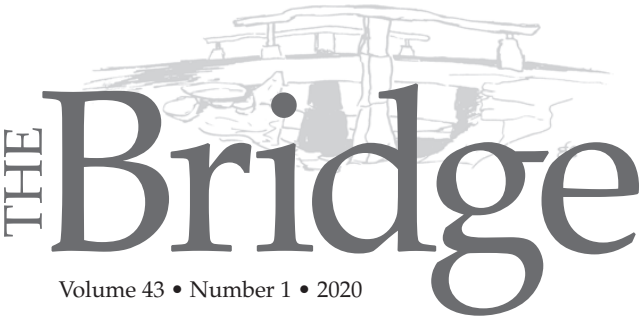
The Bridge

Volume 43 | Number 1 Article 11

2020

Full Issue



THE Bridge

Volume 43 • Number 1 • 2020

Journal of the Danish American Heritage Society

PROOF 7-23-20

Danish American Heritage Society
925 NE 15th Street
Salem, OR 97301
Phone 612-724-1814
www.danishheritage.org

To become a member of the DAHS, visit www.danishheritage.org or contact Joel Mortensen, 4300 W River Pkwy #176 Minneapolis, MN 55406, morte007@umn.edu

Past issues of The Bridge can be viewed online at https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/thebridge

Inquiries concerning back issues of *The Bridge* should be sent to Sheri Muller, Grand View University Library, 1350 Morton Ave, Des Moines, IA 50136, smuller@grandview.edu

Books for review in *The Bridge* should be sent directly to our associate editor, Julianne Haahr, 278G Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 728 State Street, Madison, WI 53706, jehaahr@uwalumni.com

Salem, Oregon (ISSN 0741-1200)

Submission Guidelines for The Bridge

The Bridge: Journal of the Danish American Heritage Society appears twice a year and contains articles and book reviews dealing with all aspects of Danish and Danish American culture, literature, and history, particularly the Danish experience in North America. Manuscripts can be more scholarly or more popular in style, but all articles should demonstrate critical reflection and responsible scholarly practice.

Past issues of *The Bridge* have also contained Danish American memoirs, essays, short stories, collections of letters, and historical documents. Book reviews and review essays in *The Bridge* deal with Danish life and history and the broader Scandinavian experience in North America as well as the Danish American experience. *The Bridge* occasionally reprints previously published material.

Manuscript submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Please submit an electronic version of the manuscript file via the "Submit Article" link located in the left margin of the web page: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/thebridge, or as an attachment via email in MS Word or Open Office, with illustrations in a separate file, to Julie K. Allen, editor of *The Bridge*, at julie_allen@byu.edu. It is the author's responsibility to obtain permission to publish any illustrations included in an article. Please include a brief, fifty-to one-hundred-word author's biography suitable for the journal's "Contributors to This Issue" section.

All manuscripts are reviewed by the editor in consultation with the associate editor. However, there is an option to have manuscripts peer-reviewed. Authors who want to have their articles subject to double-blind peer review should indicate this at the time of submission. Accepted peer-reviewed articles will be identified as such in the published issue of *The Bridge* in which they appear.

Julie K. Allen
3008 JFSB
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah 84602
julie_allen@byu.edu

Julianne Haahr
278G Memorial Library
University of Wisconsin-Madison
728 State Street
Madison, WI 53706
jehaahr@uwalumni.com

Editorial Statement

One of the most persistent questions in discussions of national identity, of what it means to be American or Danish or both, for example, is what culture actually encompasses. In its most common usage, culture seems to mean "how we do things" in a certain place or group, but while the way we do things changes according to weather, technology, politics, and pandemics, to name just a few, normative ideas of culture as defining features of our identities as individuals and members of specific groups have remarkable durability. In his essay collection *År to & tre* (Years two and three, 1999), the Danish writer Carsten Jensen muses, "Culture has become synonymous with identity. … Just as Hof beer is always *our* beer, we say *our* culture, since culture is always about collective identity, about the symbols in which we recognize and rediscover ourselves, a beautiful, solid ground under our feet amidst a fluid world that threatens to pull us along out into namelessness" (103). Invested with such solemn significance as a fixed point in the whirlwind of life, certain ideas, practices, behaviors, objects, linguistic patterns, and other elements marked as "culture" get preserved and passed on, but also transformed as they move from person to person across time and space.

From a Danish immigration history perspective, the question of cultural identity leads down many different roads. The basic question is deceptively simple: how do Danes who leave Denmark and their descendants, or immigrants to Denmark and their descendants, define and express Danishness? The particular answers depend, of course, on when they lived, where exactly they came from and where they settled, how they traveled, whom they married, and other variables. Each of us can point to particular heirloom objects, food dishes, turns of phrase, institutions, or individuals that seem to exemplify what being Danish means, but it can be hard to agree which are most normative and whether or not they should be. In order to bring together a wide array of approaches to this topic, DAHS will be hosting its next international conference in Seattle, Washington in May 2021, with a theme of "Traditions and Transitions: Ways of Being Danish." We hope to have many of you join us there to hear about the ideas,

artifacts, songs, stories, images, and other elements that have shaped and continue to define Danish and Danish American cultural identity.

In this issue of *The Bridge*, we get the chance to jumpstart our investigation of Danishness by looking at the question from many different angles. To get us started, the Danish American poet Finn Bille reflects on the ships that hang in so many Danish and Danish American churches. Accompanied by a few of the beautiful photos by Krister Strandskov that appeared in *The Bridge* 40:1 (2017), Bille's poem is intended as a counterpoint to an uncritically nostalgic celebration of all things Danish, reminding us that Danish history is not just a peaceful landscape of windmills and daisies, but also a Hieronymous Bosch-like tumult of war, enslavement, and exploitation. The next two articles explore how Danish Americans negotiated the physical, social, and intellectual distance to their homeland brought about by emigration. Karoline Kühl considers the extent to which retaining the use of Danish language has shaped Danish Americans' sense of identity, while Ryan Gesme explores Danish Americans' reactions to the 1920 plebiscites that united most of northern Slesvig with the Danish state.

In our third article, Christyl Burnett tells the fascinating history of the growth of Circle Pines Center out of the Danish folk school movement, showing how ideas and institutions as solidly Danish as Grundtvigian self-improvement through continuing education and enrichment have transformed themselves in an American context. The fourth article in this issue is an essay by Chantal Powell about her experiences as an intern at the Danish American Archive and Library in Blair, Nebraska, which reminds us how many treasures of knowledge may be hiding in our own attics, basements, and relatives. Finally, we conclude with J. R. Christianson's thought-provoking review of a new book about that pillar of Danish economic, political, and culinary identity, the Danish dairy industry.

Two of the articles in this issue were made possible by Bodtker grant-funded research. If you enjoyed them and would like to see more new research into Danish American history and culture, please consider donating to the Bodtker fund.

Contributors to this Issue
(in alphabetical order)

Born in Denmark during the German occupation, **Finn Bille** has immigrated to the United States three times. While previously known in the southeast as a performing storyteller, his life-long artistic pursuit has been poetry. Poetry was also his primary academic study for his PhD, earned at Georgia State University in 1979. At the University of Copenhagen, he contributed to *Polylogue: An Experiment in Teaching Methods* (Akademisk Forlag, 1969). His books of poetry include *Waking Dreams* (The International People's College, 1986), *Rites of the Earth* (Chattanooga, TN, 1994), *Fire Poems* (Maecenas, 2011), and *The King's Coin* (Maecenas, 2017-20). His poems have appeared in *Southern Light: Twelve Contemporary Southern Poets* (Chattanooga, 2011), and other anthologies. *The Bridge* has published some of his poems in two previous issues. *The Danish Pioneer* published his Christmas story, "Marzipan," in its 2019 holiday issue.

Christyl Burnett has spent the past twenty years focused on the lifelong learning that can be obtained in nontraditional settings. With degrees in anthropology and fine arts, her experience is diverse, from working as a professional studio potter for the past ten years to working in conservation education for the ten years prior. As a home school mom, Sunday school and fine arts teacher, Christyl considers herself both a teacher and a student. She is the recipient of a 2017 Bodtker grant.

J. R. Christianson is professor emeritus of history at Luther College, where he taught for thirty years. He was the editor of *The Bridge* from 1998-2003 and 2009-10. He has worked as an author, editor, and translator of various works of Scandinavian and Scandinavian American history, including *Scandinavians in America: Literary Life* (1985) and *On Tycho's Island: Tycho Brahe and His Assistants, 1570-1601* (1999). He has served as a member of the executive board of both the Danish American Heritage Society and the Norwegian American Historical Association, in addition to being assistant director for academic relations of Vesterheim, the Norwegian American Museum in Decorah, Iowa. His richly illustrated biography, *Tycho Brahe and the Measure of the Heavens,* tells the story of one of the greatest Danes who ever lived (Reaktion Books, 2020).

Ryan Gesme is a PhD candidate in modern European history, specializing in Germany, Denmark, borderlands, and nationalism, at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. He received his MA in history from the University of Tennessee (2018) and his BA in history and Scandinavian studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2015). His dissertation investigates the nationality conflict in the northern German and southern Danish border region of Slesvig-Holsten surrounding the First World War and the 1920 Slesvig plebiscites. His work has been supported by a Fulbright fellowship to Germany (2019-20), a DAHS Bodtker grant (2019), and an American Scandinavian Foundation dissertation fellowship to Denmark (2020-21).

Karoline Kühl (born 1976, associate professor, PhD) researches Danish language usage outside Denmark. From 2014-2018 she led the research project "Danish Voices in the Americas" at the University of Copenhagen, which gathered old recordings of Danish emigrants and their descendants in the US and Canada, as well as interviewing Danish-speaking Argentineans of Danish ancestry (https://danishvoices.ku.dk/).

Chantal Powell was an intern at the Danish American Archive and Library in Blair, Nebraska, during her last semester at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, where she recently graduated with a bachelor of arts in creative writing and English. Powell has had an article published in *The Danish Pioneer*.

The Bridge
Journal of the Danish American Heritage Society
Volume 43, Number 1
Spring 2020

Table of Contents

Articles and Translations

Articles marked with * were supported by a Bodtker Grant

Book Review

Church Ships

by Finn Bille

Photos courtesy of Krister Strandskov

Three ships hang in Fanefjord,
the church looks out to sea
and paintings in the ceiling
tell stories of the fall of man.

A devil with his pointed tail
looks through the ropes
of a frigate with its guns run out
while dangling over flames of hell

a poor parishioner and sailor man.
The organ blasts the martial tune
"King Christian stood at lofty mast"
to bless these men-of-war

hung from vaults above
on iron rods. Their models
could have seen the bleeding king
and heard the thunder of his guns.

These battle ships can testify
to the perils of the sea.
They aim their bowsprits at the altar
and the man nailed to the cross.

Their sails remind all worshipers
of Danish wind-blown vessels
bringing coffee from the East
and slave-cut sugar from the West.

The Devil grins through shrouds and stays
while Adam at the gate of Paradise
looks back to see three bone-dry hulls
hung up and locked far from the living sea.

Contextual note: Fanefjord Kirke is a medieval church on the southern tip of the island of Møn. This church is famous for its frescos created by Elmelundemesteren—the master craftsman and his crew who painted the interior of Elmelunde Kirke, where my grandparents are buried. The ceilings in both churches are vaulted.

All Danish churches that I have visited have one or more model ships hanging from the ceiling and facing the altar. Most models are sailing ships and many are ships of war showing their guns.

The tune is the Danish national anthem, "Kong Christian stod ved højen mast," the equivalent of our American "Star-Spangled Banner."

The bleeding king is Christian IV, who was wounded aboard his flag ship, *Trefoldigheden* (the Trinity), in 1644 at the battle of Kolberger Heide against a Dutch fleet allied with Sweden.

Coffee, the Danish national drink, came initially by sailing ships from the east. Sugar used to sweeten it came from Danish plantations on the Virgin Islands where slaves cut, gathered, and pressed the cane and loaded the sugar on Danish vessels.

Language Shift and Maintenance among Danish Immigrants in the US

by
Karoline Kühl

The destination of most participants in the mass emigration from Denmark around the turn of the twentieth century was North America. In total about 400,000 to 450,000 Danes immigrated to the United States between 1820 and 2000, the majority between 1880 and 1920 (Grøngaard Jeppesen 2005, 265ff., 323). Danish immigration to the United States was, generally speaking, a story of socioeconomic success due to rapid assimilation based on both sociodemographic factors and attitudes. Between 1870 and 1940, when most Danish immigrants settled in the United States, the group included, to a larger degree than most other European groups, young, unmarried men, 55–65 percent of the total (Hvidt 1971, 188f.). This led to a high degree of exogamy (marriage outside the ethnic group) und thus intermingling with other (mostly European) ethnic groups (Grøngaard Jeppesen 2005, 282ff.). Although earlier Danish immigrants in particular formed tightknit communities—Chicago was the home to some major Danish communities before 1930, for example (cf. Nielsen 1993)—the general picture of the Danish immigration to the US was one of social and geographic mobility. Danish immigrants and in particular their descendants moved on in search of opportunities, leading to above-average socioeconomic success (Grøngaard Jeppesen 2005, 179).

The efforts of *Dansk Folkesamfund* (Danish Folk Society), founded in 1867 and based on a Grundtvigian mindset, led to the establishment of a number of Danish settlements with Danish churches, Danish-language primary schools, Danish folk high schools, and the possibility of leading a Danish-speaking life (Bredmose Simonsen 1990, 1993). These settlements were mostly established in the Midwest, but the most recent of the settlements is Solvang, California, founded in 1911, which still is considered a prototypical Danish American village. Yet such Danish ethnic enclaves were the exception to the general rule that the Danish Americans were willing to immerse themselves into the surrounding majority society. Moreover, disagreements

within the Danish Church with regard to the religious orientations of Grundtvigians and adherents of the Inner Mission were transplanted from Denmark to the US, ultimately leading to the formation of two separate synods. In consequence, the Danish American Lutheran church never became a common landmark for all Danish immigrants. The Inner Mission settlements (known as "the Holy Danes") and the Grundtvigian settlements ("the Happy Danes") are reported to have kept very much to themselves despite geographic proximity (cf. Bredmose Simonsen 1990, 1993), thus leading to (further) fragmentation of the Danish ethnic group.

The nationalistic spirit and patriotism in the US during World Wars I and II put pressure on all immigrant groups to become core Americans and thus reinforced the already ongoing disintegration of Danish Americans as a cohesive group. Not surprisingly, the loose ties within the Danish American community affected the maintenance of Danish language in the United States: as a general rule, the Danes gave up their native language in favor of English already in the first US-born generation, implying that the intergenerational language transfer from the Danish-born group to American-born descendants was vulnerable (cf. Kühl 2015, Kühl et al. 2017). However, a closer look at individual speakers yields a picture of processes of language shift and assimilation that is much fuzzier, including accounts of Danish immigrants refusing to learn English for several years and intense engagement in Danish American associations with the aim of promoting Danish culture and language.

In line with this observation, this article presents a study of a small subset of fifty-seven either Danish-born or first-generation US-born speakers of Danish ancestry with regard to language use and attitudes towards cultural and linguistic assimilation. The study combines analyses of the amount and type of bilingual features in the consultants' speech with sociolinguistic variables such as Danish-born immigrant speaker vs. US-born, age at emigration, gender, place of residency (together with other Danish Americans or not), etc., and a content analysis (Scheier 2012) of the interviews with regard to motivation for emigration, acquisition of English, participation in Danish American networks, language use and language maintenance in the

family, and engagement in Danish American "communities of practice" (Meyerhoff 2002).[1]

The Data

The data for this study is a subset of interviews with fifty-seven Danish Americans extracted from the *Corpus of American Danish*, a corpus of spoken Danish in North America and Argentina located at the University of Copenhagen.[2] The North American part of the corpus contains the speech of 195 Danish Americans (as well as forty-five Danish Canadians), of which almost all were recorded by the late Danish linguists Iver Kjær and Mogens Baumann Larsen between 1966 and 1982 on their journeys through North America (cf. e.g., Kjær and Baumann Larsen 1978). The data for the present study were recorded in 1973. With regard to text type, the recordings can be characterized as sociolinguistic interviews which has quite often resulted in autobiographical narratives. This text type provides a lot of information on the changes in the use of Danish across the interviewee's lifespan. Iver Kjær and Mogens Baumann Larsen both followed a consistent set of questions with regard to sociolinguistic factors such as birth year, birth place, year of emigration, engagement with other Danish Americans, etc. They differ, however, with regard to how much the speakers were allowed to digress from a subject brought up by the interviewer. Table 1 provides an overview of the speakers that the present study is based on.

Table 1: Speaker Sample

Speakers	57 (28 female, 29 male)
Birth year	1876–1933 (median: 1889)
Country of birth	Denmark: 45; North America: 11
Year of emigration	1887–1955 (median: 1912)
Average emigration age	age range 3–43 (median: 23)
Average age at the time of recording	age range 40–97 (median: 84)

It is important to note that the speakers in this set do not form a group *per se* in the sense of all participants living in close vicinity to each other or belonging to the same communities of practice. The sample contains only two groups that can be assumed to have interacted

on a daily basis: one group is made up by the four speakers from the small town Lake Norden in rural South Dakota, representing a married couple and a pair of life-long friends, and another major group are fourteen speakers recorded at the Danish Home for the Aged in Croton-on-Hudson, New York, to which they had moved from other places in the United States. The other speakers in the dataset lived in Chicago, New York City, and Minneapolis at the time of the recordings; there is nothing in the recordings to suggest that they know each other. This implies that most of the speakers only cluster due to group-external factors, namely that they were immigrants from Denmark or the descendants of such, they could speak Danish, and they agreed to speak to the interviewers. Still, as with all kinds of historical sociolinguistic data, the lack of evidence does not disprove the existence of interpersonal ties (Bergs 2005, 45).

The selection of the speakers for this study came about rather randomly. The decisive factor was whether the recordings had been transcribed at the time the study was conducted. However, taking into account what we know about the generally fragmented nature of the Danish immigrant group, these speakers may actually turn out to be representative.

The Study

The design of the present study is quite simple, consisting of a qualitative, in-depth assessment of the contents of the interviews made by listening and noting down the speakers' statements regarding a number of previously defined topics, such as their motivation for emigration, motivation for and way of acquiring English, etc. (see below). In a second step, the interviewees' speech was characterized with regard to English influence on lexicon and grammar. Finally, the speakers' sociodemographic characteristics, their statements about topics related to Danish language, and the linguistic analyses were aligned in order to see if and how these aspects go together. In a simple world, one would expect homesick immigrants to be very much engaged in such contemporary Danish American expat networks as Danish American lodges, sports clubs, and other similar communities of practice characterized by mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and

a shared repertoire (Meyerhoff 2002), and to have maintained Danish. Anticipating those results, the picture that emerges is much blurrier.

Getting the Picture: Social Factors in Language Maintenance and Shift

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the speakers' narratives with regard to their reasons for emigration, motivation for and way of acquiring English, if and how they maintained use of Danish within the family, as well as their engagement in Danish American communities of practice as a sign of affiliation with the ethnic group.

Motivation and Mechanisms of Emigration

The main reasons for emigration given in the interviews are escape from poverty and the societal limitations of Denmark around 1900, the aim of achieving a higher income, chain migration (i.e., following a previously emigrated family member), and a spirit of adventure. The first-named reasons—poverty, unbearable working conditions, and limitations of individual development due to societal norms—are typical for the very early migrants in the sample, i.e., those who left Denmark around 1900. Very often, these are stories about families with many children and a small income where the children (the future emigrants) had to perform hard work from an early age. The extract below represents Minni Jensen, born 1890 in the northernmost part of Denmark, who emigrated in 1906:

Extract 1

MIJ: *den sidste år jeg var derhjemme der arbejdede jeg for en gårdmand # og når en pige er hyret ude der # hvor jeg var hyret ude så kan du øh # ikke forstå jeg var overbøjet og arbejdede # jeg samlede sten ude på æ field # og hvilede i dynger # og de sendte mig ud og # sprede møg # gødning # ja # og det regnede det var ikke # xxx kørte ud på æ field # de øh de skulle ikke ud # men jeg skulle ud og øh og sprede # da jeg kom hjem og det var vådt øh strippede jeg mine klæder # og det når jeg var en pige # og der var både en karl og en mand og en dreng der # men de var ikke ude #*

(the last year that I was home I worked for a farmer. And as a servant girl, can't you understand, I was burdened and worked. I was picking stones on the field and I rested in stone heaps and they sent me out to spread manure, dung, yes, and it was raining [xxx] drove out on the field. They didn't go out, but I was told to go out and spread manure. When I came home and it was wet, I took off my clothes. And I was a girl. There was a farm hand and a man and a boy, but they didn't go out).[3]

Interviewer: *var det # en af grundene til at du tog herover # var det derfor du tog herover#*
(was that one of the reasons that you came here # was that why you came here)

MIJ: *ja*
(yes)

One would not expect much nostalgia with regard to the homeland in these cases. The need or hope for a higher income is definitely a recurring theme in the narratives but it is by no means the only one.

The interviews clearly show that love of adventure also emerged as a reason for migration and that both young men and young women were attracted to North America for the chance to see something new. Alma Petersen's (born 1884 in Copenhagen, migration in 1910) account of her decision to migrate is marked by excitement about the unknown and promising land:

Extract 2

Interviewer: *ja hvad øh hvad v-hvad var ideen bagved at øh du tog til Amerika*
(well why did you go to America)

ALP: *åh jeg synes at det var man havde lyst til at se sig lidt om og at tingene er lidt anderledes mente man og tingene var bedre den gang end end de var hjemme der var mere frihed her og man fik bedre løn og øh så det syn- øh det var meget bedre*
(well I thought that it was- I had a good mind to look around a bit and things were a bit different I thought

and at that time things were better than they were at home there was more freedom here and one could get better wages and uh it look- uh it was much better)

The idea of the US as the land of possibilities and freedom definitely was strong and it is mentioned often as a reason for emigration by the interviewees, though most often by those who migrated later than 1900. It is remarkable that none of the speakers express disappointment with regard to this narrative that brought them to leave their homeland, despite hard times during the Great Depression in the 1930s and other blows of fate that they met in the US.

Many of the emigrants, both poor and comparably well-off, followed a previously migrated person, either a family member or a family member of a friend. Sometimes, these previously migrated persons paid for the trip, making the decision for either temporary or permanent emigration easier. This is described in the following account of Carl Christiansen (born 1887 in Copenhagen, migration in 1902), whose uncle paid for the transatlantic crossing of no less than thirteen persons:

Extract 3

CC: *en onkel han havde været farmer herover i Utah han kom herover i 1860 og øh begyndte farming ude i Utah øh og så øh var solgte han hans farm der og rejste til Danmark for han ville blive i Danmark i hans han var oppe i alderen then and øh han var hjemme to år og jeg var bydreng på den her bicycle shop og min mor arbejdede på det her mælkeri og alle vores bekendte øh tanter og onkler og folk der kom besøgte os i København og alt det han lå billetten ud for jeg var bare en dreng han lå billetten ud for tolv jeg tror det var tolv [...] han lå billetten ud for tretten af os til at komme herover*
(an uncle had been a farmer here in Utah. He came here in 1860 and uh started farming out in Utah uh and then uh he sold his farm there and went to Denmark because he wanted to stay in Denmark in his- he was old the and uh he was home for two years and I was an errand boy in this bicycle shop and my mother worked in a creamery and all of our acquaintances uh aunts and

uncles and people who came to visit in Copenhagen and he paid the tickets for all those. I was just a boy, he paid the fare for twelve I think it was twelve […] he paid the tickets for thirteen of us to come here)

Even if previously migrated family members could not provide money for travel, they provided a safe haven for the first period of time in the new country and could often arrange a first job, too.

Danish American institutions also provided both shelter and Danish-speaking company as described by Dagmar Christiansen (born 1892 in Chicago).

Extract 4

DC: *min mor og m- og min tante de havde det danske ungdomshjem det danske ungdomshjem her i i Chicago de rendte det. ikke øh ikke med logi men med kost see øh og der fik du din kost her for fire øh fire dollars om ugen øh tre måltider for fire dollars om ugen ha [...] nå det var et hjem de kaldte Det Danske Ungdomshjem og der var hvor det var en forening [...] der kunne alle nykommere komme og og bo til de fået øh plads og til de kom der og spiste og nogle og levede de- der var nogle der levede der og der boede og nogle boede i kvarteret der og de kom hver dag og så når de havde deres kærester pigerne de kom der om torsdagen når de var fri og mødte dem og så havde de dans og [...] kaffegilde og [...] dans hver torsdag*

(my mother and my aunt they had the Danish Youth Home here in Chicago, they ran it. Not with lodging but with board, see. And there you could get your board for four dollars a week, three meals for four dollars a week ha […] well that was a place they called The Danish Youth Home and it was a club […] all newcomers could come and live there until they got a job and they came and ate and some actually lived there and some lived in the neighborhood and they came each day and then when the girls had their boyfriends, they came on Thursdays when they were free and met them and then they had dancing and coffee parties each Thursday)

All of these speakers seem to have migrated due to the prospect of opportunities to improve their lives, either financially or with regard to gaining experiences. It is remarkable that only very few express nostalgia towards their homeland, and no one seems to have considered immigrating to the United States only to stay together with other Danes.

Acquisition of English

The speakers' accounts of how and when they acquired English yield insights into their attitudes towards the new homeland, their willingness to integrate into American society, and not least their language learning strategies. In line with what we know about the general picture of Danish immigration to North America, most interviewees appear to have been willing to acquire the societally dominant language as quickly as possible and as well as was necessary. Nevertheless, some recount a great reluctance to acquire English due to homesickness. Rosa Hansen (born 1906 in Copenhagen, migration in 1929) reports how she refused to speak English for six years.

Extract 5

RH: *min mand han sagde når du er i dette land her taler vi engelsk så må du tale engelsk og når jeg gik ud med min søn så sagde han det er jo rædsomt drengen kan ikke en gang tale engelsk fordi de første seks år ville jeg ikke tale andet end dansk men så fandt jeg ud af at jeg skulle blive i dette land og jeg var nødt til at tale det engelske*
(my husband said when you are in this land, here we speak English, so you must speak English and when I went out with my son, he would say this is horrible the boy cannot even speak English, for the first six years I didn't want to speak anything else than Danish but then I found out that I would be staying in this land and that I had to speak English)

As she lived in English-speaking surroundings in New York City, Rosa Hansen at last accepted that she had to learn English, not least due to some situations where she felt deeply helpless because she could not ask for directions and was laughed at in a store.

Other speakers tell similar stories of either having a hard time or simply refusing to learn English, and some mention older relatives who never learned to speak English, such as Arnold Holmgaard's father (Arnold was born 1895 in Hetland, South Dakota):

Extract 6

AH: *i mange år skulle de køre helt til Hetland med deres avling og deres deres hvede og deres kreaturer det skulle de tage helt til Hetland for at komme af med det*
(for many years they needed to drive all the way to Hetland with their crop and their wheat and their livestock. All that they needed to take all the way to Hetland)

Interviewer: *men var det ikke svært øh når din far ikke kunne så meget engelsk*
(but wasn't that difficult when your father didn't speak English)

AH: *nej nej for der var jo altid en dansker til at de havde altid en dansker til at være clerk eller hvad kalder du det ja [...] ja ja som som kunne forklare det*
(no no because there was always a Dane to- they had always a Dane as a clerk or what you call it yes (…) yes who could explain)

As the Holmgaard family lived in the Danish-speaking community of Lake Norden, South Dakota, old Holmgaard never felt the need to learn English.

The immigrants arrived with very different degrees of competence and employed a variety of methods to acquire English, from attending evening classes to picking it up in everyday life by immersing themselves into an English-speaking workplace, either deliberately or because they had no choice. Mary Christensen (born 1885 in Nykøbing on Mors, migration 1912) explains how she used a cookbook for acquiring English, thus building on her previous competence as a cook:

Extract 7

MC: *jeg studerede kogebogen [...] for der kunne jeg jeg vidste hvordan jeg skulle koge så jeg kunne på den måde lære så*

mange forskellige ord som hja- that øh den var rigtig min øh min største hjælp
(I studied the cook book […] because there I knew how to cook so in that way I could learn so many different words that help- the cook book was my greatest help)

That their first exposure to English-speaking surroundings nevertheless must have been challenging, is described vividly by Peter Gantriis (born 1899 in Nørre Nissum, migration in 1926):

Extract 8
PG: *da jeg først hørte det engelske så tænkte jeg det det er altså det lærer du aldrig det det lader sig ikke gøre og det var jo akkurat som at høre en flok vildgæs over hovedet det det der var hverken sans eller samling til det men dog tog det ikke ret længe før et ord og to var sat sammen og efterhånden så kunne vi jo forstå hvad der blev sagt og senere føre en samtale på p- på sproget og så var vi jo øh for så vidt øh ovre ovre det den hårdes- den værste*
(when I first heard English, I thought I will never learn it. It's impossible to learn. It sounded like a skein of wild geese over my head, there was no sense in it, but it didn't take long before one word and two words were put together and gradually we would understand what was being said and later on have a conversation and by that time we were over the worst)

Language use in the family

The reports on language use in the family almost all agree that the children's start in school made a great impact, as exemplified by Clara Andersen (born 1886 in Copenhagen, migration 1916):

Extract 9
CA: *vi talte mest dansk ha I don't know det er ha- øh ha hard to tell det det mixede jo op når ha hvad hedder øh og børnene de gik jo i skole til til den de talte ikke dansk [...]*

(we mostly spoke Danish ha I don't know it's hard to tell, it mixed up when- what do you call it ah and the kids they went to school, they didn't speak Danish)

Interviewer: *talte I dansk til børnene da de var små?*
(did you speak Danish with the children when they were small?)

CA: *ja da de var små jamen så begyndte de gå i skole ikke sandt så skal de selv lære sproget så kan vi jo ikke blive ved at tale dansk til dem*
(yes, when they were small, then they started in school, you know, they have to learn the language and we cannot keep on speaking Danish with them)

Interviewer: *kunne jeres børn engelsk da de begyndte i skole?*
(did your children speak English when they started school?)

CA: *nej ikke et ord*
(no, not a word)

Clara Andersen points out the mechanisms in language shift in the families. Children of Danish-speaking families might have grown up as almost monolingual Danish speakers but the need for them to learn English quickly in order to be able to participate in school made the parents turn to English as a home language. The second effect of school was that the children brought English language into the home and passed it on to younger siblings, typically with the effect of the younger siblings developing the home language to a lesser degree. This effect of majority language schooling on the family language represents a recognized pattern in heritage languages (Polinsky and Kagan 2007).

Some speakers in the sample grew up or settled in Danish American settlements with schools that provided at least part-time Danish teaching, Danish church services, and neighbors and friends who spoke Danish. Within these Danish American communities, Danish naturally had a greater chance to be maintained in the family. Another stabilizing factor for the maintenance of Danish was non-English speaking parents or grandparents who came to stay with the families,

as described by US-born Dagmar Christiansen, who learned Danish from her Danish-born mother and mother-in-law:

Extract 10

Interviewer: *talte I så øh dansk og svensk øh hjemme hos jer*
(did you speak Danish and Swedish at home)

DC: *øh dansk! mor talte altid dansk og Carls mor var øh var hos os [...] hun døde i 1960 og hun var seksoghalvfems år hun talte også øh dansk så jeg fik mest af det fra at tale med min mor og min svigermor*
(uh Danish! Mom always spoke Danish and Carl's mother stayed with us […] she died in 1960 and she was ninety-six she also spoke Danish, so I mostly got it from speaking with my mother and mother-in-law)

Only very few interviewees report that their children had maintained Danish as adults, thus corroborating the intergenerational language shift in the first or second US-born generation. Some children did maintain Danish to a certain degree, though, and they engaged with the homeland of their parents and grandparents by such means as visits to Denmark, employing their heritage language as a means of communication. Thus, in individual cases, they delayed the completion of language shift in the families for another generation.

Engagement in Danish American Communities of Practice

Many speakers report some engagement in Danish American institutions and societies and almost all say that they befriended other Danish immigrants. However, none of them reports the proximity of other Danes as a motivation either to stay or to move in order to be closer to others from the same ethnic group. As a general rule, engagement in Danish American communities of practice seem to have been strong until around 1940, but on the decline ever since. None of the speakers report their own children as engaged in Danish American societies.

Language use in Danish American associations was subject to a certain degree of linguistic pressure, both due to the intergenerational language shift but also due to the growth of nationalism related to

World War I and II, as Svend Aage Hansen (born 1900 in Copenhagen, migration 1920) recounts:

Extract 11

SGH: *ligeledes inden for Den Danske Odd Fellow Loge som jeg har tilhørt i syvogfyrretyve år vi talte kun dansk indtil den Anden Verdenskrig så blev det engelske sprog brugt og øh vi er jo blevet nødt til at kunne tale skulle tale det engelske sprog ved møderne da andre loger blev forenet med os som ikke var danske*
(also in the Danish Odd Fellow Lodge which I belonged to for 47 years, we only spoke Danish until the Second World War, then English was used. And well we had to speak English at meetings when other lodges that weren't Danish joined us)

Interviewer: *hvorfor gik grænsen netop ved Anden Verdenskrig?*
(why did the line go exactly at the Second World War?)

SGH: *fordi under verdenskrigen blev det bestemt af storlogen i Amerika at vi måtte tale det engelske sprog og så troede vi at hvis vedlige- vedligeholdt det engelske sprog så ville vores børn måske kunne melde sig ind i vor loge fordi at de ikke forstod det ritualistiske arbejde på dansk som øh de ellers skulle*
(because during the world war the Grand Lodge in America decided that we should speak English and then we thought that if we kept up with English, then our children maybe would join our lodge because they did not understand the rituals in Danish which they otherwise would have to)

The internal and politically motivated external pressure towards a shift to English that obviously was at work within the Danish American societies had the effect that these groups could no longer function as a means of maintaining Danish. In general, the speakers express either indifference or consent to the language shift to English in the Danish American societies and also in institutions like Danish American churches. They apparently accept that the participation of

non-Danish spouses and younger generations with less competence in Danish requires a common language which cannot be Danish.

Linguistic Categorization

This section provides a categorization of the interviewees' speech, reflecting the degree to which English and Danish is represented. I have taken this as a sign of how well Danish has been preserved by the individual speakers, which may in turn reflect their engagement with their Danish heritage. The linguistic analyses have led to a rough grouping of the speakers in four groups:

(1) Maximal Danish

This category includes respondents who spoke Danish with only little English influence. Typically, these speakers would use some English discourse words in their otherwise Danish speech (e.g., ***well***, *til at begynde med vidste vi jo ikke rigtig hvad vi skulle gøre*), use English words for culture-specific terms with no Danish equivalent as e.g., *miles* (*du kan tage den tur på ti* ***miles*** *i den retning*), or an occasional slip into English for a single word, often a lexical cognate.

(2) Maximal English

This category includes respondents who answered mainly in English although the interviewers kept on speaking Danish.

(3) Regular Language Mixing

This category encompasses respondents whose base language clearly is Danish, judged by the number of Danish surface morphemes and the adherence to Danish word order in (the few) cases where Danish and English word order differs. Still, English influence can be observed at expectable points, e.g., lexical code-switching not only for cultural loans and discourse words, but also for core vocabulary. Also, the copying of English verbal semantics and syntactics into Danish (e.g., *vi* ***rendte ud af*** *vasketøj*, literally "We hurried out of laundry" from English "to run out of sth.") occurs.

(4) Intense Mixing

This category signifies that the respondents' speech contained both English and Danish surface morphemes with the switches between the languages occurring almost at random, cf. the extract below (bold signifying English, underlined signifying English influence that does not show in English surface morphemes as word order, semantics or argument structure). Intense Mixing and Regular Mixing do not differ with regard to the type of English influence that occurs; it's a matter of degree.

Extract 12

så jeg havde gæs for (.) år øh for flere år (.) de er ***nasty*** *ting (.)* ***messy*** *ting to have på en farm de* ***messer*** *alt over (.) græsset op in vor* ***garden*** *(.) øh (.)* ***and*** *(.) vi kan ikke sige et ord (.) eller (.) tale højt (.) de (.) de snakker med (.) der fra kommer det udtryk (.)* ***you*** *gås (.)* ***you're*** *dum som en gås (.)* ***because*** *de gæs de ville* ***screame*** *højt (.) mens øh jeg* ***for*** *øh* ***instance*** *råbte (.) xxx (.) øh (.) ned til* ***somebody*** *nede i (.) i (.)* ***on*** *farmen (.) et stykke* ***away*** *(.) øh de råbte op (.) til huset og så (.)* ***and then*** *du hører dem (.) skrige for en lang tid disse gæs (.) og (.) vi havde det (.)* ***I didn't like*** *jeg lær- jeg jeg kunne ikke lide dem men jeg (.) havde dem for fjer (.) og de var jo også dejlige for (.) steg (.)* ***you know*** *(.) gåsesteg (.) jeg* ***raised*** *jo også øh (.) ænder (.) men de var slemme til at gå i (.)* ***creek*** *som vi kalder den vandløb og og gå med vandet (.) så vi havde en tid med at (.) få dem hjem for natten*

(then I had geese for several years, but they are nasty things, messy thing to have on a farm. They mess all over the grass up in our garden and we cannot say a word or speak up, they would join in. That's where the expression comes from "you goose, you are stupid as a goose" because the geese they would scream when I for instance called XXX down to somebody down on the farm some distance away, they screamed up to the house and then you hear them scream for a long time, those geese. I didn't like them, but I had them for their feathers and they were also good for roast goose you

> know roast goose. I also raised ducks but they would always go into the creek as we call it and go with the stream, so we had a hard time to get them home again)

As the categories were established bottom-up, i.e., with the speakers' speech as a starting point of the categorization, the majority of speakers fit into one of the four linguistic categories. It is, however, not always possible to set up absolute limits between these speaker categories; they represent tendencies rather than undisputable facts based on quantitative analyses as some speakers fall in between categories, often because their speech mode (in the sense of Grosjean 2001) changes during the interview due to a change in situation, topic, or participants.

The linguistic speaker categories are not represented quantitatively balanced in the sample of fifty-seven speakers: "Maximal Danish" and "Regular Mixing" account for most speakers while the categories "Maximal English" and "Intense Language Mixing" make up only five or six speakers each. This represents a wide range of linguistic outcomes for people with similar biolinguistic profiles, a result that is in line with what we know about situations of language obsolescence, which produce notoriously heterogeneous linguistic outcomes (Campbell and Muntzel 1989, 186ff., Romaine 2010). It remains to be said that those speakers connected by interpersonal ties identified above (speakers from Lake Norden and speakers from Croton-on-Hudson, respectively) do not cluster in the linguistic categorization.

Correlating Linguistic Profiles with Sociolinguistic Factors and Attitudes

The main result of correlating the linguistic profiles with sociolinguistic variables (such as gender, place of residence, immigrant speaker versus US-born speaker, age at emigration) is that there is no clear pattern with regard to the sociodemographic factors and the speech outcome, neither individually nor across the whole sample. US-born speakers do not represent either more mixers (i.e., speakers categorized as Regular Mixing or Intense Mixing) or a more intense degree of mixing, nor do they choose to speak English only to a higher degree. For Danish-born immigrant speakers the time spent in the

US seems to play a role with regard to language loss, but exceptions can be found: some speakers who speak a fluent, standardlike Danish without any influence after fifty to seventy years in the US must be characterized as Maximal Danish.

In addition, crossing the results of the qualitative content analyses with the linguistic profiles provides a rather fuzzy picture. Some consultants, such as Gertrud Petersen (born 1887 in Stenderup, migration 1902) in the extract below, explicitly mark a connection between language maintenance, loss, and the feeling of belonging:

Extract 13

GP: *jeg kan ikke forklare mig selv så jeg ved ved nok hvad øh hvad det kan unders- forstå alting men je- øh det er hard for me at forklare mig selv*
(I cannot explain myself I know- I can understand everything but it's hard for me to explain myself)

Interviewer: *ja og derfor foretrækker du engelsk øh nå*
(and that's the reason why you prefer English)

GP: *ja*
(yes)

Interviewer: *det er blevet dit sprog simpelthen*
(it simply has become your language)

GP: *absolutely this is my home*
(absolutely. This is my home)

However, such clear connections are rare. Engagement in Danish American communities of practice seems to coincide with a high degree of language maintenance (realized as Maximal Danish or Regular Mixing); living in the vicinity of other Danish Americans may lead to language maintenance as Danish in these situations may be assigned to certain contexts, i.e., for card-playing evenings with friends, as Peter Gantriis (born 1899 in Nørre Nissum, migration in 1926) tells.

Extract 14

PG: *til dagligt så taler vi engelsk men øh nu har vi mange venner og vi har vi har flere som vi spiller kort sammen med og så taler vi udelukkende dansk så taler vi udelukkende dansk*

> *men ellers nu har vi naboerne og vi har folk der kalder her og telefonen går og og den slags ting øh det er meget lettere at holde sig til en øh et sprog for ellers øh ens øh ta- tankegang kan ikke holdes øh øh sådan rigtig i orden som den skulle hvis man hvis man blandede de to for meget.*
> (normally, we speak English, but we have many friends and we have several that we play cards with and then we only speak Danish, then we only speak Danish, but otherwise we have the neighbors and people calling and the telephone keeps ringing and things like that, it's much easier to stick to one language because otherwise one cannot keep one's mind in order as it should be if the languages get mixed up)

In line with this, speakers who are categorized as Maximal English or Intense Mixing typically report little participation in Danish American communities of practice. Some speakers report that they live close to Danish American institutions and people but choose not to engage with them ("our friends said it was foolish to keep up with that […] English comes first anyway," Alma Frandsen, born 1889 on Læsø, migration 1912). Still, these speakers may have maintained Danish to a quite high degree. Regular Mixers may also scorn the company of other Danish Americans. This means that language maintenance does not presuppose this kind of engagement. Speakers who report no contact to other Danish Americans during their lifetime turned out to speak fluent and varied Danish when they were interviewed late in their lives, and the other way around.

Conclusion

The in-depth analysis of a small sample of Danish American immigrant and US-born speakers from the time of mass immigration has corroborated the recognized pattern of a rapid language shift from Danish to English in the first or at the latest second US-born generation, in consequence of diffuse settlement patterns and the rather fragmented nature of the Danish immigrant group. The study has, however, also shown that this was not a straightforward and unilateral process. Some individuals did not learn English during

their lifetime for want of necessity, some refused outright to acquire the language for several years (thus separating themselves from the majority society), others deliberately chose to leave their Danish heritage behind and insert themselves wholly into the majority society. Still, the maintenance of Danish appears to be based on individual choice rather than on Danish being perceived as an important factor in the self-perception of the Danish American group (cf. Smolicz 2001, Garrett et al. 2009). In other words, language use seems to have been a question of pragmatism, not ideology.

In line with this, a crucial point for all speakers seems to have been the well-being of their children. The requirement of the American schools to speak English made whole families shift from Danish to English and from then on, only very few interviewees report that they shifted back to Danish once the children grew up. Most Danish Americans did not perceive the Danish language as a core value in their cultural value system which would have been worth fighting for, at least not for the speakers represented by the current study (cf. also Kjær and Baumann Larsen 1975).

Language maintenance and shift in immigrant groups, i.e., non-indigenous groups with no historically defined territory, seems to be particularly sensitive to certain extra-linguistic factors like settlement patterns, internal network structures, and not least sociopsychological factors, such as the usefulness of the migrant language and its status as a core value in the group's cultural value system. As this study has shown, several of these factors may be shaped by individual choices, thus accelerating or delaying the processes of language shift. Once again, this pinpoints the importance of speaker agency for linguistic development.

Endnotes

[1] The paper is based on a presentation at the ICLaVE 8 conference in 2015 together with Jan Heegård Petersen. Many thanks to Jan for allowing me to write up the presentation as this paper.

[2] The *Corpus of American Danish* has been established within the project *Danish Voices in the Americas* (University of Copenhagen, 2014–18), funded by the *A.P Møller and Hustru Chastine Mc-Kinney Møller Fond til Almeene Formaal*, the Carlsberg Foundation as a *Semper Ardens* project, and the Faculty of

Humanities at the University of Copenhagen. For a comprehensive account of the corpus, see Kühl et al. 2017.

[3] All interview translations by the author.

Works Cited

Bergs, Alexander. 2005. *Social Network Analysis and Historical Sociolinguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Bredmose Simonsen, Henrik. 1990. *Kampen om danskheden tro og nationalitet i de danske kirkesamfund i Amerika.* Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

Bredmose Simonsen, Henrik. 1993. "Differences in Cultural Assimilation in Similar Danish Immigrant Communities: The Case of Grundtvigians and Inner Mission Supporters." In *On Distant Shores. Proceedings of the Marcus Lee Hansen Conference*, edited by Birgit Flemming Larsen, Henning Bender, and Karen Veien, 287-98. Aalborg: Danes Worldwide Archives.

Campbell, Lyle and Martha C. Muntzel. 2015. "The Structural Consequences of Language Death." In *Investigating Obsolence: Studies in Language Contraction and Death*, edited by Nancy Dorian, 181–96. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Garrett, Peter, Hywel Bishop, and Nicholas Coupland. 2009. "Diasporic Ethnolinguistic Subjectivities: Patagonia, North America and Wales." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 195, 173–99.

Grosjean, François. 2001. "The Bilingual's Language Modes." In *One Mind, Two Languages; Bilingual Language Processing*, edited by Janet L. Nicol, 1–22. Malden/Oxford: Blackwell.

Grøngaard Jeppesen, Torben. 2005. *Danske i USA 1850–2000; en demografisk, social og kulturgeografisk undersøgelse af de danske immigranter og deres efterkommere.* Odense: Odense Bys Museer.

Hvidt, Kristian. 1971. *Flugten til Amerika eller drivkræfter i Masseudvandringen fra Danmark 1868–1914.* Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget.

Kjær, Iver and Mogens Baumann Larsen. 1975. "Udvandring og sprog; Dansk i Amerika." *Mål og mæle* 4, no. 1: 26-32.

Kjær, Iver and Mogens Baumann Larsen. 1978. "Problems and Observations of American-Danish." In *The Nordic Languages and Modern Linguistics 3. Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Nordic and General Linguistics,* edited by John Weinstock, 189–91. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Kühl, Karoline. 2015. "'Det er easy at tale engelsk også': Amerikadansk i 1960'erne og 1970'erne." *NyS* 47, 39–64. DOI: 10.7146/nys.v47i47.19916.

Kühl, Karoline, Jan Heegård Petersen, Gert Foget Hansen, and Frans Gregersen. 2017. "CoAmDa: et nyt dansk talesprogskorpus." *Danske Talesprog* 17, 131–60.

Meyerhoff, Miriam. 2002. "Communities of Practice." In *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*, edited by J. K. Chambers, Peter Trudgill, and Natalie Schilling-Estes, 526–48. Malden/Oxford: Blackwell.

Nielsen, George R. 1993. "Chicago Danes in 1870: a Demographic Study." In *On Distant Shores*, 337-44.

Polinsky, Maria, and Olga Kagan. 2007. "Heritage Languages: In the 'Wild' and in the Classroom." *Languages and Linguistics Compass* 1, no. 5: 386–95.

Romaine, Suzanne. 2010. "Contact and Language Death." In *The Handbook of Language Contact*, edited by Raymond Hickey, 320–39. Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Scheier, Margrit. 2012. *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. Los Angeles: Sage Publishing.

Smolicz, Jerzy, Margaret Secombe, and Dorothy Hudon. 2001. "Family Collectivism and Minority Languages as Core Values of Culture among Ethnic Groups in Australia." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 22, no. 2: 152–72.

From the Eider River to the Great Plains: The Danish American Community and the 1920 Slesvig Plebiscites

by
Ryan J. Gesme

*Supported by a Bodtker Grant[1]

On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on the German Empire, officially entering the three-year-long conflict now known as the First World War. At the time the US entered the conflict many American-born citizens felt uneasy about the recent immigration of thousands of Europeans and the possibility of those new residents having divided loyalties between their homelands and adopted country. These fears proved to be largely unfounded, as millions of naturalized Americans took up the call to arms issued by the United States, even in the face of increasingly xenophobic laws and policies. This included the Danish American community, which took a particular interest in the war's progress because of their Danish-speaking compatriots within the German-administrated region of Slesvig-Holsten.[2] The entrance of the US into the war allowed President Woodrow Wilson to propagate his vision for the post-war world. His ideals of self-determination spread to aspiring nationalists across Europe, anti-colonial forces throughout Africa and Asia, and members of his own citizenry seeking rectification of historical offenses. The Danish American community experienced intense debates over these ideals, as Wilsonianism clashed with the historical memory of German aggression towards Denmark and Danish-speaking Slesvigers.

This "Wilsonian Moment," a term coined by historian Erez Manela, saw nationalists around the world produce countless think pieces, newspaper articles, and petitions utilizing Wilson's language to claim political legitimacy.[3] These communities utilized the Wilsonian ideals of self-determination, popular sovereignty, and ethnicity-based nation-states to call for a reordering of the international world, leading to clashes with European leaders negotiating at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Debates raged in Paris between older claims of

dynastic rights, military necessity, or economic benefits to specific territories and the newer Wilsonian ideals, as various individuals raised their voices in order to craft their version of a better world. This included the Danish American community, which sought to pressure Wilson into taking up the cause of securing the legal rights of the territory known as Sønderjylland or the Duchy of Slesvig, which was then a part of the German Empire.

The decision by the Entente Powers to attempt to resolve the notoriously complex German-Danish border issue via the democratic application of self-determination and popular sovereignty in the form of the 1920 Slesvig plebiscites offers an excellent place-based study of the diffusion of Wilsonian rhetoric. The debates within the Danish American community between the end of the war on November 11, 1918 and the unification of part of the region with Denmark in 1920 highlights the diffusion of Wilsonian rhetoric and its impact on older conceptions of statehood within a diaspora community. In this paper, I will first explore the establishment of the Danish American community and the continued connection between this community and the German and Danish politics of its time, before transitioning to a discussion of Woodrow Wilson's ideas on statehood. I will then analyze the public debates within the Danish American press, examining the three major rural weekly papers: *Den Danske Pioneer*, *Dannevirke*, and *Danskeren*, other printed media produced for and by the community such as academic journals, youth magazines, and religious journals, as well as personal letters and diaries of Danish Americans.[4]

Based on an in-depth analysis of the material produced by the Danish immigrant community, Woodrow Wilson's speeches, and contemporary press debates, I argue that the Slesvig Question and the need to preserve Danishness in the US was a prevalent theme accompanying Danish immigration during the second half of the nineteenth century. The dissemination of Wilson's ideals via speeches popularized a romanticized vision of the post-war world, in which great powers would support the efforts of minorities, including the Danes of Slesvig. This caused the Danish American community to incorporate these ideas within their justification for a plebiscite. However, upon the signing of the armistice of 1918, many of those who had suffered under and fled from the German administration of Slesvig-Holsten

sought to utilize older power politics to claim more of the region, even in the face of resistance from many within their own diaspora community and the Danish government. It was only with the signing of the Versailles Treaty that support for the plebiscite among the Danish American community coalesced via articles, economic support, and democratic participation.

The Slesvig-Holsten Question

The Duchy of Slesvig, which is commonly combined with the Duchy of Holsten into a region known as Slesvig-Holsten, has a long history of being a bridge between northern Germany and southern Denmark. Scholars trace the origins of the dispute between the Kingdom of Denmark and a multitude of German-speaking polities to 811, when King Gudfred of Denmark and Emperor Charlemagne established the Eider River and the Dannevirke, a historical fortification, as the border between the two realms. During the nineteenth century, many Danish nationalists advocated for the Eider Policy, which called for the annexation of the territory within the duchies of Slesvig-Holsten up to the Eider River, thus separating the predominately German-speaking Holsten from the largely Danish-speaking Slesvig. This policy violated the Treaty of Ribe (1460), which had declared the two duchies indivisible while under the ownership of the Danish king as duke of Slesvig-Holsten. The efforts of nineteenth-century Danish nationalists were matched by those of German nationalists in the duchies who rebelled during the Revolutions of 1848 in hopes of unifying the entire region with the new German confederacy proposed in Frankfurt.

The First Slesvig War (1848-51) ended in a stalemate, with the ownership of the duchies reverting to the status quo ante bellum, but this was a temporary peace. A second Danish effort to divide the duchies in 1863 resulted in the Second Slesvig War (1864), between Denmark on one side and Prussia, Austria, and the German Confederation on the other. As a result of the war, the duchies were separated from Denmark and incorporated into the German Confederation under the administration of Austria and Prussia. After the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, Prussia fully incorporated the duchies, an annexation confirmed with the formation of the German Empire in 1871. This long and complicated history prompted the British statesman Lord Palmerston, in

the aftermath of the First Slesvig War, to declare that "only three men in Europe have ever understood it [the Slesvig Question]. One was Prince Albert, who is dead. The second was a German professor who became mad. I am the third and I have forgotten all about it."[5]

The Danish American Community

The incorporation of the duchies into the German Empire ushered in a new era for the inhabitants of the region and led many to reevaluate their futures. There were three major pathways one could take: the first was to accept German citizenship and remain in the region, the second was to utilize Article XIX of the Treaty of Vienna (1864) to retain Danish citizenship and remain in the region, while the third option was to emigrate either to the Kingdom of Denmark or somewhere else in the world.[6] This essay explores the opinions of those who took the third option, those who decided to leave Slesvig and/or Denmark for the United States.[7] During the nineteenth century, approximately 300,000 out of 2 million Danes emigrated to the US, with approximately 172,000 departing after 1868 and peak migration occurring from 1880-90. Danish emigration figures are small compared to Ireland's or Norway's, but as a percentage of the country's total population, Danish emigration was significantly higher than in other European countries, such as Germany.[8] Emigration records rarely differentiate between Denmark and Slesvig as place of origin, with the best estimate being that some 59,400 Danish-speaking Slesvigers emigrated either to Denmark, the US, or another region of the world during the period of German administration.[9]

Among the many political, economic, religious, and personal reasons for emigration, mandatory service in the German military was the central political concern for many Danish-speaking Slesvigers. The brothers Claus and Niels Bodholdt of Ørby, Slesvig, for example, saw four out of their five sons emigrate between 1880 and 1900 out of reluctance to serve in the German army; two of their three daughters also emigrated during that timeframe and later married fellow Slesvigers who had sought to escape serving in the German army. Of the one son who stayed, Niels' son Jørgen, his own son Niels emigrated to the US to avoid serving in the German army prior to the First World War.[10] This push factor even separated families, as exemplified by the

Byg family of Halk, Slesvig. Niels Kaestensen Byg had one son migrate to Denmark in 1868 in order to avoid military service, while his brother, Peter Nielsen Byg, remained in Northern Slesvig with at least six of his grandchildren, all of whom were able to participate in the plebiscite in 1920.[11]

The central push factor for many migrants from Slesvig was thus political, but for many others, emigration was an economic or personal matter. Jens Lind from Jutland emigrated in 1914 because he had received a letter from his cousin describing America as a place of bread and honey, a typically romantic portrayal of the economic bounty of the US.[12] Reverend Niels Peter Gravengaard emigrated in order to serve as a pastor for the Danish Lutheran Church in America.[13] One of the most famous Slesvigers to migrate, the landscape architect Jens Jensen, told a later biographer that his decision was mainly due to his parents' disproval of his fiancée.[14] The reason for emigrating could even be as simple as one's brother having already sent a ticket, as was the case with Chris Sorensen, whose brother forwarded a ticket to his then-fiancée who had married someone else by the time it arrived, leaving Sorensen to take her place.[15]

No matter their reasons for emigrating, Danes in America continued to construct a world around their Danishness and the fraught history between Germany and Denmark. In an 1851 letter, Torben Lange expressed disgust at seeing Germans in St. Louis, writing that "these Germans are real trash. On the whole the Germans are the lowest, most despicable scum ever inflicted on American soil."[16] The ideas expressed in this private letter are extreme but highlight the persistence of Old World grudges in America. A central goal for the Danish American community was the preservation of their dual cultural identities through the creation of civic associations and preservation of religious institutions. Danish veterans of the war of 1864 founded the Danish Brotherhood in 1882 and their wives the Danish Sisterhood in 1883, with both organizations providing sickness, unemployment, and death benefits for their members. By 1910 the Danish Brotherhood had 268 lodges and 18,797 members, with approximately 10 percent of the membership claiming origination from Slesvig.[17] The presence of these Slesvigers would have been a constant reminder to

the Danish American community of the loss of the duchies, reinforcing the need to prevent the loss of Danishness in America.

The other major organization that led the way in preserving Danishness in America was the Danish Lutheran Church, which not only contributed financially to the immigration of Danes to America, but also to the education of Danish Americans, with the founding of Dana College and Trinity Seminary in Blair, Nebraska in 1884 and Grand View College and Seminary in Des Moines, Iowa in 1896.[18] Pastor Peter Sørensen Vig, the leader of the seminary at Dana, wrote passionately in defense of preserving one's native language in a 1914 history of the Danish Church in America, writing that "language is expression of thought and mind, and as such one of the finest instruments known and associated with custom and values so deep that nobody ought to forget that change of language means change of many other important things and will take place very slowly."[19] Pastor Vig's defense of the Danish language represented the central goal for these places of higher education and religious institutions, the preservation of Danish heritage.

Pastor Vig was not the only Danish immigrant to take a strong stance on the need to preserve one's native tongue. In 1893, a group of Slesvigers in San Francisco wrote a letter that was reprinted in the *Flensborg Avis*, a major Danish language newspaper in the Duchy of Slesvig, about their continued desire to preserve their culture and language both in the US and Slesvig. The group accused the German government of hypocrisy because while they defended the right to speak German in the US, they restricted the use of Danish in Slesvig. The authors went on to protest, "I cannot understand why Schleswigians do not have the right to fight for their own language and maintain its validity within its own territory instead of throwing it away as though it were a foreign coin."[20] These examples highlight two vital points about Danish American communities at the time: first, that since the Danish language was intrinsically tied up with their identity, many sought to create an environment to debate these issues in their own language; and second, that they continued to debate issues that affected their homeland.

The Great War, Wilsonian Self-Determination, and Danish America

Such attempts by the Danish American community to preserve a sense of cultural belonging and advocate for its homeland reached a climax with the First World War. The outbreak of war in 1914 shocked many individuals, with many Americans, including President Wilson, seeing the war not as a noble crusade or justified conflict, but rather the epitome of European power politics. [21] In Wilson's eyes, such politics consisted of overt militarism, secret alliances, and claims to foreign territory regardless of legality. Wilson believed that as an outside actor with a new vision of the world he could be the neutral arbiter to end the war at an American-led peace conference.[22] It is necessary to note that Wilson himself was not a naive idealist or a secret realist in regard to foreign policy, but exhibited the very human characteristics of imperfection and contradiction, whether through his own exclusion of African American communities or his acceptance of French and British claims to the Middle East.

These contradictions did not prevent Wilson from having an impact on the conception of the world in the aftermath of the Great War, as many communities utilized his rhetoric to further their goals. The genesis of the "Wilsonian Moment" lies in Wilson's speeches during the war. Wilson most clearly outlined his vision of a new world order on January 22, 1917, in a speech to the US Senate titled "Peace without Victory." In this speech, Wilson attempted to claim the mantle as the only honest negotiator, as the US was still neutral, through an outright rejection of pre-war European diplomacy. Wilson argued,

> No peace can last, or ought to last, which does not recognize and accept the principle that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that no right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property.[23]

In this passage, Wilson described Europe's past in negative terms, as he saw the exchange of territory by kings and queens like playing cards as foundational to the conflict. Wilson envisioned a future in which states were no longer constructed along dynastic rule, but rather by the consent of the governed or the self-determination of the people.

Wilson was not the first politician to use the term self-determination—Vladimir Lenin, for example, had utilized the German Enlightenment term much earlier—but he became its most famous proponent.[24] Wilson believed that the application of self-determination in Europe would create a system of democratic states that would come together as a community, e.g., in the League of Nations, to prevent the future outbreak of war.[25] Wilson reinforced this vision in his other speeches, most notably in "Declaration of War" on April 2, 1917, and "Fourteen Points" on January 18, 1918. In both speeches Wilson identified the German violation of the liberties of small nations as the central cause of the war and declared that in the post-war world self-determination, popular sovereignty, and ethnicity-based nation-states would be the key to peace.[26] He did not, however, mention the status of Northern Slesvig in any of his speeches. Wilson may have failed to recognize the plight of the Danes in Slesvig because Denmark remained neutral, Germany had not invaded the territory during the conflict, and Slesvig was not a historically independent state, like Poland, which meant this minority group did not fit nicely into the narrative of the US entering the war to punish German for its abuses of smaller nations.

In order to put his ideas into practice, Wilson—along with many like-minded individuals at the Paris Peace Conference—decided to utilize the plebiscite system or referendums to solve certain contentious border questions. This method was not new, as Article V of the Peace of Prague (1866) granted the northern region of Slesvig the right to secede from Prussia to Denmark pending a free vote in the district.[27] This vote never came to pass, however, as the Imperial Government created by the unification of Germany in 1871 sought voidance of Article V. They secured this nullification in their 1878 treaty with Austria, which Denmark affirmed in 1907.[28] Nevertheless, many Danish politicians and citizenry held out hope during the Great War that this clause would finally be implemented.

Overall, the Danish American community supported the official stance of neutrality by the US government, with their main concern being the plight of the Danes in Slesvig. In an August 13, 1914 editorial in *Den Danske Pioneer*, the editors warned, "Now the rest of the world realizes what we have long known…what German militarism

means. We have no hatred of the German people, but we do of the Kaiser's war machine."[29] The connection of the war to German militarism and more specifically Prussia mirrored Wilson's view of the conflict.[30] America's entry into the war in April 1917 caused the Danish American community to focus on two major issues: preserving foreign language education in the face of a wave of anti-immigrant legislation and demanding the return of Slesvig.

The Danish American community, like many other immigrant communities in the United States in this period, faced accusations of divided loyalties from their American peers. For Danish Americans, the xenophobic laws targeting foreign language education proved particularly worrisome as the Danish language was a key tenet of Lutheran theological teachings. Pastor Axel Christensen Kildegaard spoke passionately in defense of dual cultural identities in a wartime sermon delivered in New York, declaring, "I am a hyphenated American, and will be never anything else, for I am certain that as such I can best serve the American people and country."[31] This conviction of being best able to serve the American people and country as a hyphenated individual was an early representation of the desire to pursue American goals during wartime while preserving traditional cultural identities. In their attempts to preserve their language and culture under an increasingly xenophobic American regime, many Danish Americans began to compare the experiences of their countrymen in Slesvig to the treatment of foreigners in the United States.

One direct major policy impact of nativism on the Danish American community was the passage of federal censorship laws that required all foreign language newspapers to provide a translation of the newspaper to the local post office. These laws impacted the newspapers by increasing costs and leading to some degree of self-censorship. However, this was merely the tip of the iceberg, as many local governments soon passed xenophobic laws targeting foreign language usage. In response to a ban on the teaching of German in schools and use of foreign languages in public places in Iowa and Nebraska in the spring of 1918, Martin Holst, an immigrant from Slesvig and the editor of *Dannevirke*, passionately defended the need for freedom of language. He argued,

> The Prussians prohibited Danish in Slesvig and the result was to stiffen the resolve of the Danes and to encourage their Danishness. Are we now to see this in a free, democratic land? America has fought for freedom of speech; it is a basic point in our history. Each nationality has its own freedom of speech and religion in America. Are we now to show the world that we are unfaithful to ourselves?[32]

Holst connected the German policy in Slesvig to the policy of the American federal and state governments, highlighting the continued memory of the Danish American community on the Slesvig Question and their desire to preserve the language, culture, and religion of their forefathers.

A pro-Danish poster promoting the union of Sønderjylland with Denmark. *Used by permission of the Danish Royal Library.*

Notably, the anti-foreigner laws did not cause a drop in military enlistment among Danish Americans. Jens Lind, who had just immigrated in the spring of 1914, joined the army on October 25, 1917, serving overseas on the western front and in the post-Armistice occupation force in the Rhineland.[33] This mirrored the experiences of Thorvald Vandet who immigrated in 1915 and enlisted in early 1918.[34] Dana College saw approximately 45 current or former students enlist by February 1918, causing a drop in the overall enrollment from 114 in 1917-18 to only 73 in 1918-19.[35]

The Slesvig Question in the Danish American Press

The sense of sacrifice and continued connection to Slesvig led many within the Danish American community to advocate for the US government to take up the Slesvig Question. The September/October 1918 issue of the academic journal *The American Scandinavian Review* dedicated the entire issue to the Duchy of Slesvig.[36] In one article, Jens Jensen wrote a passionate defense of Denmark's claim to the region up to the Eider river, citing history, culture, language, and economic policy, even though he acknowledged the southern part of the region now held more German speakers than Danish speakers.[37] Jensen's views on the issue represented the traditional power politics of punishing the Germans for 1864 and 1914 and securing historical regions claimed by the Danish crown even at the expense of the local population's popular sovereignty. The editors of the journal differed in their approach and instead utilized Wilson's language and historic treaties to justify claims to the region. They wrote that "the restoration of Slesvig should therefore concern only the northern region, which is essentially Danish, and should be based on self-determination, thus carrying out, though tardily, the provisions of the Treaty of Prague."[38] The editorial clearly saw the value in combining Wilsonian rhetoric of self-determination with the legal argument for a vote in Northern Slesvig following the Peace of Prague.

The debates between Wilsonianism and older ideas were not limited only to academic circles. Towards the end of the war, Pastor Knud C. Bodholdt of Racine, Wisconsin, Carl Plow of Petaluma, California, and Jens Jensen petitioned Wilson directly to take up the cause of the Danish-speaking Slesvigers. The petition utilized Wilson's own language, even quoting him directly, to support the need to subordinate authoritarian systems of power to the principles of peace and individual rights. They connected these ideals directly to the Slesvig Question in highlighting the abuses the Danes of Slesvig had suffered during fifty years of authoritarian rule as a result of the abrogation of article V of the Peace of Prague. They expressed hope that "all nations and all peoples, who have suffered repression, humiliation, and defeat at the hands of the infamous monster known as the German autocracy, can appeal to them for restoration of their inheritance rights."[39] Incorporating both Wilsonianism and the history of the region in its appeal,

this petition highlighted the key role of Danish Americans in bringing attention to Slesvig, as well as the power of Wilson's rhetoric.

President Wilson responded to the petition in a lengthy note on November 12, 1918, which was later reprinted in not only the Danish language press, but also the *Chicago Tribune,* thus reaching both the Danish-speaking community and the broader Midwestern public.[40] Wilson remarked on how grateful he was to have received a petition from Slesvigers and like-minded Danes in the United States concerning their desired application of his values to the Slesvig Question. He ended his note to Pastor Bodholdt with the request, "Please accept on behalf of the Slesvigers in this country my thanks for the faith of which their petition is an evidence and on behalf of your race in the old country, my earnest wish for the hastening of the day when right and justice shall prevail to deliver them from oppression."[41] Wilson did not explicitly define what type of rights or justice would prevail in regard to the Slesvig Question, and as a result the Danish American community continued to articulate their vision of the correct adjudication of the border between Denmark and the newly founded German Republic.

The petition represented one view of the Slesvig Question in the broader American press. A Danish American named Dagmar Gosse wrote to the *Los Angeles Times* on November 17, 1918 to demand that the newspaper stop using the spelling "Schleswig" and instead use the Danish form "Slesvig." Gosse maintained that after fifty years of German administration, the authorities had effectively erased the Danishness of the region by Germanizing the spelling of Slesvig's cities, towns, and rivers. She sought to sway public opinion towards the Danish cause instead of perpetuating the "Huns'" erasure of the region's Danishness.[42] These early debates between Wilsonianism and power politics were only the beginning of the rhetorical exchanges within the diaspora community and, soon, with the Danish government.

The debates in the American press caused concern in the Danish government as it geared up to present its demands at the Paris Peace Conference. The Danish Legation in America published an editorial in the *New York Times* stating that they only desired Northern Slesvig through a free vote.[43] In a direct response to the Slesvig issue of *The American Scandinavian Review*, Professor L.V. Birck reprinted his offi-

cial statement in the newspaper, *Nationaltidende* (Copenhagen), in the January/February 1919 issue, in which he avers, "If the Danish North-Slesvigers will declare by their vote that they desire to be united with Denmark, we shall be happy to receive them, but we do not wish to offer frontier people of another nationality conditions that we refuse for our own countrymen."[44] The Danish American community disagreed with these positions and continued to argue for the use of both power politics or a more thorough application of Wilsonian principles. C. C. Peterson from Chicago contended that unless Denmark received all the land up to the Kiel Canal and the canal itself was internationalized, Germany would eventually dominate the entirety of Eastern and Central Europe.[45] The editors of *The American Scandinavian Review* even expanded their original demand for self-determination along the principles of the Peace of Prague, as they saw claims for a plebiscite to Middle Slesvig as entirely justified.[46]

The three major newspapers of rural Danish America—*Den Danske Pioneer, Danskeren,* and *Dannevirke*—covered these debates extensively, the news coming from both Slesvig and the Paris Peace Conference.[47] Many of the leading Danish Americans and ordinary citizens capitalized on the large circulation numbers of these three newspapers to publish editorials supporting their desired division of Slesvig. Pastor Vig continued his spirited defense of Danish culture, heritage, and Danish claims to Slesvig in the March 3, 1919 issue of *Danskeren*. Vig praises young America and its descendants of the Old World for finally standing up to the brute known as Germany. He chastises the Danish government for abandoning their fellow Danes, now that an opportunity to demand justice had arisen, by requesting a plebiscite only in the north, which he felt was not forceful enough.[48] In acquiescing to the plebiscite, Vig contends, the Danes allowed fifty years of Germanization to expunge centuries of Danish history, culture, and legal claims to the region.

The Danish Brotherhood became involved in the debate by reprinting an article sympathetic to the Danish government's stance by a man from Horsens in their official magazine, *Det Danske Brodersamfunds Blad*, on April 1, 1919. The author defends the government's decision to hold a plebiscite in order to prevent future claims of injustice from the local German-speaking population. Moreover, he supports

the decision to limit the plebiscite to Northern Slesvig, on the grounds that a duchy-wide vote would most likely result in a German victory, due to the predominance of German speakers in Southern Slesvig. Yet he diverges from the Danish government's stance in his advocacy for a separate vote in Middle Slesvig, specifically around the city of Flensborg, explaining, "Middle Slesvig and Flensborg are a different case. Here the population is more mixed…and here we could count on the quickly growing sympathy for our nation."[49] The anonymous Danish contributor represents one of the common views within the Danish-speaking world with his desire for the expansion of the plebiscite zone.

Coverage of the plebiscite was not only limited to reporting the events on the ground or in editorials but soon became a key conduit for raising funds to support the efforts of the Danish-speaking Slesvigers. The main organization raising money for Slesvig was the Amerika Centralkomite for Den sønderjyske Fond (American Central Committee for the Southern Jutland Fund), which placed ads in *Danskeren* asking for the support of the Danish American population. The ads predict that the suffering, death, and oppression Slesvig had experienced would soon be rectified by the region's unification with Denmark, but they first must survive the hardship of food shortages. As a result, Danish Americans were urged, as good Christians, to donate money, food, and support in the region's time of need.[50] The secretary for the fund was none other than Jens Jensen and one estimate placed the total funds collected at around fifty thousand dollars, reinforcing the connection of Danish America to Slesvig.[51]

These debates began to subside after the Entente Powers officially presented the terms of peace to the German delegation on May 7, 1919, which included a provision for a plebiscite in Slesvig, not only in the northern regions, but also in the middle and southern areas. The Entente Powers ignored the concerns of the Danish government concerning Southern Slesvig, which prompted the Danish government to reject the plebiscite in this zone on May 17, 1919. Their main concern was that if the International Commission mandated a vote in Southern Slesvig and the region voted for unification with Denmark, they would have to accept the results and it could lead to future conflict with Germany, given the high percentage of German speakers in the south.[52] The Danish American press extensively covered these

debates on May 21-22,[53] congratulating Danish nationalists in the US, Denmark, and Slesvig for their successful efforts to secure a vote for Middle Slesvig.

The Slesvig Plebiscite and Danish America

The Entente eventually accepted the Danish government's concerns about Southern Slesvig and removed it from the final treaty, finalizing the Slesvig plebiscite in Section XII of Part III of the Versailles Treaty signed on June 28, 1919. The peace treaty gave Danish Americans from Slesvig the right to return and vote, as the plebiscite was open to any male or female over twenty years old who had been a resident of the region before 1900.[54] Few Slesvigers who had emigrated to the US took advantage of this provision, largely due to the prohibitive cost of transatlantic travel. For example, a vacation taken by Hans Jorgensen and his family in the spring of 1920 cost $386 for a roundtrip voyage in a third-class cabin on the Scandinavian American Line. This did not factor in overland travel from Montana to New York or the cost to hire someone to watch their property in their absence.[55] Since it was infeasible for most Danish American to be physically present in Slesvig to vote, they focused mainly on supporting the cause financially, via the Amerika Centralkomite for Den sønderjyske Fond, and promoting unity within the Danish American population after months of intense debates.

The Danish American press kept readers informed about the details of the vote, while underscoring the need to free Slesvigers from Prussian oppression. For example, *Danskeren* published an English-language supplement to their October 15, 1919 issue. In this brief pamphlet, N. H. Debel provides logistical details of the plebiscite, explaining who could vote and where the vote would be taking place, including a map of the region.[56] Debel's inclusion of information for Southern Slesvig highlights the dissatisfaction many felt concerning the lack of a third vote.[57] The Danish Government attempted to pacify these individuals through a press campaign justifying their stance. In the 1919 end-of-year journal, *Miseltenen*, the Christmas magazine for Danes in America, the recently appointed Minister for Sønderjylland, Hans Peter Hanssen, wrote an entire article about the history of the region during the war and the experiences of the Danish-speaking pop-

ulation under Prussian militarism. He ended the article with an explanation of the Aabenraa Resolution of November 17, which formed the basis for the negotiations in Paris, and of the Danish government's efforts to balance the new "Wilsonian Moment" with the older Peace of Prague.[58]

The Slesvig Question in America reached its apex with the plebiscites, held in Northern Slesvig on February 10, 1920 and Middle Slesvig on March 14, 1920. The voters of Northern Slesvig cast 75,431 votes for Denmark, compared with only 25,329 votes for Germany, resulting in the unification of the region with Denmark, as the Danes needed only a simple majority. Danish Americans rejoiced over their brethren's return to Denmark.[59] In his diary entry on February 13, Jens Dixen described how thankful he was that Southern Jutland had been united with Denmark. He lamented, however, that

> so many had waited and hoped to take part in the vote for the reunion with Denmark. They never made it; death came first. But let the few of us, who experienced the reunification, thank our God and Father also for this blessing. Father often talked about it and so did my brother. But both of them went behind the curtain before it was obtained.[60]

This passage reveals that for many Danish Americans this was a generational struggle, one that had begun in 1864 and continued even as many of them emigrated to the United States and embraced their dual identity as Danish Americans.

The success of the first vote led many to believe they could win the second vote and possibly secure a larger share of Slesvig, though a few expressed concerns about the practicalities of the voting procedures in Middle Slesvig, particularly the fact that many German speakers, like their Danish-speaking counterparts, were allowed to return to vote if they had lived in the area before 1900. On March 4, 1920, *Den Danske Pioneer* reprinted a note from Jens Jensen, who wrote:

> We citizens of Slesvig birth are practically barred from taking part in the plebiscite to which we are entitled, due to the great distance, demanding sacrifice in time and money, beyond the means of the great majority of our countrymen. Therefore the present arrangement favors the Germans

> who are able to send thousands of former military and civil officials and their families in Slesvig to vote and thereby cause an unfair election especially in the second zone.[61]

Jensen's fears of a lopsided vote in the middle region were unsurprising, as he had been a reluctant supporter of the plebiscite in his homeland, but his opinions were relatively rare. A more common reaction came from Professor Christian Larsen at Dana College who wrote an article on the history of Slesvig in *Hermes,* the college's paper. He ended the paper with the hope that the results of the vote, with a strong majority already decided in Northern Slesvig, would result in the settling of the border between Denmark and Germany, leading to a lasting peace that included Middle Slesvig.[62]

In Zone II the fears of Jensen and many ardent Danish nationalists were realized, as only 12,800 people voted for Denmark, versus 51,724 votes for Germany. In Flensborg, the most populous city in the region and the historic home of the Danish royal family, Germany received three votes for every vote for Denmark, causing distress within the Danish American community.[63] The result meant none of the electoral districts of Middle Slesvig would return to Denmark. This vote does highlight that if Denmark or the Entente Powers had been swayed by the arguments for traditional power politics, it would have caused Denmark to not only go against the wishes of the local population, but also gain an unruly minority group angry about the forced annexation. Still, personal letters lamented the defeat, as exemplified by a March 1920 letter from Niels Christiansen to his brother Christian in the US, in which he sums up what many must have felt over the loss of the vote in Slesvig. After describing how their mother had taken a turn for the worse and would not be long for this world, Niels expressed his sorrow over Flensborg and the women and children of Southern Jutland who must continue to live in Germany. His only hope was that the Entente Powers would support a neutral zone within the region; otherwise, they would have learned nothing from 1864 or 1914.[64]

While many accepted the results of the vote as reflective of the principles of self-determination, a few did not. The April 1919 issue of *Det Danske Brodersamfunds Blad* reprinted an article from well-known Slesvig American Carl Plow, who argued that the Danes should take over all of Middle Slesvig regardless of the vote, as the gods of victory

as well as America would support them over the wishes of the Germans.[65] The Danish King, Christian X, also refused to accept the results. He ordered his prime minister to reunify both sections of Slesvig. His actions caused the so-called Easter Crisis, which resulted in the further curtailing of the king's power within Denmark's constitutional monarchy and led many members of the Rigsdag (the upper house of the Danish parliament) to threaten to abolish the monarchy altogether. Christian X eventually backed down and allowed the division of Slesvig to proceed, but this incident highlights once again the close connection between Danish American thought and the Kingdom of Denmark.[66]

It was more common, however, to express joy that the Slesvig Question was finally solved, and the lost province would be returning home. Press coverage of the question reached as far as missionary journals like *Sudan*, published by the Danish United Sudan Mission, which declared in its April issue, "We want our siblings in the south to come home. They are namely our brothers and sisters, with the same way of life, thoughts, feelings, and language, so we feel that we are one folk. Now they have risen and want to come home, and we answer: Yes, a hearty welcome home!"[67] One Danish American, Thorvald Muller, was so thrilled to see Northern Slesvig united with Denmark that he left his family to return to his home-

A street in Slesvig hung with Danish flags to celebrate unification with Denmark. *Used by permission of the Danish Royal Library.*

land. He did not even stop to say goodbye, only writing a letter to his family hoping they would understand that he could not rest at home until he returned and saw the province free from the Prussians.[68]

Conclusion

The Slesvig Question came to a symbolic end on July 10, 1920, when Christian X ceremoniously rode across the older border between the two states.[69] Jørgen Bodholdt, whose nephew Knud Bodholdt had petitioned Wilson to take up the cause of Slesvig, was the local magistrate of the area where the king rode across the border and, according to family legend, had the privilege of greeting him first.[70] This anecdote again showcases the connections between the Danish American community and the Kingdom of Denmark with regard to the Slesvig Question. The period of mass migration from Europe to North America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries occurred for a variety of reasons, shaped both societies, and created a large network of interconnected parties invested in the politics of both North America and Europe, as the Danish Americans' vocal support for a resolution of the Slesvig Question along pro-Danish lines illustrates. This community, much like the rest of the world, got swept up in the "Wilsonian Moment" of 1918 and utilized Wilsonian language to advocate for their political goal of unifying Slesvig with the Danish state.

The Paris Peace Conference provided the opportunity to achieve this long-sought goal, although older ideas about power politics and claims to the region clashed with the newer Wilsonian ideas within the diaspora community. These debates continued even after the signing of the Versailles Treaty in 1919, but most Danish Americans gradually coalesced around the official Danish government position and provided economic and moral support to the Slesvigers in the run-up to the vote. The result of the plebiscites did satisfy many in the Danish American community as the dream of returning Northern Slesvig was achieved, albeit without Middle Slesvig and Flensborg. The combination of Wilsonian principles, the Peace of Prague, and the Danish government's support for a referendum within Slesvig led to the effective resolution of the complicated Slesvig Question as nearly everyone involved accepted the results. The fact that even Adolf Hitler and Nazi

Germany did not attempt to revise this border during World War II testifies to the long-term benefits of such a balanced approach.

Endnotes

[1] The research for this article was funded by a Danish American Heritage Society Bodtker Grant, which allowed me to analyze documents held by the Danish American Archive and Library in Blair, Nebraska, and the Danish Immigrant Archive at Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa. Without the Danish American Heritage Society's support this work would not have been possible.

[2] A note on spelling: I have chosen to use the Danish spellings Slesvig, Slesvig-Holsten and Flensborg, instead of the German forms Schleswig, Schleswig-Holstein, because the Danish American community referred to the region as such. I will refer to the region as Slesvig unless the primary source itself uses another term, whether *Sønderjylland, Sydjylland, Nordslesvig,* etc.

[3] Erez Manela coined the term "Wilsonian Moment" in his study of anti-colonial movements, which in the aftermath of the First World War sought to utilize Wilson's rhetoric to break up the imperial power structure of Britain and France. Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[4] I choose to use *Den Danske Pioneer*, *Dannevirke*, and *Danskeren* because they were the three main newspapers for the Danish American community, and each represented a certain segment of society. *Den Danske Pioneer* was the largest of the three and the most secular. *Dannevirke* represented the Grundtvigian part of the Danish Lutheran Church in America, while *Danskeren* represented the Inner Mission contingent. Marion Marzolf, "The Danish Language Press in America" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1972), 73-82, 107-14.

[5] Lawrence D. Steefel, *The Schleswig-Holstein Question* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), 3.

[6] The Treaty of Vienna ended the Second Slesvig War. "Treaty of Vienna," in *Major Peace Treaties of Modern History 1648-1967,* ed. Fred L. Israel (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1967), 1:621.

[7] For the experience of the Danish-speaking and German-speaking Slesvigers who remained within the duchies see Inge Adriansen and Immo Doege, *Deutsch oder Dänisch: Bilder zum Nationalen Selbstverständnis aus dem Jahre 1920* (Ger.: Flensburg Institute for Sønderjysk Lokalhistorie und Historisk Samfund for Sønderjylland, 1992); Norman Berdichevsky, *The Danish-German Border Dispute, 1815-2001: Aspects of Cultural and Demographic Politics* (Bethesda, MD: Academica Press, 2002); Peter Thaler, *Of Mind and Matter: The Duality of National Identity in the German-Danish Borderlands*

(West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2009); Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, *Purging the Empire: Mass Expulsions in Germany, 1871-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); J. Laurence Hare, *Excavating Nations: Archaeology, Museums, and the German-Danish Borderlands* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Nina Jebsen and Martin Klatt, "The Negotiation of National and Regional Identity during the Schleswig plebiscite following the First World War," *First World War Studies* 5 (2014): 181-211; and Peter Thaler, "A Tale of Three Communities: National Identification in the German-Danish Borderlands," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 32, no. 2 (2007): 141-66.

[8] An average of 242 people per 100,000 emigrated from Denmark between 1861-1908. Kristian Hvidt, *Flight to America: The Social Background of 300,000 Danish Emigrants* (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 1-14.

[9] Kristian Hvidt based this estimation on comparing the number of live births in the region to the actual growth of the population in order to determine the difference between the two numbers. Ibid., 139.

[10] Typescript of "The Bodholdt Family History," MsC 03, Box 4, Folder 32, Karen Kadgihn Family Histories Collection, Danish Immigrant Archives, Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa.

[11] Ellen and Jakob Due, *Bygslægten fra Halk sogn, Sønderjylland* (Halk, Den.: self-published, 1984).

[12] Typescript of "Memories and Biography of Jens Lind," MsC 02, Box 18, Folder 153, Danish Immigrants and Their Descendants Collection, Danish Immigrant Archives, Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa.

[13] Typescript of "English Autobiography of the Reverend Niels Peter Gravengaard," trans.: Ardean Andersen, MsC 18, Box 1, Folder 2, Reverend Niels Peter Gravengaard Memoirs, Danish Immigrant Archives, Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa.

[14] Leonard K. Eaton, *Landscape Artist in America: The Life and Work of Jens Jensen* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1964), 10-12.

[15] Typescript of "Chris Sorensen Box Info," LCS-2019, Box 1, Christian Lars Sorensen Diary 1911-1970, Danish American Archive and Library, Blair, Nebraska.

[16] Torben Lange, "Letter to Sister, 16 April 1851," in *Danes in North America*, ed. Frederick Hale (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1984), 133.

[17] Using the examples of the membership rolls from the West Denver, Colorado Lodge (1906-1931) for the Danish Brotherhood and the Kansas City, Missouri Lodge (1895-1954) for the Danish Sisterhood, I was able to determine that in West Denver 6 out of the 53 and in Kansas City 15 out of 130 claimed to be from Slesvig. I used these numbers as examples of the possible numbers of Slesvigers who participated in both organizations. Typescript of "The Danish Brotherhood in America: A Rough History," MsC 25, Box 1, Folder 7, Danish Brotherhood in America, Danish Immigrant Archives, Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa. Typescript of Ludvig Hoffenblad, "The Danish Sisterhood in America," trans. Edith Matteson, MsC 25, Box 1, Folder 7, Danish Brotherhood in America, Danish Immigrant

Archives, Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa. Handwritten Membership List, DBL-2000, Box 1, Colorado, West Denver Lodge 179 (Inactive), Membership Records 1903-1931, Danish American Archive and Library, Blair, Nebraska. Handwritten Membership List, DSL-2005, Box 4, Missouri, Kansas City Lodge 30, Minutes & Membership, 1895-1954, Danish American Archive and Library, Blair, Nebraska.

[18] The two universities reflected the theological divisions in the Danish Lutheran Church with Dana College drawing on Inner Mission principles and Grand View prioritizing Grundtvigian ideals.

[19] Peter L. Petersen, *A Place Called Dana: The Centennial History of Trinity Seminary and Dana College* (Omaha, NE: Acme Printing Company, 1984), 53.

[20] "Letter from Danish Immigrants in San Francisco," in *Danes in North America*, 145.

[21] For more information about the US policy during World War I and its aftermath see Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001); Ross Kennedy, *The Will to Believe: Woodrow Wilson, World War I and America's Strategy for Peace and Security* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2009); Justus Doenecke, *Nothing Less Than War: A New History of America's Entry into World War I* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2014); Robert Hanningan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-1924* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); David Steigerwald, "The Reclamation of Woodrow Wilson?" *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 79-99.

[22] Doenecke, *Nothing Less Than War,* 19-58; Kennedy, *The Will to Believe*, 1-24.

[23] Woodrow Wilson, "Essential Terms for Peace in Europe," in *Woodrow Wilson: Essential Writing and Speeches of the Scholar-President*, ed. Mario R. Di Nunzio (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 394.

[24] David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference,* Vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), 11-12; "Treaty of Brest-Litovsk" in *Major Peace Treaties*, 2:1235-64; Erez Manela, *Wilsonian Moment*, 37; Eric Weitz, "Self-Determination: How a German Enlightenment Idea Became the Slogan of National Liberation and a Human Right," *American Historical Review* 120 (2015): 462-96.

[25] Wilson, "Essential Terms for Peace in Europe," 393.

[26] This paragraph briefly summarizes Wilson's goals and ideas regarding state power and the post-war world. The focus of my dissertation will be Wilson, the Slesvig plebiscites, and German and Danish reactions to them. Woodrow Wilson, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress Calling for a Declaration of War," in Address to a Joint Session of Congress Calling for a Declaration of War," in *Woodrow Wilson*, 397-403; Woodrow Wilson, "Fourteen Points," in *Woodrow Wilson*, 404-07.

[27] "Treaty of Prague," in *Major Peace Treaties*, 1:630.

[28] Thaler, *Of Mind and Matter*, 73-80.

[29] Marzolf, "The Danish Language Press in America," 139.

[30] Ibid., 139-43.

[31] My translation. "Jeg er en Bindestregsamerikaner, og bliver sikkert aldrig andet, thi jeg er sikker paa, at jeg som saadan kan tjene det amerikanske Folk og Land bedst." "New York Sermon" (undated), MsC 21, Box 1, Folder 3, Axel Christensen Kildegaard, Sr. Collection, Danish Immigrant Archives, Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa.

[32] Marzolf, "The Danish Language Press in America," 145.

[33] "Memories and Biography of Jens Lind."

[34] Record of Military Service, MsC 02, Box 18, Folder 266, Danish Immigrants and Their Descendants Collection, Danish Immigrant Archives, Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa.

[35] Petersen, *A Place Called Dana,* 202; "Our Soldiers," *Hermes: A Messenger from Dana College* (February 1918): 24-25.

[36] *The American Scandinavian Review* 4, no. 5 (September/October 1918): 249-95.

[37] Jens Jensen, "Are the Slesvigers Danes or Germans?" *The American Scandinavian Review* 4, no. 5 (September/October 1918): 268-72.

[38] "Self-Determination for Slesvig," *The American Scandinavian Review* 4, no. 5 (September/October 1918): 284.

[39] My translation. "at alle Nationer og alle Folk, som har lidt ved Undertrykkelse, Ydmygelse, og Nederlag i Hænderne paa det infame Uhyre, kendt som det tyske Autokrati, kan appeller til dem om Tilbagegivelse af deres Arverettigheder." "Præsident Wilson og Sønderjylland," *Den Danske Pioneer*, November 28, 1918, 1.

[40] "Sønderjylland," *Ungdom* 12, no. 16 (December 1918): 254; "Slesvig," *Det Danske Brodersamfunds Blad*, December 1, 1918, 1; "Schleswig Will Get Freedom, Wilson Pledges," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 24, 1918, 2.

[41] "Slesvig," *Det Danske Brodersamfunds Blad*, 1.

[42] Dagmar Gosse, "Letters to 'The Times': Slesvig or Schleswig?" *Los Angeles Times,* November 17, 1918, 18.

[43] Roger Nielsen, "Schleswig-Holstein: Denmark Wants Only the Northern Part of Schleswig, and No More," *The New York Times*, December 1, 1918, 38.

[44] L. V. Birck, "Letter to Slesvig Forum," *The American Scandinavian Review* 7, no. 1 (January/February 1919): 53.

[45] C. C. Peterson, "Letter to Slesvig Forum," *The American Scandinavian Review* 7, no. 1 (January/February 1919): 54.

[46] "The Boundaries of Slesvig," *The American Scandinavian Review* 7, no. 1 (January/February 1919): 56-57.

[47] A search on http://archive.danishamericanarchive.net/ of key terms such as *Slesvig, Nordslesvigske, Sønderjylland, Sydjylland*, and *Folkeafstemning* yields extensive results from each major newspaper. Examples of the plethora of articles on the topic include: "Præsident Wilson og Sønderjylland," *Den Danske Pioneer*, November 28, 1918, 1; "Slesvig Genforening med Danmark," *Den Danske Pioneer,* December 5, 1918, 1; "Danmark," *Dannevirke*, January 22, 1919, 2; "Wilson Skal Hvile—De Gjorte Fremskrid," *Danskeren*, February

2, 1919, 1; "Skandinavisk Kommissionsstyre i Slesvig," *Den Danske Pioneer,* February 13, 1919, 1; "Den sønderjydske Spørgsmaal i Fredskonferencen," *Den Danske Pioneer*, February 27, 1919, 1; "Sønderylland," *Dannevirke,* March 5, 1919, 7; "Den danske Rigsdagsdelegation i Paris," *Den Danske Pioneer*, April 7, 1919, 1; "Den sønderjydske Fond," *Danskeren*, April 16, 1919, 6; "Afstemningen i den tredie slesvigske Zone," *Danskeren*, May 21, 1919, 1; "Rigsdagen og den 3. Zone," *Dannevirke*, June 18, 1919, 5.

[48] P. S. Vig, "The Slesvig Question Once More," *Danskeren*, March 3, 1919.

[49] My translation: "Men med Mellemslesvig og Flensborg er det en anden Sag. Her er Befolkningen mere blandet... og her kunde vi gøre Regning paa hurtig voxende Sympatier for vor Nation." "Den sønderjyske Sag," *Det Danske Brodersamfunds Blad* 4, no. 3 (April 1919): 7.

[50] My translation. "Vi har ingen nærmere Pligt end denne, saa sandt som Amerika er kaldet til at værge de smaa Nationer, de undertrykte Folk." "Amerikas Centralkomite for Den sønderjydske Fond," *Danskeren*, April 23, 1919, 6.

[51] H. Einar Mose, *The Centennial History: Dania Society of Chicago, 1862-1916* (Chicago, IL: self-published, 1962), 44.

[52] "Den danske regerings indsigelse mod 3. Zone. Uddrag af et brev fra den danske gesandt i Paris til fredskonferencen fra 17.5.1919," in *Der Nationale Gegensatz/De Nationale Modsætninger*, *1914-1933* ed. Gerhard Kraack, Frank Lubowitz, and Hans Schultz Hansen (Aabenraa: Institut für Grænseregionsforskning, 2001), 140-44.

[53] "Afstemningen i den tredje slesvigske Zone," *Dannevirke*, May 21, 1919, 5; "Afstemningen i den tredie slesvigske Zone," *Danskeren*, May 21, 1919, 1; "Afstemningen i den 3de Slesvigste Zone," *Den Danske Pioneer*, May 22, 1919, 1.

[54] "Extract from Part III of the Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany, signed at Versailles, June 28, 1919," in *Plebiscites since the World War: With a Collection of Official Documents,* ed. Sarah Wambaugh (Concord, NH: Rumford Press, 1933), 2:3-6.

[55] "Mr. Hans Jorgensen Travel Documents," JOR-992, Box 5, Packet 1, Lilly Jorgensen Sorensen 1880-1992 Collection, Danish American Archive and Library, Blair, Nebraska.

[56] N. H. Debel, "The Return of Slesvig," Supplement to *Danskeren*, October 15, 1919, 1-7.

[57] Ibid., 7.

[58] Hans Peter Hanssen, "Ved Indgangen til den Nye Tid," *Misteltenen*, 1919, 12-14.

[59] "Afstemningen i 2. Zone Udsat: Nærmere fra Afstemingen i 1. Zone," *Danskeren*, February 18, 1920, 1; "Afstemningen i de to Zoner," *Dannevirke*, February, 16, 1920, 4; "Fra Afstemningsdistriktet i Sønderjylland," *Den Danske Pioneer*, February 12, 1920, 1; "To Trediedele danske Stemmer i 1. Zone," *Den Danske Pioneer,* February 19, 1920, 1.

[60] Typescript of "Jens Dixen English Diary," translated by Ralf and Inga Hoifeldt, DIX-978, Box 1T, Jens Dixen Diary, Danish American Archive and Library, Blair, Nebraska.

[61] Axel. H. Andersen, "Et tidligt Hurra," *Den Danske Pioneer*, March 4, 1920, 4.

[62] Christian Larsen, "Sønderjylland," *Hermes: A Messenger from Dana College* 1, no 1. (March 1920): 11-14.

[63] "Efter Afstemningen i 2. slesvigske Zone," *Den Danske Pioneer*, March 25, 1920, 1; "Tyskerne vandt i 2. Zone med stort Flertal," *Dannevirke*, March 17, 1920, 4; "Folkeafstemningen i 2. Zone," *Danskeren,* March 17, 1920, 1; "Anden slesvigske Zone tabt for Danmark," *Den Danske Pioneer*, March 18, 1920, 1; "Det sønderjydske Spørgsmaal," *Danskeren*, March 24, 1920, 1; "H. P. Hanssen Hyldes i København," *Dannevirke*, March 24, 1920, 2.

[64] March 27, 1920 Letter from Niels Christiansen to Christian Christiansen, HAN-988, Box 4, Hansen-Mengers Family Collection, Danish American Archive and Library, Blair, Nebraska.

[65] "Danmark, Ude og Hjemme," *Det Danske Brodersamfunds Blad* 5, no. 3 (April 1920): 8.

[66] "Krisis in Dänemark," *Der Seebote und Der Sonntagsbote*, April 4, 1920, 1.

[67] My translation. "Vi vil have vore Søskende mod Syd med hjem. De er nemlig vore Brødre og Søstre, samme Levesæt, Tanker, Følelser og Sprog, saa vi føler, at vi er eet Folk. Nu har de rejst sig og vil hjem, og vi andre svarer: Ja, hjertelig velkommen Hjem!" *Sudan* 8, no. 4 (April 1920): 46.

[68] Thorvald Muller, "Letter to Mette and Children, April 29, 1920," in *Embracing Two Worlds: The Thorvald Muller Family of Kimballton*, ed. Barbara Lund-Jones and John W. Nielsen (Blair, NE: Lur Publications, 1998), 77.

[69] "North Slesvig's Reunion with Denmark," *The Times,* July 10, 1920, 11.

[70] "Bodholdt Family History."

Eighty Years since Ashland: The Untold Story of the Transition from the Ashland Folk School to Circle Pines Center, 1928-1951

by
Christyl Burnett

*Supported by a Bodtker Grant

> Loyal supporters of Ashland tried still to continue, but when the fire marshal in 1938 condemned the building, the program of the school was moved to Chief Noonday Camp under the sponsorship of the Central States Cooperative League. Later, that project grew into Circle Pines Center, near Hastings, Michigan, which is still active in 1977.
>
> -Enok Mortensen, *Schools for Life: The Grundtvigian Folk Schools in America*[1]

> The purpose for which this organization is formed is to create, establish, and maintain a center of co-operative culture in the Central United States for the purpose of carrying on co-operative education, and to advocate and teach, through demonstration and otherwise, the superior advantages of co-operation as a way of life, and to aid in establishing a system of production and distribution for use instead of for profit, through the development and expansion of Rochdale Consumer Co-operation. The aim is to help build co-operative economic democracy in America.
>
> -Article II, Section 2, Constitution and By-laws of Circle Pines Center[2]

This is a brief record of my journey to research the transition from the Ashland Folk School in Grant, Michigan to the Circle Pines Center in Delton, Michigan. This journey began as I became increasingly involved with the programming at Circle Pines, and more specifically the folk school portion of Circle Pines' annual music festival, the Buttermilk Jamboree. I have been a neighbor to Circle Pines since 2001,

so close that I can ride my bike there. Proximity has afforded me the opportunity to be involved with many aspects of life at Circle Pines. In 2018 Circle Pines celebrated eighty years; I had the pleasure of working with a handful of others in planning the eightieth reunion that saw over 170 folks returning to celebrate the long life of Circle Pines. In the spring of 2018 I was elected to the board where I am a part of several committees. I am fortunate to be particularly well-situated to conduct this research and I have a passion for microhistories. With my education and experience I enjoy archival appraisal and curation and find it enjoyable to discern why stories are told the way they are.

Circle Pines' annual Buttermilk Jamboree music festival offers a weekend of folk educational opportunities that include hands-on workshops and discussion circles about everything from homestead farming to concerns about nuclear capacities, home schooling, and advanced ukulele. As a coordinator of the weekend's folk school, I am frequently asked, "What is a folk school?" I knew what we were trying to do at Buttermilk and I knew Circle Pines' lore said that Circle Pines grew out of the Danish folk school movement, but I didn't really know more about it than that. I didn't even know what the Danish folk school movement was. I got the sense, though, that it had to be more than something like the church basement canning workshops of the 1970s, but what?

This is one of the oldest existing photographs of the Circle Pines Center Civil War-era farmhouse. *Photo courtesy of Grant Library.*

The History of Circle Pines

Circle Pines Center was founded in 1938 as a non-profit cooperative recreation and education center. It operates as a center for cooperation with a membership base of around 160 members. Circle Pines has semi-annual membership meetings at which the staff and board members report on the state and activities of the organization and new board members are voted upon as vacancies arise. In recent years, Circle Pines adopted four pillars on which it builds its programming: peace, social justice, environmental stewardship, and cooperation.

The membership is diverse in terms of age, race, ethnicity, religion, education, and economic class, with commonality most often found in support for progressive social, political, economic, and environmental causes. The membership is also geographically rather far flung, with most residing in the Midwest but some as far away as California and Maine, and even a few outside the United States. There are many active legacy families, a handful of whom go back to the very beginnings of Circle Pines. Circle Pines has operated an annual youth summer camp from its early years and has consistently held year-round programming since the 1970s, with annual events like maple syrup weekends and apple cider weekends. In more recent years Circle Pines has hosted a January cabin fever weekend, a semi-annual Spanish immersion weekend, and has revived a Thanksgiving dinner. Most recently the annual Buttermilk Jamboree has brought a few thousand people to the property each June. Circle Pines also frequently offers programming that meets the description of "a vacation with a purpose," such as the People's Institute week of participant-driven discussions about pressing societal and world problems. Likewise, outside groups with similar missions often rent the space for annual meetings and retreats, such as the semi-annual Equitable Pioneers co-op retreat.

Circle Pines Center and the Danish Folk School Movement

Where did the lore that Circle Pines grew out of the Danish folk school movement come from? As an active member with an interest in appraisal of non-material culture, I came to wonder how this came to be a Circle Pines origin story. The more I talked with Circle Piners, though, the more I realized that most of those who might have

known the answer were, sadly, beyond my reach because of death or advanced age. In a conversation with the then-current director I learned that Circle Pines was specifically connected to the Ashland Folk School in Grant, Michigan. I was excited to have something more concrete to look for and I quickly confirmed the name Ashland by digging into the Circle Pines archive. Having lived in West Michigan my whole life, I knew the tiny town of Grant as one of the charmingly quiet gateway towns to our treasured lands, rivers and lakes in northern Michigan. When I searched the web in 2014 for information about Ashland, one of the few leads to come up was a Wikipedia entry for Kristian Ostergaard, who had emigrated from Denmark in 1878, taught at a Danish folk high school in Elkhorn, Iowa, and helped to establish the Ashland Folk School in Grant in 1882. I was glad to have learned how old Ashland might have been and potentially confirm its link to the mysterious Danish folk school movement but the Wikipedia entry was thin, both on the Danish folk school movement and on Ashland. I needed to know more about what went on at Ashland that could have given birth to Circle Pines Center.

From a mention in the Circle Pines archive I learned that Enok Mortensen had written about Ashland in his 1977 *Schools for Life: The Grundtvigian Folk Schools in America*. He reported that Ashland was created by a small group of Danish immigrants in the 1880s according to Grundtvigian ideals.[3] Through reading Mortensen's book and articles in *The Bridge*, I quickly discovered that the folk school was no small educational/cultural institution in Denmark's past or present. My impression is that all Danes, old and young, know who N. F. S. Grundtvig was and have felt the impact of his work. Mortensen provides a thorough historical overview of Danish American folk schools in *Schools for Life*, including a chapter on Ashland that describes Ashland as quite progressive in its last decade. He mentions that after Ashland closed, some of the folks involved went on to start a project called Circle Pines Center, but that is all he wrote about it. He draws a clear line between Ashland and the Circle Pines project, then closes the chapter. Indeed, nowhere in any of the literature on Danish American folk schools have I found any discussion of Ashland's afterlife in Circle Pines Center. Mortensen's book is the only place in all the litera-

ture I have read to date concerning the Danish American folk school movement where I have found Circle Pines mentioned at all.

From the historical literature, it appeared as if Circle Pines had little in common with Danish and Danish American folk schools in general, or the Ashland Folk School in particular. Could Circle Pines legitimately consider itself an outgrowth, the offspring, of the Danish folk school movement, and more specifically the Ashland Folk School? Clearly, I had found a hole in the literature. But was it a hole worth considering? From reading Mortensen's account of Ashland, I immediately got a hopeful sense that the late progressive years at Ashland might be, indeed, where the seeds for Circle Pines came from because I knew something of Circle Pines and I knew that a characterization as progressive was one that fit.

A Decided Shift at Ashland: John E. Kirkpatrick

The Ashland Folk School waxed and waned from its beginnings in 1882 until its last stint of programming from 1928-38. During a time of high anti-immigrant sentiment after World War I, with low participation and interest, Ashland closed for a number of years.[4] After the war, a shift took place in the thinking around Ashland, as well as in other Danish American folk schools. By the 1920s, progressive American educators were starting to recognize the potential of the folk school idea and were spreading the word through their writings and people's school initiatives. In 1927, those with interests in Ashland went looking for a non-Dane to make a go of things at Ashland and the use of Danish at Ashland came to an end. When it reopened in 1928, it was with a decided difference in leadership, and participation from then on would be much less culturally homogenous. The common bond among participants would no longer be chiefly ties to life in the old country, but rather, in life as Americans.

The school was reinvigorated under the leadership of two successive directors, Dr. John E. Kirkpatrick and Chester A. Graham. I went in search of information that could tell me about who these two men were and what was going on at this renewed Ashland. Through email correspondence with Howard L. Nicholson, co-author of the 2015 publication *Danes and Icelanders in Michigan*,[5] I learned that the Grant Area District Library held some information on Ashland. Find-

ing the Grant Area District Library's Ashland collection is what led me to apply to the DAHS for a Bodtker Grant to allow me to pursue my research and tell this story. Intrigued by what I might be able to add to the scholarship on the impact of the Danish American folk school, I was delighted to be awarded the research grant in June 2017.

Progressive ideas in American education, society and politics flowed into the school under Kirkpatrick's, and later Graham's, leadership.[6] In their 2011 article, "John Ervin Kirkpatrick and the Rulers of American Colleges," Timothy Reese Cain and Steven E. Gump describe Kirkpatrick's struggle to ensure academic freedom for college faculty, in particular his continual fight "against what he saw as the ultimate enemy of higher education: external boards of control."[7] Kirkpatrick was fired from Washburn College in Topeka for criticizing the governance of the institution, and was later dismissed from Olivet College for publishing scholarly works on the subject.[8] In between he held a few temporary appointments at Harvard and the University of Michigan.[9] In 1926, during his time at Olivet, he published one of the first studies of the history of college and university governance in America, *The American College and its Rulers*. Through his study of academic governance Kirkpatrick concluded that external, nonresident boards of control tended to be motivated by a priority for raising money.[10] Ultimately, Cain and Gump portray Kirkpatrick as a frustrated educator who condemned the governing bodies of America's colleges and universities for usurping academic freedom and denying academic self-governance. The task of re-centering faculty in academic governance was central to Kirkpatrick's career.

Kirkpatrick had his own ideas for how to accomplish this task. While at Harvard and the University of Michigan, he was involved in planning a public college in Kansas City that would operate without an external board of trustees; instead its governing board would include members of the academic faculty, community members, students and alumni. He collected endorsements from David Starr Jordon, president emeritus of Stanford University; Edward S. Parson, president of Marietta College; John Dewey, at Columbia University; Harry A. Garfield, president of Williams College; Alexander Meiklejohn, president of Amherst College; and Charles F. Thwing, president of Western Reserve University, but this project ultimately fell

through.[11] Later, as Ashland's 1928 promotional brochure reveals, some of the same people who endorsed his Kansas City project also supported Kirkpatrick's Ashland project.[12] In the article, "In Danish Shoes," which appeared in *Survey Graphic* in June 1928, Kirkpatrick described himself and the group of educators he had assembled as "a group of 'new' or 'progressive' school people who have discovered the kinship between the Grundtvigian principles of education … and their own pedagogical theories."[13]

Kirkpatrick stressed that the program he was proposing at Ashland would be different than that found at other American schools and would only appeal to a select group of students and teachers. He viewed this exclusivity as an asset, noting, "The American college standard of measurement—thousands of students—was as useless here as the yardstick in an art shop," implying that mere numbers of students enrolled was an inadequate measure of a good school. Using the Danish folk school as a model, Kirkpatrick's Ashland College would not be open to students under eighteen years of age. In describing the kind of student his project was looking for, Kirkpatrick seems to have been winking when he declared that his school would deny enrollment to "the usual run of children just out of high school or college, even though they be six feet tall, twenty-two years of age and hold a bachelor's or master's degree. Newly fledged doctors of philosophy will be wholly ineligible, while dissatisfied and 'radical' undergraduates will be given careful consideration."[14] Ashland would be looking for students interested more in self-education than traditional academics. Kirkpatrick explained, "The academic or scholastic curriculum has been wholly abandoned in the Ashland School program. This, perhaps, is the most radical of its several departures from the standard American school. Life interests, not scholarly subjects, make up the curriculum. There will be no pretense of making or of improving scholars in the several 'departments' of the usual college curriculum."[15] Indeed, the life interests to which Kirkpatrick referred are described in the 1928 brochure as including sex, marriage, home, occupation, community, leisure, and education.[16]

Kirkpatrick's goal was to offer a liberating education. He criticized teachers of the day as predominately "machine-made," questioned whether "scholarship is possible until mind and spirit are

freed," and declared that the "first and supreme service of the school is to give freedom and initiative to its students."[17] Speaking about the relationship between students and teachers at the school, Kirkpatrick speculated that, "With a mature group of students and teachers, with teachers interested first in their own education and students familiar with life problems, the distinction between teacher and student may all but disappear. Those who are listed as students may prove in certain fields the most understanding and enlightening members of the group."[18]

To account for why folk school education no longer appealed to most Danish Americans Kirkpatrick explained, referring to the post-war "100 Percent American" movement, that second- and third-generation Danish Americans were anxious to be "'American,' if not 'hundred percenters.'"[19] Further, he recognized that most Danish Americans preferred the public education opportunities offered in America to those of the folk schools. While Kirkpatrick described this new school as an experimental "free laboratory," he ultimately felt his renewed Ashland would not be "departing from the aim or spirit of its Danish predecessors" but "merely adapting" it to his "most progressive of the progressive" educational initiatives.[20]

Ashland under Chester A. Graham

Soon after carrying out a successful summer of programming in 1928, Kirkpatrick, who died in 1931, became very ill and was unable to continue the work of directing Ashland College. With his standard for local and participatory governance, Kirkpatrick was loath to try running Ashland from afar. In late 1928, he asked Chester A. Graham, associate director at the Pocono People's College in Henryville, Pennsylvania, to come on as director at Ashland. In his autobiography, Graham explains that Dr. Eduard C. Lindeman and Joseph K. Hart had influenced Soren Mathiasen's decision to build the Pocono People's College in the early 1920s.[21] Mathiasen, who had been a close friend of Graham's in college at Oberlin, had spent a session, together with his wife Lucile, at the International People's College in Elsinore, Denmark under the leadership of Peter Manniche. Graham and his wife Margaret worked at Pocono from June 1926 to August 1927, where he had been made aware of the opportunity to build something new at

Ashland even before Kirkpatrick. Graham tells of receiving a letter at Pocono, in May 1927, from folks at Ashland in search of a non-Danish organization to revive the school. He had passed the opportunity onto Kirkpatrick, who was visiting Pocono at the time, but he was thus prepared to take over for him the following year.[22]

The new Ashland's progressive ideology aligned with Graham's political and religious views. In his autobiography, Graham defined himself as a Democratic Socialist who believed that "the 'consumer' not the 'worker' hold[s] the key to our economic future."[23] "Emphatically opposed to all forms of dictatorship including the 'dictatorship of the proletariat,'" Graham favored a drastic reduction of "federal bureaucracy in the socialization of our economy, with emphasis on consumer cooperatives, cooperative factories and farms, municipal ownership, and enterprises similar to The Tennessee Valley Authority." [24] Having served in World War I, Graham believed that "love of country and loyal citizenship" were "created and nurtured by home and community, not because of experience in military service, but in fact, in spite of the wasteful, authoritarian and immoral impact of military experience." He explained that he had had to set aside his longing to enter the missionary field after his military service because "church denominations were still calling for God's blessing on militarism and war." Recognizing the opposition his convictions would arouse for the rest of his life, he stated, "My clear spiritual commitment that militarism and war were a negation of the teachings of Jesus would make me a constant source of friction and trouble." In a 1969 article on Graham, journalist Donna Hasleiet related that Graham "rediscovered religion" through "required instruction in the Bible" while at Oberlin College. When Graham's college education left him feeling like he could no longer relate to his mother, he realized "that college often trains people away from their home communities," the insight upon which he would later base a new kind of higher education.[25] Graham felt that the teachings of Jesus were a clear path to the Kingdom of Heaven on earth for human society.

After college and military service, Graham began working for the YMCA and the public schools in Akron, Ohio on immigration and Americanization, an experience that deepened his appreciation for the inherent worth and dignity of all people. He was opposed to the immigration quota systems of the time which he saw as favoring some

people as superior, while denying others as essentially inferior; for his part, he believed that the "key to true Americanization was the discovery [on] the part of the immigrant that we understand and appreciate his or her good qualities and cultural heritage," explaining, "We call out the best in the person through our appreciation."[26] Similarly, he felt that "Hull House in Chicago, the International Institutes, some Public School Americanization Programs, and other similar programs made good US citizens by revealing to the individual immigrants our regard for their poets, musicians, and great teachers, thereby giving them the desire to be a part of our life and culture."[27]

Graham felt that his time at Ashland was his finest work. He used Jane Addam's Hull House as a model, with no separation between town and gown, stating that "our aim was to make every family in the area feel at home in the school."[28] According to Hasleiet, "the frame of reference was the community from which each individual came. If John Smith came from a coal-mining town which desperately needed recreational activities for its young, John would be trained to return home to fill that void. And when the school was not in session, a staff member would follow John to Coal City to see how he was doing."[29] In many ways Graham continued with programming similar to Kirkpatrick's, as he wrote in his autobiography:

> The entire first two days of the session were spent formulating the curriculum, with students and staff members having equal voice, with definite understanding that on Monday of the fifth week, in an eight-week session, the entire curriculum would be reconsidered in light of experience during the first four weeks. Year after year no two curricula were identical because no two groups of people are identical. Previous school experience varies widely. Some had not finished elementary school, some had graduated from high school and quite rarely the students attended college. With few exception students had previous work experience. We were not interested to have winners and losers. Each student was encouraged to do her or his best.[30]

With regard to his curriculum Graham explained, "Emphasis was given to the study of contemporary national and international move-

ments such as world government, human rights, elimination of poverty and hunger, totalitarianism, international peace, the labor movement, the cooperative movement, Mahatma Ghandi and Non-Violence, Public Ownership and Civil Liberties. …The school library tried to keep abreast on all important contemporary developments."[31] Graham's Ashland placed a strong emphasis on the creative arts such as creative writing, crafts and folk recreation in the form of singing and dancing.

To give us a feel for what Ashland must have been like under Graham's leadership, Hasleiet notes, "Because of the reform-mindedness of Chester Graham, the Grant school also became a microcosm of the efforts for change in this country in the thirties."[32] Many organizations used the Ashland facilities and staff for their seminars, retreats, and conferences, including Michigan State Grange, the Lower Michigan Federation of Consumer Cooperatives (formed at Ashland), the Central States Cooperative League, credit unions, the Michigan Farmers Union, the League for Independent Political Action, the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party USA, proponents of Henry George's Single Tax, the Reuther brothers, and other industrial unions.[33] One group in particular would change the course of things at Ashland, namely the Central States Cooperative League. The League began holding its educational institutes at Ashland starting in 1935 with students coming from co-ops in large cities across the Midwest, such as Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago.[34] Ashland seemed like a perfect fit for the League's institutes with its Danish history of cooperative economics and Graham's like-mindedness.[35]

At its annual meeting on September 4, 1937, the Ashland Folk School adopted a set of by-laws, which articulate the school's progressive, inclusive goals, namely:

> 1) To awaken and conserve the finer values of a new American symphony of culture through an integration of the different cultural heritages of the American People, and
>
> 2) To seek a better understanding of human behavior and of the social process, and
>
> 3) To help to build a better social order. For the accomplishment of this purpose the school shall endeavor:

a) To awaken the minds of students rather than merely to fill them;

b) To enliven as well as to enlighten;

c) To lead youth and adults into a process of continuous self-education;

d) To discover the gifts which native and immigrant groups have brought to us and to create an appreciation for these gifts;

e) To lead the way in cooperative and creative living and learning;

f) To serve as a center of local community life.[36]

Article II, section 14 of these by-laws, which stipulates that each voting member must "own at least one share of stock but shall have one vote regardless of the number of shares held," illustrates that Graham and his board were trying to develop something very similar to a cooperative society with an uncompromising commitment to democratic member control wherein one person has but one vote, much like what would later be included in the by-laws for Circle Pines Center.

Finding a New Space

In the space of one year, everything changed. By 1937 the summer school had begun to outgrow the Ashland facility and needed to find a new home, which it did at the soon-to-be-completed Civilian Conservation Corps' Chief Noonday Camp in Barry County (about sixty miles away, an hour and fifteen minutes south of Grant on modern highways). According to Mortensen the school moved to Chief Noonday because the state fire marshal condemned the Ashland building in the spring of 1938, a belief that has persisted in Circle Pines lore. However, the records contradict this narrative, confirming that the decision to move had already been made based on space requirements. The decision to condemn the building was due in part to discomfort that some people felt regarding the progressive activities taking place at Ashland. Graham reflected that closing the facility "pleased local and state-wide interests and persons who were displeased by the identification of the Folk School with the Cooperative Movement, the farmers' union, and the League for Independent Political Action. We

were visited frequently by a State Fire Inspector who warned me each time that he would arrest me if he ever found any person above the first floor of the building."[37] Graham and others tried to save Ashland by selling shares to raise the money needed for repairs or perhaps erect a new building but, as Graham explained, the national board of the Danish Lutheran Church preferred not to sell the property to a non-Danish organization.

When friends of Ashland learned in late 1937 that Chief Noonday would soon be ready to rent to groups, Ashland's board of directors decided to move the summer school there in 1938. The board called a meeting in April 1938 at which "final action would be taken and the rental contract signed and a cash deposit made."[38] At that meeting, Graham lost control of his folk school altogether; he later recalled, "When our committee met in April 1938 to sign the lease for Chief Noonday Camp for our Summer School, members of the committee had been canvassed previously, I was outvoted and the Central States Cooperative League took over the rental and the directing of the Summer School."[39] Upon moving to Chief Noonday, Ashland Summer School changed its name to Circle Pines Center.

During their time at Ashland the Grahams had received no salary but volunteered their time out of conviction, supporting their family primarily by conducting recreation programs across the country.[40] Since his work on immigration and Americanization, Graham had become increasingly involved with recreation education in the form of folk dances and games, while his wife, Margaret, was a skilled and passionate proponent of folk recreation.[41] Prior to a visit to Kirkpatrick's Ashland, in the summer of 1928, the Grahams had been exposed to group singing and folk dancing while on a tour of Danish communities in the west, as well as while visiting Nysted Folk School. This experience, Graham wrote, "only deepened our interest in folk recreation."[42] Almost as a foretelling of his future leadership at Ashland, during a visit at the close of Kirkpatrick's 1928 summer season, Graham saved the night when he was able to step in as caller for a community folk dance hosted by the college.[43] The Grahams had a deep understanding of the power of folk recreation to open people's minds to one another and they employed it as a technique in all of their work. When questioned many decades later in an interview with folks from Circle Pines as to the origins and meaning of Circle Pines'

commitment to recreation, education, and cooperation, Graham simply stated, "The best way to get a cooperative state of mind was out of an hour of folk dancing."[44]

Despite losing the directorship, Graham and his family continued to be involved with Circle Pines, leading the recreational institutes that took place each summer in those early years.[45] After Margaret Graham died unexpectedly a few years later, Graham married Viola Jo Kreiner, who had been actively involved in both Ashland and Circle Pines.[46] Throughout the 1940s the Graham children were involved with youth programming at Circle Pines. In the decades that followed Graham continued to stay in touch and would occasionally attend membership meetings and reunions. Likewise, Graham continued much of the same work he had been doing at Ashland, organizing farmers and cooperatives and volunteering in numerous capacities for the many social causes he felt passionate about, such as serving on the boards of groups like the Illinois Committee to Abolish Capital Punishment, many committees of the American Friends Service Committee, local chapters of the American Civil Liberties Union, and the National Advisory Committee of the Fellowship for Reconciliation, to name just a few.[47]

Circle Pines Center and Dr. David E. Sonquist

Under the leadership of the Central States Cooperative League the former Ashland Summer School gained a new director in Dr. David E. Sonquist. A former professor steeped in the cooperative movement, Sonquist served as president of the League. As a sociologist and author of several books and other publications on cooperation, Sonquist championed "the superior advantage of cooperation as a way of life."[48] Under Sonquist's leadership the newly created Circle Pines Center rented the Chief Noonday facilities for the summer programming of the 1938, 1939, 1940, and 1941 seasons. Each summer saw weekly programming on cooperation, similar to that which had been offered at Ashland, that explored various aspects of the cooperative movement, such as recreation, medicine, education, finance, housing, and the relationship between managers and employees, as well as the relationship between producers and consumers.[49]

Chief Noonday was not a permanent solution for Circle Pines, however. In his 1947 diary Sonquist recalled that he and the organizers of the 1939 Circle Pines summer season were frustrated with the slow pace of the government's response to their rental application: "The League Board faced the possibility now or in the future of discontinuing Circle Pines Center unless steps were taken ultimately to secure our own camp site."[50] Regarding the drawbacks of Chief Noonday, Sonquist explained, "Everything was finished; … there was no opportunity to build anything or grow anything. Even the maintenance was provided. Jokingly we said 'We could not even drive a nail in the wall without first getting permission from Congress.'"[51] Recalling the difficult decision of what to do next, he wrote in his diary, "How could we hope to provide anything even remotely to compare with the government camp? But there were those who knew that the old maxim, 'That those who own, control' was true and we would live to rue the day if we did not act accordingly."[52] Fundraising for the purchase of the nearby 283-acre Stewart farm began in 1939, albeit without the support of the Central States Cooperative League, although Sonquist would continue to serve as director for many years.[53] In 1940 and 1941, summer programming was conducted at both locations. Regular cooperative and recreational education programming took place at Chief Noonday, while at the Stewart farm site folks worked hard to make the rundown Civil War era farm and buildings livable and useable again. The contract for renting Chief Noonday was not renewed in 1942. From then on, all programming took place solely at the new farm and a new venture in cooperative ownership had begun.

In 1944 Circle Pines Center published *First Fruits: A Collection of Creative Works by Members and Friends of Circle Pines Center, Anthology-1944.* The foreword describes the impetus for the creation of the anthology, giving us a glimpse of the optimism of the time. Referencing site plans for the center created by Frank Lloyd Wright that, while never executed, were extensive and impressive, and have been a longstanding point of pride for many, editor Lois Runeman enthused,

> It is fitting that such superb plans, representing the best of today's architecture, should be made for Circle Pines Center, a consumer cooperative society dedicated to educational, cultural and recreational pursuits; for in consumer

cooperation are embodied the best principles of democracy in operation today.

During this year, 1944, cooperators the world over have celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the consumer cooperative movement in Rochdale, England. As part of the centennial celebration, Circle Pines Center offers this little anthology, "first fruits" of the creative expression of its members and friends inspired during sojourns at the Center. The writings and illustrated works represent the authors' own concepts and spontaneous expression, and are therefore examples of genuine folk culture. Much of the material included in this collection interprets what the people are striving for at Circle Pines, what Circle Pines means to them.

May this humble effort inspire many others to express their latent talents, and even more important, to create and build a better Circle Pines and a stronger cooperative democracy.[54]

In this photograph, Dr David Sonquist holds a drawing from the original Frank Lloyd Wright plans for Circle Pines Center. When Wright asked brusquely if he was expected to design the site as free contribution, Sonquist responded that he and the others did not want a hand-out but hoped Wright would join them as a member in building this new cooperative. *Photo courtesy of Circle Pines Center.*

As an example of the inclusivity that these builders of a "stronger co-operative democracy" were working toward, the anthology contains the following poem by Dr. Sonquist:

> With Skeptic's Eyes
> *A word picture based on the experience of the late Dr. Williams, eminent Negro surgeon from Chicago, when he visited Circle Pines Center in the summer of 1939.*
>
> With skeptic eyes I came amongst you
> To probe beneath your pretensions,
> To see whether you practice what you preach.
> "Here is a place," my friends said,
> "Where there is no line on color or creed,
> Where they all live together, work together,
> Yea, even play and eat together."
> "Where is such a place?" I asked.
> "It is a Cooperative Family Camp," they replied.
> Quietly I entered your midst
> You did not know who I was,
> You did not know that I had been probing for years and found wanting:
> The churches that preached brotherhood
> And built negro churches,
> The lodges who sang of fraternity
> And organized separate lodges,
> Many unions who called us "brothers"
> And turned us out of their locals.
> Unknown to you I probed.
> I accidently touched you while shaving in the bathhouse,
> To see if you would wince and pull away;
> I purposely rubbed your arm when you passed me the potatoes,
> To see if you would politely excuse yourself
> And withdraw.
> I danced your folk dances,
> And you looked beneath and saw me as I really was…
> A living human being.

You smiled at me and welcomed me.
And I came,
    And I was ashamed for having doubted you.
It was true:
Here was a place where all could live together,
And in living, forget the color of skin;
The line of creed; the difference in position and wealth.
Cooperators all,
Bound together by the same needs,
The same basic interests and wishes,
And growing together by sharing with each other
The many problems
In building a new brotherhood of man
Right here in America.
You were weighed in the scales
And you were not found wanting.[55]

Sonquist's vision for Circle Pines took more prosaic form as well, as his recently rediscovered Folk School Prospectus illustrates. Packaged neatly, and titled separately, in three black, paper folders, the prospectus, written in late 1944 and early 1945, describes the twenty-seven-hundred-mile study tour of people's school initiatives in Indiana, Ohio, and the Southern Highlands (southern Appalachian mountains) that Sonquist and his wife Dorothy undertook in November 1944.[56] During this tour the Sonquists visited numerous people's schools which represented a variety of methodologies and purposes. For each one, the Sonquists detailed the origins of the school, its financial set-up, its organizational framework, its constituency, the school's relationship to its community, the type of students or people using the school's facilities, the school's educational policy and program, the staff and personnel, the outreach of institution, the effect of war on the school, and the school's future hopes and prospects. The purpose of this tour was to gain a clearer plan for a cooperative folk school at Circle Pines. In the section, "Our Next Step," Sonquist explained:

> With this sketch we have seen how naturally Circle Pines has been growing towards its purpose as expressed in its By-Laws. "The purpose for which this organization is

> formed is to create, establish, and maintain a center of cooperative culture in the Central United States for the purpose of carrying on cooperative education, and to advocate and teach, through demonstration and otherwise, the superior advantages of cooperation as a way of life, and to aid in establishing a system of production and distribution for use instead of profit, through the development and expansion of Rochdale Consumer Cooperation. The aim is to help build cooperative economic democracy in America."[57]

However it appears that Circle Pines was in dire financial straits by 1946. While some, including Sonquist, wanted to push forward with an expansion in programming, others did not.

The *Pine Needles* newsletters from 1946-49 document a very messy upheaval in the mid-1940s, marked by many discussions and much conflict amongst the membership and the leadership about the direction that Circle Pines should take. It is clear that Sonquist and his supporters wanted the expansion to include year-round programming for adults in the form of a folk school. As a Circle Pines folk school had yet to materialize by November 1948, Sonquist attempted to galvanize the membership by praising those donors who "backed their interest [in Circle Pines] with their money," declaring,

> This interest was based on the conviction that Circle Pines Center, in its own home, should, can, and must become more than merely a ten weeks' vacation spot; that it should become an institution for the creation of cooperative culture, the development of cooperative leadership and of cooperative techniques. Such an institution can render valuable aid to the several local societies in the Central States and even in the nation. It could have somewhat the same function as the research laboratories equipped by large corporations for the development of new methods and techniques of doing business.[58]

The conflict over the fundamental nature of Circle Pines seems to reflect differing ideas regarding the focus of the organization from its inception, as a letter from member Fred G. Lehman and his family,

published in the January 1949 *Pine Needles* newsletter illustrates. Lehman argues,

> Organizations have a habit of growing but often during the process they deviate from their original course. The early edition[s] of PINE NEEDLES state a purpose that appealed to us on becoming members; namely that CPC would provide an inexpensive vacation spot for cooperative families…. We have watched with dismay and concern the difficulties attending the growth of CPC. To us it seemed that these difficulties were unnecessary had the original purpose been remembered. Perhaps the greatest cause for unrest is the continued and planned attempt to force upon the society the idea of a school. It should be known to all cooperators that people band together in order to provide themselves with a wanted service of some sort or other. But in our case (the school idea) it has been the other way around—a few people in control of administration and publicity have hammered away relentlessly for a school.[59]

In fairness, I should note that it can clearly be seen in the promotional literature of the time that Circle Pines was advertising itself as both a cooperative education center with training institutes and a cooperative vacation spot. Reading this promotional literature today it comes as little surprise that some might fall on one side more than another. A 1939 brochure declared, "Regardless of whether one is interested in attending one of the training schools or institutes or merely desires a place where a delightful vacation and outing can be enjoyed at a reasonable cost among congenial people, the Circle Pines Center offers the ideal solution to the vacation problem for the co-operators of the Central States League district."[60]

This ongoing disagreement may explain why Sonquist's contract was not renewed in September 1951, when he was replaced as director by Jane Reed.[61] By this time, Sonquist may have understood that he was never going to be able to implement the kind of cooperative folk school plans he had in mind at Circle Pines Center. Like Graham, Sonquist continued to be involved in the cooperative movement. He occasionally attended Circle Pines reunions and stayed in touch with

many of the members.[62] A sociologist to the core, in later years he studied and wrote about the attainment of life fulfillment in older adults.

The Circle Pines farmhouse front porch has been the backdrop to many shared moments such as many group photos from the Quaker work camps of the 1940s and concerts by Big Bill Broonzy (then on staff as the camp cook) and Pete Seeger in the late 1950s. The original farmhouse of the old Stewart farm is still in active daily use today. *Photo courtesy of Circle Pines Center.*

Circle Pines Then and Now

Today the Circle Pines by-laws read a bit differently than they did in Sonquist's time. Today the stated purpose they contain is simply: "The object for which this society is formed is to create, establish and maintain a center of cooperative culture and education in the United States, including a camp for the purpose of teaching through education, demonstration and otherwise, the superior advantages of cooperation as a way of life. The educational program shall be in accordance with the Rochdale Principles of consumer cooperation."[63] In comparison with the 1940 version, the aim of helping to "build cooperative economic democracy in America" has been omitted. Looking at the by-laws today offers little insight into the exciting, turbulent history behind them that my research has uncovered.

Starting with the Danish folk school movement in America, in my search for the lineage of Circle Pines Center, I found in Dr. John E. Kirkpatrick a disaffected, progressive educator looking for more than the tight confines he found in American academia. In his successor, Chester A. Graham, I found a compassionate, progressive Christian working toward a better society by inspiring young adults with, as the by-laws state, "the enlivenment and enlightenment they needed to strengthen their communities." Later, at Circle Pines, in Dr. David E. Sonquist, I found a tireless social scientist and champion of cooperative economics as a superior way of life. All three of these radical reformers, along with their wives and families, helped to build Circle Pines and the ideas they were so passionate about have continued for eighty years to draw folks to Circle Pines for like-minded fellowship.

While young adult participation was critical in Danish and Danish American folk schools, the youth camp has been the most significant driver of adult participation at Circle Pines since the early 1940s. This model was established at Ashland, as Graham reported: "A few young people attended our summer school each year but attendance was mainly adults with special emphasis on family participation."[64] At Circle Pines, this family camp concept allowed adults to experience both Circle Pines' cooperative educational and recreational programming, while their children were given similar opportunities at a level more appropriate to their understanding. In his prospectus Sonquist agreed with Grundtvig's conviction that the folk school experience was best for those over eighteen. Still, he acknowledged the need for youth programming at Circle Pines as a source of students for his young adult folk school, noting:

> This does not mean that the Summer Youth Institutes or Youth Work Camps should be discontinued. They should be strengthened because they are the logical training ground from which the more mature and prospective students will come for the Winter School. The Youth Work Camps will be influenced positively by the pattern set by the older students. They will have something more tangible to look up to.[65]

Circle Pines youth programming grew steadily throughout the 1940s, with less and less cooperative education programming being offered for adults. Still, the 1950s and 1960s saw many families camping onsite while their children were campers in the youth summer camp. Work projects, art making, folk dancing, and folk singing brought different age groups together at various times throughout the summer season. Family legacies at Circle Pines most often begin with a youth summer camp experience. This has afforded lifelong participation in the life and governance of Circle Pines, which is largely responsible for the communication and transmission of progressive values within the organization. At the same time, diversity and the idea of respect for the authentic experience of the individual is paramount at Circle Pines, serving the organization as an effective check on nationalism and xenophobia, sexism, racism, genderism, and other negative trends. Circle Pines has retained a culture of commitment to making space for all voices, but, as it most certainly was in the early years, it is admittedly very difficult and often messy to allow such space when a particular voice appears to some as speaking the language of the above-mentioned negative-isms.

It is well documented that prior to establishing the Highlander Folk School in the 1930s, Miles Horton traveled to Denmark for a personal study of its folk schools. Graham fondly remembered Miles Horton's visit to Ashland just before he left for Denmark.[66] It is perplexing to me, however, that, at least to the best of my knowledge, Horton never publicly credited Graham's Ashland as an influence upon his work. To me it appears that Graham's Ashland should have had a profound effect upon Horton, and in my reading of several of Graham's accounts of Horton's visit, it seems as if Graham might have felt the same way. Needless to say, I would love to be proven wrong and someday find that Horton did indeed acknowledge Graham's Ashland as an influence. It is impossible for me to count how many times I have seen Circle Pines compared to Highlander Folk School, with Circle Pines, for one reason or another, coming up short every time. After all these years of involvement, these many months of deep consideration of the organization, and a good deal of reading about the Danish folk school, I have arrived at the question of whether perhaps Circle Pines could, in some ways, more closely resemble the

Danish folk school experience than others of the more-or-less Danish inspired, non-Danish folk schools in America. My research has led me to believe that Circle Pines Center should at least be allowed a place within the discussion.

When I presented some of this research at the Circle Pines Center's eightieth reunion, many of the people in the audience were inspired by it. Very few in the audience knew of Chester A. Graham or the Ashland Folk School, and none about John E. Kirkpatrick and his plans for Ashland. So eager were they for this information that the presentation managed to capture a spirit of goodwill and joy, just what one hopes to have at a reunion. Indeed, I certainly could judge, by their responses to the original letters, newsletters, photographs, and promotional materials I presented that the audience felt a sense of awe and confirmation in the direct link from the late years at Ashland to the progressive ideas that the Circle Pines membership and programming have always embodied. I mentioned above that Circle Pines enjoys many legacy families in its membership, several of whom go back to the early days of Circle Pines. In recent years, Circle Pines has been joined by a family that links us all the way back to the very first days of Kirkpatrick's leadership at Ashland through his acting secretary for Ashland, Eugene Sutherland.[67] Until my research uncovered it, the Sutherland family knew virtually nothing of this history, nor did anyone else currently active with Circle Pines.

A lack of institutional memory plagues many nonprofit organizations, both old and relatively young ones. Micro histories such as this are important because, by encouraging a sense of purpose and place, they can rekindle and strengthen individual and collective identity. This small account of the transition from the late progressive years of the Ashland Folk School to the early years of the recreation and education cooperative of Circle Pines Center provides an inspiring genealogy which can be rightfully claimed to aid in strengthening the identity of Circle Pines. Much has been retained of its inherited passion and drive, but much has been obscured over the decades with ever-present financial worries and conflicting ideas of purpose. As from its beginnings, the multiplicities of purpose represented in the membership and the community of Circle Pines are often at odds with each other, and both with simply making ends meet. I cannot help

but think of Grundtvig's educational model as curative. If the ills of lacking a memory and collective identity as a people were in any way what Grundtvig envisioned his folk school to cure, Circle Pines is certainly in need of that tonic now. Understanding where Circle Pines should go in the future will be aided by a better understanding of where it has been.

Endnotes

[1] Enok Mortensen, *Schools for Life: The Grundtvigian Folk Schools in America* (Askov, Minnesota: Danish American Heritage Society, 1977), 55.

[2] *Constitution and By-laws of Circle Pines Center: Adopted March 30, 1940*. Circle Pines Archives, Delton, Michigan.

[3] Mortensen, 5.

[4] Mortensen, 49-50.

[5] Howard L. Nicholson, Anders J. Gillis, and Russell M. Magnaghi, *Danes and Icelanders in Michigan* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2015).

[6] Mortensen, 50-55.

[7] Timothy Reese Cain and Steven E. Gump, "John Ervin Kirkpatrick and the Rulers of American Colleges," *American Association of University Professors Journal of Academic Freedom* 2 (2011): 3. https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/Cain.pdf

[8] Cain and Gump, 4.

[9] Cain and Gump, 21.

[10] Cain and Gump, 23.

[11] Cain and Gump, 23.

[12] *Ashland School for Adult Education: July 30th to September 8th, 1928,* Ashland Folk School files, Grant Area District Library, Grant, Michigan.

[13] John Ervin Kirkpatrick, "In Danish Shoes," *Survey Graphic* (June 1928): 277.

[14] Kirkpatrick, 279.

[15] Kirkpatrick, 279.

[16] *Ashland School for Adult Education.*

[17] Kirkpatrick, 278.

[18] Kirkpatrick, 279.

[19] Kirkpatrick, 277.

[20] Kirkpatrick, 278, 310.

[21] Chester A. Graham, *The Eighty-Year Experience of a Grass Roots Citizen: An Autobiography* (Muskegon, MI: Self-published, [1979]), 83. *Professional Employment, Chester A. Graham* (stapled to letter to historical researcher Paul A. Elliott of Grant Public Library from Chester A. Graham, April 1, 1978), Ashland Folk School files, Grant Area District Library, Grant, Michigan.

[22] Graham, 86; Cain and Gump, 21.

[23] Graham, 57.
[24] Graham, 128.
[25] Donna Hasleiet, "Sunset Thoughts from the Rebel of Many Causes," *Wonderland Magazine, Grand Rapids Press*, October 5, 1969, Ashland Folk School files, Grant Area District Library, Grant, Michigan.
[26] Graham, 79.
[27] Graham, 80.
[28] Graham, 88.
[29] Hasleiet.
[30] Graham, 92-93.
[31] Graham, 94.
[32] Hasleiet.
[33] Graham, 91.
[34] David E. Sonquist, "Diary, 1947" (unpublished manuscript, 1947), 2, Circle Pines Archives, Delton, Michigan.
[35] *Circle Pines Center,* 1942 (brochure found within "Sonquist Diary, 1947"), Circle Pines Archives, Delton, Michigan.
[36] *By-laws of Ashland Folk School, Grant, Michigan: September 4, 1937*, Ashland Folk School files, Grant Area District Library, Grant, Michigan.
[37] Graham, 110.
[38] Graham, 110.
[39] Graham, 110.
[40] Graham, 89.
[41] Graham, 102-03.
[42] Graham, 103.
[43] Graham, 87.
[44] Interview with Chester and Jo Graham, by Circle Pines Center co-directors Barbara Hofer and Don Shall, Muskegon, Michigan, October 14, 1981, transcript, Circle Pines Archives, Delton, Michigan.
[45] *Circle Pines Center 1938 Scrapbook,* Circle Pines Archives, Delton, Michigan.
[46] Graham,139; Lois G. Runeman, ed., statement introducing Viola Jo Kreiner, in *First Fruits: A Collection of Creative Works by Members and Friends of Circle Pines Center, Anthology-1944,* ed. Lois G. Runeman (Cloverdale, Michigan: Circle Pines Center, 1944), 35.
[47] *Voluntary Service Activities, Chester A. Graham* (stapled to letter to historical researcher Paul A. Elliott of Grant Public Library from Chester A. Graham, April 1, 1978), Ashland Folk School files, Grant Area District Library, Grant, Michigan.
[48] David E. Sonquist, "A Prospectus for School of Cooperation or a Cooperative Work School," (unpublished manuscript, 1944), 28, Circle Pines Archives, Delton, Michigan; *Constitution and By-laws of Circle Pines Center.*
[49] *Circle Pines Center 1938 Scrapbook.*
[50] Sonquist, "Diary, "12.
[51] Sonquist, "Diary," 13.

[52] Sonquist, "Diary," 13.
[53] Sonquist, "Diary," 16-17.
[54] Lois G. Runeman., foreword to *First Fruits*, iv.
[55] David E. Sonquist, "With Skeptic's Eyes," in *First Fruits*, 8-9.
[56] David E. Sonquist, introduction to "Sonquist Folk School Prospectus: People's Education" (unpublished manuscript, 1944), 1, Circle Pines Archives, Delton, Michigan.
[57] Sonquist, "A Prospectus for School of Cooperation or a Cooperative Work School," 10.
[58] *Pine Needles: News Organ of Circle Pines Center*, November 1948, Circle Pines Archive, Delton, Michigan.
[59] *Pine Needles: News Organ of Circle Pines Center,* January 1949.
[60] *Circle Pines Center 1938 Scrapbook.*
[61] *Pine Needles: News Organ of Circle Pines Center*, August 1951.
[62] *Pine Needles: News Organ of Circle Pines Center*, December 1958.
[63] *The By-laws of Circle Pines Center: May 27, 2018.* Circle Pines Archives, Delton, Michigan.
[64] Graham, 106.
[65] Sonquist, "A Prospectus for School of Cooperation or a Cooperative Work School," 56.
[66] Graham, 111; interview with Chester and Jo Graham; letter to historical researcher Paul A. Elliott of Grant Public Library from Chester A. Graham, April 1, 1978. Ashland Folk School files, Grant Area District Library, Grant, Michigan.
[67] *Ashland School for Adult Education: July 30th to September 8th, 1928*.

My Life as a Danish American Archive and Library (DAAL) Intern

by
Chantal Powell

Scouring through archives provides a person with a glimpse into the details of the past not provided by just reading a history book. Homemade Christmas cards and PanAm airplane tickets, award ribbons and family pictures, newspaper clippings and handwritten letters are just a few of the details of people's lives I got to go through and experience for myself at the Danish American Archive and Library (DAAL) in Blair, Nebraska.

I was an intern at the DAAL my last semester at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, where I earned my bachelor of fine arts degree with a double major in creative writing and English. It was the first internship opportunity my advisor showed me that intrigued me, as I have always enjoyed digging through details and learn the history of people's lives. Interning at the DAAL provided me with a wonderfully concentrated version of this, where was able to learn expressly about the history of Danish people who came to America.

As a way to teach me where things were located, intern coordinator Dr. Tim Jensen sent me on a scavenger hunt at the beginning of my internship. This required me to find information on both the library and archival sides of the DAAL. It had me digging through acid-free envelopes in acid-free boxes, flipping through periodicals, and looking through the Dana College and Lur Publications rooms for specific details. It was a great introduction into how things are organized and the types of items and information you can find at the DAAL.

The first project I worked on was writing an article about Tiny Loveland, whose daughter, Dody Johnson, volunteers at the DAAL. Tiny, who was born in Denmark and immigrated to the United States with her family when she was young, was a trailblazer for women's rights during the 1940s and 50s. She was a part of two different groups of women that met with Eleanor Roosevelt and Congress to discuss women's rights, and worked her way up through the ranks in her career as well as any man could. It was interesting to find that some of

the same struggles she went through are still taking place in today's women's movement. Through my connection with the DAAL, I had the opportunity to have this article published in *The Danish Pioneer*. Writing about Tiny gave me insight into the specific details and mementos an archival box could contain, the opportunity to visit personally with Dody for her recollections, and the chance to learn what life could be like for a Danish immigrant.

A few of my favorite discoveries in the archives include a collection of quips such as "I started out with nothing – I still have most of it left" and "Never turn your back on a unicorn," a newspaper article about a Nebraskan who bought a castle in Denmark, an ad for an Underwood typewriter that exclaims, "You can't expect this weak little finger to do the work of this big strong one!" with pictures of a woman's pinky and middle finger, respectively, and a letter from a soldier with vivid details of everything he encountered during the time he was serving. I also enjoyed looking through holiday cards; you can see how a family grows and changes from year to year, and what each stage of their life held just by reading them. Each archival box at the DAAL is a treasure trove of unique items that tell a story about individuals and their families; but collectively, they all tell a history of Danes and their lives both in and outside of America.

One consistent thing I found, no matter which archival box I looked through, was the sense of community the Danish people have. I experienced this firsthand at the DAAL, where every day at 10 a.m., whether you are a volunteer, visitor, or just happen to be there for whatever reason that day, you are invited for coffee and treats, which usually includes some sort of Danish pastry. During this time, I heard personal stories about Dana College, learned about other archival projects going on, and got to know the people that work so hard to make the DAAL an amazing resource for the history of Danish American people. Starting out, I didn't know what this internship would hold; and I am grateful for the history I learned, the opportunities I was presented with, and the community I got to be a part of as an intern at the Danish American Archive and Library.

The Danish American Archive and Library collects, catalogues and makes available to the public documents and other media that span three centuries–from the mid 1800's to the present. It is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Left to right: Ruth Rasmussen, Elaine Hoyer, David Shepard, Laura Meldrum, Joan Sorensen, Dody Johnson, Erna Berthelsen, Julie Johnson.

For more information go to www.danishamericanarchive.com.

The Bridge 43:1 (Spring 2020)

Book Review

Markus Lampe and Paul Sharp. *A Land of Milk and Butter: How Elites Created the Modern Danish Dairy Industry.* Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2018. x, 273 pp., ills., maps, tables, endnotes, bibliography, ISBN-13: 978-0-226-54950-7.
Reviewed by J. R. Christianson

In her Copenhagen apartment, she had a gray stoneware jug decorated with a verse in blue letters: *Før sled de bønder rent forbandet, nu er de herrerne i landet* – "They used to slave with little say / But farmers rule the land today." My wife's grandmother had come to Copenhagen from Jutland as a pretty sixteen-year-old on the eve of the First World War, leaving behind her deep rural roots to become a city woman. The legend on her jug came true in 1901, when the farmers' party (Venstre) took control of the Rigsdag and forced King Christian X to accept democratic majority rule. Most observers saw this "farmer power" as a political reflection of the economic power built up by farmers' cooperatives and strengthened by a cultural solidarity acquired in Grundtvigian folk schools. All in all, it was quite a story, telling how ordinary country folks established Danish democracy and led the way to rapid modernization of the Danish economy.

Economists have been especially interested in the cooperative side of the story. If cooperatives worked in Denmark, why couldn't cooperatives be organized in other lands in order to move traditional societies into the global economy?

In Denmark, everything seemed to happen so fast. The cream separator was invented by L. C. Nielsen in Roskilde in 1878, and the first cooperative creamery was established only four years later. Hundreds of Danish cooperatives popped up during the 1880s, financed and built by the farmers themselves, and this stimulated growth in the whole Danish economy. Factories were built to make cream separators and motors, railroad tracks were laid for the train engines and cars that were built to carry butter from the cooperative creameries to seaports, whole fleets of ships were built in Danish shipyards to carry endless cargoes of rich Danish butter to English markets, and Danish financial institutions expanded to provide the capital for all this

investment. Cooperatives led the way in Denmark and made her rich. Shouldn't developing countries follow Denmark's example?

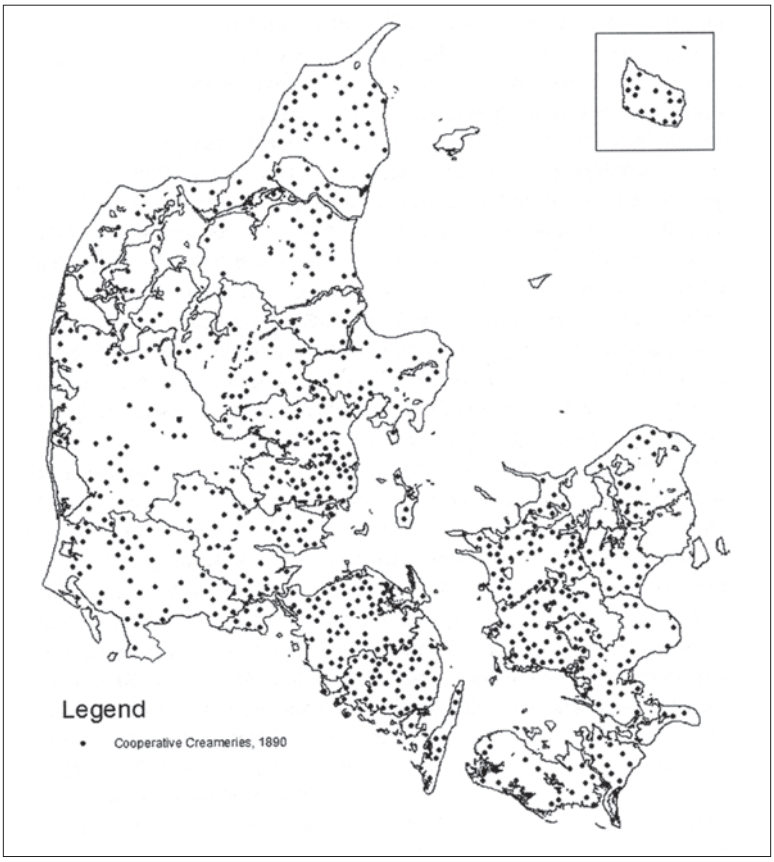


Figure 1. Danish cooperative creameries, 1890.
Map from *A Land of Milk and Butter.*

Not so fast, say Marcus Lampe and Paul Sharp. They are economists who warn that it didn't really happen quite like that. Neither of them is Danish. Markus Lampe is a German who picked up some Danish during a postdoc year in Copenhagen. Paul Sharp moved from England to Denmark as an adult and is now a professor of economics in Odense. These two international economists acquired the skills

needed to study the writings of Danish historians and learned things that were news to economists around the world. They quantified the story as well as they could because they knew that economists believe in numbers and because their aim was to convince economists, especially those involved in third-world development, that cooperatives aren't an easy answer to third-world economic challenges.

In Denmark, they point out, there was a long backstory that laid the groundwork for the cooperative movement, which explains why it was able to have such a powerful effect on Danish economic development so quickly. The story as they tell it goes back to the mid-eighteenth century. This was a time when many Danish farms were clustered in villages surrounded by three large open fields, which farmers cultivated in common as directed by village elders. An individual farm did not exist in one single place: it consisted of long, narrow plots of arable land scattered all over the three village fields in a manner that aimed to provide equitably some good soil and some less

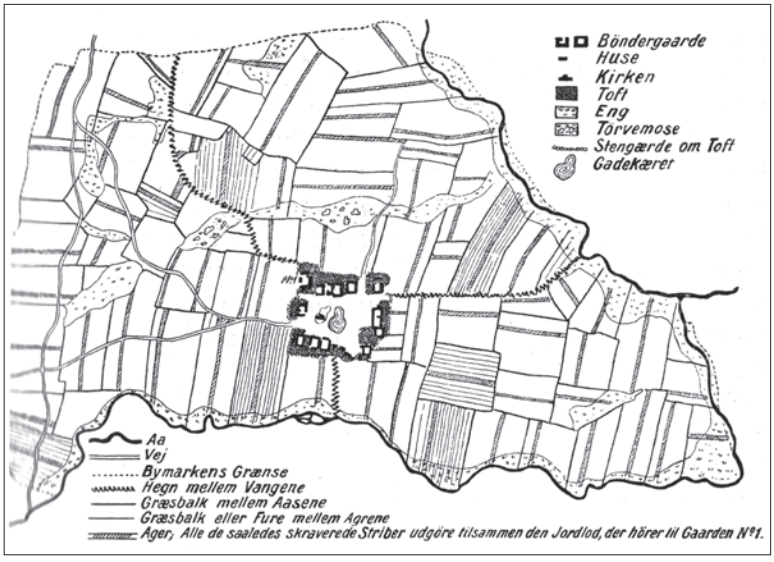


Figure 2. An eighteenth century Danish village surrounded by its three fields. Each field was divided into smaller plots, and each plot into strips separated by grassy walkways. The strips that comprised the arable land of Farm No. 1 are shaded. Map from *Danmarks Riges Historie* (1896-1907), 5:235.

desirable land to every farmer. These long, narrow plots were separated by grassy paths, which meant that a lot of the arable land was taken up by pathways. The village elders gathered under the village beech or oak to make decisions for everybody, levying fines on those who disobeyed. In plowing time, you and your neighbors formed a crew to plow your strip and then your neighbor's and so on until the work was done. You plowed with a heavy, wheeled plow pulled by horses or oxen, and the strips were long in order to make as long a furrow as possible before the plow needed to be turned. You plowed, sowed, harvested, and did everything else when the elders said you should. The main field crops in most villages were cultivated in a rotation of barley, rye, and lying fallow, with the fallow field simply plowed to hold down weeds. Yields on the two cultivated fields were very low. Beyond the three fields, villagers had common meadows where livestock grazed, as well as marshes, woodlands, and waters held in common.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, Danish leaders began to realize that most people in Denmark were involved in agriculture and that the whole agricultural system was out of date. Until this system was modernized, the Danish economy wasn't going anywhere. Discussions began to take place in government and elsewhere among enlightened Danes. In 1761, a local official named Niels Schelde published an essay that demanded civic freedom for Danish peasants so they could become productive citizens. Other enlightened individuals established a Royal Danish Agricultural Society *(Det Kongelige Danske Landhusholdningsselskab)* in 1769 and began to present awards to innovative farmers. Government ministers Reventlow, Bernstorff, and Schimmelmann from Slesvig-Holstein and a Norwegian named Colbiørnsen joined in these discussions. This group advised Crown Prince Frederick, who headed the government, and together, they wrote a batch of new laws in the 1780s that freed the peasants, provided credit, and facilitated the modernization of entire villages. This legislation was a turning point in the lives of Danish peasants. All our rural Danish ancestors were affected by these reform laws; the changes they bought were tremendously beneficial to farmers and estate owners, although not to farm laborers and other rural folks who were not landowners.

These laws facilitated a process of transforming communal villages into individual farms owned by the farmers themselves. In each village, the process began with a professional survey and assessment of the entire village, the three open fields, and all the common village meadows, woodlands, and wastelands. Once everything was surveyed and assessed, the common lands were divided up in a way that gave every farm its own arable land in one contiguous block that could be fenced and farmed as the family decided.

Figure 3. Snøde on Langeland, 1819.
Map from Geodatastyrelsen, Historiske kort på nettet, Snøde, Langeland Nørre Herred, 1819, Målestok 20,000, accessed March 20, 2020, http://hkpn.gst.dk.

Figure 3 shows the result in one village after it was divided into individual farms. This is the village of Snøde on the island of Langeland. It was divided and enclosed in the year 1801. Most of the farm buildings remained in a cluster in the village with their new acreages laid out as fields that radiated outwards from the village. The village itself was renamed Store Snøde (Big Snøde), and a new village called Lille Snøde (Little Snøde) was established on previously uninhabit-

ed commons land west of the original village. These farms in Lille Snøde did not radiate outwards from the village but were laid out in compact blocks with the farmstead located on one edge. They were brand-new farms, and all the buildings had to be constructed from the ground up. The Lille Snøde farms were allotted to ambitious young families who were not drinkers, because it took a lot of hard work to build a new farm from the ground up. The layout of the land gave these farms the potential to become the best, most compact, and most modern farms in the parish. The Snøde farmers were tenants, but new systems of credit made it possible for them to buy their own farms and hold them on secure tenure.

In this way, the breakup of communal villages like Snøde created a new class of landowning farmers in Denmark, some forty to sixty thousand of them, which is what laid the foundation for modern Danish democracy. This was quite different from other European countries like England, where the land was held in large estates instead of family farms; Prussia, where the peasants had to pay exorbitant prices for their land; or Russia, where the farming villages remained communal. In Denmark, the ones who drew the short straw were cottagers and rural laborers, because they lost their rights in the commons that no longer existed and came to live on small plots at the margins of the village farms. No wonder so many of them opted for America a generation later.

Let's say you were one of the farmers. Now that you own your farm and it's all in one place instead of scattered in thirty or forty narrow strips all over the village lands, what do you do next? The village elders no longer tell you what to do. Where do you turn for guidance? Lampe and Sharp have answers to those questions, too.

Crown Prince Frederick became King Frederick VI in 1808. He still had his wise councilors from Slesvig-Holstein and Denmark, who realized the importance of education in times like those. Mandatory confirmation had existed in the Danish Lutheran church since 1736, which meant that boys and girls were already being taught to read and write on a basic level in order to be confirmed. In 1814, however, public education was stepped up a notch when the Danish government made eight years of schooling mandatory and set up systems for funding schools and educating teachers so the whole system would

work. Denmark became the first Protestant country in the world to establish mandatory public education, decades ahead of countries like England, America, or Norway.

Men and women soon started to read the new agricultural journals that began to appear, and consultants came around. Excellent agricultural research institutions were established. In 1773, Denmark became the first country in the world to establish a veterinary college. This was followed by other schools of agriculture, mostly public institutions, but also private ones like Grundtvigian folk schools, which received government subsidies.

Getting an education and using it to read was part of the preparation for success in the new system of individual family farming, but farmers could also learn by observing what their neighbors were doing. Mixed in among all the family farms were a few larger estates centered on castles and manor houses. Lots of young Danish sons and daughters from farming families still worked on large estates after they were confirmed and before they were married, learning the farming methods used there, and sometimes even meeting their future spouses, as was the case with some of my ancestors and possibly yours.

Some large Danish estates began early on to pick up new farming methods from abroad. A system called *koppelbrug* came in from Slesvig-Holstein, where the Ahlefeldts, Reventlows, and other aristocratic landowners had been experimenting since the 1600s with laying out rectangular fields called *kopler* (singular: *koppel*) enclosed with hedges and ditches. They used as many as a dozen *kopler* to experiment with elaborate rotations combining traditional grains with new crops including legumes like peas, alfalfa, and clover, which restored nitrogen to the soil. This *koppelbrug* system was well-developed by around 1800, when experts began to bring it from Slesvig-Holstein to Danish estates. The *koppelbrug* system brought about a tremendous increase in productivity. It could also work on a family farm but not in communal three-field villages, so breaking up the villages into individual farms had to come first.

But then, if you were the farmer, what would you do with all the forage you raised when you shifted over to *koppelbrug*? Clearly, you needed to raise more animals and feed it to them, increasing your pro-

ductivity even more. In Jutland, farmers had been fattening steers for centuries and driving herds of them down into Germany or shipping them from Ribe to the Netherlands for slaughter. You could continue to raise beef cattle, or you could consider shifting to a system called *hollænderi.* This system was based on raising dairy cattle instead of steers and exporting butter and cheese instead of beef. Immigrants from Holland had brought it into the rich salt-marsh grazing lands along the North Sea coast of Slesvig-Holstein, the original homeland of the famous black-and-white Holstein cattle, and it spread into the rest of Slesvig-Holstein from there. Experts on large estates and at the new Danish schools of agriculture did the math and found that dairying was more profitable than raising beef cattle, so *hollænderi* was what they began to recommend to Danish family farmers using *koppelbrug*.

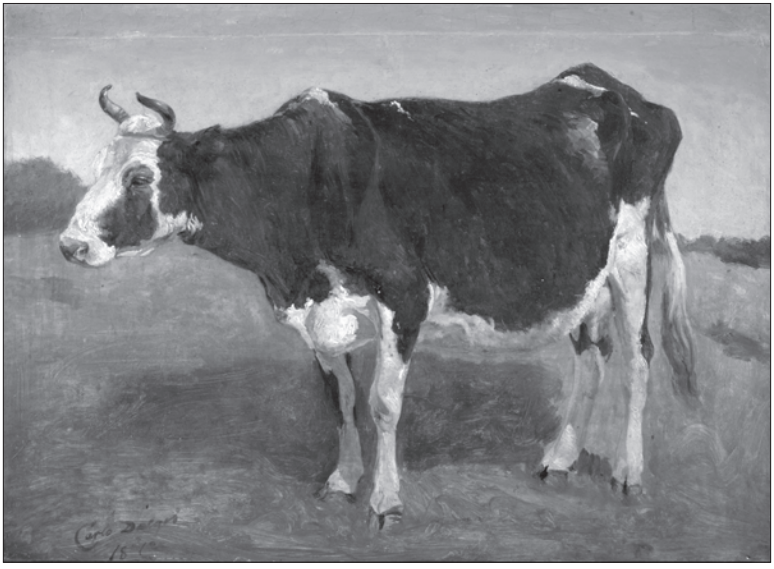


Figure 4. Carlo Dalgas, *Black and white cow standing. Study.* 1846. Painting in Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen, from Wikimedia Commons, accessed 20 March 2020 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carlo_Dalgas_-_Black_and_white_cow_standing._Study._-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

Making butter and cheese was women's work in Denmark, but when the *hollænderi* system started to appear, it was generally on a

large estate, where a professional husband-wife team leased the dairying operation at a set rate per cow, sometimes for several years at once. The husband redesigned the stables, improved the forage to increase milk production, built a dairy room or cellar that could maintain a stable temperature, and arranged to haul the milk and dairy products. The wife oversaw the milkmaids, maintained cleanliness in handling the milk, and took charge of making the butter and cheese to very high standards. Together, they began to weigh, measure, and keep double-entry books on standardized forms. The estate owner or his steward continued to run the rest of the farming operation.

Christian Albrechtsen and Margrethe Christensdatter are a good example of this kind of dairy professionals. She grew up on the Sandbjerg estate in Danish-speaking Slesvig *(Sønderjylland)*, where the Reventlow brothers were applying the reforms they were helping to legislate for all of Denmark. He grew up on the Skovbølgaard estate not far away, which had converted to *koppelbrug* as early as 1709 and maintained a *hollænderi* herd of eighty dairy cattle. Growing up on these two estates in the Danish-speaking part of Slesvig, Christian and Margrethe learned the ropes of *koppelbrug* and *hollænderi*. Soon after their marriage in 1795, they leased Straarup manor near Kolding for seven years, apparently to establish a dairying operation, and made enough money in those years to buy an estate of their own. They purchased a tired old cattle farm named Hygum Skovgaard on the Jutland heath, a few miles north of Vejle, and turned it into a modern, productive farm through a lot of hard work. Christian's crews used deep plowing to break up the hardpan below the moorland soil and spread out many cartloads of lime-rich marl clay to reduce the acidity of the soil. Christian's surveyor laid out the *kopler*, and his crews dug ditches and planted hedges around them. They may have raised beef cattle at first and only later started to build up a good dairy herd, possibly crossbreeding Holstein cows with a Danish red-and-white bull. Margrethe maintained spotless facilities and carefully supervised her milkmaids in order to produce butter and cheese.

Copenhagen University's first professor of agricultural economics, Gregers Begtrup, came to Jutland and wrote about their innovations in 1808, referring to them as "Holsteiners" because they came from Slesvig-Holstein:

> To treat newly broken heathland as a fallow field is something that only one [person in all of Vejle County] has dared to do, and his name is Albrechtsen. He broke his heathland in the fall and gave it marl and manure in the spring, treated it during the summer as fallow with four plowings, and sowed it with rye.[1]

Later in the same book, Begtrup went on:

> Three able and very energetic farmers from Holstein, Mr. Thomsen on Alstedgaard, Mr. Albrechtsen on Skovgaard, and Mr. Stoutz on Lerbæk have with unmistakable hard work, careful reflection, and considerable expense built up their farms by properly dividing their land, planting hedges, and substantially improving the soil by proper cultivation and marling. These worthy men have given their neighbors a completely different concept of how to handle heathland soil . . . to produce [not simply buckwheat but] barley and clover.[2]

The Albrechtsens farmed for a quarter-century and handed over a fine farm to their daughter and son-in-law. Eventually, Hygum Skovgaard supported a herd of around seventy dairy cattle and produced high quality butter for export while using the byproducts of butter production—skim milk, buttermilk, whey—to feed hogs for bacon and Danish ham.[3] Christian Albrechtsen and Margrethe Christensdatter happened to be my great-great-great-grandparents, but your Danish ancestors probably also saw their lives changed by the story of this transformation of Danish agriculture.

In the process of building international markets for Danish butter, trade routes shifted from going via Hamburg to a direct connection with England. Steamships replaced sailing vessels. *Hollænderi* was adapted to family farms. Then came the cream separator, which was much faster and more efficient than skimming cream from shallow bowls by hand. At that point, it was a short step to the explosive growth of cooperative creameries. When creameries, machinery, and educated professionals came into the picture, men began to replace women as buttermakers. The average family farm milked from six to a

dozen cows, but cooperatives could gather and process the milk from three to four hundred cows every day. New patterns of calving and feeding allowed farmers to produce milk year-round. Cooperatives allowed a large part of the profit to stay in the pockets of these farmer producers. Tariffs protected Danish butter, and the use of yellow color in margarine was banned by law.

From Denmark in the 1880s, it was also a short step to America, where the first Danish cream separator arrived in 1882, the very year that the first cooperative creamery in Denmark was established. Lampe and Sharp don't discuss this part of the story, but it is a part of our Danish American heritage. Jeppe Slifsgaard arrived in Fredsville, Iowa, with a new Burmeister & Wain cream separator for his farmer son, Truels, and he brought along a Danish dairyman to help them set it up. This was the very first cream separator in America. It continued to run in the Slifsgaard Creamery, day in and day out, for the next eleven years.[4]

The point of this book is that Danish farmers' cooperatives may have produced an economic miracle, but they did not do it on their own. Lampe and Sharp show how "elites" worked over the course of many decades to create an infrastructure that allowed family farms to prosper. These "elites" included aristocratic landowners from Slesvig-Holstein and Germany who worked with experts and administrators to develop the agricultural system of *koppelbrug,* promote *hollænderi*, and provide leadership in writing laws that transformed communal Danish tenants into landowning farmers. The "elites" included leaders of international trading and shipping companies who established connections to markets for Danish butter, bacon, and ham, and leaders of Danish industries that grew out of the agricultural sector in brewing, chemistry, pharmaceuticals, engineering, and finance. The "elites" included agricultural researchers at public institutions like Begtrup at Copenhagen University and Th. R. Segelke, N. J. Fjord, and Bernhard Bang at the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, whose innovations helped family farmers become more efficient, productive, and prosperous. First and foremost, these "elites" included leaders in Danish government from Crown Prince Frederick on, who supported agricultural reform by legislation, public education, tariff protection, and government-sponsored research. Denmark was not a

constitutional democracy until 1849, but long before that year, those at the head of the Danish government adhered to a tradition of serving the good of the populace at large, not just a privileged few.

It was the farmers themselves who took what Danish society gave them, organized cooperatives, and made them work. They and the "elites" showed what Danes could do by standing together for the common good. It's hard to reproduce that whole package in other lands.

Endnotes

[1] Gr. Begtrup, *Beskrivelse over Agerdyrkningens Tilstand i Danmark, Femte Bind: Nørre Jylland, Første Bind* (Copenhagen: A. & S. Soldin, 1808), 253.

[2] Ibid., 260.

[3] I. B. Krarup, *Beskrivelse af Landbrugets Udvikling i Danmark fra 1835 indtil Nutiden,* Tillæg til Første Bind: Det sydøstlige Jylland (Beskrivelse af enkelte Landbrug) (Copenhagen: Det Schubotheske Forlag, 1896), 358-61.

[4] T. P. Christensen, "The First Cream Separator in the United States," *Annals of Iowa,* 34 (1957): 57-58.

Danish American Heritage Society

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please enroll me as a member of the Danish American Heritage Society.

- Student Membership $ 15.00
- General Membership (indv. or family) $ 30.00
- Institutional Membership (including libraries) $ 50.00
- Patron Membership (indv. or family) $ 100.00
- I would like to support the DAHS with an additional contribution of $ _____ designated towards the Bodtker Fund or the General Fund.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

EMAIL: _____

Renew online at www.danishheritage.org or send your membership dues to the following address:

Danish American Heritage Society
c/o Grand View University
1200 Grandview Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50316-1599
www.danishheritage.org