by a doctor. That was in 1880–1881 during the time when the Scandinavians were building the church, and in spite of his free thinking, he supported that work in word and deed to the best of his ability. The doctor's store was not paying out enough for two, so the doctor took over the pharmacy and Jespersen was out of a job. He vanished as sud-

denly as he appeared. If his full life story in America were to be written, it would be a gathering of bits and pieces from many pens for he stayed many places.

An acquaintance found his trail first to Topeka, Kansas, then to Denver, Colorado, and in 1884 met the same genial but aging man in a good position. He was manager of John Anglum and Co.'s Wholesale Drugs and Chemicals business. A friend had seen an ad in a Scandinavian newspaper from Jespersen's relatives in Denmark through Pastor Ole Amble in Gowen, Michigan, for important matters which were not named. When the friend asked Jespersen about answering the ad himself, the answer was, "No." He asked the friend not to answer it, because then he would have to move again and he would hate to do that. His relatives should not by his will ever know if he was alive or dead. Maybe they still do not know. At the time of his death, a couple of years later, the death notice in *The Danish Pioneer* listed his name as Gustav Petersen.

So it appeared to be a family matter that darkened the life of our countryman. He was a tough fighter, and he fought his battle alone.

Kansas
The Sunflower State

Kansas is the middle state in the Union, between 30 degrees and 37 degrees latitude. Compared to areas in the "old world" it is somewhat like southern Italy and Greece but being so far from the ocean, the climate is vastly different. Eastern Kansas near the Missouri River and state, is barely 800 ft. above sea level. The land rises in "waves" until at the edge of Colorado it is 2000 – 4000 ft. above sea level. The rivers, of course, tend to run in an easterly direction. The two largest rivers are the Kansas and the Arkansas. The name Kansas is Indian and is said to mean smoky water.

The state is nearly a regular rectangle, about 200 miles wide and twice as long. It has 82,020 square miles, slightly larger than Nebraska and five and a half times the size of Denmark. In the high western areas very little rain falls, and in the dry 90s thousands of pioneers had to leave their homesteads to save their lives. The empty shanties with belongings left behind and the bones of animals were for a very long time a sad reminder of a failed effort to take over western Kansas. But the stream of pioneers can be slowed down but not stopped. When rains came again, progress continued. In Eastern Kansas there is plenty of rain, so winter wheat, corn, and other crops with hog raising and cattle feeding are profitable.

Kansas is very like its neighbor state to the north, Nebraska, and they have generally kept pace in development, but in several ways Kansas has been ahead. They both became territories in 1854. In the stormy years before the Civil War, the South with enticement and force tried to make Kansas a slave state, but most of the newcomers were from the North and would not knuckle under. Bloody battles with fires and looting took place, and John Brown fought for freedom against Southern forces, and Kansas stayed on the Northern side. It became a state in 1861.

In 1860 there were 107,000 inhabitants – more than three times as many as Nebraska. In 1870 Kansas had 365,000 inhabitants, and in 1880 one million and by 1890 1,400,000. In the 1890s the gain was only a few thousand, but by 1910 the total was about 1,691,000.

The largest city in Kansas is Kansas City lying at the mouth of the Kansas River near Missouri. The total population is 83,000 as against 3000 in 1880. The city is known for its meat packing. Topeka, the capital, which lies about 70 miles west near the Kansas River, has 44,000 inhabitants. It was second in size, but Wichita in the southern part of the state grew from 25,000 to 53,000 between 1900 and 1910. The next four cities in size are Leavenworth (nearly 20,000), Atchison (16,500), Hutchinson (16,400) and Pittsburg (14,800). The two first lie north of Kansas City near Missouri, the third near Wichita and the last in the southeastern part of the state.

There are 470 incorporated towns in Kansas, but most are very small: 340 are under 1,000, half a score under 200, one had only 53 residents and one with only four. Forty-five percent of the population lives in the towns.

Danes in Kansas

Although Kansas is a rich state for farming, comparatively few Danes have found their way there. Most who traveled in this direction probably found what they were looking for before they got that far – Iowa and Nebraska held them fast. Quite a few arrived in eastern and middle Kansas and several hundred spread toward the west.

The following outline names 15 of the state's 105 counties. In each of these there are 50 or more Danish immigrants. A few other counties have upwards of 50 and the total

Counties& Towns Danish Organizations	Danes Born in Denmark			Danes Born in U.S.
	1890	1900	1910	
Wyandotte	202	237	287	212
Kansas City		182	233	164
Atchison		48	50	62
Atchison			39	39
Jackson	104	89	77	90
Marshall	98	114	76	81
Washington	101	131	93	158
Republic	97	97	81	84
Cloud	187	161	124	153
Ottawa	86	55	78	80
Lincoln	179	198	164	214
Saline	78	72	62	57
McPherson	59	62	57	45
Marion	99	121	115	105
Sedgwick		41	62	40
Wichita			37	21
Lyon	87	105	83	80
Osage	116	107	77	72
Total	1493	1638	1486	1533
In 90 counties	1643	1276	1273	1102
Grand Total	3136	2914	2759	2635

In about ten counties in southwest Kansas there are no Danes at all, and in the whole western half there are very few. Only two northern counties (Phillips and Rawlings) have more than 30 each. Most counties in the west have very few. The chart shows that the 90 counties have much less than half of all Danes.

Except for Kansas City, the cities in the state have very few Danes. Topeka has 14 immigrants and 16 born in the U.S. In Parsons (pop. 13,000) there are a few more, respectively 24 and 30. The drop in numbers of immigrants for the whole state is the same but in varying proportions. In Marshall and Osage counties the difference is great. In several counties where there now are less that 50 there have been twice as many (Doniphan, Jewel, Dickenson, Waubaunsee), while in Kansas City and other places the numbers are increasing.

There are about as many Danes born in Denmark as born in the U.S. "Danes born in America" means those whose parents are both born in Denmark. Besides these there are 1822 persons in Kansas who have one parent born in Denmark and the other in America. Many of them can be "real" Danes since a person born in America can still be a full blooded Dane. So this census cannot give an exhaustive report on how many Danes there are nor on how many live in mixed marriages.

The Danish Colony in Denmark, Lincoln County, Kansas

By J.L. Nygaard

The First Danes—the Indian Attack

The Danish colony in Kansas is in the middle of Lincoln County. In February 1869 the first colonists came: the brothers Peter and Lorens Christiansen with their families. They were both blacksmiths by profession. With them were Eskild Lauritzen and family, and Otto Petersen, unmarried. They were all south Jutlanders from the area south of Haderslev. In March or April Georg Veichelle came with his wife and Fred Meigerhoff , unmarried; they were from Switzerland.

On May 30, 1869, a Sunday, about 60 Indians came down around Spilman Creek. E. Lauritzen's son was over at the brothers Christiansen who lived together in a dugout. He and his wife and Otto Petersen were on the way over there when the Indians came riding; they killed all three of them on the spot. They tried to get hold of Christiansens, but Lorens stood inside the dugout with a rifle and kept them away. They tried to burn the dugout, but couldn't accomplish that either. The Indians got tired of this game and rode east, where they attacked and killed Veichelle and Meigerhoff; they took Mrs. Veichelle with them. It was a band of Sioux Indians under the leadership of Tall Bull.

During the night Christiansen walked down Spilman Creek to Salina River, followed it 13 or 14 miles to Schermerhams Store, from there over to Fort Harker and later to Junction City. Christiansen had Lauritzen's son with him. He was later sent to his family in Chicago. Mrs. Veichelle was brought to Colorado by the Indians, where they were overtaken by the U.S. soldiers at the southern branch of the Platte River. They found Mrs. Veichelle in Tall Bull's tent badly wounded. She recovered and was later married.

More Danes
Settlers' Conditions

In 1870 and 71 the following Danes arrived: N.Nielsen, A. Rasmussen, P.M. Nielsen, Jens Morgensen, H. Hansen and H. Sørensen, all from Zealand; Lars Rasmussen and Niels Petersen from Fyn; P.L. Jensen and H. Erebo from Lolland; J. Larsen, J. Damkjer, Seply and H.P. Andreasen, all from South Jutland; C. Andersen, C. Bunk, P. Andersen and J. Andersen, all from Jutland.

There are three streams flowing through the colony: Spilman from the west toward the east, and Trial and Little Timber from north to south. There was

Peter Christiansen

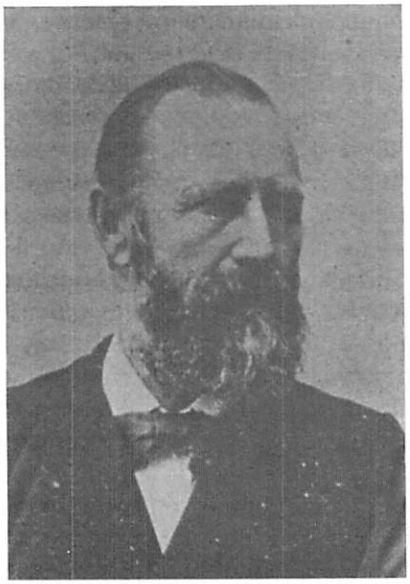
N. Nielsen and wife

water and plenty of trees for firewood and to build houses. They were built of logs laid on top of each other with the cracks chinked with clay. The roof was also of tree trunks covered with dirt. There was a drawback about the roof; water would seep through so that eventually there was not a dry spot in the whole house. We can easily understand that the water would not be very clean after going through a dirt roof, and it was the wife, especially, who endured the most.

Of the first colonists there were none who came directly from Denmark; they came from various states and it was rather difficult for them to make the journey. First they went to Junction City. That is where the land office was located; from there they went by Union Pacific train to Salina, and then by foot 30 to 40 miles up to Denmark. After they had located some land, they had to go back to Junction City to get their documents.

None of them had realized what it meant to build a house under those conditions without money, no work to be had, and no way to market their products for many years. Then there were grasshoppers, drought, hot winds, and now and then prairie fires. One of these came to the colony in the fall of 1878. P. Andersen had been gone that summer to earn a little money; he had just come home to get ready for winter when the fire roared unceasingly; six head of cattle and three horses burned, and he himself was burned on his face and hands, and the scars were there until his death.

1874 was a hard year for the settlers. It was a dry spring, and the grasshoppers came and took what was left of the harvest. In 1876 in the fall they came again and destroyed most of the wheat; they laid eggs, and the next spring there were so many of them that they covered the ground. When we feared



Jens Mortensen

Mrs. Jens Mortensen

that they would destroy everything, we began to kill them in various ways. One way was that we laid straw in windrows and burned them; but no matter how many we destroyed, the same number remained. Then they went because they didn't yet have wings; however, they were gone and we were happy and thankful for a fairly good harvest.

In 1871 there was a post office in Denmark; P.L. Jensen was the postmaster for many years. He was also the first merchant in the colony. In 1874 they built the first school in the colony. In the fall of 1875 we began to take stones out to the church; it was actually built of rough hewn limestone. Since we had no money and had to do the work ourselves it was a long time till it was finished. The first service in the church was in the spring of '80, and then the church was not completed inside.

Long Rides—Slow Progress

Lorens Christiansen built the first stone house with a shingled roof. J.L. Nygaard built the first frame house with a shingled roof. This was in the fall of 1876 that he decided to build. He had heard that there was a lumber merchant at Wilson, about 30 miles away. He had never been there, but a neighbor told him that he could make the round trip in one day. It was late in the morning when he left, and it was late in the afternoon before he started home.

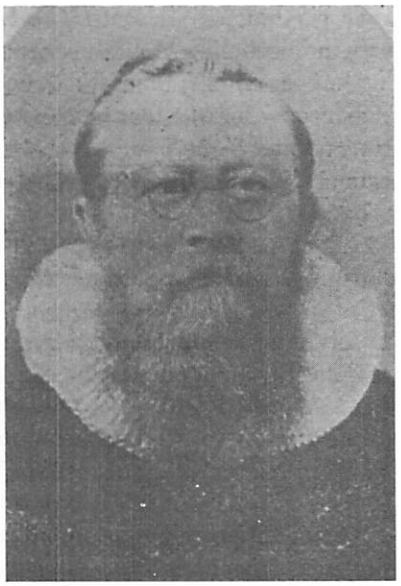
After he had driven for 10 to 12 miles, it began to get dark; but he kept on driving until he came to an abandoned dugout. There he knew that he had lost his way, but it was 10 to 12 miles to the nearest house. He thought that if he drove in a northwest direction he could perhaps find his way, but it was so

dark that he couldn't see where he was going, and momentarily the wagon was about to tip over, so he stopped and tied the horses to the wagon—thinking that he would wait for daylight. After some time had passed, he heard the rumble of a wagon, and he was lucky enough to call to them, and when he finally got his wagon over to them, where they had stopped, they showed him the way, and he arrived home toward morning. He had bought all the lumber in the lumber yard, so he had to get the rest of the lumber in Salina, about 40 to 50 miles away.

The same fall ('76) P.L.Jensen, Lorens Christiansen and Nygaard decided to buy a seed drill; one could be purchased at Cauwker, over 50 miles northwest, on the other side of the Salmon river. None of them knew the way, and in order to get there in good time they started on their way a little after midnight. They reached the place a little after noon. The merchant had two of them, and they bought one, but it took him a long time to put it together. East of Cauwker was a famous spring—the Great Spirits Spring; there they had decided to spend the night. When they were finally ready for the trip home and had tied the machine behind the wagon, they asked the merchant how far it was to the above mentioned spring. He really didn't know, but said that it was toward the east and they would be able to get there before dark.

With that information they started on their way. After they had driven several miles, the road divided into various wagon tracks. They took the one most traveled, but it branched again. As it was getting dark, they came to a river. In the meantime a heavy thunderstorm was beginning nearby. The wagon track seemed to go over the river, and they decided that if others had driven over, they could too. Now it was pitch dark, and when they were half way down the river bank, the horses stopped. Now they saw that the tracks had been washed away and that the machine couldn't pass on. They couldn't go forward or backward, and large raindrops began to fall. While they stopped there, they heard someone come down and water horses on the other side of the river. They called to him and asked if they could drive over; he said that the crossing was bad and hadn't been used for a long time; but if they followed the tracks, it was possible. He would stay there with a lantern, and they could drive toward him. Fortunately they got across, because the next morning there was high water in the river. They stayed there overnight and reached home the next day before evening. But because of the merchant's unfamiliarity with the machine, they didn't get all the parts and had to go back again.

It was a long way to market, with neither roads or bridges over the rivers. As far as possible several people traveled together. All the grain was in bags because they often had to carry some of the load over the bad places in the roads. Once some of the Danes had been to market with their wheat and on the way home came to the Salina River where the water was high, so they couldn't cross until the water fell. An American who lived two or three miles on the other side of the river, didn't want to wait; he thought he could let the horses swim across; but the current was too strong and it lifted him so that he fell between the horses and drowned.



Pastor F. M. Christensen

Mrs. F. M. Christensen

Financially, progress was slow; money was needed. After a while when they had a deed to a farm, they could take a loan with the farm as security—but they were hard conditions, 12% plus 3% commission, all paid in advance. Loans were usually for five years. Short loans with farm ownership as security would be for six months and the interest would be 35% as a rule, and some paid as high as 50%.

The Congregation – Danish Names

The congregation was organized in 1877 by Pastor O.L. Kirkeberg. Its first president was J.L. Nygaard. He was president for 18 years, when he refused re-election. The Sunday School was started in 1880. Nygaard was its leader and has worked in that service either as teacher or leader since that time.

The congregation, which has always belonged to the Danish Church, has had the following pastors: A.Becker, F.M. Christensen, O.Gregersen, R.R.Ravn, J.L.J. Dixen, C. Hasle, and now Johs. Jensen. They have all had Danish summer school.

Pastor F.M. Christensen's son, Axel C. Kildegaard, is the first pastor's son, born in America, who became a minister. He has been pastor in Muskegon, Michigan, and is now a pastor in the Bronx, New York.

Our church is built of limestone. Most of the work was done voluntarily by members of the congregation. Only carpentry and plastering was paid for.

The Ladies Aid has given a beautiful altar painting and carpeting in the church. They also contributed toward a church bell.

There is a young peoples society which belongs to the "Danish Association for Young People."

In the teaching profession the colony is well represented: W.P. Erebo,a grandson of Peter Christiansen, is principal and owner of a business college in Pittsburg, Kansas. H. Andreasen is principal and owner of a business college in Abeline, Kansas; he was a volunteer in the Spanish (American) War. Viggo Nielsen is principal of a business college in Long Beach, California.

Oluf Morgensen was the first from the settlement who went for the teacher examination. For several years he was teaching at a parochial school in Perth Amboy and is now a teacher in a business college. Besides these, there are men and women teachers in the public schools.

The brothers H.P. Nielsen and H.T. Nielsen have worked for the Department of Agriculture. The first one as superintendent for research in Kini, Alaska. He was a volunteer and corporal in the Spanish American War. H.T. Nielsen is a farm consultant and travels most of the time, especially in the southern states.

Not a few Danes have participated in public life, as elected officials. The town council as a rule consists of two Danes and an American. Only two have been county officials: J.L. Nygaard, commissioner for six years, and S. Bogh, deputy recorder for four years and elected recorder for three terms (six year). He was born near Christiansfeldt and died in his home in Lincoln June 2, 1900, 50 years old.

The Present

The colony is, more or less, lying above coal deposits, at this place from 40 to 80 feet in depth. In some years the coal has been mined at several places, and there was a little town of coal diggers. But in later years there was mining only at one place, but sporadically. If possibly there is better coal deeper down, will perhaps be evident in the spring, since almost all the land around here has been leased for drilling for oil.

Yes, times have changed. We now have railroad trains through the colony, and the little town of Denmark is growing. We have two large grain elevators, two merchants, who also handle farm implements, a lumber yard with hardware, a hotel, a ladies apparel shop , a barber , a butcher, two automobile dealers, and a bank will soon come. There is a railway station, creamery, and telephone office.

Before the railroad came there were six residences and that will soon be doubled because so many are coming. There is the church and the meeting house. In the "old days" there was a post office but with free delivery we receive mail from Vesper.

J.L. Nygaard was born in Langbolls, south of Aarhus in the same parish as Testrup High School. In his youth he was strongly influenced by the religious and cultural revival that went over that area before and after 1864. The religious revival was begun by the Inner Mission Laymen Jens Larsen and Jens Dyrholm. Later the revival leaned more toward Grundtvigianism, when Pastor Kirkeby in Odder, Otto Møller in Gylling and J. Teilman in Bering became

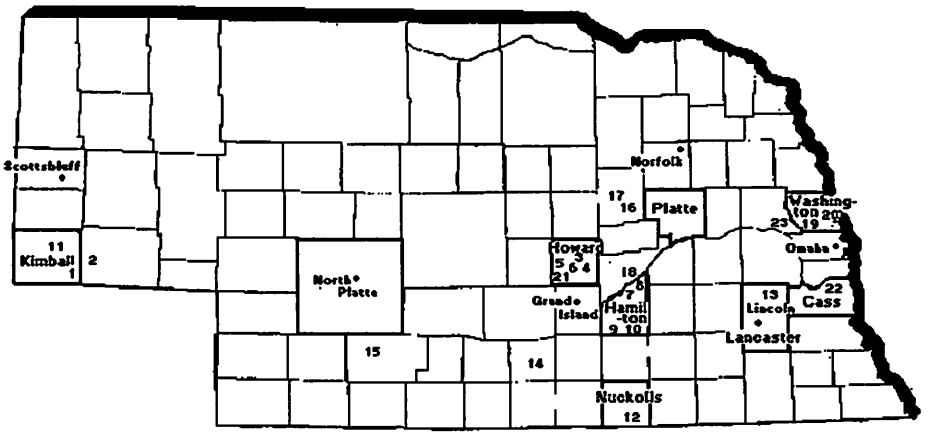
W. P. Erebo

J. Nygaard

leaders. In 1866 J. Nørregaard and C. Baago started Testrup High School.

Nygaard was at Hindholm High School. There were nine teachers, of whom the most prominent were Chr. Nelsen , the principal; L. Budde and A. Jørgensen, who later became principal at Høng; but none of them could in any degree sweep away his students like Nørregaard. I have never heard his equal. Nygaard taught under the Royal Agricultural Association and was a member; but he could not agree with the working conditions on the large estates. And after he finished his military service, camping twice near Hald and taking part in an autumn maneuver, he applied for emigration permission and traveled to the U.S. in the spring of '73.

Nebraska



Keys to Cities on the Map

1. Dix
2. Potter
3. St. Paul
4. Dannebrog
5. Dannevirke
6. Nysted
7. Marquette
8. Hordville
9. Aurora
10. Hampton
11. Kimball
12. Ruskin
13. Davey
14. Minden
15. Curtis
16. St. Edward
17. Looking Glass
18. Central City
19. Kennard
20. Blair
21. Boelus
22. Weeping Water
23. Fremont

How Shortsighted Can People Be!

by G. S. Strandvold

How shortsighted people can be! In 1858 *The American Review* wrote about Nebraska Territory: "The population of the United States has reached it western boundary, and the Missouri River divides the rest of America from a huge desert that can be traversed only in caravans on the back of a camel."

At about the same time the Scotch *Edinburgh Review* stated that "there lies a desert which probably never will see planned settlements arise."

These expressions are only 50 years old, and now there are many more than a million inhabitants in the "desert" called Nebraska.

We can better understand that J.B. Lyman in 1871 could write in the *New York Tribune* that, after traveling 5000 miles in America, he had not found a more attractive state west of the Missouri River than Nebraska.

Nebraska is no desert; neither is it a garden nor a park, but it is a state where the top soil is from three to ten feet deep. *Rural New Yorker* wrote in the 1880s, "The best garden soil in New York State is not a hair better than Nebraska's soil which is free of stones, easy to work, and highly productive."

From this soil comes corn - enormous piles of corn – wheat, rye, barley, buckwheat, peas, alfalfa and many kinds of grass besides the vegetables that thrive in the temperate zone, and on this ground more cattle are raised than in any other state.

Desert? Yes, Indeed!

Naturally Nebraska isn't a tourist haven. People from the big cities and from Europe don't come here to enjoy Nebraska's sights, though there are those who have the eyes to see the somber prairie beauty. There is poetry in golden acres of grain or the green corn fields where in the summer heat one can literally see the plants grow from day to day. Those who can enjoy the unique coloring of Indian Summer – these people will not come to Nebraska in vain.

In Howard Co. one can still meet Danes who remember the tough pioneer days when Grand Island, many miles away, was the closest railroad depot, and one can understand what it took to haul one's crop by horse and wagon over a prairie with only few and poorly kept roads.

But that time is gone. The Union Pacific railway and its many branch lines brought the farmer and his markets together. Now hundreds of trains every day roar over the rolling landscape. Nebraska is almost exactly half way between two oceans.

The land that is now Nebraska was included in the lands that Spanish explorers visited in 1541, but the Indians ruled here long after. Pawnee, Missouri, Omaha and Sioux lived in their wigwams and swung their tomahawks

on these plains. In the meantime the land became part of the Louisiana Territory which was ceded to the U.S. in 1803, but even 29 years later 16,000 Indians fought a three day war where 5,000 died.

Nebraska's civilization begins in 1805 when Manuel Lisa started a trading post called Bellevue (near Omaha), and in 1810 The American Fur Co. opened a trading station and a fort at the same place.

In the 1840s Colonel Fremont traveled in Nebraska, and in 1847 The Mormons who had been driven out of Illinois sought a refuge on the west bank of the Missouri but were driven farther west in their search for a new home. Two years later, the army of gold seekers from the East crossed the state laboriously, drawn by the hope of gold on the coast of the Pacific. Not until 1854 when the Indians had signed a treaty with the "great white father" in Washington, did the first settlers start to live off the soil. In 1855 there were few more than 4000 white persons in the territory, five years later the count was 28,000 and in 1870 almost 123,000.

The one thing that more than anything else contributed to the rapid growth of the population in Nebraska (and in nearly all the central states) was the Homestead Act which was passed in 1862. The aim was to give every man who wants it, farmland to work at no cost. He must promise to live on and work the soil for at least five years. With this in mind, one can understand that the number of farmers in Nebraska rose from 2,789 in 1860 to 12,301 in ten years. This also explains the increase in population from 123,000 in 1870 to 257,000 in 1876.

Naturally, the pioneers didn't find gold and green forests. They most often lived in sod huts and used the most basic tools, but for those who persevered (and that for the Danes meant most of them) they did win their gold, and if there aren't many green forests, there are green fields to delight the eyes, fields that turn to gold in one way or another. Nebraska Danes are not people of small means. Anything but that, for there are 50 million acres of farmland in the state.

A rich land, this state. The soil is almost its only source of income; no lumbering, no mining, and the factories which are found here are based on the products of the land: corn and wheat, and much else, but mostly corn and wheat.

When one thinks of the difficult pioneer life, what comes most often to mind is the pioneer with an ax in hand, clearing the ground with stump pullers and branching roots. But to get an inland field to produce when the ground itself is rich like the prairie, takes energy and constant attention, not to mention things like grasshoppers, drought, cyclones and tornadoes that try the patience of men. There's a need for a man's will and his work where the soil is good but climate and nature are unpredictable.

It is encouraging to think there were Danes in this battle, and they stayed with it and won. But those chapters belong elsewhere in this book.

An Historic Sketch of the Danish Colonies In Howard County, Nebraska

Told by Peter Ebbesen

The Danish Colonies

Probably the name and its size will explain why the Dannebrog Colony is known wherever Danes are located. The colony in Howard Co. is really in two parts: Dannebrog and Dannevirke, plus some smaller groups, but Dannebrog is the oldest and the most lasting.

It is located in the south central part of the county, 11 miles east to west and seven miles north to south. It includes Dannebrog and Nysted towns and touches Boelus on the southwest. The leading business people in Boelus are Danes.

Dannevirke Colony takes in eight miles north and south and five miles east to west in the northwest corner of the county. There are smaller groups of Danes in the northeast quarter and some of the older Danish pioneers are near Farwell and not a few in the county seat of St. Paul.

The Place is Located

It was among the flock of Danish pioneers in Waukesha Co., Wisconsin, that the thought of setting up a colony on the prairie of the west developed. Several of them had settled in the forest already in the 1850s and were at the point of needing capital to set up a farm. On the western plains a pair of strong arms and an honest will would fill the bill when Uncle Sam would give the land. There was no need there to cut down trees and haul stones, and there one could have the advantage of living in a big Danish community where Danish speech and customs could thrive and flourish.

This was actively discussed in 1869 and 1870 when "The Danish Land and Homestead Company" was incorporated. Lars Hannibal, the most eager and active proponent, was president; Vice consul C.F.J. Møller of Milwaukee was secretary and Jens Reddelin treasurer. In February of 1871 a committee including Lars Hannibal, Søren M. Pedersen, John Seehusen and Poul Hansen was sent out by the company. They were to choose a place to set up the colony.

The Union Pacific Railroad, finished a few years earlier, had been given alternate sections of land on a strip of land 40 miles wide along the whole line. The aim was to settle this wild land and to do so, the railroad society published

flyers in every language praising to the skies the great possibilities in the Platte River valley that up till now had been seen as part of "the Great American Desert." It was this newly found "western garden" that drew Lars Hannibal and his comrades. That they went so far west, when there was just as good land on the same terms much nearer Omaha has to be charged to their inexperience. The railroad society wanted to set the boundaries of civilization as far west as possible, so its directors were sent the 150 miles west of Omaha to the little town of Grand Island (which originally had been a German settlement and now was a station on the new line). From there they were sent north 20 miles along three branches of the Loup River but of course inside the railroad's territory. The committee and their guides ferried themselves across the river on a raft they had fastened together of logs, and spent 12 days studying the territory. They declared themselves satisfied, traveled back to Wisconsin and said they had found the place.

The First Pioneers

Already a couple of months later the first contingent arrived. It consisted of Lars Hannibal, Niels Nielsen, Paul Anderson and two other men whose names are lost to history, probably because they lost courage and left the area after they had chosen home places. In Grand Island Lærke Sørensen joined them, and on May 1 they went back to the Loup River, ferried themselves over and each chose his plot on different places between the two creeks, Oak Creek and Turkey Creek. On the sixth they went back to Grand Island and registered their choices in the U.S. Land Office.

Lars Hannibal, Lærke Sørensen and his father, old Søren Eriksen, immediately began digging their sod houses which were about four miles from each other. In time these became the foundations for the two Danish towns of Dannebrog and Nysted. When they had arranged their houses, Lars Hannibal and Lærke Sørensen traveled to Grand Island to get their families, and during their three day absence, Sørensen's old father was the only white man in the whole area. On the twentieth of May, Pentecost Sunday, the wives were installed in their very primitive new homes.

In the same group were also Lærke Sørensen's three little girls, Hannibal's 13 year old stepson, Christian Hansen and three new settlers: Jens Wilhelmsen, John Seehusen (the secretary of the colony since Consul Møller had resigned), and Lorenz Melsen, who all settled in. The two wives, Karen Hannibal and Johanne Sørensen, were the first two women in the colony, and actually the first in Howard Co., although a Mrs. James Eddy had come with her husband to a colony begun by Americans farther down the valley, but she soon left for the East, heartily tired of roughing it.

It is impossible for today's people to imagine the many strange emotions that plagued the first lonely pioneers so suddenly removed from a cultured environment to raw and unforgiving nature. There was no sign of human hands. The untamed land was a hunting ground for red men and almost as

wild white hunters. The coyotes howls were about the only sounds in the short pauses between the almost never resting winds.

In the meantime an American colony was started in the center of what is now Howard Co., about 20 miles northeast of the Danes. Two young surveyors had on behalf of the railroad showed the Danes to their lands and now were making a name for themselves by starting a new county. N.J. and J.N. Paul got the legislature to create Howard Co. in March, and in April they started their colony about where St. Paul lies now. A couple of months later a provisional county government was set up with the newly created town of St. Paul as the county seat. Thus the Danes lost their first and best chance to govern the county. The Americans were many more in number and probably had more practical know-how.

For Lars Hannibal it was a great disappointment that most of the colonists who had signed up lost courage at the last moment and stayed in their homes in the East. Besides the above mentioned settlers, only the following actually came in 1871: Frederik Olsen, Hans Nielsen, Jens Andreasen, Hans and Peter D. Thomsen, Hans Rasmussen, Niels Ebbe Jensen, Frank Gertsen, Carl F. Petersen, and Chris Diercks. But that same fall a well-to-do man from Sweden, C.O. Schlytern, came. He bought several sections of railroad land on the highland south of Oak Creek. He then went home, returning in August, 1872, bringing Carl Søderberg, Jonas Blomgren, Johan Wahlgren and his foster son Calle. In 1873 and a few years later more Swedish pioneers came from the old country and soon there was a little settlement of these hardy and able neighbors who became a valuable part of the colony. Personally, Mr. Schlytern was a good support for the new town. He was a good business man, had some capital, and he offered willingly of both to further the welfare of the community in all ways.

The Town of Dannebrog

By the winter of 1872 they were able to start a town on Lars Hannibal's land near Oak Creek, a good mile before it joins the Loup. Now the colony and town were given their present name. To honor Lars Hannibal who was the soul in the whole undertaking it was thought to name the town Hannibal or Carthage, but he demurred, saying this was not a one-man job. It was much greater, so to designate the national character he suggested Dannebrog, and so it was.

A post office was immediately set up with Hannibal as postmaster. That same year he built two wooden houses – the first, in Dannebrog, was his own – and the other, a little store where Carl L. Petersen and Hans Nielsen opened a grocery and general store. Conrad Madsen built the first hotel. Jens Wilhelmsen was one of the first carpenters. He married Hannibal's daughter Hannah, and early on became one of the first large farmers – he owned and farmed 500 acres. Jens Andersen was the first blacksmith; Rasmus Hannibal, the youngest son of the president, the first shoemaker. He later became county

judge, a lawyer and a well-known politician. His eldest brother, Peter M. Hannibal, widely known as a teacher, lecturer and author, was the town's first teacher since he had evening classes in the winter of 1871-1872 for the first inquiring pioneers. In the spring of 1872 a school district was set up in Dannebrog and by the following fall another for the western part of the colony.

In 1874 Lars Hannibal built a flour mill driven by the water power of Oak Creek. The creek was dammed up and formed a beautiful lake in the town.

The fall elections in that year were to decide the location of the county seat. St. Paul, of course, had the advantage of being the interim county seat, but Dannebrog made heroic efforts to take it away from them. To spread the news, an American lawyer printed a local newspaper, but in spite of everything, the vote October 13 made St. Paul the county seat, 226-206. It was a bitter disappointment for the Danes, and many years went by before the resentment toward St. Paul was overcome. The newspaper stopped coming, and plans for city growth were tabled until the railroad came about ten years later.

Progress – and Many Settlers

Of all the difficulties in the pioneer life here, one of the most noticeable was transportation. Grand Island was the nearest railroad station from where all necessities must be brought home, but access was blocked by the wide Loup River. Near St. Paul a simple bridge had been built in the summer of 1871 and was replaced by a solid span a year later. This meant that the Danes had to take the long way around and then drive over many miles of loose sand to get to Grand Island and home again, a round trip of 65 miles. Finally this problem was solved with the building of a county bridge over the Loup near Dannebrog – an event properly celebrated with joy.

In 1872 and especially 1873 a large group of new settlers cane in, some from the East but most came directly from Denmark, especially Jutland, thus bringing the population to a respectable total. The following came in 1872-1873, settled on their homesteads, and began to plant the prairie: Paul Anderson, later outstanding businessman, lawyer, and county judge and Niels Nielsen (near Turkey Creek) later active in farm organizations. These two young men had registered their land in 1871 the same time as Hannibal and Lærke Sørensen, erected their temporary dwellings and lived there while working for the railroad until they could afford to start farming. Also coming were Søren M Pedersen, member of the original committee; his brother-in-law Lars P. Jepsen whose son, Peter, became merchant and banker; Christian Sørensen, Lars Hannibal's son-in-law and the first in the colony to celebrate his silver wedding August 24, 1887; Jens M. Petersen, the first musician and father to the present editor and postmaster in Dannebrog; Niels Enevoldsen who started pioneering with $0.25 in his pocket but ended well-to-do; Thomas Johnson, pioneer at Dry Creek; Lærke Sørensen's brothers Paul and Christian and their brother-in-law Jacob Eriksen; Henry Hansen Lerche; Laurits J. Hansen; Hannibal's sisters Mrs. Maren Johnson and her daughters Miss Hannah Johnson

and Miss Marie Johnson (later Mrs. Hart); Peter Hansen (Bonde); Smith Frederiksen; brothers Daniel and Christian Schmidt; Niels Jensen, Niels Steffensen, Rasmus Mortensen; Peter Hansen Fynbo; Søren Hansen; Søren C. Nielsen; Niels Simonsen who started the first Danish brickyard; Anders Enevoldsen and his eldest son Enevold, later known to be an enterprising farmer and businessman; Henrik Hansen Boesen, one of the most enterprising and earliest orchardists; Peter Madsen whose flute music delighted the Danes at many a party; Rasmus Ebbesen who loved trees; Didrik Jepsen; Anders Christensen and his sons Jens and Christian Andersen who were outstanding builders; blacksmiths Niels Pedersen and Ole Kofoed; brothers Adolph and Carl Mogensen; Ole Nielsen, now one of the outstanding farmers of the area; Mads Anderson, later a store keeper and now owner of the world's leading (steam) roller factory; Niels Eriksen; old Lars Hansen; Søren Møller who for want of a wagon drove an ox sled for several years; Erik Petersen and Henry Petersen. These all were pioneers the first three years who paved the way for the later settlers who came a few years later until all the land was taken.

Hard Times

These hardy pioneers could need reinforcements, for now they experienced the meaning of fighting nature. They had come in fear of wild people and wild animals, and to protect the settlers from Indians a company of soldiers under Captain Munson was set up in the northern part of the country in 1871. But fortunately these fears were unfounded. These Indians were "peaceful" Pawnee who showed up every winter to beg or steal what they could, and wild animals were only such innocent sorts as antelope, wolves, wildcats, fox, beaver, otters, mink and prairie dogs with their companions – rattlesnakes. Bison and elk had already moved further into the wilds ahead of the settlers.

But nature had unexpected weapons. One of these was the blizzards, electric whirlwind snowstorms that are characteristic of the steppes of the west. They happened often the first 10–15 years, gave the settlers much trouble and were sometimes life-threatening. The most memorable was the blizzard that began Easter Day, April 13, 1873. The weather had been mild for several days and in the afternoon a steady rain began. But when people stuck their heads out of their sod houses on Monday morning, they were met by a terrible hurricane, and the air so full of whirling snow that they could scarcely see 10 feet ahead. For 60 hours the storm raged, never stopping, with biting cold until Wednesday afternoon. Only then could the settlers venture out to care for their poor animals. Many of them had died and the rest were almost crazed with hunger. No lives were lost among the Danes, but among the Americans in the northern part of the country six died while the 11 year old Emma Cooper miraculously survived. From Tuesday morning till Wednesday noon, bareheaded and with torn clothes she was on the open prairie in constant flight from the raging storm.

But there was worse to come. In the afternoon of July 17, 1874, there ap-

peared something on the southwesterly horizon that looked like smoke. It could not be a prairie fire because the grass was still juicy and green. The uncertainty soon ended. Terror mixed with amazement as the clouds approached and one could see flying insects that thumped down like hail. That was the grasshopper plague for the poor settlers. The next day when the sun was high, they swarmed from the prairie into the little fields of the pioneers, completely covering the plants. It was a frightful sight. And how they ate! The corn stalks were eaten to the roots. The oats and whatever wheat had not been harvested, though ripe, were gnawed off. Day and night the greedy plague's eternal gnawing and sawing continued like the hum of a mill. They were in huts, in the clothes, on the people. Not a thing was left untouched. Even the tools with hardwood handles like rakes and hay-making tools had marks as of saw teeth. After three days the steady southwest wind blew them away only to have them return on the 25th on the northeast wind in numbers so great that their clouds cast shadows on the ground. There wasn't much left for them to eat except prairie grass, so that's what they ate. In the next two months they appeared several times and ate the new growth on the corn stalks.

Now the pioneers' situation was critical. Very few had any money left over of the money they had brought, and hunger was a threat. Gifts of provisions and clothes were sent from the East and handed out, but many still suffered bitter need. This writer can, for example, tell that during the next winter there was one 24 hour period when there was not a bite of anything edible in the house. The first they got was a sort of bun made of "goose wheat" ground in a coffee mill, and that was not an unusual instance.

Many Americans ran away from the whole business to their families in the East. The tough Danes stayed – actually they had to, for few of them had anyone to turn to, and the cup of tribulation was filled to the brim because the winter was unusually bitter. The next summer, in 1875, the grasshoppers returned several times, but this time while they did a great deal of damage, they usually left enough for the poor pioneers to keep body and soul together.

We really scraped the bottom of the barrel. When with honest appreciation and a hungry stomach you consider cornmeal mush topped with sorghum as "fit for a king," drink coffee made of roasted wheat, and elder tea, make a winter cap of rabbit skin, smoke killikinik bark, and the meat supply depends on what you can shoot – then you are at the height of frugality. And that is where the settlers were.

In 1876 the grasshoppers did not forget the area, but this time the damage was less. Those were "times that tried men's souls." There were lice that infested the sod houses and made life bitter. One year there were worms in the ravines that penetrated the houses, climbing the walls and posts. There were prairie fires every spring and fall that with a little wind could outrun a galloping horse. Especially the first years there was much property loss from the fires. Those who lived on high land and found wells had to go deep to get water and paid accordingly. Many had to haul their water, often long distances from a neighbor's well, until they could afford to go deeper.

Forward – a Gleam of Light

One must not believe from this list of troubles that the pioneer life was unbearable. On the contrary, it was bearable and to a degree even happy. There was a delightful optimism about these pioneers. Like others who tackle hard problems, they were dreamers who lived not in the NOW for soon, maybe even next year, their wide fertile fields would yield heaps of golden yellow corn and wheat. Then they would have decent houses and many conveniences. As old Søren Christensen often said, " A little patience now. Lots of meat and butter are hidden in the ground." Those were true dreams that were verified by the future

It is impossible for people now to understand the economical and easily satisfied attitude the early settlers had. Their outlook on life was happier then than now when their goals are reached. We were brothers and sisters, all one family, no differences in status or money, all having the same troubles and inspired by the same hope, mutual aid always available. Even the simple community joys, as when someone had come so far that he could lay a wooden floor in his soddie, the whole colony was invited to a genuine Danish ball where they whirled in muscular dance to the tune of old Jens Petersen's violin.

With the exception of thin wooded strips along the larger rivers, the prairie had been treeless from time immemorial. Thus the planting of trees was one of the first goals of the pioneers. Rasmus Ebbesen, son of a forest supervisor from Lolland who was one of the 1873 pioneers, started a nursery already that same fall. In a few years 100,000 box elder and ash trees were delivered to small acreages and timber claims in the area.

By the end of the 1870s things were looking up. The tilled areas were enlarged, and since the grasshoppers vanished, the wheat culture was increased. Even though the cost of freight and of farming machinery was high, still there was little by little a bit more available money. Sod huts gave way to frame houses; horses took the place of oxen as draft animals. The railroad from Grand Island to St. Paul was finished in 1880, and the long way to market was cut in half.

December 28, 1882, Lars Hannibal died. He was the actual creator and leader of the colony and for his time was an able and energetic man. With great enthusiasm and optimism he accomplished a nearly impossible task. His name will stand as an historic memorial.

Nysted

Dannebrog was founded in the eastern part of the colony which occasioned thought about the establishment of a more centrally located Danish gathering place. A place for a town was chosen on Lærke Sørensen's land four miles further west. A post office was established in 1883 with Frederik Olsen as the postmaster; he started the first general store there. They knew they faced the difficulty of giving the town a name, but the results were a good natured and

lively exchange. They first voted for the name "Daneville," afterwards because the postal department said that it sounded too much like Danbury another post office in the state they divided into small groups over more Danish sounding names like "Rosenlund," "Thyras Minde" (Thyra's Memorial), and "Lækerville." When they couldn't decide on another name, it was because of Mrs. Rasmus Ebbesen that the town got its present name. "Why not call it Nysted after our town at home?" she said. And Nysted it became; the Lollanders were all for it, although the Jutlanders were somewhat reluctant. Nysted is now a pretty, little, real Danish country town and is known through the whole of Danish America because of its local, model Danish folk high school.

Dannebrog Again

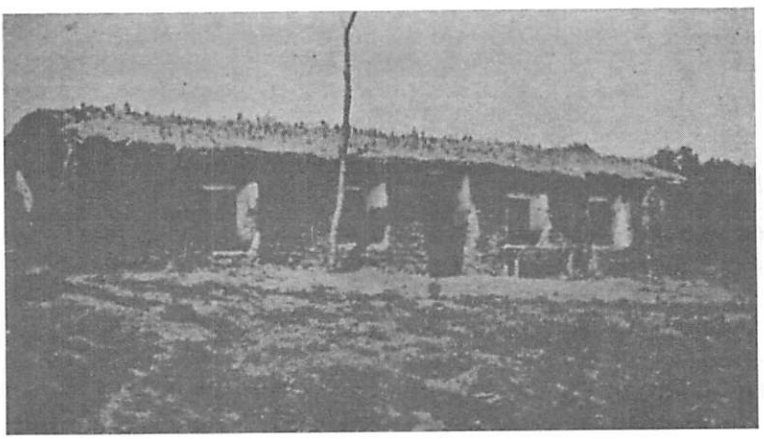
At that time, 1883, Dannebrog was in a deep recession. The last general store which included the post office had closed, and it looked as if the whole business would go to Nysted and leave Dannebrog as "only a saga." In the crisis O.M. Hannibal stepped in to save his father's work and the beautiful Dannebrog name. With self-sacrifice and devotion he set up a general store and post office and kept it going until the railroad was brought to Dannebrog in 1885. It cost him his whole personal fortune. But now the town grew with giant steps. Several other stores opened, and in the next few years two banks were opened, a grain elevator, a steam mill, church and high school. In 1888 Peter Ebbesen moved his Danish weekly, *The Star* from St. Paul to Dannebrog and also edited an American language newspaper. Danish societies were begun, a lovely park with a gathering place was laid out near Oak Creek in the town itself by M.C. Petersen, and Danish cooperation and partying began to really unfold, for now times were good.

Dannevirke

The Dannevirke colony near Munson Creek in the northwestern corner of Howard Co. began about three years later than the Dannebrog colony, and it began more by chance than by planning. In March of 1874 Niels Hansen, Søren Johnson (now a pastor in the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church), Niels Christensen and son A.P. Christensen came from the East to take land. Niels Christensen took land about where Farwell was laid out and where other pioneers: Knud Petersen, Christen Andersen, his son O. Grothan, Lars Petersen, Niels Larsen, Christian Hansen and his sons Niels and Lars Peter Hansen as well as the Norwegians Mikkel Johansen and C. Knudsen had begun work. But Niels Hansen and Søren Johnson went six miles farther north and took land near Munson Creek. These two were joined in two months by Johnson's father-in-law, Niels Peter Larsen with his sons Laurits and Marius as well as Nikolaj Lassen. Later on C.P. Christensen took land near by. Niels Peter Larsen

N.P Larsen and wife.
Marius Larsen and wife.

C. O. Leth and wife.



Jorgen C. Larsen's sod house near Muson Creek (Dannevirke)

died many years ago, but his widow lived on the home place with her son Marius until a few years ago. She died at age 86. Nikolaj Lassen and his wife are still alive and living on the original homestead. Niels Hansen and his wife moved to town, but the son had the homestead.

In the next year the group increased by only one man Peter Nielsen, but in 1878 the village got a real boost in the spring with Hans Mortensen, Claus Frandsen, Rasmus Rasmussen, old Ole Nelson (who died two years later) and Jacob Larsen (who later moved to California), and in the fall Nis Mortensen, Niels Ole Nelson, A.W. Christensen and Jens C. Larsen. And then in 1879 came another group: Lars Jørgen Hansen, Andrew Olsen and son Rudolph, brothers Jørgen and Peter Kliver and Bertel Kliver's widow, Chris F Jensen and Andrew Larsen. In 1880 Nils Rasmussen, Christen Nielsen Dreier, and Niels Mikkel Madsen arrived. Madsen became postmaster in Dannevirke.

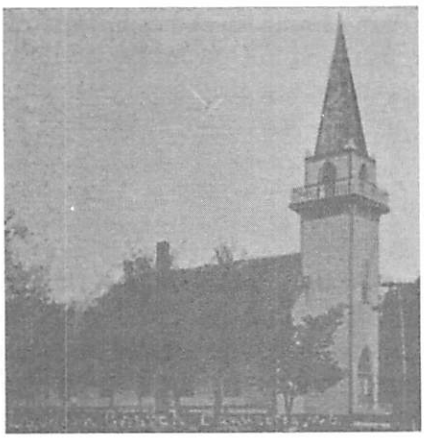
These people were the real pioneers. It wasn't until the 1880s that greater numbers of Danes streamed in, but since 1885 the hilly terrain has been covered by a close Danish settlement that in every way is a credit to our nationality. It takes courage and strong hands to deal with the less than inviting hill country, but with ability and energetic persistence the Jutlanders have built the area up to be as attractive as anything in the west.

In the center of the colony lies the general store with a post office, a beautiful church and a roomy meeting house. This is the heart of the social life for these farmers. Their difficulties were about as we have described for Dannebrog. In addition to the above named pioneers, the large Leth family and its enterprising abilities have contributed greatly to Dannevirke's growth. First two sons, Christen and Ole, came from Denmark in 1879. Two years later John and Kristine (later Mrs. N.O. Nelson) followed. In 1882 Martin, Hans, Mads, Ane Marie (later Mrs. Jørgen C. Larsen), Valborg, (married Axel Møller), and their parents Mr. and Mrs. C.O. Leth arrived. The father was a genuine Jutlander who farmed his 320 acres ably until a very few years ago when his age said, halt! In October 1905 they celebrated their golden wedding. To honor the occasion thy gave $400.00 toward the building of a Danish church. This was the push that gave Dannevirke its lovely church, and when it was completed, Leths gave the altar painting.

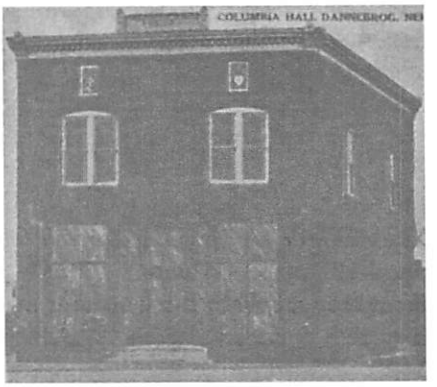
Danish Church and High School

The Howard Co. Danes have shown a more than average interest in church and enlightenment. Pastor H. Hansen was the pioneer pastor in Dannebrog, making his scheduled trips from Omaha as early as 1872. At the end of 1873 Pastor A.M. Andersen became the resident pastor, one of his church's ablest pioneers.

When he left for another call in a few years, Pastor S.H. Madsen of the Gruntvigian strain came. He later moved to Nysted and was their first pastor. The first Danish church in the county was St. Peters in Nysted, dedicated June



Danish Lutheran Church, Dannebrog



Danish Brotherhood building, Dannebrog

19, 1887. The Lutheran Church in Dannebrog was built in 1890. There are now ten Danish churches in the county, nine Lutheran and one Baptist besides a Swedish Methodist. Some of the best public schools in the area are in the Danish settlements, and there is great interest in higher education. Since they have become able to afford it, their children are given good schooling in institutions of higher learning. In December 1886, Pastor H. Hansen opened Dannebrog College with the aim "to give a chance for young people of both sexes to get an education in both English and Danish." However the school closed after two years. On December 1, 1887, a high school course was begun in the parsonage at Nysted. The teachers were Pastor C.J. Skovgaard and seminarian H.C. Nielsen. The next summer the first small high school building was erected, "mother" to the present large building complex.

Danish Cooperation

The Danes in Howard Co. have been leaders in cooperative enterprises. In March, 1883, the Nysted Cooperative Assurance Co. through which the farmers carried their own fire insurance was organized. This company has grown. As early as 1887 there was a cooperative dairy in Nysted. The first attempt failed, but there is now a large cooperative dairy in Dannebrog which has lasted through many years. Both Dannevirke and Dannebrog have in the last 20 years auctions for selling hogs and cattle and two cooperative corn elevators owned and controlled mostly by Danes. Niels Nielsen by Turkey Creek is the one man who has worked for at least the earliest of these activities and who also worked for political cooperation among the farmers.

Business has been well represented. Since "Norden" (the North) society was started in Dannebrog in the winter of 1871-72, the attempt has been made

to promote everything possible (and some things impossible) through organizations. There are six lodges of Danish Brotherhood in Howard Co. and two Danish Sisterhoods. In Dannebrog the lodge had built a meeting place costing about $8000.00.

In the Public Arena

In politics the Danes have taken an active part because farmers as tax payers and freight tax payers had a practical interest in public affairs. The old Farmer Alliance and the party that was born of it found the Danish pioneers sane and tough. They have been represented in county offices. Paul Anderson was elected county judge in 1879 and was reelected twice. Rasmus Hannibal was also elected judge several times and served a term in the state senate, as has Dr. O. Grotham. Jens Wilhelmsen, Niels Hermansen, and Søren M. Fries have been members of the state legislature. Danes have been county treasurer: Peter Ebbesen, Chris Appel and Christian Jensen. County Commission members have included Frederik Olsen, Hans Mortensen, Jens A. Carlsen, Peter Christiansen, Søren Sønderup, Christoffer Mortensen and Claus J. Frandsen. Peter Hansen served as sheriff. Mark Holm and J.P. Christensen, son of pioneer Niels Christensen, have been county assessor. Therkild Hermansen has been court reporter for the district court. Many of the community positions have been filled by Danes.

Many able and honorable Danes have merited good names in the business world, and many have attained leading positions in their fields.

Today

It is especially in the use of the soil that Danes excel. After the hard seven years, the 1890s with the exception of the 1894 complete crop failure from drought that brought financial ruin, have brought good crops and steadily rising prices. No one knows better than Danish farmers how to use the golden opportunity. Several of them are rich; most are well-to-do; and no one is really poor. It is a pleasure to drive through Dannebrog-Nysted and Danniverke and the smaller neighborhoods in Howard Co.! It's a delight to the eyes to see the well built farm buildings, the well-kept fields where an acre would now sell from $60 to $120 per acre. The most daring 1871 pioneer could not have dreamed of it, no more than he could have imagined the dark time that lay between.

The Number of Danes in Howard County

In 1890 there were 1153 immigrant Danes in Howard Co.; in 1900, 1034 and in 1910, 1015. Also, in 1910 there were 1391 Danes born in America to Danish parents. Compared to other places this is a rather large proportion. In Nebraska there are 5000 people whose father or mother is Danish. It is not men-

tioned how many there are in Howard Co., but in proportion there could be 500. There are more Danes in Howard Co. than anywhere else in Nebraska, Omaha included.

In Danish Lutheran churches in Howard Co. about 1800 children have been baptized, probably that is most of those that were born there. The pastors have buried about 430 and married 260 couples. It is not known how these totals compare to weddings and deaths in the county.

Short Biographies

Lars Haannibal and wife

Lars Hannibal

This old, American farmer born July 3, 1822 in Fuglse, Lolland was the son of Hannibal Larsen. Lars Hannibal was married to Marie Pedersdatter born 1820. He was a small landholder on Lolland and was a soldier in the Three Years War in Denmark. A nephew of his wife, Lars Olsen, went to Wisconsin in 1855 and took land near Pine Lake. In May 1856 Lars Hannibal also traveled to this land, bought some woodland two miles north of Pine Lake House, now Nashotah, becoming neighbor to the aforementioned Lars Olsen and farmed there until the Civil War. His wife died in Nashotah in the spring of 1859.

In 1861 Hannibal was drafted as a soldier in Company B, 15th Regiment, Wisconsin Volunteers. He was inducted as a sergeant and had a chance to be a lieutenant; but this promotion was conditional upon paying a sum of money to a higher ranking officer which Hannibal looked upon with contempt. After the war Hannibal went back to his farm at Nashotah.

In 1864 he married Karen Hansen, widow of carpenter Rasmus Hansen from Lolland who as far as I know was killed in the Civil War. Before the marriage Hannibal had been on a trip to Denmark. He lived now until 1871 in Pine Lake when he went along to select land and afterwards to establish the

new town of Dannebrog in Howard Co., Nebraska. More about him belongs elsewhere in this work. Before Hannibal moved to Nebraska, his old father who lived many years in this land and was an American citizen died in 1868.

Lars Hannibal died in Davenport, Iowa December 27, 1882 and is buried in the cemetery in Dannebrog, Nebraska. Shortly before his death he said to his eldest son: "There is much sham and injustice in politics. I could easily have been a lieutenant in the war and maybe advanced further if I had followed the custom; but 'bribery' is both ignoble and unlawful, and I have been thankful many times that I was not guilty of that. Better to be in a less important position and possess the noble principled truths that we have inherited from our forefathers in Denmark. To hold to the Word, to be true and honest is a valuable treasure worthy to be inherited by our descendants. Hold it fast. It is a greater reward than rank or riches."

From Hannibal's first marriage 10 or 11 children were born, the following three are living:

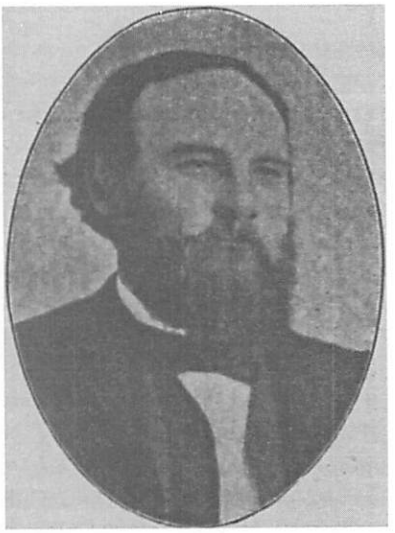
Hannah, born 1846, was married to Jens Wilhelmsen, St. Paul, Nebraska.

Peter M. Hannibal, born 1849, was a well educated man but because of hearing problems gave up teaching and made a living as a book agent. He is an ardent teetotaler and author of many pamphlets. He married and lives in Dannebrog, Nebraska.

Rasmus Hannibal, born in 1850, has been the county judge in Howard Co. for seven terms, state senator for one term and the states Oil Inspector for several years. He is now a lawyer in Omaha, Nebraska.

A third son of Lars Hannibal, Frederik Hannibal, was a brakeman on the railroad, but he disappeared without a trace.

Lars Hannibal



P. M. Hannibal

Karen Hannibal

Dannebrog's mother was born Karen Christendatter. She was born to poor parents in Oster Ulslev, Lolland, September 6, 1819, and married Rasmus Hansen. They emigrated in 1856 by sailing vessel to America and settled in the wooded forest of Waukesha Co., Wisconsin, where her husband wore himself out in the pioneer life and died young, leaving Karen with five small children. The same fate had struck Lars Hannibal and the two married. She was the support that he needed, for she could keep the home together and in spite of poverty could make something of nothing.

She and Johanne Sørensen came to Howard Co. May 20 (Pentecost Sunday), 1871, and they were the first women to set up a family cornerstone in nature's wasteland. Karen Hannibal was a little lady with staying power, a warm heart, and never failing courage. She was able to care for the unmarried pioneers when they were depressed. Although in later years she was well situated, she remained thrifty till the end because she thought it was a sin to use for one's self what someone else might need. She embraced Dannebrog with characteristic pride and was always ready to give to promote its well being. Her greatest wish was to see a church in Dannebrog and she gave a rather large amount to that end, but her eyes closed before the building was done. Beautifully spoken at her funeral were these words about her life and activity in the colony: "She was like a mother among us." She died April 14, 1890 and was buried next to her husband in Dannebrog cemetery.

Lærke Sørensen, wife, and sons Sophus and Frederik

Lærke Sørsnsen

Born October 16, 1845 in Stubberup, Lolland, he came to Chicago in 1867 and married Johanne Jørgensen in 1868. He worked in the quarries at Lemont, Illinois before coming to Grand Island, Nebraska, May 1, 1877. He and Hannibal were the first pioneers in the colony. He built the first sod house and in the next year built a brick house, Danish style, with a straw roof. Twelve years later the town of Nysted was laid out on his land.

Lærke Sørensen was a genuine pioneer type – a hard worker, a solid character. He did not say much, but when he expressed his opinion, one knew it was carefully thought out. In February 1887, he succumbed to pneumonia leaving a wife and nine children.

Johanne Sørensen

Johanne Sørensen lives in 1916 with a son on the original homestead, and almost all the children live in the area. Lærke's father, Søren Eriksen, was with him from the beginning. Two brothers Paul and Christen and Jacob Eriksen (married to Lærke's twin sister, Sidsel), came in 1872 and took land in a row along Oak Creek. In 1878 his brother Hans and brother-in-law Hans Petersen (married to Anne) arrived and took land in the wests of the county where Hans still lives as one of the bigger farmers.

John Christoffer Seehusen

Johan C. Seehusen

Seehusen was born in Espegaard, Lolland, March 21, 1840, (his mother was of the Damskjold family). He went to military school, was a lieutenant in the war of 1864 and was a hero in the Battle of Sankelmark. He came to New York in 1865 and later to Wisconsin. When Vise-consul Møller resigned, Seehusen became secretary of the Danish Land and Homestead Company. With Jens Wilhelmsen and Lorenz Melsen he came to Howard Co., May 20, 1871, just two weeks after Lars Hannibal and Lærke Sørensen had arrived. He and Wilhelmsen brought the first herd of cattle (ten milk cows) to the town. He remained unmarried and died January 5, 1902, leaving his estate to relatives in Denmark. Seehusen was a thorough and thoughtful man who took an interest in ordinary things, doing his best for the good of the community. He was a bit eccentric and reserved by nature. A part of Dannebrog is built on his homestead.

Jens Wilhelmsen

Jens Wilhelmsen

Wilhelmsen was born May 23, 1845 near Slagelse, where he learned cabinet-making-handwork. He came to New York in 1867 and to San Francisco by boat via Panama and the Isthmus and worked there 1869–1870. He came to Nebraska in 1871 and settled near Oak Creek. On May 16, 1874 he

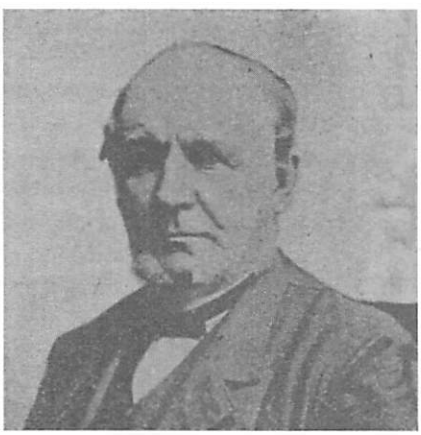
married Lars Hannibal's daughter Hannah. He was one of the most active of the pioneers, the first Danish large farmer. He helped build the original town of Dannebrog, and when the railroad came to Dannebrog, he was active in building its business community. He was one of the founders of the Nebraska Mercantile Co. – a wholesale grocery company. He was in 1887 a member of Nebraska's legislature. He has lived in St. Paul since he retired in 1885.

Mrs. Hannah A. Wilhelmsen, his wife, died in St Paul, February 19, 1916. She was born in Nysted, Lolland, March 9, 1840, and in February 1871, she took a homestead near Dannebrog, a couple of miles from her parents. She became one of the oldest of the pioneer women, one of the best of the type. She faithfully shared with her husband the battles as well as the victories in the work for culture, and she shared completely in all the important projects he started. She left three sons and three daughters.

Mrs. Trine Marie Hansen (Jens Wilhelmsen's mother) died March 29, 1916, just five weeks after her son's wife died. She was 94 and the oldest person in the county. Born February 22 near Slagelse, she was married in 1847 to Wilhelm Jensen with whom she had son Jens. After her first husband died, she married Hans Jensen with whom she had six children. In 1865 she was widowed again but later married Anton Hansen. They came over in 1874 to the son Jens and took a homestead a mile north of Nysetd. Hansen died in 1884 and her third widowhood lasted 32 years. In all that time she lived with her son Jens to whom she had deeded the farm. Among all the hospitable Danish housemothers, Mrs. Hansen was high on the list and her long life was characterized by an unusual cheerful life outlook.

Carl Otto Schlytern

Carl Otto Schlytern was born April 2, 1823 in Moritzberg Oster Gotland, Sweden. He spent his best years in North Sweden building up a large sawmill and lumber business. He came to Howard Co. in 1871. The eldest son, Charles E., who is now a leading banker in Chicago, came with his father. Mrs. Schlytern and the other children came in 1873. He farmed in a big way for ten years or so but then moved into Dannebrog in 1885 and opened a bank. Schlytern was forward looking, unusually ambitious, had a mind for business and was most enthusiastic over the possibilities for the future. He was generous in his support of anything that could further the pioneers' welfare.



Carl Otto Schlytern

He was the only one who had more than barely enough capital, so he became a willing and solid supporter of all community projects as long as his cash held out and until the barren 90s surprised him with barely enough for himself. Many pioneers remembered Schlytern and his fine wife thankfully for help and encouragement.

Anna Sofia Schlytern

After his death in 1894, his widow Anna Sofia Schlytern, had her home with the youngest son, John G., one of the leading businessmen in Dannebrog. She died July 1, 1912 at the high age of 89. Her outspoken Christian character and helpfulness are part of the bright memories of the old days. She had 11 children, but except for the two sons mentioned, only two daughters survived.

Judge Paul Anderson

Judge Paul Anderson

Anderson was born September 25, 1847 at Bellinge, Funen. He came to the United States April 25, 1868 and worked in Iowa and in the South for three years. He was with Hannibal and the first land agents in May 1871; farmed his homestead by Turkey Creek for two years, and was a storekeeper and postmaster in Dannebrog from 1874 to 1880. Three times between 1880 and 1885, he was elected Howard Co. judge. He passed the state law exam and set up law office, including insurance and loans in St. Paul and is still active in it. April 6, 1872 he married Maren Kirstine Nielsen with whom he has nine children: one son, eight daughters. He is a past member of the St. Paul town board, a school board member, an outstanding member of the Danish Brotherhood and of the Masons and several other organizations. He is an unusually able and talented man who in a surprisingly short time learned English and studied law independently. He writes and speaks well and quite naturally became spokesman for the Danes politically and their leader. His accuracy and dependability in business matters assures him of a large and lasting clientele. Judge Anderson is one of the best known and most respected Danes in the west.

Mads Anderson

Anderson was born August 20, 1851 in Bellinge, Funen. He came to Howard Co. in the spring of 1872 where his brother Paul had settled, and took out a homestead six miles northwest of Dannebrog. In 1873 he married Karen Marie Nielsen who died in 1881. A widower with three small children , he went to Denmark the next year and married Jensine Katrine Hansen. In 1881 he opened a store in Dannebrog and the next year one in St. Paul.

A few years later he and Jens Wilhelmsen started a wholesale company that developed into the Nebraska Mercantile Company. In 1894 he gave up his business interests and spent the next 20 years turning his 400 acre farm near Cushing into a show place. In 1912 he moved to Hastings and established Great Western Land Roller Company, the largest factory of its kind in the west. Mads Anderson reaches above others both bodily and in his spirit and activities. All he does is characterized by thoroughness and foresight. He has an inventive knack. Already in the grasshopper days he invented a rather practical machine for catching these pests, and he has used many inventions on his farm. He was the first to raise potatoes as a cash crop. For several years he had from 40 to 60 acres in potatoes.

Niels Nielsen

Mrs. Niels Nielsen

The Nielsen Brothers

These able and ambitious men from Lolland worked in the Dannebrog-Nysted development. Niels Nielsen, born in Hunseby, Lolland, January 3, 1845, came to Waukesha Co., Wisconsin, in the spring of 1867. In May 1868, his brother Ole came. He was born February 17, 1847, and these two worked a few years in Wisconsin, Iowa, and the South until they could begin farming. They were signed up in Lars Hannibal's colony. As said before, Niels was one of the original six that took land in 1871. He settled on his homestead in the spring of 1872 and married Bodil Marie Lausten August 16, the same year. They have

five sons and three daughters. Ole took a homestead a mile north of Nysted May 1, 1872. In 1878 he married Else Petersen (daughter of pioneer Carl F. Petersen); they have seven sons and three daughters. As previously mentioned, Niels Nielsen has been a leader in all cooperative activities, in political reform movements and in the Farmers Alliance, and his brother Ole has been in full agreement and worked for these interests. They both have been the folk high school movement strongest supporters.

They both, especially Ole, have been some of the largest and most successful farmers. They both live on and still farm their original homesteads.

Martin Nielsen, a third brother, came over in 1873 with their parents. He also took land near Turkey Creek and has built up an excellent farm. The father died in 1881, but the mother lived until 1905.

Frederick Olsen

Born December 6, 1848 in Fuglsø, Lolland, (his mother was Hannibal's sister Maren), Olsen came with his mother in 1863 to Lars Hannibal in Waukesha Co. He worked as a shoemaker before coming to Dannebrog the summer of 1871 and settling on a homestead one-half mile north of town. He married Christine Jensen in 1876. He was County Commissioner from 1881-1883. He was Nysted's first storekeeper and postmaster in 1883. He retired from business in 1895 and took up farming on a new place south of Oak Creek, where he died July 26, 1905. His widow still lives with her son-in-law, Niels C. Pedersen, a son of pioneer Carl F. Pedersen.

Mrs. Maren Sophie Johnson, Hannibal's sister and Frederik Olsen's mother, was born in Fuglsø December 17, 1818. She married Hans Olsen who died young (with whom she had the son Frederik). Then she married shoemaker Mads Johnson, with him she had five children, but only two daughters, Marie and Hannah, lived. Johnson died after 12 years. She came over to her brother Lars in Waukesha Co. in 1863 and in the fall of 1871 came to Dannebrog with her daughter Hannah, followed by Marie in the spring. Both she and the girls took homesteads; Mrs. Johnson's 40 acres was just northwest of town. "Grandmother" Johnson was a busy, able and helpful person. She kept a cheerful disposition and a genuine Christian character throughout her unusually hard and tiring life that lasted almost 95 years. She lived until November 14, 1913, being the oldest person in the colony. The last 25 years when her iron constitution failed her, her daughter Marie (Mrs. Hart) cared for her, and she is the only family member to survive her.

Christian Sørensen

Sørensen was born February 6, 1838 at Nakskov and came to Waukesha Co., Wisconsin, in 1861. On August 24, 1862 he married Margrethe Hansen (Karen Hannibal's daughter). He enlisted in the Union Army during the Civil War where he served with honor for three years. He came to Dannebrog in

March 1872 and settled on a "Soldier Claim," three miles west of town. Mr. and Mrs. Sørensen were the first to celebrate their silver wedding (1887). Sørensen was an unusually active and resolute man. He seemed to know something of every craft – a good example of the can-do pioneer. He was a good farmer and one of the first to raise cattle. He died April 27, 1902. His widow lives in Dannebrog. A son Louis owns and runs a good farm west of Dannebrog; another son, Edward H., manages The Chicago Lumber Co. in St. Paul.

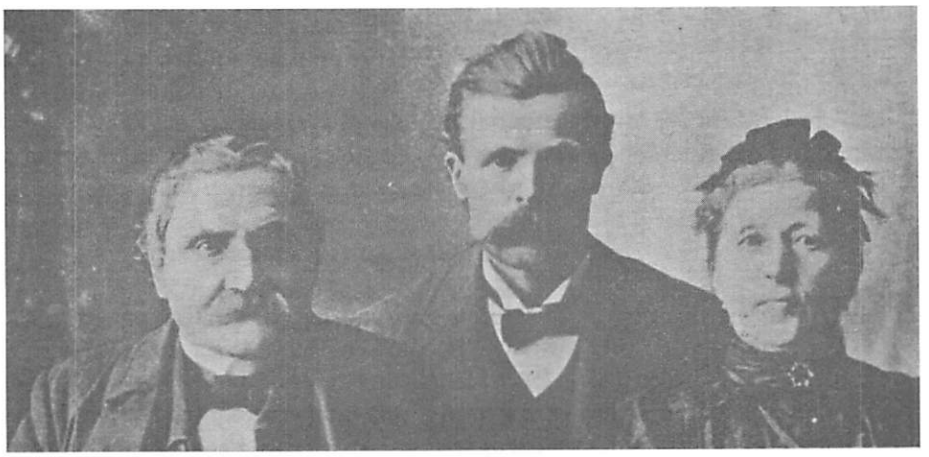
Carl Frederick Petersen

Petersen was born August 23, 1837 in Gertoff, Slesvig. He married widow Marie Berthelsen in 1864, served in the Danish Army, and came to Grand Island in 1869 where he had chosen a homestead near Oak Creek and settled on it when Hannibal's group arrived in 1871. After he proved up his land, he moved to a farm he owned near Prairie Creek five miles north of Grand Island. He built a pleasant home in Dannebrog in 1890 and lived there until his death December 13, 1894. His widow survived him about ten years. Their daughter, Else, is married to Ove Nielsen. The son Nils C. is one of the large farmers near Dannebrog, and the step-son, Jens Berthelsen, has moved into Nysted. Carl Petersen from Prairie Creek, as he was usually called, was a beloved person. At the celebrations it was often his knowledge and humor that furnished the entertainment. There was no end to his funny stories. And since he was better off than most in those days, there were many who had been helped by his practical advice or by a cow, a hog, some tools or cash. He was like a father with all his acquaintances. His wife was just as generous. She always said, "We are to gather for ourselves with one hand so we can spread it to others with the other." Many a poor settler has saved hotel expense on Grand Island trips by laying over on Carl's farm where Carl and Marie treated them royally. Carl F. Petersen was for the poor newcomer in Howard Co. the same willing and practical helper that Jens Reddelien had been in Wisconsin.

Rasmus R. Ebbesen

Ebbesen was born Febraury 6, 1832 in Egholm forest ranger house, Lolland (shortly before his father, Rasmus Ebbe, began his 50 years of service as forest ranger in Rykkerup, Hardenberg Estate). On February 26, 1858 he married Anne Christine Pedersdatter in Stubberup and became a smallholder there.

He came to America in April, 1863, on the same ship as Paul Anderson and settled in Waukesha Co., Wisconsin where Lars and Karen Hansen (Mrs. Ebbsen's brother-in-lar and sister) had come after a five week trip on a sail ship over the Atlantic. For two years he cut trees and hauled rocks. He joined Lars Hannibal's Danish Land and Homestead Company and worked from 1870 to 1872 in Council Bluffs, Iowa. He settled on a homestead a mile east of what now is Nysted, on June 24, 1873 after a three week trip with horses and an overloaded wagon through mud and flooding from Council Bluffs. In 1883 he



Rasmus R. Ebbesen, wife, and son Peter

gave up farming because of poor health. They lived in St. Paul 1884-1887, in Dannebrog until 1894 and in St. Paul again till his death November 12, 1903, a few months after the couple had celebrated their golden wedding anniversary.

Rasmus Ebbesen was a pioneer in planting trees and was the first to make systematic use of manure on fields. He was a thorough farmer who could turn a furrow half a mile long and straight as a ruler. He was bright, and in the 25 years that his health was poor, he read eagerly and had a great store of knowledge. He wrote to newspapers on questions of religion and political reform. He was a great admirer of Mr. Bryan, and six days before he died, he cast his vote for him for president for the third time.

Mrs. Anna Christine Ebbesen, his wife was born October 26, 1831 in Stubberup, Lolland. She died at home in St. Paul on March 9, 1916, surviving her husband by seven years . She was a mighty spirit in a puny body, and surprisingly she accomplished a great deal both for benefit and blessing to others in her long life. She was small, crippled, weak and worn out. She cared for her sick husband for 50 years and helped her son publish *The Star (Stjernen).* She cared for others and helped in word and deed. She offered her life daily for others and her soul thrived. Her sense of honesty and justice was almost too strong for the new generation, but her love of Christ was recognized and appreciated far and wide. Among pioneer women she was one of the prime examples in her actions. She is the one who cooked the essential sorghum syrup for the whole colony the first many years.

Peter Ebbesen

Peter was born June 9, 1860, the only child of Rasmus and Anna Christine Ebbesen. He grew up in the pioneer life struggle and with its inspiration. He was a teacher in the common school during 1879-1883 and taught at Nysted

Folk High School in 1888. He was editor and publisher of the Danish newspaper *The Star* from 1886 to 1896, and of the local American newspaper *Phonograph* from 1893 to 1901. He was a leader in political reform and one of the founders of the People's Party. He was Howard Co. Treasurer during 1894-1897 and candidate for presidential elector in 1892, 1896, and 1900. In 1902 he joined Judge Anderson as a partner in his Insurance, Savings, and Loan, but in 1911 he withdrew to care for his helpless mother.

Mrs. Christen Grothan Andersen

Her maiden name was Guri Rustli and she was born in Norway in 1830. In 1845 she married Knud Grothan who died in 1868. With him she had two children: Dr. O Grothan of St. Paul, Nebraska and Mrs. S.H. Carlsen of Julesburg, Colorado. She came to Howard County in 1872 and took government land on high ground about 10 miles west of St. Paul, one of the very first in that area. In 1873 she married the Dane, Christen Andersen who still lives on the old farm. She died January 17, 1916. She was a woman of unusual charisma—one of the largest, strongest and most genuine of the pioneer women who lived a steady self-sacrificing life all her days without rest.

Dr. Ole Grothan, her son, was born in 1860. He was one of the most able pioneer youths. He earned the medical degree with distinction in 1886. H was state senator from 1897 to 1898. He was a surgeon in the Third Nebraska Regiment in the Spanish-American War and took part in the Cuba Campaign. Dr. Grothan lives in St. Paul and has a large practice. He is known throughout Nebraska for his success with very difficult surgical procedures.

Lorenz Melsen

Lorenz Melsen, one of the first settlers in Dannebrog, had been a school teacher in Jutland when he was young. Early in the 1860s he emigrated to Argentina, South America, and then came to the U.S. He died in Denmark when he was past 90. His widow, Mrs. Marie Melsen still lives in Dannebrog.

Ludvig Conrad Madsen

Ludvig Conrad Madsen, Dannebrog's first hotelkeeper, was born December 15, 1840, near Maribo. He came to America June 2, 1865 and lived in Waupaca and Oshkosh. He made several trips to Denmark as an emigrant guide. In 1871 he married Christine Jensen from Holbæk. (She died in Dannebrog January 6, 1899). He came to Dannebrog in 1872 and the next year built the first little hotel. For some years he was the hotel and saloon keeper and agent for various things, but in the 1880s he settled down and farmed the rest of his life. He became one of the strongest supporters of the Lutheran congregation. He died in 1914.

Henrick Hansen Lærke

Lærke was born in Stubberup, Lolland, August 16, 1840. He learned the milling trade, and came to America in 1862 living at Pine Lake, Wisconsin from 1862 to 1863. He learned cigar making in Chicago in 1864 from Omaha's well-known cigar maker Jorgensen. He worked this line for several years in Detroit and New York but came to Dannebrog and took land in 1872. In 1873 he was the first justice of the peace in Dannebrog. Like his kindred spirit and friend, Seehusen, he never married. At various times he was a storekeeper and land agent in Dannebrog and other places. He died in 1905 at Peter M. Hannibal's. He was a cousin to Lærke Sørensen.

Søren M. Pedersen

Pedersen, who was a member of the Land committee in 1871, came to Oconomowoc, Wiscoonsin in 1869 from the Silkeborg area. There he worked as a mason until in 1872 he settled on his homestead two miles northwest of Dannebrog. About ten years later he moved to Grand Island and became a building contractor. He made good money in property speculation, but he lost his fortune after his wife died. He went back to Denmark where he died. Pedersen was a gifted and fluent man.

Ole Kofoed

Kofoed was born on Bornholm October 19, 1817. He traveled to Australia as a young man, but in June, 1873 settled on a homestead six miles west of Dannebrog. He was unmarried and farmed alone until the mid 80s when he moved to the town of Dannebrog. He lived there until his death December 3, 1889. The town was listed as the only heir of his estate (about $2500) and a fire pump with housing was bought. A suitable stone was placed on his grave.

Niels Simonsen

Simonsen who came from Jutland in 1872 bought a piece of railroad land three miles west of Dannebrog. It was a piece that L. Hannibal had held back in the hope that Jens Reddelien would move to the colony, which he never did. Simonsen was a good mason, tile maker and farmer. He was one of the most talented among the Danes, but he died young on May 22, 1886.

Niels Jensen

Niels Jensen came from Jutland in 1872 wearing wooden shoes. He went back to Denmark a couple of times and brought back many emigrants who lived in the colony. He was an original with his own philosophy of life, which

Pastor J. Chr. Pedersen

was in many ways very practical. Today's people could save themselves a lot of suffering and troubles if they would follow his simple rules for the natural life.

Pastor J. Chr. Pedersen

Pastor Pedersen was born May 7, 1863 at Toustrup Field, near Hammel, Jutland. He came to America April 23, 1883 and studied at Chicago Theological Seminary, 1885-90 and at Trinity Seminary, Blair, 1891. He was married in Chicago March 18, 1891 to Lizette Margrete Sophie Dahnke. He was ordained in Council Bluffs May 29, 1893. He came to Dannebrog June 5, 1893. After 24 years, Pastor Pedersen is still serving this, his first call. This is outstanding among Danish pastors in America and probably among Americans as well. The work he has in this long time been doing among Danes in Howard Co. is of immeasurable value, and his influence is great among all nationalities.

The Hermansen Brothers

There were six Hermansen brothers who came from Gredsted near Ribe. Martin came in 1873 and is still farming his land. Niels who had been a teacher in Esbjerg came in 1879. He is a businessman and working with land use. He is still running his farm south of Nysted. He has been in politics and public activities as a Nebraska legislator and on the Danish Church Board. Carl came about the same time as Niels, and he farms near Boelus. Herman moved to Texas in the mid 90s with one of the Dannevang founders. Peter, who had also been a teacher in Esbjerg and became a teacher at Nysted, died in Dannebrog in 1893. His wife Kristine H. had also been a teacher, and she contributed greatly to the Danish spiritual life in the colony. As a widow she was housemother at the Danish Church School in Des Moines, Iowa, and a home for youth in Racine, Wisconsin. Therkild was a businessman. For 20 years he was stenographer in the district court and is now a banker in Benson near Omaha.

The brothers Hermansen were people of the future—constantly looking ahead. The brothers, and especially Niels, had a great influence on the founding and development of the folk high school in Nysted.

Grandmother Petersen

Grandmother Petersen, though not one of the early pioneer women, is so interesting and beloved a character that she must be mentioned. She was born on July 22, 1819 on Seeland. She came with her husband Hans Petersen to Neenah, Wisconsin in 1862 and latter settled on a farm northwest of Dannebrog in 1880. After her husband's death she lived in St. Paul and later with a daughter (Mrs. Carl L. Petersen) in Dannebrog where she died March 28, 1912, almost 93 years old. She lived to see her grandchildren's grandchildren. With her cheerful disposition and bright outlook on life, she brought joy to many.

From a Pioneer Pastor's Notebook

Perhaps in a book like this there may be value in these bits from pioneer life.

In the fall of 1874 Rev. A.M. Andersen came to Nebraska right after his ordination. One of "the Danish brothers" he had studied with had been ordained and sent there in the spring, so now there were two. They went together to visit several Danish colonies, and the first visit this time was to Dannebrog, and after that to a farmer colony on the other side of the Platte, but the trains were far apart and so were the bridges over the rivers.

A farmer met them in Grand Island and to shorten the distance by 10 miles or so, he drove straight across the Platte. It went well until they were almost across. Then the three-year old horse got tired, and they were stuck in the sand. There they sat on a cold November day. The farmer climbed out on the wagon poles and managed to unhitch the horse. Then he rode off to get help from a settler who lived a half a mile from the river. The two pastors sat in the wagon. The one shivered—no, he shook. Pastor Andersen was afraid he would fall out of the wagon so he wrapped a blanket around him. The end of the story is that the pioneer brought a pair of oxen that got the wagon out of the quicksand, and the pastors were delivered safely but chilled. But that was all forgotten when in the soddie they sat round a table spread with good things.

In Dannebrog Pastor Andersen had his first call. He lived temporarily with a Danish family who ran a hotel and boarding house for pioneers.

In the meantime his call grew. He got an annex eight miles away at Oak Creek, later called Nysted, another about the same distance away at Turkey Creek, a third one 15 miles away at Munson Creek, a fourth, 60 miles, at Hampton, a fifth one 90 miles away at Staplehurst in Seward County and the sixth and last 120 miles away at Spring Creek, later called Ruskin in Nucholls County. To all these annexes he drove a little horse, but it died from some disease that passed through the area. After that it was a little mule that his host let him borrow.

In the spring of 1875 he and his fiancee planned their wedding in Omaha—but his wife-to-be was snowed in, in Northern Iowa, so they changed the date to two days later and their wedding trip was to these mission stations. In Dannebrog they found a two room house to live in, though the dividing wall only went three-fourth of the way to the ceiling. They settled in for $24.00, and they fit in with the pioneers they were working among.

It was in the time of grasshoppers. One day in the summer people stood looking at the dark clouds covering the sun. All the fields were beautiful—the corn was about a foot high. In an hour there was not a green thing left.

Another year when the grasshoppers came, they tried to cover the crops

with sheets or quilts—but then the grasshoppers ate those. They didn't try that again.

When Pastor Andersen started on a 60 mile trip, he lacked money for oats for his horse, or mule, so Pastor brought a lunch along from home for himself and let the horse graze while he ate after the first 20 miles. This was repeated after the next 20 miles.

In spite of the grasshoppers there was a crop that year. The wheat and oats made about half a crop, and the corn came again. The potatoes gave a yield as never before or since. Then a little pious lady said, "It is wonderful that the Lord gave us a crop anyhow," to which the answer from one who considered himself a free thinker was, "Well, that's no more than His duty." It hurt to hear such words.

Another trip over the Platte was more dangerous. It was spring and the ice was beginning to break up, but Pastor Andersen had to get across, like so many others. It went all right for a while, but then the mule and wagon both sank. People came from the other side and got mule, wagon and pastor fished out of the water. In town he got his clothes dried.

On one of his scheduled trips to an annex, he traveled in driving rain. He stayed with a family whose home was a dugout with sod for roofing. In the night everybody had to get up. The baby was placed under an umbrella on a corner of the bed—everybody else stood in a row under the ridge pole that held the roof, but Pastor Andersen got so wet that the next morning he had to go to bed in the home of a Danish family who lived with a German family while his clothes were dried.

In the spring of 1876 Pastor Andersen got a call. What to do? He was in debt and as an honest man he had to pay—it wasn't much, but what money meant in those times this will explain. For the homestead rights in Nebraska, pastor could get for $40.00. Today the same piece of land without buildings would bring $100.00 per acre or more. But neither the $40.00 nor money to pay his little debt were to be found. By taking the call the matter could be settled. That made the decision.

The day came when the family was to pack. Easter Sunday, confirmation Sunday and the farewell brought many people to church. That made it harder to say goodby. Then the last trip to the annexes, and they were ready to leave on a Friday in April, in the buggy with the little mule pulling.

The going was muddy so they didn't get much more than halfway to Hampton that day. They stayed overnight with good friends, an American family. They had other "free stations" here and there.

In the night there was a hard frost so the road was hard and rough. By noon it was snowing, but they had to get there before night. The next day, Sunday, the snow was six inches deep, but even so, many people were at the service in a school house, a beautiful service.

The next week they were to go to Ruskin, 60 miles farther. They started Monday morning expecting to reach a "free station," an American family, but—pardon me!

It was a real spring day; the sun was warm, melting the snow. The ditches were full of water and run-off, and the roads were mud. That day they made only 20 miles to Sutton. One axle on the buggy was bent, so they had to stay at a hotel in a strange town, put the mule in a barn and find a blacksmith. When Andersen left his wife at the hotel, he told the owner he had 22 cents in his pocket. The host gave him a dark look, but he was not allowed to put them out on the street.

After the pastor had done his errands, he stopped at the store where some of his members shopped. There was a Mennonite there, and Andersen asked him for a loan of a couple of dollars until he got back so he could pay his bills the next morning.

Off they started again. There was ice on yesterday's water, and for the poor mule everything was up and down. That day they got just to where they should have been the night before, to the American family.

The next morning the prairie looked like a sea of ice. Long detours were necessary to avoid the ditches and ravines. One place they got stuck. The mule was unhitched, the lady carried to dry land, and then the pastor pulled the buggy backwards and out of the mud. He was fortunately wearing boots so he kept his feet dry.

Near noon they came to a little stream which in the summer was dry but now was full of water and ice. Here they found a sunny hillside and ate the lunch they had along.

In the meantime a farmer came along in a spring wagon with powerful horses pulling it. He went at it—up on the ice and through the ice, for a while. But finally he had to wade in water to his waist to pull the ice sheets away from the horses. When he had gone, the pastor slipped through before the ice sheets froze again.

Farther south, the ice decreased and they could make steady progress, but in a little stream of clear water, the little mule got stuck in the mud. Again Andersen carried his wife to dry land, unhitched the mule and somehow managed to pull the wagon up on the right side.

Now they met no more slowdowns, but it got dark and the pastor had to walk ahead to find the way. They did not want to spend the night there under the open sky. They had tried that before. So they finally reached the goal later in the evening and found friends who provided good things for body and soul. The next day he held his farewell service with a reasonably good crowd and was paid his salary, $40.00. That was a large sum, and a liberal one under the circumstances, and now he could pay his bills on the way back.

Thinking about these experiences, Pastor Andersen says, "The memories of pioneer life are beautiful. Troubles we had plenty of, but the friendly reception we had wherever we came more than makes up for them. The brave emigrants from Denmark and South Jutland who had come to the FREE America and out to the prairies of the west to make a home for themselves—they were genuine. They didn't avoid hard work nor doing without. They would give when they

had something to give of, and for many of them it was important to be able to hear the word of God and to be able to have their children instructed in it. It wasn't hard for a servant of God to share life's events with them.

The Danish Colony near Marquette and Kronborg, Hamilton County, Nebraska

By Pastor H. Ravn

Hamilton County

In 1866 the first "dug-out" was made in Hamilton County; in 1867 the first soddies were built; and May 3, 1870, the county was organized.

So it was after the Civil War that the wave of eastern culture made it 125 miles west of Omaha, and several years elapsed before the virgin soil was put to use and was permitted to yield what it could to able and ambitious farmers. In 1872-1873 the stream of people came from Missouri, Illinois and Iowa. They took homesteads.

The First Danes Arrive

There were Danes among the pioneers. In 1871 Anders B. Nissen, Jørgen Nielsen, Knud S. Nissen, Peter A. Jacobsen, Mads Hansen, Hans Peter Madsen and Jens Mortensen left Dwight , Illinois to look for land in the west. They took the train to Lincoln and another to Seward which was the final station on the newly opened railroad which now goes through Nebraska and Wyoming to Montana. From Seward they traveled by horse and wagon. Where the town of Utica now lies, they stopped for refreshments in a lonely house with the sign "Prairie House." The woman who waited on them asked where they were going. "To Hamilton County," was the answer.

"That's strange," she said. "Last year people were going to York County. This year it's Hamilton Co." Colonization of Nebraska was moving at a fast tempo in the 1870s.

Easter Saturday, 1873, they reached their stopping place. Along Lincoln Creek near where Hampton now lies, they had acquaintances where they could stay while they looked for land in the area. All the ground along the Blue River and Lincoln Creek had been taken, however, so they had to go out on the prairie where the present day towns of Hampton, Aurora, Marquette, Central City and Hordville lie. On this slightly rolling and fruitful plain where then only two houses had been built, two large Danish settlements grew up, one to the northwest—the Marquette group, and one to the south—the Hampton settlement. This article deals with the former.

Pioneer Life on the Prairie

Pioneer life in the first years had its problems. The connections to the outside world were poor. Although the Union Pacific came to and through Central City only ten miles away, there was one loop missing in the chain. There was no bridge over the Platte River which between Marquette and Central City is a mile wide, and driving through the river had its hazards. When the Colorado snow melted in the summer, the river bed filled with strong streams that were impossible. In the winter ice was the barrier. The best time was in spring when the ice had melted but before the mountain waters were heavy. At that time the pioneers could sometimes haul wheat to Central City, but they unloaded half the sacks and made the crossing in two trips.

Of course there were other towns where they could buy and sell. The trip to Seward took two to three days. Sutton was closer—only 28 miles.

There were worse difficulties than those inherent in living in the outposts. Many lost courage in 1874 and left, finding it not a place worth living. As an old German said, "This country isn't fit for anything but buffaloes and Indians."

Today we smile at such remarks, but the reality was hard enough. In 1874 when the men were ready to harvest, grasshoppers came in on the northwest wind and didn't leave until the wind came up and carried them off to the southeast. They had eaten everything green and fresh in the fields. The corn was stripped—nothing but bare stalks were left. The crop was ruined—only a little wheat for a year's work. This was a serious blow for the pioneers who lived from hand to mouth anyway, and when the grasshoppers appeared again the next summer, it is not strange that many gave up. One man sold his 80 acres for an old horse that wasn't worth $20.00, and several left as soon as possible. But the Danes stayed. Believing in the ability of the rich earth to produce, they had set their plows in the sod. They were in their best years and looked into the future with hope. The fruitful earth could not disappoint, and they were true to their tough and unyielding south Jutland nature.

As mentioned, the Nissen brothers were among the first Danes. They came from Dostrup in South Jutland. In 1866 Anders B. Nissen emigrated to America. He and his brother Jørgen Nissen built their sod house in 1873 where everything now bears witness to solidarity and ability. Knud S. Nissen with his brother-in-law Anders P. Hoegh who had just come to the area, began a general store in 1874 in Aurora. Later he moved to Colorado. A.P. Hoegh became a well-to-do farmer.

Many Danes Stream In

As time went on connections improved. A bridge was built across the Platte so it was possible to drive over. The railroad line was extended from Seward to Aurora, with a connection from there to Central City. In 1879 and 1881 Hampton and Marquette became station towns. At about that time Danish settle-

ment towns increased. From 1878 to 1884 Danes streamed in especially from Racine, Wisconsin and Dwight, Illinois.

It wasn't speculation or profit seeking that brought young men and women out on Nebraska's prairie. The driving power was the need to build a home and win independence. They were used to working the soil from Denmark, and they were used to working hard and being frugal. These qualities had seasoned their daily bread and now were a bonus for them. It had strengthened their character, and while they did not bring treasures of gold to America, they had what was of greater value. Their hands were used to hard work, and they were able and determined to do faithful and conscientious work. With faith, hope and youthful courage they began, and with blessings from above, their work was not in vain. What was successful through troubles and struggles is expressed in a few lines by Kr. Østergaard:

Here we found our life's work,
Here are our homes,
But the church of our fathers
We raised among them.

Early in 1878 some Danes in Racine had founded an organization whose work was to find land for a colony of farmers. A committee consisting of Søren Larsen, Henrik Rasmussen, and Halkjær was sent out and went to Nebraska. They first went to Howard and Valley Counties where colonization had begun, and where R. Hannibal, a Dane, was an agent for the Burlington Railroad land. Then they were in Hamilton Co. where they liked the land better. When they returned home, they reported on what they had seen, and now C. Larsen, A.R. Buck and Jens Hansen made a trip to Hamilton Co. They signed up for land for themselves and others, and in June, 1878, twelve Danes from Racine bought untouched prairie land in Hamilton Co. from the Union Pacific Railroad for $5.00 per acre. The terms were reasonable. Repayment was to be made in eight to ten years, interest at six percent.

That same summer Henrik Rasmussen and Søren Larsen returned and got started on their prairie land.

C. Larsen and R. Olsen, both from Racine, settled in Central City and together started a smithy. C. Larsen was from Petersborg near Sorø and was a trained blacksmith who came to Racine in 1870. R. Olsen, an able machinist, moved to Grand Island where he found a good paying job in the Union Pacific's workshop. Some years later he came back to Central City where C. Larsen had run the business alone and expanded the shop to sell machines. In 1900 Larsen moved to Racine.

Christen Feddersen and Henrik Smith, both South Jutlanders, came in 1878 from Dwight, Illinois. Chr. Feddersen with his family rode that long way in a horse and wagon. He still remembers with pleasure the fairy tale trip over the prairie in a covered wagon. Vilhelm J. Vilhelmsen, another man from South Jutland, and H. Schroeder from Lansingsburgh, New York, also arrived.

Newcomers in 1879 included Niels H. Andersen from Kenosha, Wisconsin, and from Racine, L.P.Larsen and Laurits Jensen. H. Jepsen from Illinois came a little later.

The Danish colony had a good beginning and it grew rapidly in the 1880s.

Soddies

The pioneers had no time to philosophize and perhaps no desire to either. The urgent need was for a roof overhead. By his own work and the help of his neighbors soddies were built to live in and for the stock. They were simple and poor, and many no doubt entered them with mixed feelings, but one became used to them. There were some advantages; they were cool in summer and warm in winter. If they were roofed with slabs of grassy sod, as many were, the houses were uncomfortable in rainy weather, for the rain found ways to drip into the room. Then either one went out to shovel dirt on the roof and used umbrellas and bowls to catch the drops, or sat under the table. Soddies were not set up for housewifely beauties, but the good spirit of the home and its faith and hope could often be found there. Pastor Emeritus Jacob Holm, after 25 years, remembers with joy the hospitable, loving and painstaking welcome he received in 1880 at Chris Feddersen's little two room soddie. It is for him a bright memory, he wrote in a letter. Shortly after his visit the storm blew half the roof away. Well, it was good for the pioneer that he could start with a sod house. There was no way he could have procured lumber to build a wooden house; that's why now as he sits in his large, light and pleasant home, he remembers with love the little dirt house that helped him financially to crawl until he could walk.

The important thing was to get the prairie under cultivation as quickly as possible. When everything was green and growing early in the summer and the wind, playfully, whistled through the thick and green grass, he was plowing furrow after furrow. From mid-May till about July 4 he broke the prairie he wanted to use. If he could manage that, he plowed the rooting vegetation under in the fall, and the next spring he sowed the wheat in the ground as it lay. The seed was harrowed in. More attention was not needed. If it was a good year, he could harvest 15 to 25 bushels per acre. Besides wheat, barley was grown, some corn, and in a few years, a good deal of hay. There wasn't much cattle raising at first, but it increased year after year. There was plenty of grass on the prairie.

The important thing at first was to raise and sell seed, and the money that came in was needed. The land was to be paid for, machinery was needed, and the economic existence improved. And, of course, they wanted roomy and comfortable homes and barns.

Winter Firewood

The pioneer had to be working and watchful. Food and clothes he had, but firewood could be in short supply in the cold winter. Coal was not known. Today it is essential that the farmer gets his winter supply of coal in time, but then he had only the scattered wood laboriously gathered from the Platte River banks. From the field he gathered corn stalks, and in the evening a man or two sat and cut them and put them into the stove. Of course they burned cobs, but in the beginning they were not so plentiful as they became later.

Hail

When all this is taken into consideration, it is easy to understand that the pioneer economy was such that he could hardly stand a complete crop failure as in 1884. On July 20 a hailstorm ruined the crop. A few had begun harvesting wheat; the rest were ready to start the next morning. The hail laid the wheat flat and ruined the corn. Nothing was left but bare fields. Many trees lost leaves and some died because the bark was shattered.

Corn, Hogs, and Cattle

In the meantime, wheat growing was being cut back. Spring wheat was ruined by insects and the profit was too small. Something else had to be done, and it was the Illinois Danes who led the way. One of them, Lars H. Hansen, had 100 acres of corn one summer and that was the signal. Now they went to raising corn which with other factors led to raising hogs and cattle. By 1890 feeding was the farmers best source of income. The economic upsurge had a good start.

Hard Times

But then came hard times, 1893 to 1895. They hampered progress, but no one doubts they had their meaning. There are essential character traits and powers that develop in adversity. Kr. Østergaard rightly says:

Even the winter, cold and white,
Is only a strengthening rest time.
What the winter imprisons under ice
Springs to new life when spring arrives.

The hard years were like a winter, with 1894 being the worst. The whole summer was dry, and then July 2 came with a wind so hot it burned the face. It was as though one stood in front of an oven. That day is not forgotten. School superintendent Maltesen from Vrigsted in Denmark was to lecture, and several who were on their way to hear him had to turn back. It was too hot. It was

dry before, but that day the corn withered. All seed and grass burned away. There was as good as no crop at all, and in the fall, several had to sell out.

The churchyard after the cyclone

Cyclone, May 1890

In addition to these hardships, the cyclone that ravaged the settlement May 27, 1890, must be mentioned. It was a humid Saturday. The air was heavy and threatening. Toward choretime or suppertime clouds of dust were seen in the southwest and people became uneasy. Men came up on the mill to watch if it was—yes, it was a cyclone. Women, children and men went into cellars; others ran away from their homes to get beyond the range and at least save their lives.

Suddenly it became pitch black. The air was like coal smoke, and there was a rumble like a freight train or threshing machines. One couldn't see or hear anything else. Those in cellars huddled together. Those who ran threw themselves on the ground and held onto each other.

A. R. Buck's home after the cyclone.

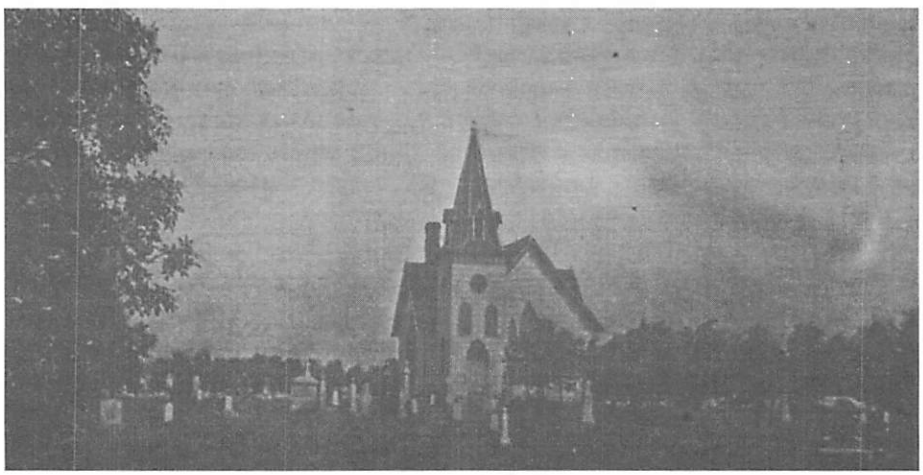
Only a NOW it lasted. The storm was over, and He without whose will a sparrow will not fall had marvelously protected the lives of people. But many houses were swept away. Among the Danes who lost their homes in that minute were Peter Henningsen, Peter Lewis, A.A.Buck, Karl Jensen, and Christen Rasmussen. The Danish church and all the buildings on the church lot were ground into kindling and spread over the field.

At one place the house flew away, but the horse landed in the cellar where the family was, but no one was hurt. At Pastor Strandskov's, 19 people were in the little cellar. When the house disappeared, the cookstove fell into that cellar. "God be praised, we're all here!" Mrs. Strandskov said when they came out.

Animals had been lifted up and thrown around. Some steers were killed. Big trees were uprooted. An iron bridge had been twisted as if it were made of thin wire. Windmills were tipped. Water tanks were emptied. The cyclone had taken whatever it met on its way and spread its booty for miles around. A baptism certificate was found four miles away. The cogwheel was torn out of a self-binder and found three-quarters of a mile from the machine.

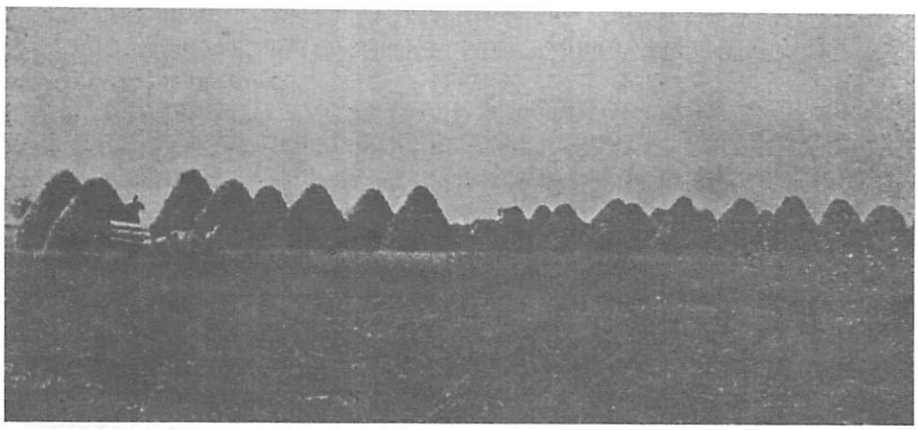
After the storm the homeless sought shelter with neighbors. When they caught rest at about 11, taking one last look at the evening sky, it was light and full of stars. The wind was calm—it was as if nothing had happened.

Next morning the bad news was spread around. A man asked to borrow a neighbor's spade. What did he want it for? Well, he had to go out and help bury dead horses and steers.

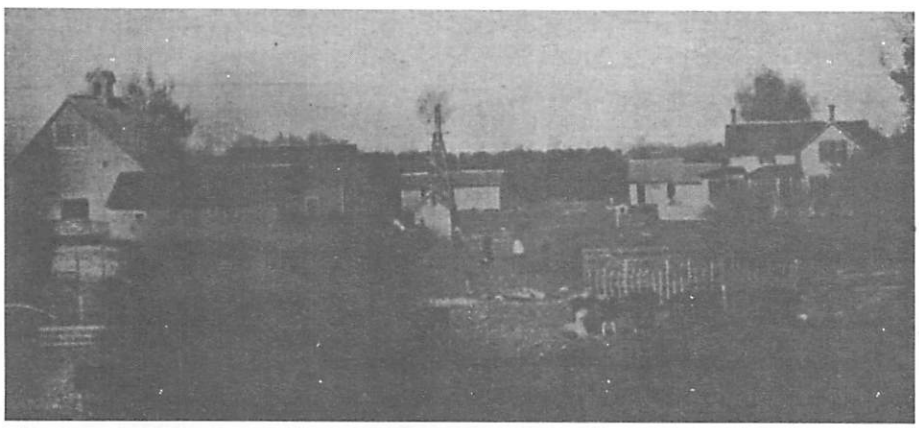


The new church

Many people found out about the damage on their way to church, and it was a sad sight to behold when they gathered on the church lot. All they had built was gone. They had need of all their will power when life's school says, "Do it over!" And they did. The church and other buildings were raised again more stately than before.



Haystacks on Henrik Smith 's farm



L. C. Jensen's farm

Farming of Today

After the 1890s the Danish settlement has had good and fruitful years. Progress is everywhere. The farmer owns his big farm, and it is worth $85 to $100 per acre. His home is light and pleasant, marked by comfort and prosperity.

Several changes have occurred in land use. Winter wheat has supplanted spring wheat, and it gives a good crop. Also much alfalfa is grown.

From early spring till July a farm is a busy place. First oats is sown; in mid-May , corn is planted. It needs cultivation three or four times. Timothy hay, clover, prairie hay and millet all have to be harvested.

In September winter wheat is sowed, and late in the quiet fall mornings one can hear the corn ears hitting the bang boards.

Feeding of hogs and steers goes hand in hand with soil use. Not a few farmers feed 20 to 50 steers in a year, and many sell 75 to 200 hogs annually.

Danish Church—and Spiritual Life

The Danes had thoughts of meeting together when they came to Hamilton Co. They had belonged to congregations in Racine, Wisconsin and Dwight, Illinois, and they felt the need of hearing the Word as they were used to. After Pentecost in 1880, Pastor J. Holm of Dwight, Illinois, visited them, and with his help they established St. Johannes congregation at a meeting in the Farr School. Further, it was arranged so that Pastor S.H. Madsen of Dannebrog, should come once a month. Those were happy days when they gathered with him in singing and the Word in the homes or schoolhouses. In 1892 K,C. Bodholdt was ordained and became their first resident pastor. Since then they have been served by Th. K. Thomsen who died April 2, 1891 and is buried in the Danish cemetery. Then came Kr. Østergaard, H.C. Strandskov, H. Ravn, and N.P. Gravengaard.

In 1889 the first church was dedicated, the one the cyclone ruined. In April 1900 the present church was taken into use. Besides the parsonage, the congregation also owns the school building, gymnastics building, and 40 acres of land. The barn near the church has room for 125 horses. Steadily and faithfully they gather for church and meetings. When the church bells call on Sunday morning and team after team rolls in, it can be felt that Sunday is the gathering day and festival day for Danes. Hans J. Thomsen who came from Dwight, Illinois, in 1883 to Marquette, has been president of the congregation for many years.

Hamilton Co. has about 700 Danes and is one of the centers for Danish spiritual life in America.

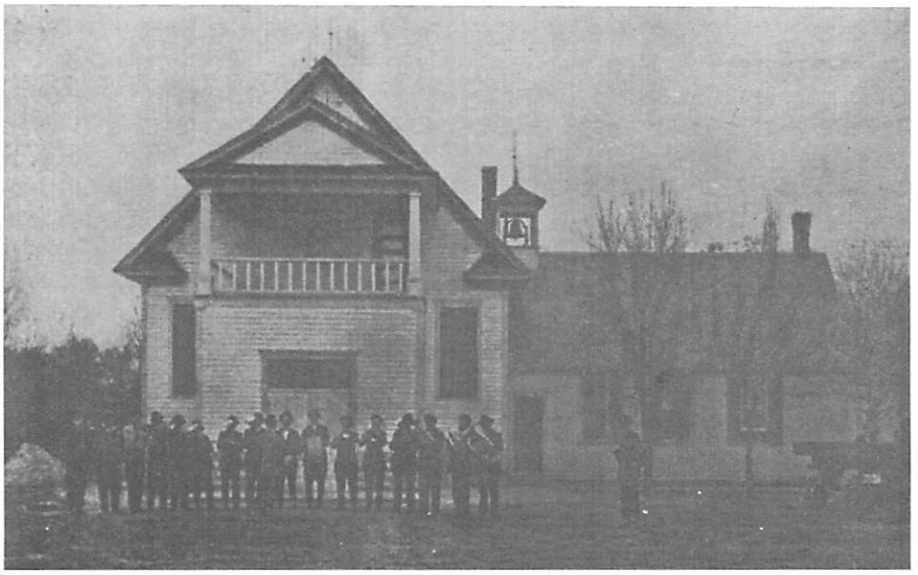
The Danish-American does not forget his fatherland. He takes a trip there every once in a while. He follows along in Danish spiritual life. The Danish library books are read in the winter and the Danish papers, *Dannevirke* (Danish Activity), *Den Danske Pioneer* (The Danish Pioneer) and *Luthersk Ugeblad* (Lutheran Weekly) are read. A solid work to maintain the Danish culture is being done through the children's summer school and the youth groups, and most of the lecturers from Denmark have visited Marquette.

Since so many years have passed since Pastor H. Ravn died, this addition will be added to what he has written.

A little town has grown up around the Danish Church east of Marquette. It is named Kronborg and has quite a few houses already, built mostly by retired farm people who moved there to be near the church they helped build and where they have spent so many good hours when they have taken part in worship services for a whole generation.

There are stores in Kronborg as well: a general store, smithy, cement works and a meeting place. Carpenters live here and a painter. The town is developing rapidly.

In 1914–1915 the church built a gymnasium and social hall that cost $4000 plus the materials in the old hall. In the basement 125 can be served from the roomy kitchen, and there is a furnace. The school room is the same as before,



The meeting house

but at the end there is a library with over 500 volumes of Danish literature and space for a reading room.

The congregation includes both Kronborg and Marquette and is named St. Johannes Congregation in Kronborg near Marquette. There has been talk of building a church in Marquette, and it is possible that development will go that way. A number of farmers are moving to Marquette, and thus the land will be farmed increasingly by Danish farmers. There are two independent ladies aids, one in Marquette and one in Kronborg.

Pioneer Life and Farming in Eastern Nebraska

Pastor L. Hansen

The settlement of eastern Nebraska began already in the 1860s. The settlers came from several places but most from Illinois and Iowa. Some had spent shorter or longer time in Omaha; others came from mines in the west or had worked for the Union Pacific Railroad which was being built in those years. Quite a few took homesteads, others timber claims, and some used both rights. Later settlers were advised to buy railroad land when it became available at $4.00 to $6.00 per acre. Some of the early comers took advantage of this as well and came into possession of huge tracts of land.

Most were people of small means, and money was scarce, but interest rates were high. Land salesmen knew how to take advantage of the situation: two to three percent per month was not unusual.

How does one get onto the land and begin farming on the virgin prairie? Most came by "prairie schooner"—a covered wagon, hitched to a team of horses or oxen with a cow or two tied on behind. Wife and children, if the pioneer had them, and some household goods were aboard. If one found on his land a little brook and a few trees, that was great, but this was probably not for the majority. A man told me he came from Iowa and had two cows tied on behind. He wanted to put them on grass, but he couldn't find a scrap of wood to use as a tether—just the opposite from the woods dwellers where they hardly knew how to start because of all the trees standing and lying around.

So what will one burn and build houses and barns with in this treeless prairie? At first they lived in the wagon they had come in, and to burn, they used hay. And then one found that some miles away were a few trees near a stream, where other pioneers came to find fuel and a little stuff to build with. To make use of this help required that the roof be taken off the wagon and used as a dwelling until they could build. This of course was true only of the earliest comers. Once there were houses, there was always house room and heart room for the newcomers.

Where did they get building material? Usually it was far to town, and most people lacked money. One got used to living in close quarters. Some pioneers brought a load of lumber from town and built a hut right away, but most built of what was found on the prairie. A door, one or two windows, enough lumber for the top of the building so it could support a layer of tar paper, on top of that a layer of sod squares and a layer of clay to finish, that would be about all one needed to buy. Either one dug into a hillside (a dugout) or one stacked a wall of sod squares (a sod house). The latter were often plastered with clay inside, and they could be cozy and warm. It is certain that many poor folks could not have begun farming with such good results without

making houses and barns of these inexpensive and available materials.

Most settlers arrived on the land in the spring, and the essential thing (after a roof over one's head) was to break as much prairie before July as possible. This would allow planting wheat that would provide flour and seed for the next year and a little extra to sell for money for the most necessary expenses. Usually there was no advantage in sowing or planting right away. It still had to be plowed again in September. Probably most pioneers had a cow or two and a few chickens the first summer. Often both single and married men would look for jobs in the harvest or whenever just to earn a little cash. Everybody looked forward to the harvest, but in those first years grasshoppers, hail or drought ruined the crop so that the work and sweat expended brought very little income. Among their enemies must also be mentioned prairie fires that could start far away, travel with the wind and burn seed, harvest and buildings without the possibility of saving anything.

Another kind of enemy consised of the agents and crooks that swarmed around the settlements convincing people to buy what they could do without or borrow money they did not need. Then when the crop failed, these men were more than ready to take the settlers to the cleaners. Some lost their homes in this way, but most survived this crisis.

If they were hard-working, sober, thrifty, and watchful as to credit, each year has brought the pioneers better situations. Their cleared land and number of cattle have increased; especially is this true of the last 25 years. They raise oats and barley as well as wheat, and the number of corn acres planted grows every year. Since the large meat packing plants have opened in Omaha, Kansas City and other places, corn and hogs have become the main sources of income. Cattle raising and feeding bring a good price in some areas, as do butter, eggs and poultry. There are not so many cooperative creameries here as in some places, so butter is a good source of income. The farmer can churn his own cream or sell it to creameries in Lincoln or Omaha. Most farmers have their own hand operated cream separator.

The formerly treeless prairies are now covered too much by roads and signs. Almost every farm has an orchard with apple, cherry, peach, apricot and plum trees. They do well here as do grapes and other berries. Beekeeping is good, because while the real prairie is gone, the fields of tame grass get larger and larger. There are more milk cows, less spring wheat and more winter wheat. The harvest of the latter is often very good.

The soddies and the small frame houses, have given place to larger and impressive houses with porches, large barns and other outbuildings. Land that 35 to 40 years ago was free or only a few dollars per acre now costs $100 and up. Farmers who then rode to town in a springwagon with oxen or a team now arrive in a fancy carriage with valuable horses or an automobile. The unbelievable is ordinary: the farmer's hired man has his own horse and buggy which often is fancier than the estate farmer's or the pastor's. That's the way it has turned out.

The Danish Colony near Davey, Lancaster County, Nebraska

By S. M. Sørensen
Lincoln, Nebraska

Establishing the Colony

Twelve miles north of Lincoln, near the little town of Davey, there is a smaller Danish colony called Rock Creek. About 50 Danish families live here.

The foundation of the colony was laid in the years of 1869–1875 by Danes who took homestead or timber claims or bought railroad land. Among those who lived there are Rasmus Johnson, Henrik Hansen, Hans Hansen, Frederik Larsen, Jørgen Jørgensen, F.G.Eversen, Lars Hansen, Ole Hansen and Ole Jørgensen usually called Ole Skytte.

The colony was called Rock Creek until the Northwestern Railroad company built a branch line from Fremont to Lincoln in 1880. A town called Davey was started, but since Rural Free Delivery is used, most of the colonists get their mail from Havelock.

Ole Skytte

In the very beginning it was Ole Skytte who gathered the Danes. He had been gamekeeper and forest ranger for Mrs. Tofte (N.F.S. Grundtvig's second wife) at Rønnebæksholm. He was born November 25, 1818 and died August 15, 1894. His wife was born April 28, 1818 and died August 14, 1889 As a youth, Ole Skytte was influenced by the group called the Gathering and when Pastor J.C. Brandt became their pastor, he joined himself to them and became an eager adherent of the spiritual life as expressed by N.F.S. Grundtvig. In the colony he actively gathered people around the church activities. When there was no pastor, he often read a sermon or some other devotional material. He was respected by all, though his nature was to make new paths and not to bend to opposition. Even though there often were sharp words spoken between him and other thinking people, there seems not to have been unfriendliness.

He had lasting respect and the love of most. Since he also had able children, he came to be considered a patriarch. The writer of this article had the joy of meeting Skytte only once, at the church dedication in 1891, but just seeing him and hearing him speak made one realize that this was an unusual personality.

Ole Skytte and wife.

The Danish Congregation

The year after Skytte came (1875) a congregation was organized, and it was served for a while by a Norwegian, Pastor Hillman. Later Pastors include J. Jensen Mylund, L. Gydesen, Hillerup Jørgensen, P. Jensen (twice), P.L.C. Hansen, Chr. H. Jensen, J. Pedersen, L. Hansen, and S. Mogensen. For several years it was Skytte and his sons-in-law that kept the congregation's work going. They brought pastors Mylund and Gydesen from Waverly often with great difficulty, because the bridges were simple and flooding often took place. In 1883 Pastor P. Jensen was called to serve congregations in Rock Creek, Lincoln, Bennett and Friend. In 1887 Rev. P.L.C. Hansen came, but Friend decided to call its own pastor, which allowed more regular service, twice a month. In 1891, the church was built and dedicated. It lies two miles east of Davey. With the addition its value is $2000. It must surely have been a joy for old Ole Skytte to help dedicate a building where his family, children and grandchildren could worship together.

From the beginning it has been considered important to train the children in a good Danish spirit, and there has been a Danish summer school for a month or two in the summer. It is a joy to hear children born in America and now grown and having children speaking as good Danish as they do. The colony is small compared to many others, but there are not many places where better work has been done to keep the Danish spirit in the young people. There are probably greater apparent results some places, but they have had more people to share the work.

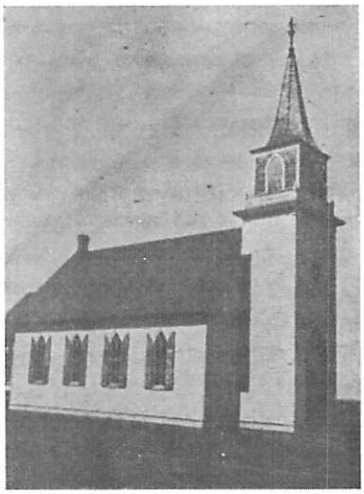
When the synods split, so did the congregation. A smaller group joined a little group served by the Blair synod. It now belongs to the United Church and shares a pastor with Lincoln.

Some of the Danes

Ole Skytte's sons-in-law have changed their names to show relationship to the old man. They are Jørgen Jørgensen, Frederik Larsen, F.G. Eversen, Lars Hansen, and Henry Harksen. His only son is Harold (Jørgensen) Johnsen.

(Jørgen Jørgensen) John Johnsen came from Sapperup near Næstved. His stepfather's name was Peter Frederiksen. He belonged to the Gathering Group and in that way Jørgen Jørgensen was in contact with the awakened (Christians) at an early age. When he moved to Ronnebæksholm, he was influenced by Pastor J.C. Brandt.

Frederik Larsen came from Snertinge, son of Lars Jensen who also belonged to the Gathering group. The son was used to being among believers, and when he too came to Ronnebæksholm was influenced by Brandt. These two energetic young men brought a substantial spiritual ballast to America, and they remained true to what they had learned in their youth.



Church at Davey.

The brothers-in-law took homesteads next to each other. Frederik Larsen stayed on the land, but Jørgen went out to work. He thus was a bit late to hold his land. A "jumper" who had been lying in wait settled on the land and began a court process that took a long time. Jørgensen worked on the railroad near Fremont. At the end of a working day he found a letter telling him to be in Lincoln the next day when his case was coming up. No train, no bus, little or no money—and 40 to 50 miles over solid prairie, no roads, no bridges. But he set out to walk it. Fortunately he came to Henrik Hansen's just as he was about to drive to Lincoln to be a witness in that same case, so he had a ride the last and worst 12 miles. Jørgensen won the case and was glad he had undertaken the walk. He worked hard and was careful with his spending until he owned a half section. He has been a delegate to church conventions and is well-known for his conversational abilities.

As previously stated, Frederik Larsen mostly stayed on his land but the first years were hard. He often said, "I can't imagine how we made it. But now that it is over, it is easy to talk about!" Again, by thrift and hard work, he owned a half section of land. He, too, has often been a delegate and has been the church's representative on several occasions. He was president of the congregation for many years. He died in 1914.

F.G. Eversen bought railroad land. He is the son of Forester Christian Eversen, from Rappenborgskoven in Karrebæksminde. He was confimed by Pastor Monrad who had a great influence on him. Also he was as a boy influ-

enced by Ingemann in whose home he had been. He traveled some the first years he spent in America; he was in the South for a while working in the sugar plants, and took a trip to Denmark. When he settled in Rock Creek, he had a number of jobs. He was the congregation's secretary for 15 years, constable for eight years, school treasurer for 24 years, and assessor for seven. He has also been convention delegate.

Lars Hansen is from Vallensbæk, Seeland. He was poor as were so many others to begin with, but as the land was farmed and more people moved in, he went to buying and selling cattle and became one of the most well-to-do. He was constable for many years and has been vice president of the Davey Bank for several years.

Henry Harksen, who married Ole Skytte's youngest daughter, came from Odense. He came to the area in the early 80s. In 1884–1885 he was a student at Elk Horn High School. He worked in Lincoln for a while. When the Northwestern Railroad opened a branch line from Fremont to Lincoln, he started a grocery in the town of Davey and expanded it through the years to include dry goods, shoes, ready-made clothes, paint, fancy goods, musical instruments, furniture, etc. Henry Harksen had a talent for business and used it to earn a fortune. When a bank was started, he was elected its president. He was twice in the Nebraska legislature, being elected on the Republican ticket in 1894 and 1898. In the work of the congregation he participated with enthusiasm, in both internal and external matters and has often been delegate to conventions. Old Ole Skytte spent his last years in this home after his wife died.

January 1, 1906, he sold his business to Peter Nielsen and Peter Madsen and left the same year to live in Portland, Oregon, for the sake of his health. It probably is not too much to say that hardly any other man will be missed more than Henry Harksen. He was direct in all his actions and had such a good understanding of ordinary matters as is seldom found in so generous a measure as he had.

Harold (Jørgensen) Johnson, son of old Ole Skytte, was with H. Harksen at the Elk Horn Folk High School in the 1884-1885 winter. When the town of Davey was incorporated, he became the grain dealer and has also worked himself up to have an honorable position. When Harkson moved away, Johnson was elected bank president.

Hans Hansen is from Falster and was one of the earliest settlers. Like the others, he was poor but worked himself into a position of wealth. For several years he drove a team of oxen to town and to church. That would have been normal for a Jutlander who had grown up behind an ox team, but it is unusual for an island resident.

It can be said that the colony is doing well. Most people own their land, and those who rent for some years usually try to buy it.

In the colony there has been a desire and need for enlightenment, both secular and spiritual, and therefore they have tried to bring in all available lecturers.

Henry Harkson

Mrs. Henry Harkson

(Ole Jørgensen) Oliver Johnson, oldest son of Jørgen Jørgensen, studied to be a dentist and settled in the town of Lincoln. He practiced for only about four years, contracted typhoid and died in 1902. In that short time he had won a reputation and a large clientele seldom exceeded. At his death at only 29, Dr. J.P. Stevens, one of the most able doctors of the city, said, "This was more than an ordinary dentist which the city has lost. He was a first class doctor and his conscientious attitude in his practice would have made him one of the most appreciated city dentists." He was a lecturer at Lincoln Dental College and was considered one of the best and most able authorities on dental medicine.

Svend Hansen, son of Pastor L. Hansen, is a practicing dentist in Davey, Ceresco and Bennett. He took his training at dental colleges in Omaha and Kansas City.

Counting the Danes

In 1890 Lancaster Co. had 500 Danes who had emigrated; in 1900 there were 435; in 1910, 400. Besides these, there were 427 whose parents were born in Denmark, and probably about 150 more where father or mother were born there. About half the Danes in the county live in Lincoln. Six Counties in the state have more Danes than Lancaster.

The Danes in Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska

By S. M. Sørensen

Lincoln

Under an elm tree a mile southeast of the Salt Basin where the B & M roundhouse now lies, a committee of three men met in 1859 to take the necessary steps to create a county to be called Lancaster. A city was platted and called by the same name which was the name of a county in Pennsylvania.

Eight years later (1867) the territorial legislature in Omaha decided to move the state government to Lancaster, renaming it Lincoln. There were then six or seven buildings in the town, and about 30 inhabitants. The whole county had not over 500 residents. In 1868 the city grew to 500.

Lincoln is about 40 miles from the Missouri River and just as far from the state of Kansas. The salt springs were well known long before this and were frequented by wild animals: deer, fallow deer, and antelope came in huge flocks. It is said that a hunter named Benadom shot 50 to 60 deer in 1868 inside what is now city limits. He found them mostly in the brush areas near the salt springs. He also shot 21 wolves plus partridge and quail without number.

The spot that seems to have been an Eldorado for wild animals 50 years ago has become a city of 45,000 inhabitants with 100 miles of streetcar tracks and 70 streetcars traveling every 10 or 15 minutes in all directions in the town.

The First Danes In Lincoln

Andrew Christensen, born June 2, 1840, in Hallund in Vendsyssel, was probably the first Dane to set foot in what is now Lincoln. It happened in 1863 when he was on his way to the Black Hills by way of the trail from Nebraska City which passed the Salt Springs. The springs were known far and wide. People from Kansas and Iowa came there to get salt, and it was a known stopping place. In 1869 Andrew Christensen came back that way, and by then, Lincoln was growing, but he met no Danes. He took a little trip to Fremont and when he returned, Thomas Christensen had arrived. More about him later. A. Christensen now lives (1916) near Alvo, 25 miles north of Lincoln, where he owns several farms. He joined the church in Lincoln.

Niels Hansen came to Lincoln May 3, 1871. He was born in 1839 in Karlslunde on Seeland . For may years he had a board and room business. Rasmus (Jensen) Johnson soon came, but he had been on his homestead near Davey for some years. He was born in 1839 in Halsted Parish on Lolland. He walked into town to work. On Saturday evening he bought sugar, coffee, flour,

etc. carried it the 13 miles to his home and was back to work on Monday morning. Robert (Rasmus) Petersen came about the same time from Sildestrup on Falster. For many years he ran a wholesale flour and feed business.

Lincoln Danes Today

Almost 200 immigrant Danes live in Lincoln and probably just as many who were born in America. They may not have played a leading role in Lincoln's development, but they have been active in smaller roles, and what they have done was well done. Many of the finest houses were built, paneled, painted and decorated by Danish craftsmen. Louis Jensen from Falster has had the contract to build several businesses. In the handcraft work, in the stores, in wholesale houses, and wherever Danes are found, they have understood and maintained their position. They have been dependable and persevering and so earned their boss's respect. Seldom does one find a Dane working somewhere that he doesn't work himself up to a better position. Danes are steady workers. It is not unusual to find Danes who have worked in the same place for ten, twenty or even thirty years.

The Danish Congregation

In 1882 a congregation was formed in Rasmus Johnson's home. It has been served by these pastors: Hillerup Jørgensen (who organized it), P. Jensen, P.L.C. Hansen, Chr. H. Jensen, J. Markussen, Elias Prøvensen, Olaf Rye Olsen, A.C. Weisman, J.P. Christiansen, and Kr. Anker. In 1888 a church and parsonage were built. The church, valued at $2000, was dedicated in 1891. The congregation belonged to the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church until 1895 when it went to the Mission Society and later to the United Danish Evengelical Lutheran Church. The Rock Creek part of the congregation which went to the Mission Society and then joined a little existing church in the town of Davey that belonged to the Blair Synod had a pastor with Lincoln and Bennet until 1903. Then Bennet pulled out of the trio, and Weeping Water came in.

There has been a Sunday School most of the time, and for many years it was directed by Julius Nielsen. Since the early 1890s there has been a month of vacation school every year.

Individual Danes

Thomas Christensen was the first Dane to live in Lincoln. He came in 1869 from Creston, Iowa, where he had owned a farm. "Old Thomas" was the name he was known by, and very few knew that his name was Christensen. He was rather a typical Jutlander, rather pessimistic, and one who found it hard to get over anything that had gone against him in life. It isn't easy to tell anything about him because at a certain time in his life, he made every effort to lead people astray both as to his birthplace, his age and much else. It can be said

that he was born in Salling where his mother inherited a mill which he inherited. We do have confirmation by a third party that she was a fine and pious woman whose father or grandfather had been a pastor in West Jutland. This seems to be verified by Thomas' old Bible which he had said was inherited. The Old Testament title page is gone but on the title page of the New Testament is printed:

Printed in Copenhagen
By Solomon Gartor in the year
MDCXXXII (1632)

The book has several good pictures. One of them, a copperplate used as introduction to the New Testament, is even by our standards very good and beautiful. The book weighs 12 to 15 pounds and is now in the possession of Hans Gilbertson, a Norseman, in whose home Thomas was when he died. In the 1850s Thomas's mother died. She had the reputation of being an unusually able woman with a strong will. She brought Thomas up to be dependent on her and gave him no chance to use his abilities. When she died, he was in his 40s and acted like a big boy who had to learn to stand on his own feet. But big boys often do dumb things before they learn. He married a girl of barely 16 whose mother was young and unmarried when she came to the mill. She died a few days after the baby's birth, and his mother then raised the child. This marriage was his undoing. The first few years went well, but then the wife began seeing other men, so Thomas sold the mill and went to America in the early 1860s

First he went to Chicago, and here the Bible was repaired since many pages were worn and torn. Then he bought land near Creston, Iowa, and was there for three years. Then he sold that for the same reason he sold the mill and came to Lincoln in 1869. He bought a ten acre tract and began providing milk to the growing town. He had 12 cows for a while, but then the old trouble came to light. This time it seemed Thomas lost courage and found his comfort in the bottle. A number of years passed in this way, and Thomas became a drunk. The last that was said about his wife is that she left on a horse behind a cowboy. Later Thomas deeded his property to Hans Gilbertson with whom he lived the last 13 years of his life.

There could be a great deal to tell about Old Thomas, but it is difficult to know what is true and what is fiction. Indications are that at a young age he was able and ambitious. He owned an excellent Danish rifle and good American hunting gear. Both disappeared when he died as did a complete set of cabinetmaker's tools.

In spite of most people's opinion that he was a hardened free-thinker, Mrs. Gilbertson says about him that he could sit hour after hour and read his Bible and that he often would read out loud for her. She adds, Thomas was a good man that wouldn't have been the way he was if he had had a decent wife. People judged him unmercifully, and that made him even more strange and

R. Johnson and wife.

reserved in the later years. It is easy to make a harsh judgment, but if it pertains to ourselves or to one of our nearest, our judgment often would be moderated. Perhaps this lighter judgement would have cast a little light into Old Thomas' dark and tangled evening of life.

Rasmus Johnson always showed warm interest and faithful love for the congregation's activities. He has more than once helped when money was short. With thrift and diligence he had done pretty well financially and was lucky in the sale of a farm and a house in town. He died June 24, 1915, and was buried on the thirty-third anniversary of the founding of the congregation in his house.

Hans Petersen, son of Christen Petersen the tailor who lived in Lincoln for many years, graduated from the University and became Professor in Scandinavian literature.

Hans Peter Lau from Flensborg had a wholesale grocery which at his death in 1897 had sales of over a million dollars a year. It is now managed by his sons and has almost doubled in sales. Lau came to the city in 1869 and began with candy and ice cream with no capital. In 1889 he is mentioned in a story about Lincoln as a man who has earned an honorable place among the largest business places and who is one of the leading capitalists there. He was tireless in increasing his business and spared neither hand nor head in achieving his aim. He often worked on his books far into the night. People say that in the beginning he used a wheelbarrow to deliver his ice cream around town. His health was not good the last year of his life so he went home and died in Germany soon after. His body was brought back to Lincoln for burial.

The Danes near Weeping Water, Cass County, Nebraska

By Jens P. Rasmussen

About 40 miles southeast of Omaha near the Missouri and Pacific Railway, the town of Weeping Water lies surrounded by hills consisting mostly of stones. When one first reaches the town, one would think it was in no way a suitable area for farming, but when one leaves the train and enjoys a ride in the country with a friendly farmer, the opinion changes. It may not be as level as in some places, but more rolling. The ground here is of the best quality for raising corn, especially, and is not behind the best of Iowa.

The first Dane to come here was as far as we know a Jutlander named John Johnsen, probably born in Silkeborg. He came from Union City, Branch Co., Michigan where he had worked on a farm for five years. There was no train to Weeping Water, but he came to Plattsmouth, the present county seat, and from there took a wagon. It was soon clear to Mr. Johnsen that this place had a great future, and the thought of buying land right away was strong. But he was like most Jutlanders careful, and after some thought he decided to rent a farm for two years to get to know the land and the climate. The 160 acres he rented was one and a half miles from town and was all prairie with as good as no buildings. When the two years were up in 1880, he bought the land and began right away to provide the necessary buildings. After a few years we find him on a well-cultivated farm as a cattle breeder. He had a herd of purebred Herefords, Poland China hogs, horses with pedigree, and in a few years had all the ground under plow.

March 17, 1880 he married Eliza Murfin who was of German descent. The fact that he was married to a lady who could not speak Danish no doubt explains why he did not socialize with the few Danes who came here in the early 80s. But he was a man who earned the respect of his neighbors and was elected to several positions, including precinct assessor.

The next Dane who came was John Domingo born May 5, 1854 on Als. He had a good education, and when both parents died, he came to America entirely alone at age 18. He went to Bloomington, Illinois and stayed there till he came to Weeping Water in 1881 and bought the farm where he still lives. The land had been plowed, but the buildings weren't worth anything. During the years Mr. Domingo has built it up so it is now one of the best built farms around here. He has also bought another 160 acres, so he owns 320 acres. June 7, 1881 he married Miss Lottie Wiuff, also from South Jutland, who came here in 1880. Their home is open to everyone, and a welcome is sure when one comes. A great sorrow came to these people a couple of years ago when their eldest son, Jesse, born September 13, 1883 was hurt in an accident in the field and now is

confined to a wheelchair unable to stand or walk. Though all means have been tried, he is paralyzed.

Near the above named farm, Jacob Domingo, John's brother, lives. He came from Denmark to Ford Co., Illinois in 1877 and rented a farm there until 1882 when he came to Nebraska and bought 160 acres next to John's land. They lived together until 1884 when Jacob married, Annie M. Andersen, whose parents came from South Jutland to Wisconsin, then to Ford Co. Illinois and later to Weeping Water. By the time Jacob was married, he had already begun building up his farm, and now, like his brother John, he has an excellent improved 320 acre farm, since he bought another 160 acres a couple of years ago. That land lies just east of his first purchase.

The fact that land prices have been rising is shown by the fact that the Domingo brothers paid about $25.00 per acre when they first came. In 1906 Jacob paid $90.00 per acre for land right next to his. Many countrymen have gone to Jacob for help, and I dare say none went in vain. Since he and John Domingo are president and vice-president respectively of The City National Bank, one can judge that they are respected by their peers. These two men have held many other offices too numerous to mention here.

In the decade of 1880-1890 not many Danes came directly from Denmark, but a few came from Illinois. Mentioned here are only Mr. and Mrs. Chris Lorensen and Peder Andersen (Mrs. Jacob Domingo's parents) and their sons, Peder Andersen and Andrew Andersen; Peder is married. Each owns a farm.

In 1885 a man from Mammen, Jutland, arrived, named Hans Johnson, who would have quite a bit of influence. He now has a large general store. At first he worked for James Johnsen, but after a year's work he decided he was not made for farm work, so he worked in a quarry 12 mile from town. After a couple of years he went to Denmark for a visit and came back bringing several young people, most of whom are still here. Mr. Johnson worked at a number of jobs until in the early 1890s he found a job in a grocery store and stayed there until he could buy his own store.

For many years he was the only Dane living in town and being as well-informed as he was from Denmark, it didn't take him long to learn the American ways and to speak the language well. Little wonder, then , that the Danish newcomers turned to him for advice and help whether they came from Denmark or other places. Many have slept in his home their first night. That this is appreciated is seen on Saturdays in his store in Weeping Water. One can then get an idea of the number of Danes who now can be found here. Mr. Johnson's wife is also a Jutlander, born in Kragelund, Viborg Co. and came here about 1886 or 1887.

In 1899 Lodge No. 125 of the Danish Brotherhood was founded with as far as we know, 12 members. The first few years showed very little progress since there were hardly any young men. When I came here in 1902, there were 17 members—a growth of five members in two years, and I was the first young man who joined except for one who joined but lived in Oregon. The next three

to four years showed some growth since it now has 50 members, but many Danes have arrived in these years. Most of them had their eyes opened to the importance of the Brotherhood and joined as soon as they had lived here the required length of time, and while it used to be mostly older members in the lodge, now it is the opposite—mostly younger, which makes the lodge that much better. The president now is Hans Johnson and the secretary is Jens P. Rasmussen. The latter has done what he could to make Lodge #125 have as many members as it has.

Other Danish organizations are not found, but we have Danish church service once a month.

(The above was written in 1908)

Danes in Union Precinct, Kimball County, Nebraska

By Pastor Chr Falck
and L.K. Nielsen
Potter, Nebraska

Location and Nature

In the southwest corner of Nebraska's panhandle lies Kimball Co. with Wyoming to the west, Colorado to the south, Cheyenne Co. to the east and Banner Co. to the north. Here is a small Danish settlement, usually called Potter, Nebraska because Potter is a post office. Potter is in Cheyenne Co. while most of the settlement is in Kimball Co. The land here is prairie which rises and falls in hills and valleys. East of the colony is the "Sidney Drove" where the sand comes up from the ground.

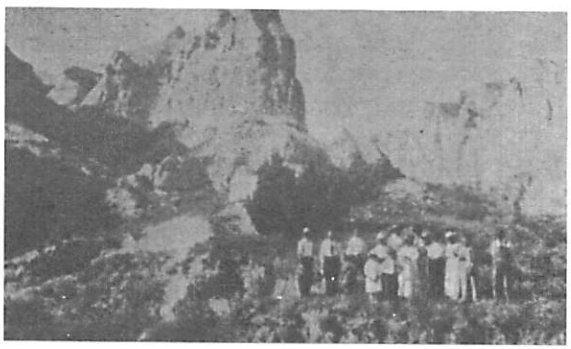
About ten miles south of the church is Cedar Valley made of canyons 250 feet deep. From the top one sees a panorama over the wild torn-up landscape. It looks as if a mighty flood has streamed through the area creating these canyons. Behind them is flat landscape into Colorado, while far to the southwest one glimpses the Rocky Mountains.

In the valley itself it looks even more like a fairy tale. Sometimes it is so narrow that one can touch the canyon walls on both sides, soon widening into a wide open place. Canyons go off to the side , to the prairie above. They can confuse the traveler coming down. A person can walk quite a ways in one of these clefts thinking he is reaching his goal only to find a perpendicular wall 10 to 12 feet deep. Then you turn back and try to find another access, unless you want to try to climb down that steep wall. That has its difficulties as we experienced when a guest, one of my sons and I faced the same situation. The guest was impressively tall; the son, not short, so they dared to stretch down and drop the last way; but I'm not tall, so I didn't dare. The guest decided to help me, not realizing that what I lacked in height I had in weight. So I knocked both of them over.

There are strange formations in the valley . There is a rock that resembles the Egyptian Sphinx; another place is like the coliseum in Rome; another, a church tower, etc.

We live high, at 4400 ft. So far planting of trees has not been successful, since we are too close to the Rockies. The elevation and the dry climate are against us. We have planted some fruit trees but haven't seen any fruit and don't think the chances are good that we will do so. But if we are poor in rain, we are rich in sunshine. There are few days in the year when we don't see the sun and few nights that the moon and the Milky Way aren't competing in illu-

minating the sky. We have a wonderful and healthful climate that we would not trade for fruit trees. Fruit we can buy, but climate can't be shipped by rail from one place to another. Wheat, rye, potatoes and spelt have been raised and sold in respectable amounts the last years. Farming increases year by year. Corn is cut green and used for fodder.



From Cedar Valley.

The Danes in Pioneer Days and Later

In 1886 the first Danish family arrived, namely that of Julius Nielsen from Finnerup, Seeland. By 1890, four families had come in this order: Mads Larsen from Magleby, Seeland, Andreas Andersen from Thy, Hans Hansen from Tyvelse, Seeland, and L.K. Nielsen from Sunds Parish near Herning. The first jobs on a homestead were to plow a piece of land big enough to provide material for a sod house and to procure three to five empty oil barrels to haul water from the town of Potter, 10 to 14 miles away. Lodge Pool Creek runs west of here; near Potter it goes underground and comes up again a couple of miles west of town When there was a water shortage in town, the residents chased the poor farmers away leaving them to find the place where the creek comes out of the ground, or they would have to be satisfied with rain water left in "buffalo wallows." These are depressions in the ground where buffalo herds have trampled the ground soaked by rain.

To dig wells right away was impossible for us. Water was far below the surface, and it would have cost a lot of money. Now every man has had his own well for a long time, and these wells are 250 to 300 feet deep. There is no water shortage as long as the windmill and pump are working.

It was hard times here in the beginning. How could it be otherwise? There were no trees for fuel and no water. Some wood could be had down in Cedar Valley; otherwise it was a drive of 25 miles northwest where there was some to be cut down. Under these circumstances the dried cow pies on the prairie served as fuel. They were also useful in other ways. The boys here sometimes

L. K. Nielsen and wife.

were dressed in the minimum: just overalls, no shoes, socks or hats. But out here the sun burns, so the boys built little huts of cow pies so they could at least get shade for their heads.

Food was also scanty, and the good climate and fresh air gave a good appetite, not least for the children and young people. If there was a place where there was food, it had drawing power. Once there was a party at old Jens Pedersen's and the young people stayed till there was no food in the house.

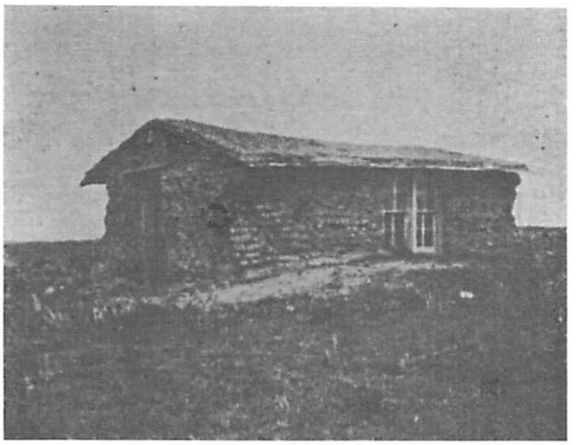
Since water was so hard to get and there was so much poverty, most families began with a single cow and a team of old horses that were really cheap but even so very expensive. Most now have up to 100 cattle including the cow they started with. The two old horses, mules or oxen they had at first are dead years ago and have been replaced by a "whole flock of strong horses."

A peculiar thing about our animals was that they always wanted to run away from us and always toward the east or northeast in the direction of the railroad. It seemed that the change and new surroundings affected the dumb creatures even more than it did people. The two first calves M. Larsen had from his cow ran away, and he never saw them again. The old cow was alone for a year, but then Mads didn't need to haul so much water.

Andreas Andersen had that problem in the beginning. It is dreary to live alone in a dugout, but finally Else had pity on him and came out from Chicago. So there was a wedding and another family. Andersen had to go buy another cow, and then another. His herd of cows and horses is among the best in the area.

Julius Nielsen who was the first man here had three cows when this writer interviewed him a while after he had settled. He now, with his three sons, has about 400.

After 1890 quite a few Danes came, and after 1900 many of the young have built their homes here. The settlement has grown, and land, which could not



The first schoolhouse in P. Larsen's district.

find buyers, no matter how cheap, is now in demand. There are good buildings on several farms, and more are planned. Much land is under cultivation; most people have automobiles; and Sidney (30 miles), Kimball (20 miles) and Potter (11 miles) don't seem so far away.

When we first lived here, it was a lonely life, but then it became a custom to have parties or gatherings that always were fun and sometimes even useful and edifying because we learned to know each other. We were quick to see the faults and drawbacks and to leave it at that, but as we gathered and visited, we came to understand each other better. Where there were faults there were also virtues. Here I truly believe it can be said of us that we have overcome the bad. We don't have so many of the old time winter or summer parties. Of course the ladies have their Aid Society meetings on alternate Tuesdays year round, but maybe that should be called business. The men have not yet started any kind of organizations.

Cowboys and Wild Horses

Jacob Nielsen, son of the first Dane out there, was for many years the best horseman and cowboy among the Danes, and no American surpassed him either. If he couldn't bring a wild cow or steer in when he was at a round up, it was no use sending anyone else to do it. He never failed.

At one Fourth of July rodeo there was a prize to the one who could catch a steer, bring it down and tie it so it had to lie there. Of course, Jacob Nielsen was there on his tried and true horse Rip. When the time came , six wild steers were released. The young men sat ready in the saddle with spurs on, and each had 45 feet of the best rope available. They swung the rope over their head, and each man took after a steer. "Yes—child's play—it went so easily there was no work to it," someone might say, for in two minutes the wild animals lay bound and helpless. But there had been work, when you saw the sweat dripping

down the faces of the cowboys. I said in two minutes, but Jacob was the day's hero. His steer was bound in one minute, fifteen seconds.

For this event the horse must be trained. It must be quick before the steer gets to running too fast, and when the steer is roped, the rope is fastened to the pommel of the saddle while the horse turns and goes the opposite direction to pull the steer down. Then the horse stands alone and holds the rope taut while the cowboy runs back and ties all four legs of the animal which lies and doesn't know but what he has been killed. If he ever had a minute to come to his senses, the last would have been worse than the first.

Jim Nelson and Vernon A. Nelson, brothers and sons of L.K. Nelson, have broken more of the half wild horses here than anyone else. They had up to 100 broncos—Indian ponies—and Oregon horses at one time, besides about 100 of less wild dispositions. This is a dangerous and uneasy life to care for all of them and tame them for harness or saddle, but without the training they have almost no value. All the horses are marked on the neck or are branded L.K.

One morning Vernon said he was going to Sidney and would ride Skip , a very wild little mare but fleet as an antelope. He saddled up a tame hose and rode out to hunt for Skip. She came home with a herd of tame horses and was under a shed before she realized it. With a lucky throw she was roped, but if there had not been strong hands and solid poles, she would not have been saddled that morning. She would jump over both buildings and men, but everything worked because there was a good plan, carefully followed.

First the bit, then the saddle and then lead her out and away from the wire fencing, because she would certainly lose the little sense she had when besides all the rest, she found there was a man in that saddle. But it wasn't easy for Vernon either because he could not touch her even with a finger tip. So he had to grab the pommel or the horn and jump into the saddle before the mare realized it, and what would come next was anybody's guess.

His mother was watching, but she turned away for a second and when she looked again Vernon and Skip were motionless on the ground. There were tears in her eyes—she thought he was dead or at least had broken legs. They lay there for 15 minutes, and the tension was hard for the mother. But Vernon was working all the time. Both feet were in the stirrups and one leg was under Skip. With one hand he had to hold Skip's head so that she couldn't lift it and start to get up; with the other he had to work himself free from the saddle. When he accomplished that, they both jumped up unhurt. When the mare felt Vernon in the saddle, she jumped and turned a somersault. But now it was to start over. This time they were successful, but instead of heading east, the mare turned north. The reins were useless. He tried to swing his hand and his hat to force her in the right direction. There were no fences so the horse ran as she pleased, or at least not as Vernon wanted her to, but three hours after they had lain on the ground at home the mare trotted into the town of Sidney. It is 25 miles as the crow flies, but nobody knows how many miles they had covered.

This was in January , 1899. The days were short. He left in the morning and came home by daylight. Skip had gone over 50 miles that day, but she was just as wild the next day. Eventually she did become a useful animal both for riding and driving, but every time she was put out on grass, she forgot some of it again and sometimes she went without water for several days to stay out of Vernon's or Jim's hands. Such activities went on hundreds of times both in riding and driving , and often a horse would run around with saddle or harness on for several days before they could get hold of it.

The Church Work

by Pastor Falck

Most of our people here had connections with a congregation of our church somewhere in the land or were from districts in Denmark that were especially interested in the church. Even so it took about four years before the pioneers were numerous enough so they were able to and dared to ask for a pastor to preach God's word to them. Our Danish Lutheran Church at that time, as it is now for that matter, had not had its eyes opened to the importance of sending pastors out to find our people (Inner Mission people in the American setting). In this way many of our people were lost to our church. If there could have been Inner Mission at that time, it would have been the pastors and the poor pioneers who would have had to pay, and their pockets were nearly empty.

Pastor Hillman of the Norwegian synod visited the settlement in 1889. He had a service for the Danes and Norwegians, but he never came back. When Julius Nielsen's wife became ill and wanted to talk to a pastor, Nielsen talked to L.K. Nielsen about it; he knew Pastor A.M.Andersen in Fremont, Nebraska. He came out in 1890, and he came several times and had services and school for the children.

One time he had Pastor A. Kirkegaard from Minden, Nebraska along. He had an extensive mission activity here in the west, so he came to serve us here. At his suggestion, a congregation was formed May 8, 1892, and they called Kirkegaard to be their pastor. He worked here for several years. While he was here, a consumptive student, P.F. Rasmussen, came out in hopes that his health would improve. He conducted services and taught Sunday School. His health did not improve, and he died in 1894.

Then the congregation was served by seminary student A.M. Nielsen, Pastor S. Johnsen from Denver and Pastor Carl Wilhelmsen from Minden until in 1899 Pastor E. Hansen became the first resident pastor. He lived in Potter.

They already had a cemetery, and now a parsonage was built, which has been enlarged and provided with a well. He served several small settlements in Banner Co. and Duel Co., and had many tough trips with horse and buggy. In December, 1900 he resigned for health and financial reasons, and moved away.

In the summer of 1902 Pastor J. Madsen came and was the pastor until March of 1904. In 1900 the group rented the 40 acres of "school land" on which the parsonage was built. They needed a church, and Madsen called a congregational meeting. Build a church! Where in the world would that money come from? One had a hard enough time keeping body and soul together and pay a little to the pastor. One of the first resident pastors was paid $5.00 per month. But there were divided opinions; sharp words were spoken; and the women cried. There was no church built after that meeting.

Peter Larsen's house (1917).

But already here at the beginning of his life work it became apparent as so many times since, that Pastor J. Madsen, the quiet, undemanding man, wanted what he wanted, as many do, but also what not many can say, he could get what he wanted. He went about from man to man.

Then Rasmus Nielsen and others went down to Sidney Drove and broke stones. Old Jens Pedersen came with his trowel and put the stones together. Julius Nielsen took care of the woodwork, and the result was one of the most elegant little town churches, with entry and altar three steps up from the nave that I have seen over here. Altar equipment is there and the building is worth $2800.00. The church is connected to the parsonage by a stone wall, and it all looks very romantic. Then Madsen planted some trees under the roof gutters so they would get enough water and some bushes that enliven the treeless area.

From here Pastor Madsen moved to Brush, Colorado and began his important work there.

From 1904 to 1906, Chris Pedersen was the pastor, installed by Pastor J. Møller from Denver who became his successor in 1906. Møller was ill with consumption when he came, and he died in 1907. His widow and his little son still live there.

Then the call was vacant for a year while Pastor Weisman from Denver visited them. On March 1, 1908, C.H. Schmidt became the pastor and stayed till July, 1915, from which time the writer of these lines has been there.

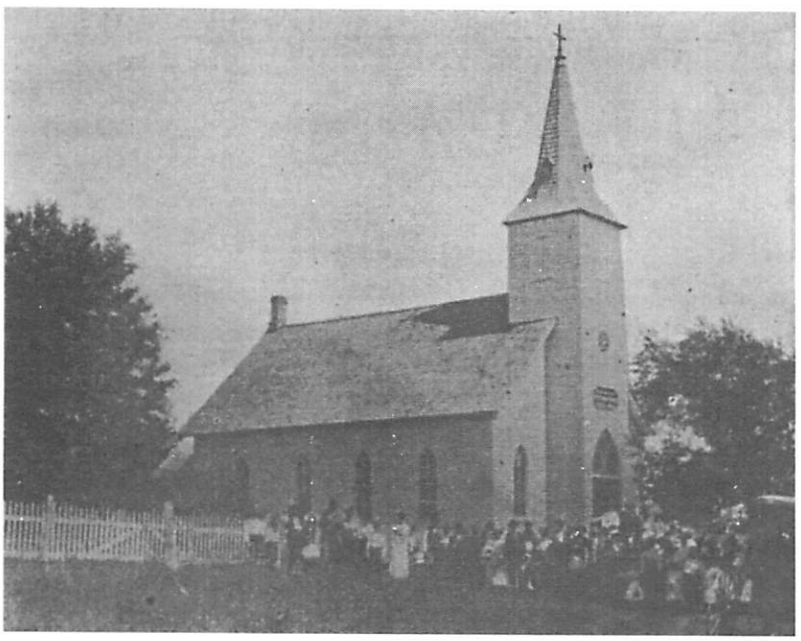
The colony in Banner Co. dissolved little by little. Pastor Pedersen went to Deuel but that group too is all but dissolved. At Curtis, Pastor C.H. Schmidt started a congregation and visited other locations nearby.

Eleven miles southeast of the church and about 15 miles west in the town of Putz there are small Danish settlements that receive the word of God from here. North of the train station at Dix and in the town there are some connections.

Our Luther League has as its goal to work for Home Mission and supply travel expenses for the pastor who is seeking Danes as far as he can. Youth meetings have been held for many years, and in 1914 a Luther League was formed.

There have been Sunday School and vacation Bible school since work began here, as well as the Ladies Aid. Being so far from other Danes people felt the need of getting together, not only in church but in good social gatherings. This need is met by two Sunday afternoon young people's meetings each month and our family meetings where we eat, sing and share a good book together.

Danes in Kimball Co. include 46 born in Denmark and 43 born in America; in Cheyenne Co., respectively 64 and 39; in Banner Co., 18 and 111; and in Deuel Co., eight and 17.



Church at Kennard, Nebraska.

From Kennard, Washington County

Niels J. Andersen
Written 1908

One evening in May, 1869, my brother and I started walking from Omaha to reach a place in Washington Co. about 40 miles from town. That was here in Kennard where I took land. Early the next spring I moved out here and have been here ever since. Right after we moved, we had a blizzard from March 13-15, 1870 so bad that in almost 38 years I have not lived through one like it. Just one night, January 12, 1888 could compare, but that was just one night. The other one raged for three days and three nights. My brother and I lived in a hut, and when the storm was over, we carried 20 wash tubs of snow out. A neighbor came over on the first day since his hut was full of snow. We had three horses, and all they got was snow that we melted for them. The worst was fuel. I chopped up a bed frame and burned that. We had to go to the neighbor to feed his horses, so we brought back some of his. One day we went over to feed his horses and there was a cow none of us recognized, since none of us had one yet. She kicked the neighbor and ran off. Later we found her half a mile away, frozen stiff. We survived the storm as well as all the other difficulties ever since.

When I had worked off my homestead, I moved to Blair and lived there for four months in the summer of 1876. Here I experienced another kind of storm—a cyclone. It did a lot of damage. Among other things it lifted my neighbor's house, turned it around, and since it didn't fit, it shattered into a 1000 pieces. There were only three Danes in Blair at that time, and the four months I lived there was the only time I have lived anywhere other than Kennard since 1870.

June 13, 1896 another cyclone went over Herman. It took the whole town except for a couple of houses. Someone who saw it from a couple of miles away said it looked as though a hand with five fingers reached down from the clouds and took everything. There could be a lot to tell of adversity and hard times. I lost my dear wife June 7, 1898, and since then I have been alone with the children. But I would rather remember the bright sides of life and tell of them.

As soon as we moved here in 1870, we began to plant trees, for there wasn't one tree for miles around. We had luck with our plantings, as can be seen by the many and large trees now growing. The young people say we have planted too many, but we older ones don't agree. We have had firewood for 30 years; we have enjoyed seeing them grow and thrive; and every year we have had the pleasure of seeing the birds that build and live in them. If these trees disappear, everything will be bare and desolate. So we older ones beg the young to

be lenient with the trees at least as long as we are alive.

When we first came out here, everything was so quiet that we were almost sick when the wind didn't blow. At least it brought some movement and activity with it. Without it, everything seemed dead. It was so wonderful when there were trees and birds, but perhaps that can't be understood by those who haven't experienced it both ways. Financially things have gone well for us, because land now sells for $100.00 an acre, and we have had good crops all the time.

Late in the 1870s we started a congregation and had a Norse pastor serving us—Rev. Saim. He stayed only a year. Then Pastor Larsen from Moen came. He stayed 26 years. Now we have Pastor Henriksen from Jutland who has been here for three years. We have a church with a cemetery around it where Pastor Saim and over 100, mostly older people, now rest. There are many grave stones. The most expensive cost $550.00.

The last confirmation class included 21 young people, and that day there were about 500 in church. Usually there are not nearly so many.

The church was built in 1884 and dedicated September 17, the day after the birth of my youngest son. My eldest son is a pastor in Willmar. As far as I know, he is the first Danish Lutheran minister who is born, baptized, confirmed and educated to the ministry here in America. One of my daughters has played the organ in our church for 12 years.

The church does not belong to any synod.

The Danish Colony in Platte County, Nebraska

By S.S. Sørensen
and Pastors
Chr. Christensen and K.C. Bodholdt

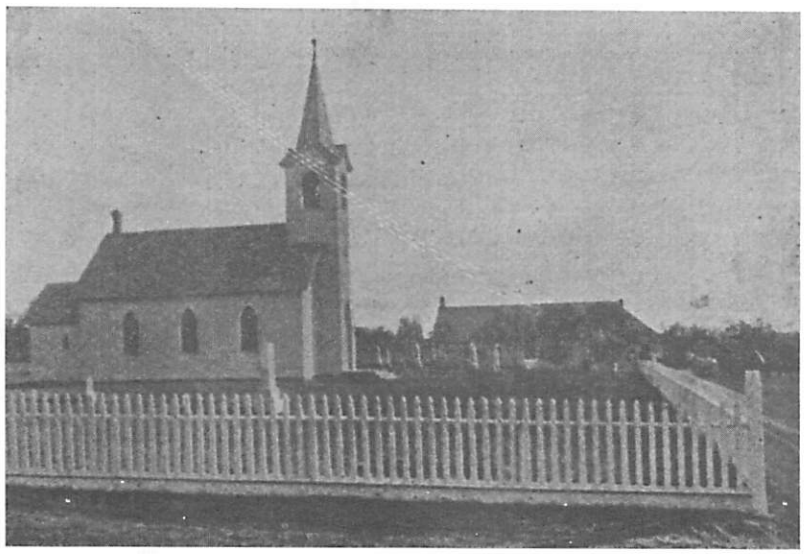
Looking Glass is the name of a creek which runs through western Platte Co., and the area is named for the stream. The first Danes to arrive here were Hans Christensen with his wife and five children. They came in 1872 from Lindeballe Parish near Vejle. A year later his brother, H.N. Christensen and their brothers-in-law Jens Brandt and Karl Stejner arrived. In the next two or three years several families came from the east. They had been working at mines near New York. Half the land was "free land" that could be homesteaded, and the other half was railroad land selling for $3 to $4 per acre.

In 1879 Mikkel Sørensen and Jens Christensen (Hesselballe) from Gadbjerg Parish near Vejle came. The first had a wife and nine children; the latter, a wife and five children. By that time all the free land was taken, but railroad land was cheap and could be bought on good terms. These two families and those that came later bought of that.

The climate then was dry with clear sunny days both winter and summer. When rains came, the skies were cloudy only until the thunder shower passed. Most of the farmers then lived in sod houses, but it could be cozy inside the thick walls which no frost could penetrate. They were smoothed and whitewashed inside. When the old settlers look back, it seems that most of them remember their happiest time as the time in the soddies.

Until 1880, spring wheat was their only crop, and it was hauled to Columbus up to 50 miles away. In 1880 two branch lines were laid, one to Genoa and St. Edward from Columbus. These were the closest towns for the Danes. The other went to Platte Center and Humphrey. By this time raising corn began, especially since after three or four years of raising wheat, the ground refused to produce wheat as it had the first year or two. When there was plenty of rain, the corn crop increased so much that it brought only 10 to 15 cents per bushel. Hog raising increased to use up the extra corn, but then hog cholera thinned out the numbers. A new railroad line, the Chicago Northwestern, came in 1887, and the town of Lindsay became the nearest depot station.

In 1891 a hailstorm covered most of Looking Glass Valley. These storms became the dread of the area. Like all other places in Nebraska, 1894 was a year of poor crops. The settlement grew in these years. More new people moved in, often young people, who rented farms easily in the hard times after 1894. But when land prices rose, many left, and that situation has continued.



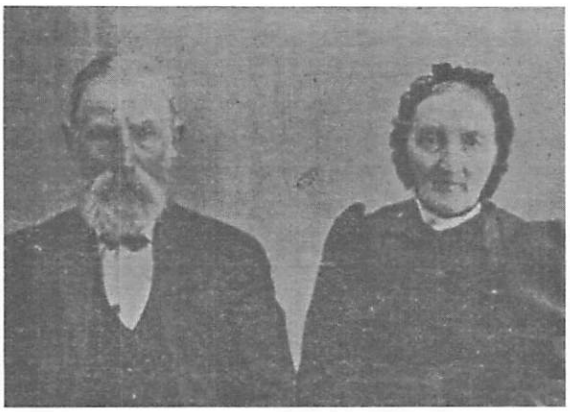
St. Ansgar's Church

Little by little, winter wheat has become a more important crop even though it is often ruined by hail. Alfalfa and red clover are beginning to take the place of corn and oats as main crops.

The two towns, Lindsay to the southwest and St. Edward to the northeast had several Danes as business people. Newman Grove just north of the colony had many Danes too, but it is essentially a Norwegian town which lies next to a large Norse Settlement. Scandinavians in Platte, Boone and Madison County number in the thousands but only a few are Danes. There are about 200 families, and most of them live in Looking Glass Valley. No Danes from this area held any prominent offices in public life.

For several years the pioneers had no regular church services. They gathered in homes, sang their hymns and read a sermon. Hans Christensen who had an easily influenced religious nature often spoke about the sermon that had been read. In 1879 a congregation was formed served from the Hauge synod. The H.N. Christensen and Brandt families were the foundation for this congregation which took the name of Bethesda and built a church east of Looking Glass. Later on they were served by the Blair synod, and it has belonged to the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church and has a pastor from there.

In 1884 St. Ansgar's congregation was formed west of Looking Glass by some of the pioneers. M. Sørensen and his son S.S. Sørensen, Jens Christensen and several others who had come after 1879 could not thrive spiritually in the first congregation where the Norwegian preaching was strange to them. They were fortunate to get Pastor K.C. Bodholdt from Marquette to visit them which he faithfully did for three years. In 1887 Pastor P. Kjølhede moved there and became the congregation's first resident pastor. The next year the beautiful



Mikkel Sørensen and wife.

church was built next to the cemetery and parsonage. The pastors from the Danish Church that have lived there include N.C. Strandskov, N.P. Hald, R. Jensen, J.J. Larager and then N.C. Strandskov again.

Business meetings and the young people use a large meeting place, a gymnasium built in 1894 and considerably enlarged in 1907. It is near the church. There are also a couple of stores nearby.

The first Dane in these parts, Hans Christensen died in 1906. Mikkel Sørensen and his wife celebrated their silver wedding anniversary on October 31, 1907. The picture of the old people was taken that day. In mid March 1908, they and their two sons moved to the new town of Askov in Minnesota. Mrs. Sørensen still lives there.

Pastor K.C. Bodholdt's Story

In his little book, *On the Prairie in Pioneer Days*, Bodholdt tells quite a bit about his visits to Looking Glass which gives a good picture of the situation and experiences of those days. The following is excerpted from his book.

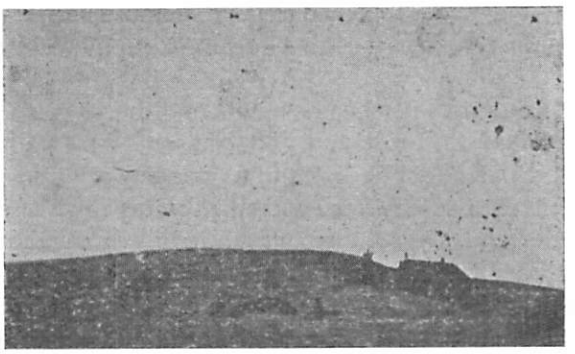
Early in the 1880s we were only three pastors of the Danish church in Nebraska: namelly Gydesen in Omaha, Madsen in Howard Co., and I in Hamilton, Co. Madsen and I had to be constantly traveling missionaries. I was home only two Sundays each month. The other two I was visiting other groups. The important thing was to find countrymen and having found them, and found a way to get the Word of God to them, to do so. This, however, was not always an easy matter. For one thing, they were spread out in little groups and for another thing many of them were suspicious of the synod I represented. It was called the Grundtvigian Synod, and Grundtvigianism for many of them was something strange, something not to get mixed up with, certainly not Lutheran and probably heretical. The Danes were strengthened in these suspicions by Norse pastors and even by some Danish pastors working in the Norwegian

S. S. Sørensen's farm 1894.

synod. Fortunately there were usually some in each place that knew better so that with their help we found help and support in the work.

When I had been in Hamilton Co. for a while, I was told that there was a settlement of Danes in the northern part of Nebraska, that is, north of the Platte River. (With great difficulty Bodholdt made contact with them and continues his story.) I went up there at the appointed time. The nearest railroad station was St. Edward, where I was met and transported by wagon 12 miles or so. From the man who came to get me I found out that Pastors Madsen and Gydesen had been there some years before but had given up coming. A Norwegian pastor belonging to the Hauge Synod had come for a while and a little church had been built where he held services. On the Sundays he was not there, a sermon was read by one of their members who had volunteered to do so. This had gone quite well for a time, but now the man had begun to do the preaching. He lacked both clarity and maturity so now it wasn't going so well. The sermons became fanatical with a Methodist bent; they became wilder and unhealthy. Some people were afraid and had withdrawn, and a few were persuaded to go along with it. The whole situation was in confusion.

I came to the settlement. The man who was the driver and told me about the background was a young man named Søren Samuel Sørensen, son of Mikkel Sørensen. I landed in their home that night, the first time I was there. It was in every way a fine family but poor as most of them were. They lived in a two room soddy. There wasn't much furniture and most was homemade. This was in pioneer times when people knew how to be satisfied with very little. In spite of the poverty everybody in the home seemed in good spirits; they were satisfied and happy. I was welcomed by the whole family—it was not a small one. One unframed photograph hung by a string over the bed in the front room. Since this was the only picture decorating the walls, it is not so strange that it caught my eye. To my surprise it was a picture of old Pastor Svejstrup who was at that time pastor in Vejen between Kolding and Ribe, and with whom



Mikkel Sørensen's sod house 1880

I was personally acquainted. "Do you know that man?" I asked at once. "Yes, that's for sure," was the answer. " He confirmed me, but he was pastor in Nørup at that time," the wife continued. "He was a good man that I'll never forget," and she continued giving him well-deserved high praise.

Since, as I said, I was well acquainted with Pastor Svejstrup, we had a common point in our background, so now I was given a description of the land here and its people, as well as some of the family history. A number of the Danes around Looking Glass were from Vejle in Denmark, including the Mikkel Sørensen family. A couple of their older children had been taught by Professor Balling whom they remembered with great love. Mikkel Sørensen had been a smallholder in Denmark without hope of anything better. As so many others they caught what they called "America fever" and emigrated in the hope that they would be able to work themselves up to a better life. How they found their way to Nebraska and to Looking Glass, I can't remember. Land was cheap then, and they had a good-sized piece and had managed to build both a house and barn, both soddies, of course. With what little money they had along from home and living frugally they had bought horses, a wagon and farm tools that were most necessary for them to work the ground. By the time I got there, they had a good start.

But one thing the family had missed—the preaching of the word in their mother tongue. So it was a real joy for them that I came, and time after time they expressed the hope that this desire would be fulfilled. The very same evening the hymnbook was brought out, and we could sing together some of our known and dear hymns. "Just so people will come," said Sørensen, "but that Norwegian pastor and the man who acts as preacher will probably set up resistance."

The next day we held a service, and probably most of the resident Danes were there. The church was a little wooden structure, but it was cozy. There was an altar and a baptismal font. I preached there gladly, proclaiming salva-

tion in Jesus, and it did seem that there were listeners. In the afternoon and again in the evening people gathered at M. Sørensens' where we spoke with each other and sang and all seemed as good as could be. It was agreed that I should come again as soon as it could be arranged, and I was happy to promise to do so.

A couple of months later I came again, and the service again was in the little church. While I was preaching, I noticed some men walking around outside. I thought it was odd, but didn't think it meant anything bad. When we had sung the last hymn and before I had taken off my robe, these men marched up the aisle to the altar. One of them was the man who read the sermon when the Norwegian pastor wasn't there. In loud voices and holy tones they now branded me as a seducer who had sneaked in to lead people from the true faith. I was no Christian but a Grundtvigian, and in their opinion that was the worst of all heresies. I tried to explain to them that they were on the wrong track, and besides I had been invited and no one was forced to come to listen if he did not want to. But I had the right to preach to those who wanted to hear me. And as far as the accusation that I was neither Christian nor Lutheran but a false teacher, I could prove that I was sent out by a Danish Commission to carry on Danish-American mission over here. Among those people I could name were professors Nielsen and Madsen, and pastors Skatt Rørdam, Brandt, Svejstrup and others. Whatever I said made no difference. They all talked at once and condemned me for one thing after another. The people in the church were restless and uncomfortable, and it didn't look good. I didn't know if I was bought or sold. Except for the Sørensen family's stance, I had no idea how any of the others felt about me. Then there was a change in the situation so I could sense that there were friends present. One of the men threatened me with a closed fist, but in that same moment I stepped over the altar rail, stood right up against him, and said, "You threaten me with your fist; I haven't done anything but preach for this group about salvation in Jesus Christ. If you want to fight me for that, go ahead. Your fist doesn't scare me."

Then the congregation arose; some men came up and said, "Pastor Bodholdt, follow us out of the church." At the same time others reproached the men who had attacked me in the church.

When I came outside, I announced that I would have a meeting in the afternoon at M. Sørensens, and I was sure anyone who wanted to come would be welcome. In the afternoon every bit of space was in use—even the bed became seating. I talked to them about their childhood home and the church there, which as "the Danish church" was reaching out a hand to everyone over here who hadn't forgotten what God in love had given them in their church. After the meeting, a congregation was organized—true, of only three families, but it was a start. And I promised to come once a month as far as possible.

(After this, Bodholdt tells of another attempt to defame him and hurt the little congregation, by trying to close the schoolhouse to them, but the attempt failed.)

The work now went its regular way. The attendance grew, and there was more regularity in the work. I came once a month and was always glad for my visit up there.

The first years I came, it was always one of the M. Sørensen family who came to get me at the depot and brought me back. These trips were not always that pleasant, especially in the winter. Usually it was the eldest son, the previously mentioned, Søren Samuel Sørensen, who drove for me. He had gone to school in Denmark to Professor Chr. Balling , had attended folk high school, as I remember, and was an alert and interested young man. In the winter when there wasn't so much to do except to care for the animals, he was the teacher for his brothers and sisters. He read with them, told them stories, and in that way made up for the lack of Danish school. The congregation also was the object of his faithful support. He died a few years ago. A little memory I include here:

One Saturday evening when he came to town to get me, he sat and told me about his childhood home and how things had been in Denmark, and of his hope for a bright future over here. In Denmark things at times were very hard, and here it was much the same, but by hard work over here they had better prospects than they had in Denmark. What he and his family had both missed the most, especially his parents, was the preaching of the Word in the mother tongue. Since you have come here, it has helped that loss. Now it is a matter of this little congregation growing and being strong enough to get a church and a pastor. But, he added, with God's help that will happen, because our Lord has heard our prayers and helped us to begin, and He will also help us continue.

As we came near the colony, he said to me, "Can you see that orchard over there?" That orchard, as far as I know, the only one still in that area, lay on a hill and could be seen far over the prairie. Yes, I could see it. "Yes," he said, "Where that orchard is there are 40 acres of land, owned by a man who lives east of here, which I think could be purchased. When I am at home and think of the future, I think that would be a suitable place for our church. It should be next to the orchard. Don't you think that would be a beautiful and suitable location? The church would be visible for most of the settlement." I had to agree that there could hardly be a better location for a church, but in my heart I thought it would be a while before these poor settlers could manage to build a church. But it happened, as Sørensen had hoped, and it wasn't too long before his wish was fulfilled. In that place the congregation really did build a church, parsonage, and meeting house, and at the same time got their own pastor.

In many ways it was a festive occasion for me to come to that little circle in Looking Glass. People did everything they could to make my visit festive. In the winter Sørensen had been out on the prairie with a gun before I came, and at gathering the table was enhanced by a partridge, hare or "snipe". It was very moving to see how thankful and happy they were in that home when they could gather together for a Danish worship service.

The Danish Settlement at Ruskin, Nuckolls, County Nebraska

By K.T. Deden
(written in 1908)

In the fall of 1873 I landed in New York, and from there I went west to find some relatives in Nebraska. It was easy enough to get to Omaha, but there I found nobody who was acquainted with Henrietta Post Office (now Ruskin). I was told, however, that it was beyond Hastings. There I was told about Carlton, where the railroad ended and that I should proceed in a certain direction. Luckily I found a Slesviger, who responded to my request and with my offer of payment would be brave enough to go out on the Nebraska prairie. It was winter, the first part of December; everything was covered with snow and ice. We rode in the direction we had been told, the Slesviger with a rod in his hand, and I with a compass. We went over hill and dale and frozen streams about 25 miles; but by evening we stopped at a sod house where there was a sign on the door: Henrietta Post Office.

I was now in the Danish settlement at Spring Creek, Nuckolls Co. and found, besides my relatives Nis Riber and Wilhem Riber, both of whom were married, two elderly people, Jesper Christensen and his wife, who had four sons and two daughters. Also there were two young, unmarried men Niels Andersen and Lars Wadum, all from the Aalborg area. Almost all the men had taken homesteads there, and most of them had come from Wisconsin. I decided on the same life style by buying the right to a homestead.

We all lived in sod houses. Not much land had been cultivated; it was a slow process to convert the prairie to agriculture since farm implements were not adequate. The horses were small and old, and the wagons were not first class. But we all had bright hopes. First and most important was getting food, until we could make contact with the rest of the world which was far away from us since it was 25 miles to the two nearest market places, Edgar in Clay Co. and Hebron in Thayer Co. The first couple of years we had to travel to Beatrice, 70 miles, to get flour and other necessities of life. For many years we didn't have a doctor; even if one had been available, there would be no way to pay him. Fortunately we had very little sickness. That belongs to a higher, refined world.

We had few refinements. We didn't spend time considering whether we could make our own furniture. We had no choice; if we wanted a bed, we hammered a bed together. If we wanted our feet under a table, we didn't discuss whether it should be veneered or polished. I have never before or since seen so many furnishings with crooked legs; with a little imagination such crooked legs could be taken for artistic design. The food was substantial but with not much variation. Salt pork was the principal food. Our biggest diffi-

culty was that rain found its way through the clay roof, and at that time it could rain a great deal. Then it might happen that a whole family could take refuge under the table. After such a shower the floor would be soaked through for several days.

The winter was hard then, and a man who didn't have a tree on his property had to go two or three miles from his home to get wood; coal was just a name for us. But when winter was over and the spring work in the fields began, then the walking began in earnest. Today, on the contrary, the farmer does his work while sitting. How we got the seed into the ground without a corn planter may be a puzzle for some people, but this was the solution: we tied a bag with seed corn around our waist and sharpened a stick; equipped this way we began our work by pushing the stick into the ground and letting two or three kernels of corn fall into the hole.

This was not the worst part of pioneer life. It didn't matter so much that the work was hard when one works with hope; but when that begins to falter, it looks very doubtful, and it was truly doubtful in 1874 when the grasshoppers like clouds settled down over us and ate everything in the fields, even the window frames. The Indians on the other hand, have never bothered us. It sometimes happened that they disturbed the first pioneers, but it ended peacefully, and along with the Indians, the buffalo also vanished, and the land was now open for civilization.

The first year was therefore hard to endure, and there seemed to be little progress; but after about ten years when the land was cultivated and access to the delivery of farm produce had been helped by railroads there was an increase in neighboring towns, more adequate houses were built, and situations improved. It didn't come in a flash, understandably, when banks charged 24% interest, and interest secured by property was ten percent. A quarter section of land could be bought for $400.00, while the price now is $12,000 . Since 1902 there has been great progress. This is shown by the well cultivated farms, livestock, plantings and houses.

There are about 200 Danish families in the colony. Ever since 1874 church work has been active here. Pastor A.M. Andersen visited for the first time in December of that year, when he walked there from Edgar, a trip of 25 miles. When he left Dannebrog, it was four years before another Danish pastor looked up the countrymen in this area. In 1880 Pastor H.P. Bertelsen settled among them and shared their situation with them for one and a half years. From 1883 until 1889 the Norwegian pastor H.C. Rornaes came once a month from Kansas. At that time the church conflicts began, since some wanted a Danish pastor and adherence was divided between the Blair synod and the Danish church, and also between the two sides: the Inner Mission and the Grundivigian. At one time both Pastor A.M. Andersen and P.L.C. Hansen came and preached. Later, Pastor R.H. Ravn lived there, and after him, Pastor N.P. Simonsen at the same time that Pastor A.M. Andersen continued his visits. When the Blair Synod and the Mission Society united, two congregations were formed, one of the United and one of the Danish Synod, and that is the way it is today.

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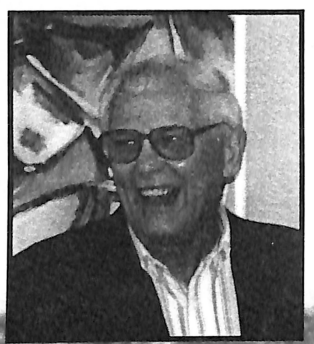
John W. Nielsen, editor



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