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Danish Language and the Church

by Robert A. Olsen

The first documented account of a Danish language church service on American soil were those conducted by the Rev. Rasmus Jensen, a Danish Pastor who was part of the Jens Munk led expedition of 1619-1620 to find the Northwest Passage to the Orient. Munk's diary states "We celebrated the Holy Christmas Day solemnly, as is a Christian's duty, with a goodly sermon and a mass. After the sermon we gave the priest an offering...."¹ Unfortunately only Munk and two of his 64 men who embarked on this journey survived the winter and returned home, thus resulting in no permanent Danish settlement. Jensen himself died on February 20, 1620 and was laid to rest near present day Churchill, Manitoba, Canada where the two ships had been forced to winter. Several theories exist to explain the tremendous loss of life that winter, including food poisoning due to eating bear meat that was not prepared properly, as well as the extreme elements of the Northern Canadian winter.²

The United States Census Bureau has released a new census study every ten years since 1790. Included in this study is a vast amount of information used for an infinite number of reasons by a multitude of organizations, companies, and individuals.

This first census contained information about people born prior to the American Revolution. Subsequent census (through 1840) only included the name of the head of household and grouped members of the household by age and sex. Beginning in 1850 every member of the household was recorded and listed by name, age, sex, color, occupation (of those over 15), country or state of birth, as well as whether or not they had been married within that year, gone to school, could not read or write and if they were either deaf, blind or insane. The 1870 Census also asked if a person's parents had been born in a foreign country. Other questions have been added over the years.

The Census has continued to change its format over the years and currently there are two forms used in the conduct of the census. Most people receive a simple form to answer basic questions,

however, one in six receive an extended form with which the bureau estimates much of the reported data based on this sampling. In 2000 approximately 83 million "short" forms were sent and an additional 15 million "long" forms. The short forms requests less information than is typically on your driver's license and takes about ten minutes to complete. The long form is estimated to take an average of 38 minutes. This census was also the first to allow respondents to identify themselves as being of more than one race. For more detail on how the census process works see the website:

<http://people.howstuffworks.com/census.htm>

The first United States Census to include any data on Religion in America was the 1850 Census when it included information on churches, church accommodations, and church property. The 1870 Census included statistics for organizations, edifices, sittings, and property. By 1890 it was expanded to include organizations, church edifices, seating capacity, halls/schoolhouse, seating capacity, value of church property, communicants or members, and ministers. Public law 94-521 prohibited the mandatory questioning of religious affiliation so the Bureau of the Census is not considered the source for information on religion. However, beginning in 1906 and running every ten years until 1936 there was a special census called the Religious Bodies Census conducted to report information about Religion in the United States.

The 1906 Report³ was the first such attempt to report language used in the conduct of religious services by all the various denominations. Prior to that census Lutheran Churches almost exclusively reported the only reference to foreign language and that was because many of the older synods included a national title in their name, for example the "Danish Church Association" or the "United Norwegian Church of America". The 1890 census reported a total of 8,364 Lutheran "organizations" of which only 1,816 used the English language exclusively.⁴ Non-Lutheran organizations reporting Danish and/or Danish-Norwegian or Norwegian-Danish organizations included the Regular Baptist (North) as well as the Methodist Episcopal Church. Forty-eight organizations were reported by the Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Wisconsin "Associations"⁵ of the Baptist church while the Methodist Episcopal

Church listed 93 Norwegian and Danish organizations (all in eight Midwest states)⁶ as well as 17 Northwest Norwegian and Danish missions⁷ conducting work among foreign populations.⁸

Of the 212,230 total religious organizations reporting data for the 1906 census just over 11.5%, or 24,594 of those reported used a foreign language (separately or combined with English) in the conduct of worship. By 1916 this number increased to 26,239 organizations, which still represented approximately 11.5% of the total reporting. Approximately 40% of those reporting the use of a foreign language as part of the 1906 report were Lutheran. Of the 9,808 Lutheran congregations reporting the use of one or more foreign languages (many also reported English) there were 326 that reported the use of the Danish language, or about 1/3 of one percent or one in 300. Of those 326 reporting organizations, 297 used the Danish language exclusively. In addition there were 138 other churches of various denominations reporting the use of Danish, 61 worshipping exclusively in Danish. Of those 34 were Baptist, 10 Seventh-day Adventist 9 Methodist and 8 others. (See Chart 1 below) The average size of the Lutheran congregations using Danish was 96 while the average non-Lutheran Danish-speaking church had 84 members. In total the average congregation numbered 92.

These numbers were obviously much smaller than those of their Swedish and Norwegian "brothers" and especially that of their German neighbors. The migration from Denmark was much smaller than that of other countries. Most Danish immigrants came to America during the years 1869 to 1914, when it is documented that approximately 300,000 left Denmark with the goal of a "new life" in a "new world" across the Atlantic.⁹ Many Danes quickly assimilated into the American culture while others became associated with their Norwegian brethren with whom they held a great commonality. The Union of Calmar (1397) had united all of Denmark, Norway (with Iceland), and Sweden (with Finland). This union would last with Sweden until 1524 when Gustav Vasa became King. The union with Norway, however, remained until 1814 when Denmark was forced to cede Norway to Sweden due to its losses in the Napoleonic Wars in accordance with the Treaty of Kiel.¹⁰ However, when

Norway separated from Sweden in 1905, the Norwegians elected Carl, a Danish Prince, as their new King. Taking a Norwegian name Haakon VII ruled Norway for over 50 years and was succeeded by his son Olav (born Alexander). The Danes and Norwegians were closely linked not only linguistically but also by heritage and history. With this in mind it is no surprise that the census reports numerous congregations within the Norwegian synods using the Danish language exclusively as well as many using a combination Danish-Norwegian.¹¹ With the exception of the Lutheran church the only denomination to establish a truly "Danish" church organization was the Baptists.¹² The work in the Seventh-day Adventist, Methodist, and Free (Congregational) church was always Danish-Norwegian (or Norwegian-Danish, depending on which group constituted the majority).

The people of Denmark gained religious freedom by the "Constitutional Act of the Kingdom of Denmark", (In Danish the "*Danmarks Riges Grundlov*"). This act, introduced on June 5, 1849 put an end to the absolute monarchy of the Country and also introduced religious freedom (or perhaps better referred to as "tolerance").¹³ Regardless of this "law", religious persecution still existed and led to the emigration of many Baptists and even more so the adherents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, commonly called Mormons. Denmark was second only to Great Britain in the number of Mormon proselytes to Utah. Mormon missionaries arrived in Denmark as early as 1850.¹⁴ The Baptist faith had actually been introduced on Danish soil as early as 1839. Julius Kobner, a Danish Jew and associate of Johann Gerhard Oncken, known as the "father" of European Baptists first met with Danes holding Baptist views. The Baptist Union was formed in 1849 and was instrumental in obtaining religious freedom in Denmark. These early converts to the Baptist faith were also prime targets for the proselytizing of the early Mormons in Denmark.

Noted historian George T. Flom¹⁵ maintained that the reasons for emigrating varied from country to country but in the case of Denmark included these eight primary influences, listed here in the order of importance: 1) the desire for material betterment and a freer, more independent life, 2) letters from relatives and friends

already in America, 3) Emigration Agents advertising, 4) Religious persecution, 5) Church Proselytism, 6) political oppression, 7) Military service, and 8) a desire for adventure. Influences 4 and 5 likely applied primarily to those of the Baptist and Mormon persuasion, and 6 and 7 to the situation in Southern Denmark and the changing borders with Germany (Schleswig-Holstein) between 1864 and 1920.

CHART 1

1906 United States of America Religious Bodies Census

(Congregations reporting the use of the Danish Language in the conduct of Worship Services)

Denomination	Number of Congregations	Danish Language Only	Total Membership
Seventh-Day Adventists	29	10	870
Baptist	50	34	3,581
Congregational	5	3	238
Friends	1		152
Independent	3	2	67
Latter Day Saints	3		2,529
Lutheran			
EL Synodical Conference of America	2	2	247
Norwegian ELCA	34	19	2,101
Eielsen's Synod	1	1	30
United Norwegian LCA	4	3	373
Danish Evangelical LCA	90	90	12,315
United Danish Evangelical LCA	195	182	16,195
Methodist	40	9	2,534
Moravian	2	2	110
Presbyterian	1		200
Episcopal	1		1,311
Salvation Army	1	1	16
Covenant	1		12
Free Mission	1		18
	464	358	42,899

These two charts gathered from the 1906 and 1916 Religious Bodies Census Reports detail the number of congregations and

membership of those congregations who report using Danish in worship. Included are the reporting congregations using only Danish or Danish along with another language, usually English.

CHART 2

1916 United States of America Religious Bodies Census

(Congregations reporting the use of the Danish Language in the conduct of Worship Services)

Denomination	Number Of Congregations	Danish Language Only	Total Membership
Seventh-Day Adventists	32	4	1,636
Baptist	41	7	4,212
Congregational	4		247
Independent	3		138
Latter Day Saints	1		1,231
Lutheran			
General Synod	2		207
Norwegian Church, Synod for	17		1,549
United Norwegian Church	4	1	599
Danish Lutheran Church	99	88	14,439
United Danish Lutheran Church	189	112	17,046
Methodist	41		2,377
Moravian	1	1	459
Free Church	5		290
	439	213	44,430
Icelandic Synod	14	11	1,830

While many Danes did not leave the motherland for religious reasons, they were nonetheless pleased with the religious freedom they found in America. Waldemar C. Westergaard states from North Dakota in 1906 that "Though the state religion in Denmark is Lutheran, there is hardly a member of the settlement who how professes the old faith" and "...the immigrants have gone through their period of severe discipline in the catechism of the Danish Lutheran Church...and...many on their arrival express freely their dislike for the compulsory religious study" and "have never been in

any haste to join any new church organization in this country.”¹⁶ He also indicates that while sects represented include Baptists, Presbyterians, Adventists, and Unitarians, most were not active members of any church body. It is generally accepted that as few as ten percent of the Danish immigrants joined ANY religious denomination. Based on the Religious Bodies census of 1906-1936 this would certainly appear to be accurate as this counts total members of “Danish” congregations, which of course would include children born in the United States as well as their Danish born parents.

The relationship between many Danes and their Norwegian “brothers” is also seen in the number of Danish pastors found within the ranks of the numerous Norwegian Lutheran synods. While the Norwegian-Danish Augustana Synod, founded in 1870 when the Scandinavian Augustana Conference split into Swedish and Norwegian-Danish groups, never had a single Danish pastor, the Norwegian-Danish Conference had eleven ministers born in Denmark. The Danes withdrew from that conference in 1884 to form a Danish Synod. Included among these Danes was the first president of the Conference, Claus L. Clausen. By 1903, even though The Norwegian Synod did not make a bid for the support of Danes, there were 24 Danish Pastors and twice as many Danish congregations within that Synod. Another eight Danish born ministers served in the smaller Norwegian synods, including the Hauge Synod as well as the United Church, the Lutheran Free Church and the Lutheran Brethren Synod.¹⁷

The Religious Bodies Census of 1916 was the second and last special census to report the use of foreign language in worship. Chart 2 indicates a small decrease in the number of congregations but a slight increase in membership continuing the use of the Danish language. English was gradually taking over in more and more of the congregations. The “Babel Proclamation”¹⁸ issued on May 23, 1918 by Iowa Governor William L. Harding, outlawing the “public use of ALL foreign languages” added reinforcement to this situation. This was near the end of World War I when antagonism against Germans and their language was escalating. While this order was repealed on December 4, 1918 by the Governor’s written statement

that it was "no longer in force as an Executive order" it had already had a major impact on many foreign-born and foreign speaking residents of not only Iowa but also elsewhere. The Danish population felt the impact of this proclamation, as well. According to the census reports of 1890, 1900, and 1910 Iowa had more Danish-born population than any other state in the Union before California edged them out for that distinction beginning with the 1920 census.¹⁹ The fourth article of Harding's proclamation was perhaps the most "difficult to swallow" for the Danes. It read: "FOURTH. Let those who cannot speak or understand the English language conduct their religious worship in their homes." As the 1916 census data listed below indicates there were still over 200 congregations using only the Danish language in worship in the United States and most likely most of them were the smaller rural congregations and with Iowa having more Danish-born residents than any state but perhaps California, it is likely that many would be impacted by Harding's proclamation. At this point in time even the theological seminaries still conducted their training in the Danish-Norwegian language.

Years earlier Iowa was actively recruiting immigrants to the state when in 1870 the Board of Immigration published *Iowa: The Home for Immigrants*, which was published not alone in English but also German, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish. By 1900 there were German immigrants in every one of Iowa's ninety-nine counties and they represented the largest immigrant group in the state.

Harding maintained that foreign language provided the "opportunity (for) the enemy to scatter propaganda." He believed his "proclamation" was legal under the first amendment. Many states passed legislation establishing English as the official language but Harding quickly became the laughing stock of the nation when five farm wives in Scott County were arrested for speaking German during a party line telephone conversation. By 1923, the U.S. Supreme Court guaranteed the freedom to communicate in any language.

Gradually English became the language of "the people" and foreign language services continued to decrease. The Norwegian-Danish Conference of the Methodist Church was absorbed into the American Methodist Church in 1943.²⁰ The Danish Baptist General

Conference ceased to exist in 1958.²¹ The Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church (the "Happy" Danes) became the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC) in 1953 and the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church (the "Holy" Danes") had already dropped the word Danish in 1946 and had become the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (UELC). The Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Free Church Association merged with the Swedish Evangelical Free Church in June 1950 and become the Evangelical Free Church In America.²² No other denominations ever established "official" Scandinavian Conferences even though many conducted missionary work among these immigrants.



John G. Matteson
Courtesy of the author

It is interesting to note that while Lutheran and Baptist Danes came from Denmark to the United States, the opposite was true of most other denominations. Almost single-handedly John G. Matteson was responsible for the establishment of the Scandinavian Seventh-Day Adventist movement not only on American soil but in Scandinavia as well. After working among many of the Danish and Norwegian immigrants in the Midwest and establishing a Danish

language church newspaper (1872) he traveled to Denmark where on May 30, 1880, the Danish Union Conference became the first self-supporting Adventist organization outside of the United States.²³ Also active in Denmark were the efforts of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints who sent missionaries to Denmark. Peter Hansen arrived in Copenhagen on May 25, 1850 and quickly began publishing translations of the Book of Mormon in the Danish language.

Today, the use of the Danish language is almost non-existent in worship. Other than an occasional service held either at Christmas or in connection with a "Danish" festival the language has become merely part of the Danish heritage in America. There are still, however, a few universities as well as other clubs and organizations that offer instruction in Danish.

The 1926 and 1936 Religious Bodies census no longer reported the use of foreign language but the word Danish remained in the descriptive titles of only three church bodies. These were the two branches of Danish Lutheranism, the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church and the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Free Church Association. As noted the DELC became the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC) in 1953 and merged with three other Lutheran bodies to form the LCA (Lutheran Church in America) in 1962. The UDELC became the UELC in 1946 and merged with two other Lutheran bodies to form the ALC (American Lutheran Church) in 1960. A fourth Lutheran body joined the ALC in 1963. In 1988, the ALC and the LCA, along with the new AELC (made up primarily of former Lutheran Church Missouri Synod congregations who had left to LCMS over theological issues in the 1960's) merged to become today's ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). The Norwegian-Danish Free Church Association (officially organized in 1910 but loosely formed by associations established in the late nineteenth century, which held bonds of fellowship with the Congregational Church) merged with the Swedish Free Church in 1950 to become the Evangelical Free Church in America (EFC).

The Norwegian-Danish Conference of the Methodist church had merged in the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1943 and the Danish Baptist General Conference remained in existence until 1958²⁴. These congregations were not reported in the census as separate denominations. The Danish Seventh-Day Adventists had never organized as an independent conference within their denomination however a loosely knit "group" had existed and listed 54 member churches in a report in their denominational newspaper, *Evangeliets Sendebud* ("*Evangelical Messenger*") on November 30, 1910. (Volume 39, Number 47).²⁵ The work of other denominations was never

sufficient to merit a conference and merely existed for a period to time to minister to those Danish-speaking adherents to that faith. Those congregations were many of the first to assimilate into the English speaking church organizations.

There has long been discussion about which church/congregation can claim to be the oldest "Danish" congregation in the US. It is well documented the first Lutheran worship services (and Danish, as well) conducted in North America were led by Rev. Rasmus Jensen on the shores of Hudson Bay, near present day Churchill, Manitoba, Canada in the winter of 1619-1620 during the ill-fated Jens Munk expedition mentioned earlier. This, however, obviously did not result in any permanent Danish settlement on American soil.

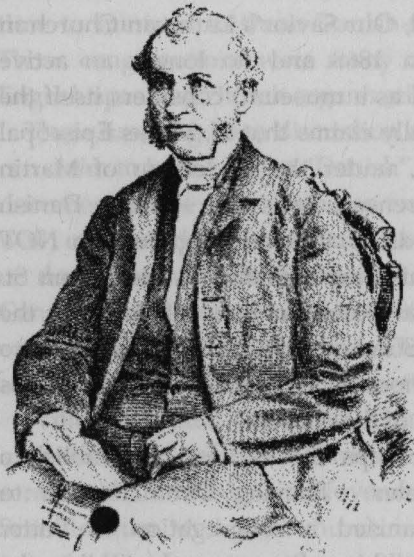
Willerup United Methodist Church (Cambridge, Wisconsin) was organized in April 1851, (Christian B. Willerup had preached his first sermon in Cambridge in November 1850.) and remains the oldest Scandinavian Methodist church in the world. This congregation is near the Koshkonong settlement in South-Central Wisconsin and has always been heavily Norwegian; however, the founding Minister Willerup was born in Denmark and came under the influence of John and Charles Wesley in the 1840's.

Many historians consider Emmaus Lutheran Church in Racine, Wisconsin to be the oldest Danish congregation in the United States but it was organized as the "First Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Church". This congregation eventually joined the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1897. Likely primarily Danish, it was in its early history a Scandinavian church. Other Lutheran churches lay claim to the title but it is difficult to officially "crown" any church with this distinction. The oldest Danish settlement in the United States is considered to be the one at Hartland, Wisconsin, where on May 5, 1867 the "Danish and German emigrants living in the vicinity of Hartland" gathered for the purpose of organizing a Lutheran congregation.²⁶ Also laying claim to this "title" is St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sheffield, Illinois, organized on October 24, 1869. The church, now on the National Register of Historic Sites (1973) was built in 1880 but the congregation closed its door in 1950. First Trinity Lutheran Church in Indianapolis, Indiana was formed as Trinity Danish

Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1868 and claims to be the oldest Danish church in the US. As well, Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Manistee, Michigan (founded in 1868 and no longer an active congregation but still maintained as a museum) considers itself the oldest. Rasmus Anderson²⁷ actually claims that St. Marks Episcopal Church in Waupaca, Wisconsin, under the leadership of Martin Sorensen, son of Rasmus Sorensen, was the oldest Danish congregation but the first records of that congregation do NOT support a claim of a totally Danish membership. A history on St. Mark's online website states that Sorensen first officiated at the church in Waupaca on Pentecost Sunday, 1856 and that from 1856 to 1870 he "conducted Sunday afternoon services for the Danish." This might indicate a Danish "branch" of the church.

The Danish Baptists were perhaps the earliest to establish a congregation in the United States. Leaving Denmark due to religious persecution, they organized a congregation in Potter County, Pennsylvania in 1854. Within a few years the "call to the west" enticed most of these people to travel further and their journey took them to Wisconsin where they settled near present day Raymond and organized the first permanent Danish Baptist church in the United States on November 10, 1856. This church was a member of the Danish Baptist General Conference until 1914 when it joined with the American Baptist Conference and became an English-speaking church.²⁸

The oldest Scandinavian congregation of the Seventh Day Adventist church is the Oakland congregation, located between Cambridge and Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. Christian B. Willerup, the aforementioned Danish born pastor of a nearby Methodist church, first ministered to these people and they became known as Seventh Day Methodists for a time. However, in 1861 John G. Matteson was called to Oakland as pastor. He also organized the oldest Danish SDA congregation at Poy Sippi, Wisconsin in 1863.²⁹ The Exira (Iowa) SDA church was one of the largest "Danish" church within the denomination.³⁰



Christian B. Willerup
Courtesy of the author

One of the largest and most significant congregations of the Norwegian-Danish Free Church Association was Salem Evangelical Free Church in the Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago.³¹ While this congregation was long a stronghold in the Norwegian community after it was organized in 1885 it actually had more Danish charter members than Norwegian.³² This work was always more Norwegian than Danish and therefore difficult to separate. Eventually there would be approximately 80 Norwegian-Danish churches associated

with the Free Church prior to its merger with the Swedish branch in 1950.³³

Even within the different Norwegian branches of the Lutheran church there were many Danish members as well as Pastors. The Danish born Claus Clausen is considered to be the "Father" of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. Other denominations also found leadership in men born in Denmark. Charles Anderson, born in Denmark in 1843 became a prominent leader in the early churches and history of what became the present day Covenant Church (known in the early days as the Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant). From 1928 until 1946 Copenhagen-born Thomas J. Bach served as Director of the Evangelical Alliance Mission (founded in 1890 as the Scandinavian Alliance Mission). The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) is headquartered in Wheaton, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago.³⁴

Salvation Army Cragin Corps #16 in Chicago appears to have been the only Danish-speaking corps with this "denomination" and merged with the Norwegian-speaking Kedzie Avenue corps in

1950's. There were several prominent Danish leaders within the Salvation Army but very limited work was conducted in the Danish language.³⁵

While the Norwegian-Danish Moravian church of Door County, Wisconsin and other varied locations were primarily Norwegian in membership the most prominent ministers within these churches was Danish born, including J.S. Groenfeldt who first came to the US (Ephraim, Wisconsin) in 1864 from Christianfeld, the Moravian community in Denmark. The other three pastors included his sons, Samuel and John Greenfield (he anglicized his name) and Christian Madsen.³⁶

The sole Danish-speaking Friends (Quaker) meeting appears to be one at Springdale, Iowa. There was a Danish Lutheran church in nearby West Branch and a sizeable "Quaker" population in that area, including the family of Herbert W. Hoover, the 32nd President of the United States.³⁷

There were several Danish speaking "wards" within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon) but the move to the English language was promoted and encouraged by LDS leadership. As late as 1991 there was a Danish-Speaking ward within the Liberty Stake in Salt Lake City, Utah. Peak membership during the years after the war had reached 129 and in May 1991 membership still numbered 47. Since then the Danish-speaking ward has been absorbed into the English-speaking and no longer exists.³⁸

A best guess would indicate that Golgotha (possibly also known as Calvary) Church in St. Paul, Minnesota is likely the Presbyterian congregation reporting the use of the Danish language. This congregation had ties with the Congregational Church and was served by several ministers trained at the seminary led by Danish-born Christian B. Trandberg in Chicago, where he trained numerous Danish-Norwegian pastors for early Congregational church which later became the foundation of the Norwegian-Danish Free Church Association.³⁹

Many of these denominations founded schools for the purpose of training their young people for service to the church. Some of these educational institutions still exist today and among them are: The original Augsburg Seminary was founded in 1869 in Marshall,

Wisconsin by the Scandinavian Augustana Synod (later the Conference of the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America). This school moved to Minneapolis in 1872 and although it trained Danish Pastors is historically looked upon as a Norwegian institution. As an institution of what many knew as the Lutheran Free Church (LFC) it merged with Luther Seminary in St. Paul in 1963, along with the LFC merger into the ALC.

The Norwegian-Danish Theological Seminary of the Methodist church was first established in 1875. This school would eventually find a home in 1884 on Sherman Avenue in Evanston, Illinois. When the Seminary merged into Garrett Theological Seminary the building continued to be used by Northwestern University. Today it stands as an office building. With the demise of the Swedish and Norwegian-Danish Seminaries in 1934 arose a new school called the Evanston Institute. That school evolved into Kendall College and relocated from Evanston to Goose Island neighborhood steps away from downtown Chicago in 2004. Its first president of the Institute was also the last President of the Norwegian-Danish Theological Seminary. Kendall College is renowned for his School of Culinary Arts. The work of the Norwegian-Danish Theological Seminary was absorbed into Garrett Theological Seminary on the campus of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

Under the leadership of N. P. Jensen, the Dano-Norwegian Baptist Seminary of Morgan Park, Illinois was founded in 1884. This school was associated with the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. In approximately 1913 it separated and became an independent Danish Seminary located on Washington Ave. In the 1920's it became a department of Des Moines College but would eventually return to the Chicago area where is operated a few years as a department within Northern Baptist Seminary. The Danish work was gradually absorbed into that of the English. The seminary at that time was located at 3030 Washington Boulevard on the west side of Chicago but relocated in the 1960's and still exists today in Lombard, Illinois.⁴⁰

Previous mention has been made of Peter Christian Trandberg and the Scandinavian students trained under his tutelage beginning in 1884 at the Chicago Theological Seminary (now a Seminary of the

United Church of Christ). CTS had been founded in 1855 to train pastors. Conflict between the school and Trandberg led to his leaving (1890) and establishing his own seminary, which he conducted until 1893 in Chicago where he trained no fewer than 24 Danish and Norwegian students. Several years later Danes and Norwegians within the Free Church Association established their own school, the Norwegian-Danish Bible Institute at Rushford, Minnesota in 1910. This school moved to Minneapolis 1916 and was renamed Trinity Seminary and Bible Institute in 1941 and became the school of the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Free Church Association. In 1949 it merged with the Swedish Evangelical Free Church and transferred to Chicago eventually relocating to Bannockburn (Deerfield), Illinois in 1961 where it still exists today as Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

In 1901 the Danes in and around Hutchinson, Minnesota built Ansgar College but after several difficult years it ceased to function as a school. The college building sat empty for several years. It found new life when the Danish-Norwegian Seventh-Day Adventists began the search for a new location for a school to train workers for their church. They had previously established a Scandinavian department at Battle Creek, Michigan. This department transferred to Union College in Nebraska when it was founded in 1890 and there was also a Scandinavian department at Walla Walla College in Washington State. A desire to separate the foreign language work within the church led them to the now defunct Ansgar College property, which they purchased in 1906, and it became the Danish-Norwegian Theological Seminary. The Seminary opened on September 28, 1910. As the need for training in the Danish language diminished the Seminary merged with the state academy at Maplewood in 1928 and transferred to the facility in Hutchinson. At that time the executive Committee of the Minnesota Conference agreed to a special course of two years of work above the 12th grade for students of Danish or Norwegian parentage wishing to prepare themselves for work among the Danish-Norwegian Adventists.⁴¹ The original college building was razed in 1980 and replaced by the new Maplewood Academy Administration building.

The Chapel of the new building is on the same site as the original college.

Former Danish-Lutheran colleges are better known in Danish circles and still exist today. Early education among the Danes was conducted at various Folk Schools established, primarily in the Midwest but also California. These would include schools at Elk Horn, Iowa, Ashland at Grant, Michigan, West Denmark in Wisconsin, Nysted, Nebraska, Danebod at Tyler, Minnesota, Kenmare, North Dakota, and Atterdag at Solvang California.⁴² Trinity Seminary and Dana College grew out of the schools (particularly Elk Horn) when it was established in 1884. Dana still exists today in Blair, Nebraska, while Trinity Seminary merged with Wartburg Seminary, located in Dubuque, Iowa in 1956 as part of the merger of several Lutheran synods to form the new American Lutheran Church.



Old Main on the campus of Grand View College, Des Moines
Courtesy of Grand View College Danish Immigrant Archive

A second Danish Lutheran College was founded in 1896 in Des Moines, Iowa. Grand View College many years the college existed as a two-year college but became a four-year institution in 1970. The Seminary was also part of merger in the early 1960's when the Lutheran Church in America was established and it became a part of Maywood Seminary, now the Lutheran School of Theology in the

Hyde Park area of Chicago. A short-lived seminary at West Denmark, near present day Luck, Wisconsin is a predecessor to the school in Des Moines.⁴³

The details of the Religious Aspects of the Danish Immigrant during the late 19th and early 20th century are wide and varied. It is hoped that this offers some insight into often times little known information about these emigrants from Denmark who came to America for many different reasons but found unbounded freedom in all aspects of their lives.

¹ Kenyon, W.A. *The Journal of Jens Munk 1619-1620*, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada, 1980, p. 25. See also Thorkild Hansen's *The Way to Hudson Bay*, Harcourt, Brace and World, New York, 1965.

² See article by Delbert Young in *The Beaver* (Canada's History Magazine) Winter 1973, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 9-15 and Young's book *Last Voyage of the Unicorn*, Clarke, Irwin & Company, Toronto, 1969.

³ Religious Bodies: 1906, Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Bulletin 103, E. Dana Durand, Director, Washington, D.C., 1910

⁴ Information taken from Eleventh Census of the United States 1890 Volume IX Report on Statistics of Churches in the United States, Washington, D.C., 1894.

⁵ These were listed as follows: Dane-Norwegian organizations in Iowa (9), Minnesota (11) and Wisconsin (11) as well as Danish organization in Nebraska (5) and Wisconsin (12). It should also be noted that both Kansas and South Dakota reported "Scandinavian" Baptist organizations, indicating the possibility of Danish congregations in those states, as well!

⁶ 54 of these 93 were found in Minnesota (29) and Wisconsin (25) with the remainder as follows: Illinois (10), Iowa (10), Michigan (5), Nebraska (2), North Dakota (5) and South Dakota (7).

⁷ Those reporting were Idaho (4), Oregon (5) and Washington (8).

⁸ Both the Baptist and Methodist church denominations also reported German and Swedish organizations in much larger numbers than the Danish or Dane-Norwegian work.

⁹ According to the 1920 Census there were just short of 297,000 emigrants from Denmark to the US in the hundred years between 1820 and 1920, barely 5,000 of those arriving before 1860 and the most arriving between 1880 and 1889 when the number totaled 85,342. See p. 324 "Immigrants and their Children", 1920 US Census Detailed Tables.

¹⁰ In return Denmark was to receive the Swedish holdings in Pomerania, but the treaty was never enforced and Pomerania passed to Prussia. Norway elected Christian Frederick of Denmark as their new King, however Charles XIII of Sweden, known as King Carl II of Norway, soon replaced him.

¹¹ See O.M. Norlie's book *History of the Norwegian People in America*, Minneapolis 1925 for more information. Norlie identifies more than 30 Danish-born Pastors serving churches within the various Norwegian synods.

¹² The Danish Baptist General Conference was organized in 1910 and disbanded in 1958. There were predecessor bodies as early as 1958 but they were not specifically Danish. See *Seventy-Five Years of Danish Baptist Missionary Work in America*, Valley Forge, PA. 1931

¹³ An amendment to his act over on hundred years later in 1953 enabled Women to inherit the throne when there were no sons born to the King, thus allowing the then 13 year old Margrethe to become to heir apparent and eventual Queen.

¹⁴ See Andrew Jenson's *The Scandinavian Mission* Salt Lake City 1908 and William Mulder's doctoral dissertation "*Homeward to Zion*" Minneapolis 1958.

¹⁵ George T. Flom "The Danish Contingent in the Population of Iowa" in *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, Iowa City, Iowa, April 1906, Volume 4, Number 2. See also Flom's "The Scandinavian Contingent in the Population of Iowa" April 1905, Volume 3, Number 2.

¹⁶ Westergaard, Waldemar C. *History of the Danish Settlement in Hill Township, Cass County, North Dakota*, in Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck, N.D., 1906.

¹⁷ O. M. Norlie, *History of the Norwegian People in America*, Minneapolis, 1925 pp. 267-268

¹⁸ Stephen J. Frese, *Divided by a Common Language: The Babel Proclamation and its Influence in Iowa History*, *The History Teacher*, November 2005 <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ht/39.1/frese.html>

¹⁹ An excellent account of the impact this proclamation had on the Danish population of Iowa can be found in Peter L. Petersen's "Language and Loyalty: Governor Harding and Iowa's Danish-Americans During World War I", *Annals of Iowa*, Third Series, Volume 42, Number 6, Fall, 1974, Des Moines, Iowa.

²⁰ This conference was always primarily Norwegian but several of the prominent leaders; in particular numerous editors of the Norwegian-Danish language Methodist church newspapers were Danish.

²¹ A total of 84 Danish Baptist churches were established in the United States (one was actually in Canada) between the years 1856 and 1914. Membership reached 5,317 in 1939 but eventually, with the English language becoming the language of the church, many of the churches left the conference, which had been formally organized in 1910, although there had been Scandinavian conferences since 1864. When the Danish General Conference disbanded in 1958 there were only 15 remaining congregations. The Baptists were the only denomination besides Lutheran that ever established a purely Danish organization in the United States.

²² This denomination has long been one of the fastest growing churches in the US. At the time of the merger in 1950 there were 275 congregations. By 2006 that number had increased to 1,278 autonomous member congregations.

²³ For more on J.G. Matteson see "Gospel Viking" Adriel Chilson, Pacific Press, 1981 and "Sons of the North," Lewis H. Harrison, Pacific Press, 1942.

²⁴ By 1958 there were only 14 member churches left in the Danish Conference as many had disbanded or joined with English speaking conferences.

²⁵ This publication had begun in 1872 by John G. Matteson as *Advent Tidende* (Coming Times) and in 1884 became *Sandhedens Tidende* (Truth Times). Sometime around 1893 it merged with another Adventist newspaper *Evangeliets Sendebud* and was published under a combined title until 1902 when the *Sandedens Tidende* was dropped. The last publication was in June 1953. Matteson had originally edited and published the newspaper single handedly, even to the point of setting the type himself. This happened only after a great deal of persuasion to convince Ellen White of its need.

²⁶ "The Our Savior's Story" by the congregation. The church would eventually split into two factions, one Danish and one German.

²⁷ See Andersen, p. 105

²⁸ The church remains active today conducted a celebration in November 2006 commemorating their early "roots".

²⁹ This congregation disbanded in on December 1,1998 according to Jane Gerndt, Secretary of the Wisconsin Conference of SDA office via email, October 2 and 6, 2006.

³⁰ Exira, Iowa is part of the Shelby/Audubon, County "Danish" community in West Central Iowa. It is just east of Elk Horn, Iowa, home of The Danish Immigrant Museum. This area is the largest rural Danish community in the United States.

³¹ On June 3, 2003 the English speaking Salem Evangelical Free Church and Spanish speaking Iglesia Evangelica Salem, merged to become Good News Bible Church, continuing a ministry begun in Chicago in 1890.

³² See 75th Centennial booklet Salem Free Church, 1959.

³³ According to Arnold Theodore Olson's *The Search for Identity*, the vote in 1950 was 73-5 in favor of the merger, indicating approximately that number of member church within the Norwegian-Danish Association.

³⁴ See J. Thomas Watson, *The Little General: The Story of T.J. Bach: Missionary Statesman*, Baker House Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1969.

³⁵ For more on the Scandinavian work of the Salvation Army see Edward Nelson and William A. Johnson listed below. It has been somewhat difficult to verify actual Danish work within the "Army". Information also includes correspondence with Sonja Sorensen of Evanston, Illinois.

³⁶ The son of Samuel and grandson of J.S., also named John S. Groenfeldt, was the president of the Northern Province of the Moravian church for many years, headquartered in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The Archives at the Reeves Library on the campus of Moravian College and Theological Seminary in Bethlehem is named in his honor.

³⁷ Correspondence with Esther Jensen, Iowa City, Iowa indicates that the Danish "Friends" may not have ever become part of an organized "meeting" so little if any documentation would be available but had recollection of Danish speaking Quakers in that area.

³⁸ Letter dated May 14, 1991 from William Orum Pedersen of Salt Lake City. Mr. Petersen was one of the first Danish LDS to arrive in America after the Second World War in 1946 and became the chairman of the emigrant committee and was called to the Presidency of the "Danish" branch. This branch was one of the last foreign language branches of the church in Utah. Recent communication from the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints indicates there are no longer any Danish-speaking branches outside of Denmark.

³⁹ Martin Andreassen served as Pastor of Golgotha (perhaps known as Calvary) receiving his theological training under the tutelage of Trandberg. He would later serve as the President of the United Danish Lutheran Church. See Odegard, *With Singleness of Heart*, p. 457.

⁴⁰ The separation of the seminary from the undergraduate division resulted in the establishment of Judson College in Elgin, Illinois. During the early-mid 1990's the author worked in a complex next to the combined campus of Northern Baptist and the Seminary of the United Brethren Church (in Lombard, Illinois) and had the opportunity to peruse the library which included some helpful information but also established contact with the

Colgate Library in Rochester, N.Y. were the archives of the Danish Baptist General Conference eventually found their home.

⁴¹ Minutes of meeting of the Minnesota Conference Executive Committee, held at the conference office in St. Paul, Minnesota on May 30, 1928 as found in the archives at the Center for Adventist Research (formerly known as the Adventist Heritage Center) at the James White Library of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

⁴² There were also approximately six folk schools established in Canada, primarily in the 1920's and 30. See Rolf Buschardt Christensen's article in *Danish Emigration to Canada*, Denmark, 1991.

⁴³ See Thorvald Hansen's *A School in the Woods*, American Publishing Co. Askov, MN., 1977