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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Danish Emigration to the U.S.A.

Larsen, Birgit Flemming and Henning Bender, eds.,

Karen Veien, Trans., Aalborg, Denmark,

Danes Worldwide Archives, 1992.

REVIEWED BY GERALD RASMUSSEN

Danish Emigration to the U.S.A. consists of 15 essays and short monographs, two of which are co-authored. They follow a historical theme, ranging from impressions of America in nineteenth century Denmark and ending with recent developments in both Denmark and the United States regarding the study of both emigration and immigration. In between, the topics include topical ones such as the use of the Danish language in the United States, the importance of Danish sculptors, Thorvaldsen and Dorph, for American Danish Churches, and the stories of Danish colonies in Kansas and Iowa. More specific topics deal with how Danes related and accommodated to the new world, as for example by forming Danish reading circles and the development of a body of Danish American literature. Danish historians wrote thirteen of the articles. Four American writers also contributed.

In his contribution to the book, historian Erik Helmer Pedersen writes, "surprisingly few Danish historians have dealt with the topic of Danish emigration to the United States." The same thing might be said about American historians dealing with Danish immigration to the United States. This book represents a major step in correcting that situation. In fact I would be surprised if the contents do not serve as points of origin for further studies either suggested here or others which might deserve further development.

As indicated earlier the essays stand independent of one another, yet follow a theme. With seventeen different writers one does not expect a consistent style or approach. The variety of topics discussed also do not promote cohesiveness. But one does not criticize a book for not doing what it does not intend to do. **Danish Emigration to the U.S.A.** is a kind of sampler of the emigration (and one must add, immigration) experience and presents a major contribution to that field. Suffice it to say that the articles reveal careful preparation and historical scholarship, and have been well edited and translated.

The editors allocated generous space to recent efforts in Denmark (The Danes World Wide Archives) and the United States (The Danish American Heritage Society) to activities promoting the study and writing of Danish American history, the collections of archives at Dana and Grand View Colleges, and the collections at the Danish Immigrant Museum in Elk Horn, Iowa.

It is satisfying to note that the Danes World Wide Archives, after such a long and insecure history, has at last found a stable and viable home with the Aalborg Municipal Archives under the leadership of Henning Bender and his assistants; the result of which now appears in this and other books. Their leadership is gratefully acknowledged. It now remains for American historians to take steps to improve and develop our abilities to further the cause of research and publication so ably demonstrated in **Danish Emigration to the United States.**

Danish Emigration to Canada

Bender, Henning and Birgit Flemming Larsens, Eds.

Karen Veien, Trans., *Udvandrerarkivets Skriftserie: Udvandrerhistoriske Studier Nr. 3 Aalborg, Denmark: Danes Worldwide Archives, 1991.*

REVIEWED BY JOHN MARK NIELSEN

In 1986 the Danes Worldwide Archives together with the Danish Society for Emigration History published Elisabeth Riber Christensen and John Pedersen's *Bibliografi over Dansk-Amerikansk Udvandrerhistorie*. Since the publication of this work, four more books have appeared in what is becoming an important series on Danish emigration history. The most recent, *On Distant Shores*, was published in July, 1993. (A review of this work will appear in a forthcoming volume of *The Bridge*.) Of these five works, *Danish Emigration to Canada* is arguably the most focused and yet the most comprehensive.

The story of Danish emigration to Canada as told in the pages of this book is an exciting one as the scope is both broad and dramatic. From the early Viking expeditions of Leif Ericsson and Torfinn Karlsefne, made around the year 1000 and recounted in the Sagas of the Greenlanders, to the efforts in 1981 of Danish-Canadians to preserve their heritage in the formation of the Federation of Danish Associations in Canada the span of time is great and the drama marks important events as Scandinavian peoples and particularly Danes migrated to Canada.

The book opens with three chapters of high drama and adventure. As is well known, the first Europeans to set foot on what is now Canada were Scandinavian Vikings. In the first chapter, "The Norse Discovery of America," Helge Ingstad describes the events surrounding the discovery in 1960 of the Viking settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows. This is

followed by Jorn Carlsen's account of the voyage of Jens Munk in 1619-20 to find the Northwest Passage. Forced to winter on what is today the Churchill River as it enters Hudson Bay, all but three of the crew died from the harsh conditions. The successful return of three survivors to Scandinavia is an inspiring story of human survival. Jette Ashlee's fascinating account of Christian Klegenberg's successful efforts to establish trading posts among the Eskimo of Canada's Arctic Islands in the early years of the 20th century completes these opening chapters.

The book next turns to the more traditional stories of immigration from the end of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century. Succeeding chapters treat various Danish colonies throughout Canada, beginning with the settlement of New Denmark in New Brunswick and then spanning the continent to the Canadian prairies and the settlement of Dickson in Alberta.

Newly arriving immigrants faced a variety of unfamiliar conditions from the forests of Canada's Atlantic provinces to the wind swept prairies of the northern Great Plains. To bring some semblance of home these early immigrants established institutions where they could gather. Henrik Brede-mose Simonsen's chapter entitled, "The Early Life of the Danish Churches in Canada" is a succinct overview of the efforts to establish Lutheran congregations while also treating the factional disputes dividing Danish Lutherans south of the border and inevitably spilling into Canadian churches as well. In "Danish Folk Schools in Canada," Rolf Buschardt Christensen explores the efforts to establish folk schools, recognizing that the folk schools in Canada evolved to meet changing economic and social conditions.

Danish historians Erik Helmer Pedersen and Poul Erik Olsen contribute chapters which carefully analyze important aspects of the immigrant story. Pedersen's contribution, "Danish Farmers in Canada," explores the agricultural conditions in Canada and the attitudes and knowledge Danish immigrant farmers brought with them and how they had to adapt in order to face changing climatic and economic conditions. Olsen on the other hand investigates the adver-

tising and even propaganda that was circulated in order to attract Danes to Canada.

An exploration of literature and language is also included in this work. The Canadian professor, Christopher Hale, explores the experiences of Aksel Sandmose, who reported for a number of Danish newspapers and who used his experiences in three novels about Danish immigration to the Canadian prairies: *Ross Dane*, published in 1928; *A Sailor Goes Ashore*, which appeared in 1931; and *September*, published in 1939. Hale shows how Sandmose weaves various people he met and experiences he had into the pages of his novel. Howard Woods of the Federal Language Bureau in Ottawa in a fascinating chapter traces the influences of Danish on Canadian English.

The final chapter describes the formation of the Federation of Danish Associations in Canada. Indeed, it was to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Federation that *Danish Emigration to Canada* was published. Recognizing their small and widely scattered population, Canadian Danes believed that the various Danish-Canadian organizations needed to coordinate their efforts to ensure their survival. The publication of this work is a testimony to the Federation's efforts and might prove to be instructive to Danish-American organizations in the United States.

Given the scope of this work from the dramatic opening chapters to the careful analysis of social organizations, language and literature, readers will find *Danish Emigration to Canada* informative and thought provoking.

Danish Emigration to New Zealand

Bender, Henning and Birgit Flemming Larsen, eds.

Karen Veien, Trans., Aalborg, Denmark,

Danes Worldwide Archives, 1990.

REVIEWED BY EGON BODTKER

This book, published in commemoration of New Zealand's 150th anniversary, is a welcome contribution to the sparse literature on Danish immigration to New Zealand. It is not a comprehensive story of Danes in New Zealand; for that one must still refer to Jens Lyng's 1939 book *Scandinavians in Australia, New Zealand and the Western Pacific*.

Instead, this book is a collection of eight articles by Danes and one by a New Zealander and covers a wide variety of topics. The contributions are well organized and well written.

The book begins with Peter Birkelund's article about the general trends of Danish immigration to New Zealand which occurred primarily in two periods — the 1870s and the 1950s. Both of these "waves" were primarily due to immigration policies of the government of New Zealand. Danish immigration to New Zealand was never great, although there are noteworthy accounts of individual Danish immigrants.

The second article is an account by Paula Christie of the lives of Danish immigrants in their first years of settlement. Her story is especially interesting because of the emphasis she gives to the roles of women in establishing and maintaining settlements and communities. The author has also published *Candles and Canvas* (1987) relating the experiences of many women in the pioneering settlement of New Zealand.

The role of the Danish church, strongly influenced by the Danish Home Mission Movement (Indre Mission), is told by

Dorte Christensen. Although the article focuses on Mads Christensen who served the Danish church in Mauriceville for many years, the author provides explanation of Danish church activities and politics until his arrival in 1887.

Three of the contributions are based on letters from those who emigrated. The very different lives of these immigrants are well depicted in the letters sent home to Denmark. Jens Kousgård Sørensen introduces and comments on the letters of Ingeborg Stuckenberg, "the muse of Danish writers and musicians," whose despondence is clearly reflected in her letters from New Zealand. (Additional letters and commentary are included in *Danish Emigration to Australia*). Viggo Rasmussen's letters, introduced and commented on by Jens Peter Stilling, give a glimpse of the life of a young immigrant who came to New Zealand to "survive" and not to "find gold." In that he was successful and finds satisfaction with his life in his adopted country. The last letters are those of Nils Peter Shourup who emigrated to Australia, but after a few years left for New Zealand and established his own photographic studio in Christchurch in 1879. Birgit Larsen introduces and comments on these letters of a man who is successful but recognizes hardship and the role of "fate."

The contributions of Danes to the New Zealand dairy industry is presented by Erik Helmer Pedersen in his article on "Danish Agricultural Technology and New Zealand Butter." Danish farmers have always been interested in agricultural developments in New Zealand because of their competition for English markets. This article does a fine job of contributing to our understanding of these competitive relationships as the author compares developments in the New Zealand and Danish dairy industries.

Political changes and the ensuing social and economic changes in New Zealand in the latter years of the nineteenth century led to it developing a reputation as "The Workers' Paradise." This myth is analyzed by Jøregen Wurtz Sørensen as he considers what Danes know about New Zealand prior to World War I. He concludes that it was "not as a goal for emigration, but as a model for State Socialism" that there was a Danish interest in New Zealand.

In the final contribution, Ivo Holmquist summarizes the relationship between Scandinavia and New Zealand from the first arrivals until the present.

Though few in number, Danes made significant contributions to New Zealand. It is the hope of the Danish Worldwide Archives that it will sharpen interest in research in this area of emigration history. We share that hope.