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Danish Old People's Homes

By

Max Henius

(Translated by Rudolf Jensen)

At present, two Danish Old People's Homes (beyond those discussed in the chapters on the two church synods) have been established in the United States—one in Brooklyn and one in Chicago, which is the oldest. On March 12, 1891, a small group of women gathered in Chicago and founded an organization with the goal of establishing a home for poor Danish women. Following ten years of dedicated work, they raised \$15,000 and planned to begin the Home's construction. An extra meeting was called, at which time it was voted to allow men to be members of the organization and as residents of the home.

In 1902 a property in Norwood Park, one of Chicago's most beautiful suburbs was purchased, the necessary construction begun, and in November 1902, the "Danish Old People's Home" opened. The Home had places for 18 residents plus additional places for the administration. The resident rooms filled immediately and the home has since, been filled to capacity.

Of the home's 18 rooms, four are rent-free. For the 14 paid rooms, the payment is a one-time payment – ages 60-65 pay \$300; 65-70 pay \$250; and over 70 pay \$200. The property's value is appraised at \$11,500, and in addition, the organization which administers the home, has a guaranteed fund of \$20,000. There are 300 members of the organization, who each pay an annual fee of \$3.00 per year.

The Old People's Home in Brooklyn is located in Borough Park in friendly and peaceful surroundings. It is governed by the welfare society, "Denmark," which was founded on April 13, 1903 with two delegates each from the following organizations—Dagmar, Stella, the Scandinavian Association of 1844, the Danish Brothers-in-Arms, DAMA, Dannevirke, and the Danish Athletic Club. These organizations agreed to hold a shared "People's Festival" and to donate the surplus money to a fund for beginning construction of the Danish Old People's Home. The first year's "People's Festival"

surplus amounted to \$104, to which one Danish man donated \$100. Even though two organizations withdrew—Dannevirke and the Danish Athletic Club—fundraising continued and the Home was purchased in October, 1905, and opened, December 16, 1906 with five residents.

Now 17 elderly women and men live in the house. To be accepted they must be at least 65 years old and pay an admission fee of \$250, which is used to pay for the care of the residents for as long as they live. Four rooms are free. The appraised value of the home is \$15,000. The current cash balance is \$1,100, with \$10,000 from the estate of Niels Poulsen in reserve.

This home is administered by the association, "Denmark," which consists of three delegates from each of the previously named organizations, as well as "Assistance Organization, Denmark." This group has 85 members most of whom are members of the Women's Organization, "Dagmar." Anyone can become a member by paying a minimum monthly payment of 25 cents. The goal of the "Assistance Organization, Denmark" is to collect small donations to maintain the Home as well as to renovate the Home. The small donations amount to \$300 - \$400 per year.