



2008

Reviews

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REVIEWS

Pia Viscor. *De drog til Racine: Den danske indvandring til Racine County, Wisconsin, USA – et detailstudie af pull-effekten som den udfoldede sig i 1800-tallet*. Copenhagen: Books on Demand GmbH, 2007. Pp. 72. DDK 79 softbound plus postage. ISBN 978-87-7691-218-5.

If you want a fuller version in the original Danish of the first article in this issue of *The Bridge*, then this slender volume is for you. It contains an expanded text with more illustrations, a bibliography, and an index. The book is in an attractive, softbound format.

This book is a pioneering study of Danish-American community building in the era of immigration. In an earlier study, published in *The Bridge* 2002, Volume 25, Number 2, pages 11-45, Viscor described the process of emigration from a cluster of communities on the Skjoldenæsholm estate in central Sjælland. She showed that conversion to the Baptist faith became a "push" factor that motivated Danes to emigrate and that "chain migration," established by correspondence and other contacts across the Atlantic, became the dynamic process of the movement from one continent to another.

In this book, Viscor focuses the other side of "chain migration," the "pull" factor that drew immigrants who knew each other to settle together in America. She shows how Danish Baptists from central Sjælland came together with other Danish immigrants in the Racine area to reconstruct a Danish-American community reflecting the Danish communities they had left behind.

Viscor documents the beginning of Danish settlement in the Racine area and follows the chain of connections between the early settlers, demonstrating how they attracted other Danes to come to Racine, and those in turn attracted still others.

This book also sketches out a broad overview of Danish immigration and explains the role that the Racine area played in Danish settlement throughout the upper Middle West.

By concentrating her research on the trans-Atlantic links that connected local communities in Denmark with a local community in America, Viscor helps the reader to understand another aspect of the background to Danish-American community building as it was presented in Torben Grøngaard Jeppesen's splendid study of Dannebrog, Nebraska.

The book can be ordered from the author. See her website at <<http://www.viscor.net/Pia%20Viscor%20publications.html>>

J. R. Christianson

Pia Viscor. *Jeg rejser til Amerika: En rejsedagbog og en samling udvandrerbrev fra Racine, Wisconsin, USA*. Copenhagen: Books on Demand, 2007. Pp. 116. DKK 119 softbound plus postage. ISBN 978-87-7691-217-8.

Nothing gets closer to the minds of our immigrant ancestors than the letters they wrote themselves in their own language to friends and relatives on both sides of the Atlantic. These letters expressed in their own words their concerns and experiences, the hopes and dreams that inspired them, and the hard realities of leaving home and finding a place in a new world.

You say you have no letters by your immigrant ancestors? Then you should turn to the letters of Jens Christian Andersen, who immigrated to Racine County, Wisconsin, in 1894. You will not be disappointed. This reviewer has read many letters by immigrants from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and other lands, but few are as interesting, well-written, and observant as his.

Christian grew up as the son of *husmænd*, small-scale farmers, on the edge of the village of Skee in Haraldsted Parish in central Sjælland. Denmark had the best public education system in Europe, and Christian received excellent schooling through the eighth grade. Then, he followed the usual pattern of rural life and went to work as a farmhand. However, he soon formed the ambition of becoming a dairyman. This was a new occupation in rural Denmark, growing out of the invention of the milk separator. To become a dairyman seemed an impossible dream for a poor boy from a Danish croft. In America, however, freedom and opportunity were said to be on every hand, and Christian decided that America was the place for him. He would emigrate and become a dairyman in America.

Christian was only seventeen. He promised his parents that he would keep a diary and write home regularly to tell of his experiences, and he kept his promise. Some of his marvelous letters have been printed in translation in this issue of *The Bridge*, but those letters are only a sample of the treasures in this little book. It contains even more letters, together with many more illustrations, including maps, photographs of Christian's boyhood home, and pictures of family members and other people mentioned in the letters. The book also includes background information on Christian's family networks in Denmark and America. Extensive endnotes help to put the letters into context.

If you read Danish and are interested in the era of immigration that brought so many of our ancestors from Denmark to America, you will enjoy this book. It can be ordered from the author's website at <<http://www.viscor.net/Pia%20Viscor%20publications.html>>.

J. R. Christianson

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Nothing gets stuck in the minds of our...
letters first with themselves in their...
relatives on both sides of the Atlantic...
their own words their concerns and...
questions that heaped from and the...
and finding a place in a new world.

You say you have no letters by your...
you should turn to the letters of your...
introduced to the letters of your...
to be sure. This reviewer has read...
from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and...
with which, and thereby all as the...

One can grow up as the son of a...
the side of the village of Skov...
school. Denmark had the best...
and Christian received excellent...
from the following the usual...
a fair one. However, he soon...
day man. This was a new...
out of the invention of the...
pointed to the...
America, however, freedom and...
every hand, and Christian...
him. He would... and become a... in America.

Christian was only...
would keep a diary and write...
experiences and he kept his...
have been printed in relation...
letters are only a sample of...
exist even more...
including maps, photos, and...
pictures of family members...
letters. The book also...
Christian's family network...
and other help to all the... and...

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J. N. Christensen