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The Danish Sisterhood in America

by

L. M. Hofenblad

(Translated by Jim Iversen)

The Danish Sisterhood in America is ca. 2 years younger than its big brother, The Danish Brotherhood, as the first lodge, namely "The Christine Lodge" No. 1 in Negaunee, Mich. was organized on the 15th of December, 1883 by Mrs. Christine Hemmingsen, whose husband was a member of the Brotherhood. Consequently, the Sisterhood has now existed for 24 years.

At the organizational meeting, it was decided that members of the Danish Brotherhood could become passive members of the Sisterhood, that is, with no voting rights, but with the duty to receive the vote and to assist the Sisterhood members with advice and tactical assistance. Thus, in that meeting, 20 brothers became members of the Sisterhood, whose first general president was Niels Hemmingsen. He had the right to establish other lodges, and thus the Sisterhood was born.

At that point in time, there were 11 lodges of the Danish Brotherhood, and the general president requested these lodges to assist in the organization of new Sister Lodges. As a result, Lodge Number 2 was started in Lyons, Iowa, on the 20th of March, 1884, with 9 active and 13 passive members. Of the latter, L.L. Ries was elected as the Society's General Secretary.

On the 14th of December that same year, Lodge Number 3 began in Davenport, Iowa with 10 active and 16 passive members and a year later, Lodge No. 4 started in Chicago with 25 active and 6 passive members. In 1886, Lodge Number 5 was started in Racine with 9 active and 5 passive members, and in January, 1887 the Sisterhood held its first annual meeting in Burlington, Iowa, where a new Constitution and By-Laws were adopted.

The second annual meeting took place in Chicago in 1890, and in the following year, "The Danish Sisterhood" was incorporated in the State of Illinois with headquarters in Chicago. The headquarters has the right to organize lodges in accordance with the Constitution and

By-Laws. The Sisterhood has progressed quickly, so that today, there are 127 lodges with 6,092 members. The locations of the lodges can be found in the Tabulated Overview.

The Danish Sisterhood is a national organization with a common National Board of Directors spread over the entire country. The objective of the Sisterhood is based on the principle of mutual assistance, and there are two parts to this, one in the form of life insurance, and the second in terms of compassionate assistance for those in need when sick and for help with funerals.

The life insurance is of a mutual type governed by the national board, and there is an obligation of \$250 or \$500 for each active member. The insurance payments come from a fund consisting of the so-called "assessments," whenever needed. These assessments depend in amount on the applicant's age and the life insurance payments.

To support the life insurance payments, the Board of Directors assesses payments from every active member. In no case, however, are these assessments greater than 75 cents per year per member.

Each lodge sets its own rules, governing help for the sick, which depends on the connection, size of the lodge, help available, etc. These rules are examined by the Board of Directors.

Those who can become members must be Caucasian women of Danish descent between the ages of 18 and 50, or married to a Danish man, and who can speak, read or understand the Danish language. In addition, a potential member cannot have been in trouble with the law, and her health must be good enough to be insurable.

Women, who are past the age of 50, as well as members of the Danish Brotherhood, can be accepted as passive members.

All proceedings of meetings must be conducted in the Danish language.

At the time of the last convention, held in September, 1910, the organization had paid out \$174,500 in life insurance, and more than \$100,000 in aid to the ill, in addition to the thousands which have gone to support those in need.

In closing, I should perhaps encourage every Danish woman in the United States to become a member of the Danish Sisterhood. In

part, because each member not only purchases security for her family, but also participates in providing for the welfare of those in need, particularly when sickness or death strikes her family.