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The Reasons for this Book and how it came to be Published

by

Max Henius

(Translated by Jim Iversen)

The appearance of this little book has come about primarily because of the Danish-born Americans' Festival in the Rebild Hills this year. We have for some time wished to assemble representatives from all Danish American camps and communities in these United States and to meet at one spot within our country of origin. This year, for the first time, we will have managed to do that, as it has become more and more clear how little those of us from the old country know about each other, because we live so far apart, and we are thus unable to understand and safeguard each other's work and interests and to retain our spiritual connection with our country of origin.

A similar lack of knowledge and connection with conditions consists—to an even greater degree—with nearly everything concerning our Motherland's press and literature.

Therefore it seemed quite natural to think about how to deal with this lack of connectivity and knowledge by presenting the public with a concise presentation of our actual situations, based on collected information, as a contrast to visiting Danish descriptions, which are often full of exaggerations, and which are mostly unlike Professor Karl Larsen's book "Danske Nybyggere" (Danish Settlers) which was based on authentic documents.

I discussed these thoughts with friends in several towns and cities, and since they all, without exception, thought this was a good and important idea, I set to work to make connections with leading authorities in the various areas and asked them to write short summary articles in those areas with which each of these people has a special connection.

So, this little book is the result. We do not pretend to be complete in our discussions in the ensuing chapters, but we have attempted to be accurate. The primary value in this book lies, as far as we have been able, to present information, which is reliable and relatively complete. We are presenting short articles which relate to where the Danish-born Americans live, their living conditions in the city and

on the land, what they have established in churches, schools, in printed communications and in their variety of societal organizations.

Many will say, perhaps, that there is not that much information to be gained or understood from this effort, but everyone will certainly get the impression that love for the land of our birth has not disappeared, even though we are seen by the Danes at home as no longer Danish. The vast majority of us have come over here to be citizens of the new country and to establish our families here. But the ties of family connections and our intellectual and spiritual connections to the land of our birth, we will not and cannot destroy. During our fight for existence and our endeavors to obtain good economic conditions, we still stick to our Danish language and our Danish way of thinking and each of us will keep his Danish-oriented personality and the capacity to retain the culture we have inherited.

For many of us this assertion about our intellectual life cannot be other than our dearest pursuit on a spiritual level, our real work, of course, is for survival. Some representatives of the spiritual-intellectual world are such events as Aarhus Day, Rebildfest, and the Denmark Building at the World's Fair in San Francisco. For other people, especially pastors and teachers, the intellectual world is part of their daily job. The work of these people is therefore the largest and by far the most important factor in the preservation of Danish heritage and Danish intellectual life in America.

It has been possible to publish "Den Danskfødte Amerikaner" -- which in its insignificance is spread over a large and varied area -- only because it is an enterprise, which has been assisted by the most willing help from so many directions. I therefore wish to publicly express my warmest thanks, first and foremost, to my fellow authors, whose names are found on the pages of this book, and who have for the sake of this enterprise forwarded their knowledge, expertise, and experience without any compensation.

In addition I wish to thank Mrs. Johanne Olsen in Brooklyn, New York, Mrs. Wm. Nelson in Chicago, Count Carl Moltke, Consul Georg Bech and Mr. Knud Lassen in Chicago, Pastor K.C. Bodholt, Racine, Editor Anton Sørensen in Omaha and Mr. Halvor Jacobsen in San Francisco for their help, who have each contributed, as well as the many women and men across the country, who have given more

or less comprehensive information about their respective organizations.

Finally, I wish to thank Cand. Mag. M. Henningsen and extend to him my most hearty thanks for the great support which he has been for me with the collection and organization of the material.

I have not tried to keep spelling or usage uniform throughout the book. Changes in the language which may have taken place in this country have not been corrected in the manuscript.

If "Den Danskfødte Amerikaner" can contribute a little to give a clearer understanding of the Danish immigrant's life and activity in the United States, then the goal of this book will have been reached.

Chicago, Ill., June, 1912