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Little Denmark in Nebraska

by
David Hendee

No charming Old World architecture. No Main Street decorated with Danish flags flapping in the breeze. No annual ethnic festival celebrating Danish roots. And it can’t be found on a map. But a small cluster of farms and ranches carved out of the prairie by Danish immigrants in sparsely settled western Nebraska in the late nineteenth century has maintained its identity as “Little Denmark” long after the homesteaders and their families assimilated into American culture. This obscure and remote Little Denmark was founded, flourished, and faded in the shadows of other Nebraska communities with vibrant Danish populations and institutions—Blair, Dannebrog, Minden, Nysted and Omaha among them—and yet the homesteaders’ descendants continue to reap the legacy of what the pioneers planted of themselves in the land more than 130 years ago.

A homestead claim by a Danish carpenter, war hero, and bankrupt farmer in the high plains of the American West marked the founding of the humble colony in 1886. The homesteader was Hans Julius V. Nielsen, a forty-eight-year-old immigrant from the western Sjælland village of Kulby. Born in Vanløse on Sjælland as the son of a schoolteacher, Julius Nielsen trained as a carpenter before enlisting in the Royal Engineer Corps in 1863, when Denmark mobilized to defend
the Slesvig-Holsten region on its southern border against militarized Prussia. Nielsen’s rescue of a Danish officer during the invaders’ overwhelming and decisive bombardment at Dybbøl in 1864 earned him one of Denmark’s highest honors—the Order of the Dannebrog. After the war, he married Maren Sophie Pedersen of Ørslev, a village near his hometown. The couple had ten children over a sixteen-year span and eventually settled on a farm at nearby Kulby.

Wedding portrait of Sophie and Julius Nielsen. They were married August 24, 1869, at her village church. It was Sophie’s twenty-sixth birthday. Julius was thirty-one. He is wearing the Silver Cross medal awarded for heroism at the Battle of Dybbøl during the Slesvig War of 1864.

In 1886 bankruptcy uprooted the family and they immigrated to the United States, lured by free land under the Homestead Act of
1862. The act permitted many people, including immigrants, to claim 160 acres of government land. They generally received ownership after five years of farming the land. Nielsen’s search for a homestead took him to far western Nebraska and land agent Charles Andersen at Potter. He built a house of sod on the treeless land for his wife, Sophie, and eight of their nine surviving children, then recruited Danes to join them on homestead land of their own southwest of Potter in the Nebraska Panhandle.

Julius Nielsen’s application for a homestead August 30, 1886, was the first in the area near Potter, Nebraska, that came to be known as Little Denmark.
Nielsen’s recruiting efforts included an 1888 letter to the Danish-language Kirkebladet (The Church Paper) published in Blair, the center of the pietistic and conservative Inner Mission movement among some Danish Lutherans in America. (Nielsen was a fervent Inner Mission adherent.) The pitch:

I have several times been asked to write in Christian papers about the conditions out here.... I have now lived here for two years so I can only now say something positive about the land and its use for farmland. The soil is from two to three feet of good loam, very alkaline but it is of very good ability to resist drought. We have had plenty of rain in these two years so everything grows well where the soil has been treated well. We have a long way down to water. (Footnote in letter: some say about 200 feet or better.) The harvest this year seems to be about this way: Corn 30 bushels per acre; the wheat, which has been threshed, has given: winter wheat not under 20 bushels per acre and summer wheat about the same. Barley and oats hay also been good and potatoes indicate very good growth. Carrots, cabbage, cucumbers, watermelons, blomsterstraa and flowers grow well. I have planted 12 fruit trees and six grape plants. They are growing well.

And then for you, the poor in God’s children who have been raised in the country and wish to take a piece of free government land, to you I will write there is much good land here to get. But remember that your souls are very dear, more dear than your body.... It is in the association of saints that we first and foremost have the feeling of finding Jesus with his forgiveness.

If you are aware and saved through the Indre Mission’s work in Denmark then join the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church Association here both with soul and mind.... If there should be several who wish to take land ... come out and look at the land here. There are trains from Chicago the 9th and 23rd of October, excursions where you could come for half price. Here you can get homesteads, 160 acres for $28 dollars, pre-emptions, 160 acres for $2 immediately, and
in another year and a half 2 1/2 per acre; the railroad land cost about 4 1/2 to $8 per acre.

In Potter there is a Danish land agent by the name of Charles Andersen. He knows where I live and he will drive out here with them who wish to take land. We are 8 Danes and 4 Norwegians who live here 8 to 12 miles southwest of Potter. There are also other Danes who live in the county but they are spread far from each other and it hurts God’s kingdom.¹

Nielsen was the first, but he was soon followed by Mads Larsen, a native of Magleby, Sjælland, who traveled from Blair to claim a homestead and build a place to live. His fiancée, Ane Kristine Hansen, remained in Blair until Mads sent for her. They were married when she arrived in nearby Sidney. When the newlyweds arrived in Little Denmark, the new bride broke into tears when she saw the place that was to be her home. It was a dugout shared by Mads’s younger brother, Nels, and built to straddle the property line between their adjoining homestead claims. Mads’s room was on his land and Nels’s adjacent room was on his claim.

Dane followed Dane after the 1887 arrivals of Mads and Nels Larsen and Andrew Andersen. Among them was Andrew’s brother, Edward Andersen. Hans Hansen claimed land in 1888; L. K. Nielsen and Andrew Bach came in 1889; Hans Christensen arrived in 1890. Nils Christensen and brothers Rasmus Nielsen and H. P. Nielsen arrived in 1891, along with Peter Larsen. Peter Jensen, Hans Rasmussen, and Jens Petersen settled in 1892, as did others by the names of Petersen, Jensen, Clausen, Fredericksen and Gundersen. By 1892 no fewer than twenty homesteads were claimed across eighty square miles of shortgrass prairie, forming the community that came to be known as Little Denmark. Settlers initially lived in houses and dugouts built of sod, traveled to distant wells and woods for water and timber, planted small fields of corn, and raised a few cattle and hogs. Deep drought and recession during the 1890s threatened to turn their dreams to dust, but most persevered. By the dawn of the twentieth century, many of the Danes were blending into the nation’s melting pot to the point of Americanizing their Danish surnames. Andersens became Andersons, Larsens became Larsons and Nielsens became Nelsons.²
Julius Nielsen’s cattleman son Jacob addressed the issue of divergent spellings in 1913 when he applied to make final proof on a 160-acre tract. In a handwritten letter to the US Land Office at North Platte, Nebraska, he wrote:

Dear Sirs:
In regard to my name will say my father came to this country twenty seven years ago from Denmark and over there they always spell the name Nelson with an i and two e. But in this country we always used the Englis way of spelling Nelson. In my business I always spell Nelson. But when I went to the county seate of Kimball to get a copy of Father’s Citizen papers I saw he had speld the name Nielson so I sined my name that way so as not to get you fellows mixed up in the name, but forgot myself in my application for final proof.

Yours Truly
Jacob M. Nielson or Nelson

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In 1908, L. K. Nielsen described Little Denmark’s early years:

The settlers’ first job in homesteading was to plow enough land to get enough material for a sod house, and to simultaneously get three to five empty oil drums for carrying water the 7, 10, 14 miles from the town of Potter. West of here runs Lodgepole Creek; near Potter it goes under ground and surfaces again a couple of miles east of the town. There was now little water in the town, so the poor country people were obliged to either look for the place where the creek surfaced, or be content with rainwater collected in buffalo ponds, depressions in the ground left by
buffalo herds that had stamped together in the rain-soaked earth.

It was very poor out here in the beginning. How could it be otherwise? There were no trees for fuel and no water. Some trees, however, could be fetched down in Cedar Valley; otherwise they had to be cut and carried from a spot 25 miles to the northwest. Under these circumstances the cow pies on the prairie became quite useful. They could be used as fuel and as a means for the boys to escape the heat, for it is warm out here. Wearing only overalls was not enough, so the boys built small huts out of the droppings, large enough to stick their heads in, thus providing themselves with some shade…. The good climate and fresh air give a good appetite, not in the least for children and young people. So if there was a place where something could be obtained, it naturally had a special attraction.

There was once such a feast at old Jens Pedersen’s, and the young remained there for as long as there was something to eat in the house. The settlers began mostly with a single cow and pair of old horses, which could be rather cheaply obtained but whose value to the farmer could not be measured.

A strange thing with our creatures was that they would always run away from us toward the east or northeast, toward the railroad. Apparently the change and new surroundings were harder to overcome for the dumb creatures than for the people; The first two calves that M. Larson had from his one cow ran away and he never saw them again… but Mads didn’t care, he didn’t have to haul so much water.

When we first came to live here it was very lonely, but it soon became a common custom to have parties or to invite people over, which were always delightful and sometimes both useful and edifying, for we learned to know each other. Of course, we were always inclined to see the drawbacks and the shortcomings first. But as we got to know each other we came to understand each other better; for if there were shortcomings, there were also virtues, and here
I certainly believe that it can be said about us that the good has overcome the bad.4

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The bubble burst after good years in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Depression rocked the nation’s farm economy, and drought seared the countryside. Most farmers in Little Denmark harvested crops each year in 1891-93, but they generally were the last until the drought eased in 1898. Andrew Andersen struggled to save his farm. Married and the father of a young daughter, he moved his family to Potter and returned to his pre-homesteading job with the Union Pacific Railroad as a member of a section gang.

Andrew and Else (Elsie) Andersen with their daughter, Matilda, in the late 1890s.

Andersen’s wife’s lone encounter with American Indians during her years on the frontier came during the family’s time in the village. Elsie Andersen was milking a cow when she looked up to see sev-
erel Native American women holding containers, asking for milk. Reduced to near starvation, many Indians wandered the countryside in desperation. Elsie poured milk from her bucket into the Indians’ containers. The encounters continued, including when Elsie gathered eggs. Fearful for their families, Andrew and the other men decided that a few of them should stay behind each day for protection. With the men in town, the Indians moved on.

Anna and L. K. Nielsen were among the early homesteaders in Little Denmark.

L. K. and Anna Nielsen arrived at Potter with their children in 1889, after a three-day train trip from Soquel, California. Both were natives of Jutland; he from near Herning, she from near Vestervig. They lived in California for about three years after giving up farming
near North Bend, Nebraska. Their return to Nebraska was triggered by Anna’s need to live in a higher and drier climate and her husband’s desire to farm. Like most other Potter-area settlers, the first person L. K. looked up was land agent Andersen. One of the couple’s sons, Ed Nelson, described the family’s early years in Little Denmark in a colorful autobiography. Ed was eight years old when his parents returned to Nebraska. He later recalled:

The next morning, Mr. Andersen came to our house driving a team of horses hitched to a buckboard. Father went with him on a tour to see and examine such quarter-sections of land as were still open for homestead entry in the vicinity of the Julius Nielsen homestead. J.N. was the man with whom Father had corresponded before coming to Potter and who had, in fact, induced my parents to come there. It seems that J.N. had a notice inserted in a Danish language periodical lauding the opportunities for successful homesteading and farming in that vicinity. It was his desire to induce immigrants from Denmark to come there in hopes of forming a settlement and community of Danish-speaking people within an area that all could participate in social and religious activities together. If that ambition were to succeed, it would have to be realized while there was still government land of desirable quality for farming open to homestead entry, for at that time the choicest locations were being rapidly taken up. Although my parents had come to America more than 15 years before that time, had met and were married in America, they still retained a preference for associating with folks of their religious faith, their customs, and for speaking the language they received schooling in.

On the section Father selected his quarter section, one quarter had been filed on as a tree claim, another had been taken for homestead by a bachelor named A. Bach, who had arrived earlier that spring and had built a sod house-stable; that is, his horse team was stabled in one end and he lived in the other end; the remaining one quarter was fit only for pasture.
At the site Father selected to build on, we would be about halfway between J.N.’s and M.L.’s which were our two nearest family neighbors, each about one and one-half miles distant. These with three unmarried homesteaders, A. Bach, A.A. and N.L., holding claims nearby, constituted the beginnings of the Danish-American settlement.

The cost of filing and locating was probably about $60. Father said the cash outlay on the sod house was only $40. The inside measurement was about 16 feet wide by 24 feet long. The oxen, wagon, cow, house, plow, and the total filing cost . . . must have used nearly $300 of our carefully hoarded savings, and I am quite sure there wasn’t much of it left.

With the help of [sons] Jim and Vern, Father proceeded to plow a few acres for corn . . . and to get to work at building the sod house. At the invitation of our bachelor neighbor, A. Bach, Father and his two boys moved in with him to be as close to the scene of labor as possible. From the Lawrence Forks area about 20 miles north of Potter, three selected pine trees were cut down, trimmed and hauled for the 30-foot ridge poles for the sod house. These poles were barked and hewed to a straight edge on one side to lay sheathing boards across. I do not recall that Mother, Agnes, Kate or I ever left Potter during that month we had the Potter house rented. But at the expiration of that month, we were transported, bag and baggage, by wagon to the home of J.N. where we stayed until the sod house had progressed far enough to shelter us. As I recall, J.N. and A.A. came to Potter to take us out to J.N.’s. When we stayed at the J.N. home, we and three of their children went to school together about two miles west of their home. The teacher there was a girl from Kimball, Rose Lemming, and the pupils sat on benches on each side of a table. We didn’t get to go to school again until the fall of 1890 when a district had been organized, mostly through Father’s efforts, and a sod school house built.
The very first night we lived in the sod house we got the big rain of the season and the next morning there was a lake of water a hundred yards from our door that saved us the trouble of hauling water for the stock. Immediately that morning Father and the boys set about getting sand and some selected clay to mix into mortar for plastering the house inside walls which were later white washed. The sod house...had no other means for heating than that provided by the little four-hole wood-burning cook stove for which the wood had to be gathered and hauled from the hills and canyons of the Lawrence Forks area thirty miles north of our place; three days being required per load, one day to drive each way and one day to gather and load. Those sparsely wooded hills and canyons provided settlers with the only source of fuel, poles and posts free of cost for several years and were finally almost denuded of timber.

Until our crumpled-horn milk cow freshened, it was my job each morning to walk after a small pail of milk at Julius N.’s, two miles each way by the winding trail road. A wet towel was wrapped around the pail to keep the milk cool, but with my meandering along, it didn’t too often get to its destination in very good condition.

For several years there was only one store (in Potter) which was combined with the post office. It had a small stock of groceries, a few bolts of cloth, some overalls, with pots, pans, cans and water pails hanging suspended from the ceiling — all contained in one room. The groceries consisted mostly of evaporated sliced apples, prunes, peaches, etc., in fruits — bought by the barrel or box lots in bulk and sold in paper bags by the number of pounds the customer desired — as were crackers, cookies, soap flakes, candies, rolled oats, sugar, salt, etc. Smoking tobacco was sold in cloth bags, 2 ounces to 16 ounces, and chewing tobacco in flat bars about 12 inches long weighing about one pound, but marked off in 10-cent lengths.

During the first two years on the homestead, we hauled water from a well in the big draw three miles north of our
place. That well was only about 125 feet deep, and the water was raised by horse power in a 30-gallon barrel with a valve in the bottom, winding the rope around a big drum in a (windlass) framework made of heavy poles. That well caved later and was abandoned, and Father bought the hoisting arrangement cheap, and that is what we used in our well at the start.

Having to haul water for livestock and household needs was one of the greatest handicaps those poor isolated homesteaders had to contend with until such time as each could get a well for himself. Before we succeeded in getting a well, we had hauled water in 50-gallon wooden barrels, vinegar barrels, whiskey barrels or kerosene barrels, any empty barrels that could be bought. We would haul four or five barrels of water per load, which was a half-day job. Whenever rain water collected in water holes on the prairie.... I would drive the stock to water there to save hauling. You can imagine how Mother was obliged to skimp the use of water for laundering, bathing and other household needs.

The well was dug a round hole 30 inches in diameter where the formation was firm enough to hold without curbing, and, where it was considered unsafe without support, it was dug square 30 inches inside of curbing. One-by-six-inch boards were used horizontally and notched at the ends to dovetail and hold in position by pressure without nailing. In all of its 265 feet of depth there was no Brule clay. The formations were of a softer substance that could be dug without much use of sharpened steel bar. At about 200 feet a very hard limestone ledge or vein about three feet in thickness was encountered that slowed the progress discouragingly several days.

A couple of years later, A. Bach, our bachelor neighbor who had made final proof on his homestead and wanted badly to sell out so that he might visit his aged father in Denmark, offered his quarter to Father for $100 cash. Mr. Bach was a good neighbor, generous to a fault.
Our experience with the big prairie fire occurred the second or third fall on the homestead. Smoke was visible at a distance northwest of our place and the wind blew from that direction. Father didn’t seem impressed by the idea that danger was so imminent . . . and said the fire still had barriers of a line or two of hills and a couple of sand draws to cross, and, of course, the direction of the wind could change. After dark we could see a long line of flame west and northwest of us at an average distance of 10 or 12 miles. By sunrise the velocity of the wind increased steadily, and before noon the fire had swept by at a furious rate. The fact that our plowed fields were north and west of the building site had saved us from disaster. I think most of our neighbors were about as fortunate. In every direction as far as the eye could see, there was nothing but black expanse.

The earliest two or three years of my life on the homestead were exceedingly lonesome and monotonous to me. I seldom saw any other children except my sisters, Kate and Agnes, for Jim and Vern were away from home most of the time. Those few kids I did see now and then couldn’t speak English, and their Danish was also different from the dialect we used at home and seemed like a lot of gibberish to me to begin with.

In 1894 there were areas where the native grass didn’t make enough new growth to change the color of the landscape. That fall Father and I pulled the stunted corn plants up with the roots attached for fodder. From the beginning, Jim and Vern hired out whenever and wherever they could get jobs and generally at pitifully low rate of pay. They gave Father all their earnings excepting only enough to pay for scanty clothing needs.

The 1890s were as a whole below normal in rainfall, while the ’80s, according to what we were told by those who had been in the country that long, were years of a lot heavier rain and snowfall. But as drought conditions continued year after year. I often saw covered wagons going east by the dozen in a party. Homesteads were generally
Little Denmark in Nebraska | David Hendee

abandoned, leaving the buildings, such as they were, often standing undemolished as there was no market for the materials. Open wells, cisterns and caves became a menace to loose livestock and were leveled by those who remained for that reason. As it became apparent to the remaining settlers that it could not be profitable to farm for cash crops such as wheat or corn, they applied their efforts to getting more livestock and to producing winter feed crops. Most of those who stayed were in the same condition as Father said we were — too poor to even think of getting away and we had no “wife’s folks” somewhere back East to go to either. So stay we must, come what may.6

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A glimpse of the settlers’ struggles in those early years — despite the generally favorable crop and economic conditions — can be found in Julius Nielsen’s declaration when making final proof on his homestead in 1892. He testified that he was gone from the homestead for two extended periods to earn money in 1887 and 1888. (He worked as a carpenter and cabinetmaker in Denver, Colorado, during these years.) Nielsen broke thirty acres of the 160-acre claim with a sod-busting plow in 1887 and planted his first crops. He farmed thirty-five acres each year in 1888 through 1892. After nearly six years on the homestead, the family’s improvements on the land consisted of the 14-by 27-foot sod house, a windmill pumping water up 258 feet from of a hand-dug well, a stable, corral, fruit trees, hen house and two caves. Nielsen estimated the total value of the farmstead at $600.

The Homestead Act was not the only way for settlers to acquire free land. In 1873 Congress established the Timber Culture Act to encourage the growth of trees on the western prairies. The act, as amended in 1878, allowed farmers to claim 160 acres of land if they pledged to plant trees. Most settlers in Little Denmark found it necessary to file for tree claims because it was impractical to raise dryland crops and graze cattle on only 160 acres in the semiarid region.

Julius Nielsen filed for his tree claim on adjoining land in 1888, doubling the size of his farm. Twelve years later, he proved up on the claim. His answers on the government questionnaire illustrate the toil, perseverance and heartbreak experienced by settlers in the dry
1890s. He testified that he planted, cultivated, protected, and endeavored to keep ten acres of ash and box elder trees alive over eight years. He said he planted at least 2,000 trees on each acre. None survived. Nielsen received the deed after paying a $4 fee, despite failing to successfully grow timber on his piece of the prairie.\(^7\)

The Julius Nielsen family built this stone house after proving up on their homestead claim in 1892. They had lived in sod houses the previous six years. The photo is from the early twentieth century.

The Nielsens had much for which to be thankful in 1892. They became citizens of the United States, received the patent to the homestead and would soon have all the family together for the first time in more than six years because they could now bring over a disabled son left behind in Denmark. They celebrated by building a house that symbolized their determination to stick to the land and to get on with their new life. Like their first two houses on the homestead, this too was made of pieces of the prairie. But it wasn’t sod. It was stone. With a lantern and wooden stakes—using the North Star as a guide—Julius squared-up the site of the new house during a summer night. The rocks, a soft stone known to geologists as Kimball limestone, were quarried and gathered from the draws north and south of the farmstead and hauled to the house site by wagon. The family had to “chop and trim them down so we could make a real nice house out of it,”
his son Jacob, who was eleven at the time, recalled decades later. The family used the clay mud from the bottom of buffalo wallows to bind the stones together.

During the years Julius lived on the homestead it developed from a single sod house to working farm with barn, corrals, granary, and orchard. Yet it was obvious to the children that Sophie continued to despair over the family’s circumstances. Could the barren Nebraska plains ever replace the land of little green farms they left behind in Denmark? Is there a future for the children here? Jacob remembered seeing his mother often sit in the doorway of the house and silently gaze across the expanse of waving prairie grass. Some of her children recalled hearing her weep at night. The High Plains climate is healthy and invigorating, but diseases and violent weather were threats. Measles and dreaded pneumonia frequently swept through the countryside. Diphtheria and smallpox were not as common but were greatly feared. Tuberculosis was common. When the devastating blizzard of ’88 howled across the plains in January 1888 it struck without warning, catching and isolating children at their schools and farmers in the countryside. Jacob remembered the storm because he was sent outside the sod house to bring in a tub. “They tied a rope around me and I went out to get it and they pulled me in. The blizzard was so hard I could not have made it without the rope.” The family had enough food to sit out the blizzard “but it was pretty slim,” Jacob recalled.

Life on the frontier provided occasional mysteries and dangers. Julius and Sophie Nielsen’s children told of times when a family known as the Hollidays would stop for the night on the Nielsen homestead with a wagon load of freshly butchered beef destined for nearby Fort Sidney. No one mentioned the source of the meat, but it was understood that the Hollidays were rustlers. At dawn the next day, the crew was gone, leaving a quarter of beef hanging from an iron bar protruding from the north wall of the Nielsen house.

When Matilda Andersen, the daughter of immigrants Andrew and Elsie Andersen, rode her horse to school, it wasn’t unusual for it to untether itself and wander home, leaving Matilda to make the three-mile trek afoot and alone. One occasion produced a lifelong memory. Matilda came over a knoll and encountered a pack of more
than twenty coyotes moving single file through a swale of tall grass. She dropped to the ground undetected and watched the pack pass.

On another occasion, a prairie rattlesnake bit Julius and Sophie Nielsen’s daughter Mary on the thumb as she reached for canned goods on a shelf in a cave outside the house. Acting quickly, Julius took a pocketknife and cut a notch out of his daughter’s right thumb where the poisonous snake’s fangs penetrated. The wound bled profusely and was credited by family members with saving Mary’s life. Mary had a misshapen thumb for the rest of her life.11

In 1896, Mary’s brother Peter was driving a buggy when he stopped west of nearby Dix to inspect a towering windmill erected to irrigate crops. Tethering his horse north of the mill on a hill, Peter walked down a slope to the windmill for a closer look. He climbed to the top of the tower and was holding the mill’s pump rod just as it started to move in a gust of wind. His right hand suddenly was wedged between the mechanism and a piece of the tower frame, crushing all the bones across his palm. Not until the wheel completed its turn could Peter free his mangled hand. Weakened by pain and shock, he climbed down the tower and, falling to the ground two or three times, made his way up the hill to his buggy and drove for help. A doctor simply wrapped the crushed hand. The bones were never set. His hand remained crippled in a clenched position.12

Early twentieth-century schoolhouse in Little Denmark.
Some tragedies seared themselves into the lore of Little Denmark. Homesteader Peter Larsen and hired man Jorgen Christen Jorgensen drove a horse-drawn hay rack into a corner outside a barn to unload hay one day in 1910. Larsen was atop the stack when a bolt of lightning pierced the evening sky, striking and killing him. The hay instantly ignited. The flash of lightning and burning hay panicked the horses and they tried to back out of the corner. Instead, however, they put the wagon tongue in a bind and knocked Jorgensen off balance. As he fell, he caught a leg in the frame of the wagon, trapping him between the wild horses and the flames. Larsen’s daughters came running from the house but could not control the horses to unbind the wagon and save Jorgensen. He and the horses died in the inferno.

Sophie Nielsen’s initial fears that her children would not get the education she wanted for them were generally realized, especially among the boys. It wasn’t unusual for classes to be held in Nebraska’s one-room country schools for only about three months each year because, among other things, the rural families were not able to finance the school districts for any longer. Little Denmark was no exception. Also, when the Nielsen boys weren’t busy on the homestead, they often would work as hired hands on other farms in Nebraska, Wyoming, or Colorado. Jacob, for instance, started school at age eight and completed only the third grade after about five years of sporadic schooling. His sister Bina finished the fourth grade. A country school the younger Nielsen children attended was nearly four and a half miles west of the farm. For a young boy walking to school, the prairie

Jacob Nielsen was a noted cowboy and preferred spirited horses.
offered distractions that sometimes were too great to ignore. Young Jacob soon learned to make the walk more interesting by catching gophers and jack rabbits, taking his pocketknife, and marking their ears with a cut. The next time he caught a critter, he knew if he had caught it before by looking for the cuts on its ears. This activity, of course, took time. “Sometimes I’d get (to school) in time to eat my dinner.”

Jacob, just five years old when his parents brought the family to Nebraska, grew up to be a cowboy. He was a skilled horseman and roamed the region as a cattleman starting in his teens. Neighbor L. K. Nielsen chronicled Jacob’s reputation in Danske i Amerika:

Jacob Nielsen, a son of the first Dane out here, was for many years the best horseman and most able cowboy among the Danes, and no Americans could show him up. If he could not bring in a wild cow or steer when he was on a roundup, then it was worthless to send someone else; he always got his cow.

At a Fourth of July celebration a reward was offered to the one who could rope, throw and tie a bull the fastest. Naturally Jacob Nielsen was also there with his faithful and trusty horse, Rip. When the time came six wild bulls were let loose. The young men sat tall in the saddle, with spurs on and 45 feet of the best rope that could be bought. They swung their lassos over their heads and each one set after a bull. “Oh, yes, of course it was so easy it was no work at all,” people said to one another, for after two minutes the wild animals were bound and lay helplessly in the dust. But they had worked; this could be seen in the sweat that rolled down the faces of these cowboys. I said two minutes; but Jacob was the day’s hero, for his bull was roped, thrown and bound in a minute and fifteen seconds.

Jacob was fourteen years old when a daughter, Inger Matilda, was born to Andrew and Elsie Andersen in a sod house four miles south of the Nielsen homestead. Twenty years later, Jacob and Matilda were married.

Slowly but steadily the settlers of Little Denmark improved their lot. The Danes learned during the dry, lean years how to adapt their farming and ranching practices to the semiarid high plains. By the early
1900s, most of the homesteaders had a hundred head of cattle for every cow they started with a decade or more earlier. Julius Nielsen, for example, had three cows to his name in 1886 when the county’s register of deeds visited the homestead to determine if the family had taken up residence. About twenty years later, Julius and his sons claimed a herd of up to 500 cattle. Andrew Andersen, who started with one cow, owned herds of horses and cattle considered among the best in the region. He also moved his wife and daughter to a two-story wood-frame house constructed steps away from their soddie.
The Andersen family celebrated Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter very simply. They didn’t decorate and there were few gifts, perhaps one or two small items at Christmas. Elsie’s baked goods were memorable, but the image that stayed with her daughter was that the family’s sod house was clean “until it shone.” Neighbor Dewey Larsen, a son of Danish immigrants Mads and Sina Larsen, delighted in telling a story about Elsie’s meticulous cleaning. He said she scrubbed the wood floors in the new house so much that it wasn’t possible to rock in a rocking chair unless it moved with the grain of the wood floor. When rocking against the grain, Larsen said, the chair would make a chunk-chunk-chunk sound.14

Matilda’s happiest childhood memories were of Christmas at the community’s stone church, which opened when she was eight years old. Children formed a circle around the Christmas tree singing carols and received gifts and sacks of fruit and nuts. Once Matilda hoped for a certain gift, but it went to another child. Her only doll as a child was a china “lady doll,” which she hated. She always wanted a baby doll but never had one. As a teenager, Matilda played the pump organ at the wedding of Gladys Nielsen to James W. Bertramson at the home of Gladys’s parents, L. K. and Anna Nielsen. The only tunes in Matilda’s repertoire at the time were “Rock of Ages” and “Nearer My God to Thee.” Given the choices, Gladys selected “Rock of Ages” as her wedding march. Three years later, twenty-year-old Matilda Andersen married thirty-five-year-old Jacob Nielsen in a late morning church ceremony on a windy November day. After the wedding, they drove in Jacob’s car to her parents’ house for dinner. Jacob drained the water from his radiator so it would not freeze during the afternoon. When the couple prepared to leave on their honeymoon, Jacob went to pour water into the radiator. In his excitement, however, he put the water into the fuel tank. The car was going nowhere. Matilda’s father came to the rescue and drove the newlyweds to Kimball to catch a train to California. Matilda had never before been away from home.

Chrystie Bertramson Jackson, the daughter of Gladys Nielsen and James Bertramson (the couple married to Matilda Andersen’s “Rock of Ages” organ selection), recalled Little Denmark as a proudly Danish and close-knit community during her childhood in the 1920s. During a 2021 telephone interview from her home in Dallas, Texas, the
105-year-old Jackson recalled the sense comfort and warmth of snuggling in her mother’s lap during meetings of the church women in the parsonage and sitting with her grandmother during worship services. Light passing through the stained-glass windows in the south walls and door cast a warm glow inside the church, she said. “It was a precious place, (and) it was a lovely community where people were so nice to each other and looked after each other,” she said. “The Danes had a great sense of humor and cared about each other. It was a wonderful childhood growing up in a working, caring community. I never remember an unkind word.”

Jackson was born in her grandparents’ stone house in 1915 while her parents were living there to care for L. K. Nielsen, who suffered a heart attack in his sixties and was not expected to survive long. He lived to be ninety-nine. Jackson’s parents farmed a mile or so from the heart of Little Denmark. She often wandered to her grandparents’ farm on her way home from school, picking bouquets of wildflowers for her grandmother. “We were extremely close,” Jackson said. “She asked about what I was doing and was eager for me to stop by no matter how old I got.”

The Danes of Little Denmark expressed their ethnicity in food traditions, storytelling, and celebrating a Danish Christmas, Jackson said. Jackson said the settlers and their children spoke mostly English, but sometimes mixed in a few words of Danish. “Grandmother talked Danish to me often but put English in between so I’d understand it,” she said. She remembers her grandfather sitting in a swivel chair at a window in his stone house, gazing south across the prairie and telling stories about his youth in Denmark. He wrote his boyhood memoirs.
in Danish when in his nineties. Christmas at the L. K. Nielsen house meant a meal featuring a soup of beef, dumplings, potatoes, parsnips, celery and onions. After dinner, Jackson played organ tunes selected by the adults. She and her brother, Rodney, would sing. Sometime during the evening, Jackson’s grandfather and father excused themselves to milk the cow. It was a cover story for smuggling a gunnysack filled with gifts to the porch, followed by a creative tale of glimpsing a sleigh in the sky.

The little stone church that came to be the focal point of the Danish community didn’t exist in the 1880s and 1890s. During these years the settlers—about a dozen families and half as many bachelors—were visited two or three times a year by preachers and began to form the nucleus of a congregation. Pastor Christian Falck, who accepted a call to the congregation in 1915, wrote in *Danske i Amerika* about the work of the church:

> Most of our people out here have been affiliated either with congregations of the Lutheran church in other places of the country or were from areas of Denmark noted for their religious interest. However, it was four years before there were enough settlers and they had the means and wherewithal to send word for a pastor to have God’s Word proclaimed to them. And our Danish Lutheran Church, apart from this, had at that time not yet seen the light as to the importance of sending out pastors to minister to our people... Many of our people have strayed from our church because of this.

In 1889 a visit was paid to the colony by Pastor Hilman of the Norwegian Synod. He held services for Danes and Norwegians but then never returned after the visit. Julius Nielsen’s wife became sick and wanted so much to have the presence of a pastor. Her husband spoke with L.K. Nielsen, who knew Pastor A.M. Andersen from Fremont, Nebraska. He came out in 1890 and after that visit returned many times to celebrate communion and to hold school for the children. On one occasion he had a Pastor A. Kirkegaard from Minden, Nebraska, with him. Kirkegaard had an extension mission field here in the West, so he came here to carry out his
calling. At his prompting the people in the area formed a congregation on the 8th of May 1892 and called Kirkegaard as their pastor. He worked a couple of years out here. While he served the congregation, P.A. Rasmussen, a student with tuberculosis, came out here in the hope of recovering his health. He preached and held Sunday school, but his health did not improve and he died in 1894.17

Pastor Andersen described his first visit to Little Denmark in an article for Kirkebladet in 1891:

A small Danish settlement has been formed in Kimball Co., Nebr., which I visited a short time ago. A man who was a member of Trinity Congregation at Fremont while I was its pastor sent me a letter from there. He suggested I come out and preach for them. Friday the 5th of December I left home and the next day a little past noon I was in Potter in Cheyenne County about 8 to 10 miles from the Danish settlement in Kimball County. One of our countrymen met me out there and we soon reached our goal.

On Sunday we met in a sod school and I was surprised to find that I knew almost everyone. Besides the man mentioned above from Fremont, Lars K. Nielsen, there was Julius Nielsen, known by our society from Omaha and from a little article in Kirkebladet from out there a couple of years ago: Peter Larsen from Polk County, Wis., former member of Pastor Robe’s congregation; two brothers, M. and N. Larsen and H. Hansen, who for some time had lived in Washington County, Nebr., from where they knew me; and A. Bach from the Danish settlement in Nuckolls County where he had seen me once when I visited there a visit. There was one other Danish man in the settlement, A. Andersen from Plano, Ill.

Four of the men mentioned had families and one had his parents with him. …They all brought their whole household. There was also a family who had come from a long ways, I think 15 miles the same morning [from] Kimball County. The Danes say the climate is very healthy and so is the market because it doesn’t lie far from the mining districts
of the mountains in the west. There is plenty of room for settlers. Most of the people who live here have a half section of land, 160 acres as a homestead and 160 acres as timber claim. There are many unclaimed homesteads, a few unclaimed timber claims and plenty of cheap land for sale besides.

Considerations for going there are the same as affect the western part of the state, namely the area’s high level (above sea), the sparse rainfall and the great depth to water. However, they got a better crop this year than in many other places further west. There has been a lot of talk about irrigating the land using the North Platte or artesian wells but nothing definite yet. There are eight Danish and 2 Norwegian families there. Several have lived there 3 years and some 5 years and intend to stay.

My advice is to write to the above-mentioned people if you intend to go out there.

A.M. Andersen
Box 125 Hampton, Nebr.

For several years the congregation was served by student pastor A. M. Nielsen, Pastor S. Johnson from Denver, and Pastor Carl Wilhelmsen from Minden. In 1899 the congregation received its first resident pastor in Eric Hansen, who lived in Potter.

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The future of Little Denmark seemed secure in the early 1900s when the homesteaders’ grown children started establishing their own ranches and farms, and the church was built. The congregation took a step toward the day it would have a formal place of worship when it rented 40 acres of state-owned land in 1900 and built a parsonage. A cemetery had previously been established a mile south of the parsonage on land donated by Andrew Andersen.

During a period between pastors, the parsonage was the site of a tragedy involving the Edward Andersen family. In 1901, Edward started building a wood-frame house east of the church cemetery. His wife, Karen, was pregnant at the time with the couple’s third child. The family lived in the unoccupied parsonage while their house was built. Just before the house was completed, however, Karen and baby
daughter died in childbirth at the parsonage. The lumber intended for the kitchen floor of the new house was instead used by Julius Nielsen to build a coffin for Karen and the baby. They were buried together in the church cemetery. As he did with all the coffins he built, Julius stained the wood black by taking soot from a chimney and mixing it with coal oil. Rubbing the mixture into the wood with a rag, the coffins had a finished, professional look.¹⁹

The arrival of the Reverend Jens Madsen in the fall of 1902 was a milestone in the congregation’s ten-year history. Born in 1869 on the island of Fyn, Madsen was a nurseryman, landscape architect and student of plant life and soil chemistry in his native Denmark. While studying in London he read Danish and Danish American newspa-
pers at the Danish Club and was impressed by repeated stories telling of the great need for pastors to serve Danish immigrants in the United States. Madsen felt this was God’s call to him. Madsen emigrated to America in 1893 and made his way to Trinity Seminary at Blair. He cleaned classrooms to help pay his expenses during the three years there. After a year at a theology school in Chicago, he returned to Blair, where he contracted tuberculosis under the strain of study and work. Madsen was ordained in October 1902, by the Rev. G. B. Christiansen of Hampton, Nebraska, the first president of the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Madsen was assigned to serve the small congregation in Little Denmark. His arrival in churchless Little Denmark is chronicled in Danske i Amerika:

Madsen called a congregational meeting in connection with this matter. But to build a church! Where in all the world were they to get money for that? It was trouble enough holding body and soul together, let alone meeting the pastor’s small salary. One of the first resident pastors out here got five dollars a month. The men were sharply divided on the matter and argued violently. No church came out of that meeting. The women cried. Here already was a beginning, however, and it soon became apparent as it did so many times later on, that Pastor J. Madsen, that quiet and unassuming man, would accomplish what so many people wanted to do but thought they couldn’t.

Madsen won over those opposed to his plan by visiting with them individually. Construction soon was under way. The church was built...
of blocks of Kimball limestone chiseled and quarried from outcrops by settler Rasmus Nielsen and others. Jens Peterson, who was a mason in Denmark, directed construction of the walls with distinctive arches and windows. He used the muddy clay from the bottom of a large bluff near the northwest corner of the site for mortar. Julius Nielsen crafted the woodwork—pews, pulpit, altar, window frames, door, floor, and shingle roof. “And soon it was one of the most elegant small village churches... as I have seen over here,” Pastor Falck later wrote.20

The swinging, inner double-doors were covered with royal-purple velour. Stained, leaded glass set in lancet arches and diamond-shaped windows filtered the prairie sunlight from the north, west and south walls. A reed organ sat at the front of the church on the left side. A stove in the northwest corner was fired up early to warm the church before services. A rattan runner of tan, red, and green was laid down the center aisle. There was an altar bowl for baptisms. A painting of Christ walking on water, donated by the Ladies Aid organization, hung above the altar. Horses and buggies were hitched to a fence. The church cost the congregation only $320 because practically all the work was donated by the congregation.

Gladys Bertramson attended services at the church as a child. “I’ll never forget my first impression. I thought it was the most beautiful place,” she said in 1985. “The altar and pews were so immaculately
done. I don’t know how he (Julius) did it. It was almost like going into heaven as you walked by the rock walls and through the two swinging doors.”

The area of the altar is about eight feet square inside the stone walls. The nave measures twenty-six feet east-west and sixteen feet north-south.

The primitive but attractive little church was named Danish Evangelical Lutheran St. Peter’s Church, or simply St. Peter’s. It was dedicated September 13, 1903, by the Rev. H. O. Frimodt-Møller of Trinity Lutheran Church of Albert Lea, Minnesota. The day after the dedication, Pastor Madsen and his fiancee, Ane Marie Nielsen, were married in St. Peter’s by Frimodt-Møller. St. Peter’s quickly became the hub of the rural community. Prior to building the church, the congregation held services in homes, the schoolhouse, and the parsonage whenever pastors were available. Bertramson recalled the early years:

Everybody was looking forward to having a church. It brought people together. We never had a meeting place before. No matter what [activity families planned] it always ended up with church services. And the kids had to be there! When a minister would come out from the East a couple of times a year, we’d have church services for two or three consecutive days. They were called mission days.
That’s when we didn’t have a regular minister and the meetings were usually at one of the homes. The big thing was to go to church on Sundays. Families would sit together. The young [families] in back and the elderly in front. I remember we used to do a lot of giggling. There’d often be potlucks after church. Families would bring food for a noon meal and then stay for an afternoon service.

The congregation continued to align itself with the orthodox and fundamentalistic theology of the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church.22

In the fall of 1903, the Danish congregation at nearby Brush, Colorado, extended a call to Madsen to become their resident pastor. He accepted. The Madsens moved to Brush in 1904 and started the work that led to creation of the Eben-Ezer Mercy Institute there. The Madsens made Eben-Ezer and the treatment of tuberculosis patients their life’s work but did not forget the Little Denmark congregation. The Madsens frequently returned for visits and the Danes of Little Denmark were welcome guests at Eben-Ezer. Edward Andersen, whose wife and newborn daughter died two years earlier, followed the Madsens to Brush to care for the hospital grounds.

In April 1907, Reverend Møller, who presided at the church’s dedication and was now pastor at St. Peter’s, died after suffering from tuberculosis for many years. His death came eight months after his marriage in the church to Katherine Nielsen. His pregnant widow stayed in Little Denmark and five months later gave birth to a son. She named him Jens Immiel. He was baptized ten days later at St. Peter’s. The Danish community rallied around Katherine Møller and her son. Gladys Bertramson said her father gave Møller 160 acres of his land on which to live. Neighbors built a one-room frame house for the family and did the field work she needed.
work. Møller and her son lived on the farm for about ten years before moving to Blair.

Danes and a dog pose for a photograph in about 1915. In back from left: Matilda Andersen, Freida Falck, Mrs. Falck, Lillian Larsen, Mrs. Peter Larsen, Peter Nelson, Katherine Møller and Elsie Andersen. Seated from left: Andrew Andersen, Rev. Christian Falck, Hans Hansen, Trina Hansen, Trina’s granddaughter and great-granddaughter. Front from left: Jens Møller, unidentified boy, Marie Nelson and Ewald Nelson.

In 1916, Pastor Falck reviewed the previous year in a message to the congregation. He said the fifty-six members of St. Peter’s, of whom forty-five were confirmed, numbered six more than a year earlier, “due to the pastor’s family of five and a baptism.” There was one marriage in the church (Jacob Nielsen and Matilda Andersen), one burial, seventy-five communers, sixty-four services, and about sixty Sunday school and Bible classes. The church also held a couple of family meetings a month, as well as about two dozen youth, ladies, and mission meetings, including celebrations for the Fourth of July and Christmas. Each of the pastors to serve St. Peter’s was born in Denmark. The little stone church was used by the Danish Lutheran congregation until 1923 when it fell into disuse as the congregation drifted to the Lutheran church in Potter and its English-language services.
By the interwar years, most of the original settlers were no longer actively involved in operating their farms and ranches. Significantly, the immigrants’ children were speaking English, not Danish. The inevitable disintegration of the Danish community—especially the fate of St. Peter’s—was not taken lightly by Jens Madsen, its founding pastor. Ed Nelson described the last gathering at the little stone church:

More than half of the second generation (of which I am one) married non-Danes and practically no descendant of the third generation can speak or understand the Danish language. In respect for my parents and their contemporaries, I and several others attended the last gathering of the faithful held in the old church. It was an impromptu one occasioned by the return of the first resident pastor, Reverend M., who has come for a short visit with the few remaining former members of his first pastorate. He delivered a discourse in the then fast-crumbling old church building in the course of which he vehemently deplored the condition of the church and berated the younger generation for their unfaithfulness and waywardness in allowing the fruits of his earlier laborious efforts to waste and become dissipated and wan-
dering away from the true and good example set by their forebears, etc., etc. The prayers, the singing and even the benediction seemed as mournful as the sermon itself and although there was a good deal of hearty greeting, hand-shaking, and well-wishing at the finish and parting, it soon became noticeable that there was more resentment among the younger attendants and sadness among the elders, who felt that the Reverend had intimated it might be their fault. After all, Reverend M. had, by his behavior and speech, only widened the rift he had so eagerly sought to close. Beginning with the first generation of descendants, the younger folks didn’t want to be Danish-Americans at all. They were determined to be not hyphenated but wholly American, and that is what they were to the very core!24

The closure of St. Peter’s signified the end of an era in Little Denmark. Some of the children of the pioneers found opportunity elsewhere, as their parents had decades earlier. Others stayed and built their lives on the farms and ranches and in the towns their parents established and nurtured. It was not, however, the end of these Danish families, nor their appreciation and pride of their heritage.

Leonard Nelson, a grandson of Julius Nielsen who returned to Little Denmark to farm after World War II, described what it meant to him to mark the centennial of the Nielsen homestead in 1986:

The effort since 1945 has never been easy, but even that is not uncommon. A definite plus has been our life on the high plains of western Nebraska, near the spot picked by Grandpa Julius. I wonder if he could foresee, somehow, the lives of his descendants? Could he see the effort to shape and build this country while at the same time the land would remain relatively lightly populated so we enjoy our independence while cherishing our neighbors? In this fortunate circumstance we raise our families with an awareness of their rich Christian heritage, an appreciation for the virtue of good, honest work, an inquisitive mind, and a respect for the viewpoint and rights of our neighbors.

In all your struggles with the land, the droughts, the grasshoppers and the blizzards, did you really know how
much you were leaving us? “Tak skal du have,” Grandpa Julius!25

The family of Little Denmark founder Julius Nielsen gathered at the family home on the day of his funeral in 1913. Standing in rear from left: brother-in-law H.P. Swensen, daughter Bina and husband John Hansen, sons Philip and Peter, daughter Margaret, and sons Hans and Jacob. Front: daughter-in-law Matilda holding her son Ewald, grandson Ernest Tracy, granddaughter Marie, wife Sophie, grandson Jack Tracy and daughter Mary.

Much of the land that was the heart of Little Denmark is now, two decades into the twenty-first century, farmed by father and son—and Danish homesteader descendants—Bryce and Mark Halstead. In 2017, a three-part Danish television documentary, “Rejsen til Amerika,” told the story of Little Denmark.26 In one episode, Mark explained how much he appreciated the courage and vision of the Danish community’s founding farmers:

We take so much for granted now. We’re not worried about getting water. We get upset if there’s a sunspot and we lose
our GPS signals (in the tractor or combine). In college, my friends in eastern Nebraska used to always joke that the reason our ancestors settled here is ‘cause this is where our camel died—because it’s dry and arid. Back then I did wish maybe we’d settled back (east) but the land was all taken back there, and this is what was available. Now I wouldn’t trade it for the world living right here.²⁷

The reminders are never far away. Mark Halstead lives three miles from of his great-great-grandfather Rasmus Nielsen’s homestead, and one mile from land claimed by Rasmus’ brother Hans Peter Nielsen. He watches over the nearby Julius Nielsen homestead, the ruins of the stone church—a grass fire destroyed the roof, windows, and doors a few years after WWII—and the abandoned cemetery with monuments marking the graves of Christensens, Hansens and Petersens. Linking it all to the outside world is Kimball County Road 69. The Halsteads, however, call it by another name: Denmark Road.

The little stone church built by the settlers of Little Denmark served the immigrant families for two decades until members started attending worship services at an English-language Lutheran church in nearby Potter. Photograph by David Hendee, 2013.
Little Denmark in Nebraska  |  David Hendee

Endnotes

2 Although many of the Danish immigrants in Little Denmark gradually changed the “sen” ending of their surnames to “son” within a few decades of settling in western Nebraska, this article and its photograph and document captions retain the original spellings to avoid confusion in the chronology of the narrative. Names in these endnotes, however, reflect the individuals’ preferred usage and spelling at the time of reference.
3 Jacob M. Nielson, Kincaid Act Homestead Certificate correspondence, US Land Office, North Platte, Nebraska, 1913, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.
5 In US land surveying, a section is typically one square mile, containing 640 acres. Quarter sections available to homesteaders were 160 acres.
7 The Timber Culture Act generally required ten acres of trees, or 675 total, to be growing at the end of eight years for farmers to acquire the land as a tree claim. Congress repealed the act in 1891 after it became evident that even the best intentions of government couldn’t make trees grow in the semiarid West.
8 Jack Nelson, taped interview, date unknown.
9 Jack Nelson, taped interview, date unknown.
15 Chrystie Bertramson Jackson, telephone interview with author, August 17, 2021.
16 Lars Kongensholm Nelson, Memories from My Childhood, translated from the original handwritten Danish manuscript by Tove Svart, Danish Embassy, Washington, DC, 1952.
18 A. M. Andersen, “A Missionary Trip to Kimball Co.,” Kirkebladet, 1891.
22 Members of the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church who aligned themselves with the Inner Mission movement often were known
as “holy Danes” or “gloomy Danes.” Many other Danish Lutherans were members of the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. They were the “happy Danes” who adhered to the teachings of Danish theologian, philosopher, and poet N. F. S. Grundtvig.


24 Nelson, Autobiographical Sketches.


26 The Museum of Danish America, Elk Horn, Iowa, reproduced the television documentary as a DVD, The Journey to America, with subtitles in 2018. The three-part series debuted in Denmark on the former DR-K public broadcasting channel as Rejsen til Amerika in late 2017. Written and directed by Peter Kryger, cinematography by Jarkko Virtanen, produced by Film & TV Compagniet, Odense, Denmark, 2017.