



1988

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Recommended Citation

Petersen,, Peter L. reviewer (1988) "From Scandinavia to America: Proceedings from a Conference held at Gl. Holtegaard," *The Bridge*: Vol. 11 : No. 2 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/thebridge/vol11/iss2/10>

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Book Review

From Scandinavia to America: Proceedings from a Conference held at Gl. Holtegaard

Jørgensen, Steffen Elmer, Lars Scheving, and Niels Peter Stilling, eds. *Odense University Studies in History and Social Studies*, vol. 103, Odense University Press, Odense, 1987, 377 pp. Dkr 160.

Reviewed by PETER L. PETERSEN

In early September 1983, scholars from Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the United States gathered at Gammel Holtegaard, north of Copenhagen, for a three-day conference on Scandinavian emigration to the United States. Because a majority of the papers presented at the conference deal with elements of the Danish experience, readers of *The Bridge* should welcome this belated publication of the proceedings made possible by a grant from the Danish Research Council for the Humanities.

The editors have arranged the twenty-one papers under four broad headings: The Danish Background; The Emigration Traffic; Scandinavian Settlement and Assimilation in the Mid-West; and Communication. In the opening article of the first section, University of Copenhagen Professor Erik Helmer Pedersen presents a useful survey of research on Danish emigration. He dates the beginnings of modern scholarship to the publication in 1971 of Kristian Hvidt's *Flugten til Amerika eller drivkræfter i masseudvandringen fra Danmark 1868-1914* (published in the United States in 1975 under the title *Flight to America: The Social*

Background of 300,000 Danish Emigrants). Although Pedersen is too modest to mention it, he has also played a major role in stimulating research on several emigration topics on both sides of the Atlantic. The remaining three articles in this section have narrower focuses. Steffen Elmer Jørgensen emphasizes the role of personal contacts in the formation of an emigration tradition from Lolland-Falster and Møn, while Leif H. Nielsen outlines some of the difficulties in explaining the emigration from North Slesvig. The next writer, Niels Peter Stilling, presents an even more microhistoric view as he offers a detailed study of emigration from Søllerød Parish, North Zealand, during the last 40 years of the 19th century.

In the second part of the book, a Swedish historian, Lars Ljungmark, explains what is called "the stock effect," the function of earlier immigrants in "pulling" some of their countrymen to a particular place in America. To get to their new homes, these migrants obviously had to cross the ocean, and thus Niels Larsen analyzes the Danish Atlantic transportation system, 1880-1900, particularly operations of the Thingvalla Line.

One of America's most distinguished historians, Allan G. Bogue of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, opens the third section with an interpretive overview of immigrant contributions to agriculture in the Middle West. Of special interest is his account of a Danish farmer, Fritz Wilhelm Rasmussen, who lived in Brown County, Wisconsin. Another University of Wisconsin Professor, Robert Ostergren, explores immigrant settlement patterns in the Middle West, with special attention paid to the Scandinavian element. The next five authors treat diverse subjects. By examining four collections of personal letters, many of them remarkably poignant, written by "ordinary" immigrants, Anne Lisbeth Olsen identifies certain common aspects among the experiences of Danish women in the new world. Drawing upon the memoirs of A. M. Iversen, Harald Naess etches a fine portrait of a small band of Scandinavian Moravians in Wisconsin. Tine Wanning describes the attitudes of Danish-American Grundtvigians toward assimilation while Arnold

Strickon examines the impact of ethnicity upon Norwegian farmers in Vernon County, Wisconsin. In the final essay of this section, Iver Kjær and Mogens Baumann Larsen summarize their work on linguistic developments among Danish immigrants in southeastern South Dakota.

With the exceptions of Aase Bak's "case study" of the Danish-American artist, C.C.A. Christensen, and Thorvald Hansen's description of the Danish Immigrant Archival Listing (DIAL) project, the authors in the final section deal with aspects of the written word. Ulf Beijbom of the Swedish House of Emigrants, Växjö, examines the ethnic press in Chicago's "Swede Town" in the years 1858-1880, while Lars Furuland calls for additional research on Swedish-American literature. Marion Tuttle Marzoff draws from her study of the Danish press in the United States to explain why she believes "the immigrant press . . . is best characterized as the immigrant's friend." Lars Scheving and Michael Mølgaard Nielsen each examine a single newspaper, *Dannevirke* and *Den Danske Pioneer* respectively. In a commentary on the Scandinavian immigrant press, Dorothy Burton Skårdal praises the historical research already accomplished, but concludes that what has been done "is only a tiny fraction of what lies waiting and needs to be studied."

In many ways, the proceedings published here are too diverse and complex to be adequately described and analyzed in a brief review. Clearly, however, by allowing several young Danish scholars to present the results of their research to a larger audience, the book represents a significant addition to the historiography of Danish emigration. Serious students of the subject will want this book in their libraries.

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