

DAILY GRIND



NEWS FROM THE MILL

Shaun Sayres

There is much to share and not a lot of time to share it! As I rush to get this out, along with the Spring issue of The Breeze which still haunts me at night, I’m overwhelmed by all that has taken place over the last month up until this very moment. For those out of the loop, the windmill’s upper gearbox is once again on strike and we are working around the clock (and the weather) to try to get that up and running as soon as possible. In the meantime, however, there is still plenty of exciting news to share along with some secrets I can’t quite reveal just yet.

If there was an elephant in the room, it’s name would be Tivoli. This year’s Tivoli Fest was yet another record year. As our closest followers might recall, the Danish Windmill sponsored a digital billboard directly in the middle of the Omaha metro along i80 which broadcast a Tivoli message for most of May and is currently advertising the windmill until the end of June. This was an expensive project that unfortunately the Iowa Tourism Office chose not to fund, but thankfully we have been able to recoup some of the funds so far via the Shelby County Hotel/Motel Tax grant sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

The results spoke for themselves. Not only was there a single parking space available in all of town over the weekend, nearly every single business posted record numbers in some form or another. The Museum of Danish America posted one of their best visitor counts in the last 25 years and by far the most in recent times. Kringleman Pastries enjoyed record sales and visitors all weekend long with the Egg Crate, Danish Countryside Winery, and Farmhouse Quilting also enjoying considerable turnouts. Even Elk Horn’s relatively new Seneca Studios, which opened just in time for Tivoli last year, had a massive crowd. Owner Ashley Hansen added: “I had an absolutely incredible turnout for Tivoli! I

started an hour early, went two hours over, and still had to turn away dozens of people. The amount of people that came in was absolutely mind-blowing. I did not slow down once, whereas last year I was fairly slow by the end of the day.” Driving local commerce has always been a paramount objective for us at the windmill, so to hear this testimony from local businesses is everything we want to hear. Even the windmill, which doubled its festival turnout last year, still saw a sizable increase this year.

The festival itself was yet again a massive hit, too, from a very busy Friday pre-festival day all the way through the fireworks Saturday night. And to top it off, the recently renovated hotel, Hygge Inn & Suites, enjoyed a full booking in addition to a great turnout for the opening of their event center. We wish to thank all of the community volunteers who make this event possible, especially the Danish smørrebrød team that works tirelessly in the town hall keeping traditional alive year after year. Courtney Davis and Emily Nelson both stepped into the fire this year as new volunteers for the festival committee and we could not be more appreciative for their help and commitment. With the windmill’s 50th anniversary colliding with Tivoli next year, we are already thinking ahead about the upcoming celebration and know we will need all of the help we can get.

With such an important milestone on the horizon, a lot of attention was put on the mill’s flowerbeds leading up to Tivoli. Between numerous greenhouse trips and a number of mid-SUV sized loads of soil, the flowerbeds all around the windmill have been completely refreshed with new perennials that we hope will add some needed color around the mill throughout the seasons. To ease the usual burden of watering, and ideally conserve water, we’ve also taken care this year to install an above-ground sprinkler system which has been a fantastic investment in time and water thus far. We’re continuing to work towards next year’s big festivities and need plenty of help, so feel free to reach out this Summer if you would like to get involved in making our grounds as beautiful as can be for what will be more than a run-of-the-mill celebration.

Navigating Danish Genealogy

Eric Mortensen

I’ve been working since late 2024 as manager of Museum of Danish America’s Genealogy and Education Center on Main Street in Elk Horn, and I’ve had the privilege of doing lots of genealogy research. I’ve seen a lot of Danish names, and one thing that modern Americans sometimes struggle to wrap their heads around is patronymic names.

In our modern American society, the common practice is that family surnames are passed down through the paternal line from generation to generation. So, my last name is Mortensen because my father’s last name was Mortensen. Also, women often will change their last name to that of their husband when they marry. People today take pride in their family name being passed down from generation to generation.

Danish Americans don’t usually have this heritage of a family name passed down through generations. It was only in the mid to late 19th century that Danes adopted the tradition of passing on the father’s surname and changing a woman’s surname upon marriage. Prior to this, they used patronymic names, where a person’s surname is derived from their father’s first name. This was the norm in Scandinavian countries and is still used today in Iceland. The son of a man named Hans took the surname Hansen, and the daughter of a man named Hans took the surname Hansdatter. And women would not change their surname upon marriage – they would use the -datter surname throughout their entire life.

Danish immigrants to America discontinued the use of patronymic names and adopted the family name system used in the United States. My great great grandfather Niels Mortensen was born in Denmark in 1844, immigrated to Iowa in the early 1870s, and was buried in the Elk Horn

cemetery when he died. Niels’s father in Denmark was Morten Nielsen – Niels was the son of Morten. However, Niels was the first to pass Mortensen as a fixed family surname to his children. His son Philip (my great grandfather) was named Philip Mortensen, not Philip Nielsen.

This naming system makes Danish genealogy somewhat unique in that we’re not usually tracing a family name through history. While my last name has now been used for 5 generations of Americans, having a last name such as Mortensen only means that somewhere in my family tree there was a man named Morten, and he had a son. Patronymic surnames only tell us the name of the person’s father. And 19th century Danes mostly used a handful of names over and over – Hans, Anders, Rasmus, Jens, Niels, etc. – with the result that there are lots of people named Hansen, Andersen, Rasmussen, Jensen, Nielsen, in our Danish American communities today (as well as in Denmark).

We take pride in these Danish names today because they signify our Danish heritage within the broad diversity of America. However, when examining our Danish ancestors in Denmark, these names were not so unique. There were likely multiple persons named Hans Rasmussen or Anne Jensdatter living in a small corner of Denmark over a short span of time. This makes it important to know places, dates, and relationships to other persons to be sure we’re identifying the correct person.

The Danes were fortunately good at keeping records – births, marriages, and deaths were recorded by the local parish church, and there was a government census every few years. Church records help distinguish people by listing a person’s parents, age, place of birth, or place of residence. Together these details of dates, places, and relationships help us determine if we have the right Hans Rasmussen.

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 15 - Dansk Møllehed aka Danish Mill Day
Enjoy **FREE ADMISSION** at the windmill!

June 16 - Outlook Study Club’s 8th Anniversary Celebration
Elk Horn Town Hall, 5:30 - 7pm

June 21 - Sankt Hans Aften celebration at the Museum of Danish America, 5pm to 10pm
Enjoy Danish hotdogs, folk music, and **FREE ADMISSION** into the museum for the evening

Marne Elk Horn Communications team joined the fun at Tivoli Fest – not only participating in the parade but also helping set up for Elk Horn’s beloved Danish celebration. We’re proud to support this cherished tradition and enjoy helping behind the scenes to bring it all to life!

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IT’S ONLY SCIENCE

Bob Mortenson

The experts in the field of human behavior state that the more a person feels connected to their environment, the higher their regard for the environment. With that higher regard comes a willingness to become involved in it. When a person is willing to take part in efforts to improve their connectivity, both the person and the environment benefits. And it has been demonstrated that their mental well-being is greatly improved.

We just wrapped up another Tivolifest and anyone observing how it was done will have to admit those behavioral scientists are absolutely correct. When you see hundreds of current and former residents of the Villages coming together, not just to plan, but to execute everything Tivolifest has become known for providing. To watch all the smiling faces as they host a multitude of visitors to our communities. Listening to the playful banner and laughter as they work to put another successful festival into the record books.

When you look around our communities and see all the things that would not be here without the spirit of volunteering, the importance of our personal involvement with the communities is evident. Without that there would not be a Danish Windmill, or a Museum of Danish America. There would not be either a Danish Mermaid or her sculpture garden. We would not have parks filled with amenities for our residents to enjoy. And much of our history would not be of a former college, or The Elim Home.

And our local Lutheran church has celebrated its 150th anniversary. That is such a great accomplishment. For it was these early churches that formed the foundation for the communities that now surround them. What once was a place where those of like beliefs, customs, and often language could gather in fellowship became much more. For this was where they could join in celebration in times of joy. Or find a sea of solace in times of sadness. When things had gone terribly wrong this was where they knew they would find help. And there was never strings attached to that help because “pay it forward” was not a motto, it was a way of life. As these pioneers found the need for certain services or businesses they worked to either entice or create that which was lacking. Soon new residents arrived, and they bought with them more resources, knowledge or skills that fit the needs of this growing population.

We must never lose that willingness to work to make that, which is already quite good, even better. Or to bring something new and different into our towns, for things and needs change with the times. For our towns to remain alive they must evolve to meet the needs of this time. As for myself, returning to town from I-80 one cloudless night, I saw the North Star shining over the main street. Like the ancient mariners I thanked it for leading me to where I now call home.

PRAIRIE ROOTS RUN DEEP, Pt. 7

Warren Watson

In my research I’ve discovered piles of elk horns with an accompanying mysticism. There are famous elk horn arches in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Though man-made in 1953, the arches draw as much photographic attention as the Tetons. In the northern Black Hills atop Elk Horn Peak is a huge pile of elk horns. The Northern Cheyenne say they were deposited by eagles. An 1850 military report describes a huge pile of elk horns sixty miles above old Fort Union, Montana. The Blackfeet tribe at the time had no explanation how they got there. Clay Township’s elk horns were most probably left from a huge herd seeking shelter in the oaks during the 1856-7 severe winter. It was during this winter that the area’s elk population was devastated. But maybe there was more to it than that. It was often said by surrounding non-Danes, that those Danes in Clay Township were a superstitious lot. Whatever the case, in 1882 the name Elk Horn traveled two and a half miles northeast to its present location. One added note about the mail. At times the mail would be dropped off at the little Red School house. It was located ¾ mile east of the Winters. The children would then carry the mail home. The Little Red School house was also used as a church and a community building.

A prophetic view of Christian Johnson and his family arriving in Clay Township might be found

ELK HORN LIBRARY LANTERN

Shining the light on what is going on at your library!



The Elk Horn Public Library is starting our Summer Reading Program! Stop in to get your forms, look over the prizes, get one of our summer reading brochures and participate in our summer reading programs for all ages!

We are celebrating the start of the Elk Horn Public Library started by the Outlook Study Club 85 years ago. Please join us for a salad supper and cake on Monday, June 16th from 5:30-7:00 at the Elk Horn Townhall.

Have you ever thought about writing your own book? Anna Redsand helped a group of us to get started with this process on March 12th. If you are interested in participating, please contact the library. Our next workshop is June 14th with new participants meeting from 8:30-9:30 am and then our group workshop from 9:30 – 4:30 pm.

Stop in to meet our new employees, Nikki Bricker is our new Children’s Librarian and Heiko Thomas is our new Assistant Librarian.

Here is our June schedule:

- June 2 – Monday Matinee 1:30 for Children of all ages
- June 4 – Storytime Characters! 2-4 pm Children of all ages
- June 6 – Friday Matinee with Coffee for Adults 2 -4 pm
- June 7 – Baking Workshop for grades 7 – 12, 2 – 4 pm
- June 9 – Christina Roelofs, Naturalist for Shelby County – all ages
- June 10 – Library Gnome and Carmen Sandiego to learn about Genealogy and Danish History starting at 2pm at the library

YES, THERE IS GOOD NEWS!

Bill Rollins

In our previous article I ended by stating that there are some who are in denial about the existence of God. As we walk through this world, we are sure to encounter someone who does not believe that God exists. My comment to such a one is twofold; I remark that they must have a greater faith than I to think that this ordered universe came about on its own. And then I consider the words of God in the scriptures, “The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” (Psm. 53:1)

Now, such words may seem offensive to some. But I just quoted the Bible and if God does not exist then these words must be meaningless and so why should anyone be offended by meaningless words? But if God does exist then these words are true and as is said, “If the shoe fits, wear it.”

But consider the idea that the ordered universe just happened, all by itself; I must say, “Preposterous.” Let’s say that you are walking along the beach somewhere and your toe comes in contact with an object. You pick up this object, rectangular in form, 3 inches wide, 5 inches long and one half inch thick. As your fingers touch it, a screen comes alive and shows forth a multicolored face. This is obviously an object we call a ‘smart phone.’ Did it come into being all by itself or did it have a creator? This phone is a very complex piece of equipment, it took a multitude of engineers to create, design and manufacture. It would be preposterous to think

in Edwin Blashfield’s mural “Westward”. It resides today in the Iowa Capitol building. It reflects a certain change coming to the West which included Clay Township. The wilderness was about to be conquered. If Christian’s figure were to be included walking abreast of that wagon in the mural, he would be clearly carrying his Holy Bible. Johnson established a strong Seventh Day Adventist presence in the township. When the constraints of a state mandated religion lessened in Denmark, new denominations started to take root. Danes were no longer just Lutherans. In the new world were found Dansih Mormons, Adventists, Baptists, along with Lutheran Danes. This was true in Clay. Religion played a major role in the lives of Danes in Clay. Probably even more so than in Denmark. It was a comforting bond that gave families added strength during the early trials of survival. An interesting phenomenon developed. The idea of Happy and Holy Danes. North of Indian Creek were found mostly Grundtvigians, Happy Danes. South of the creek were found the

- June 11 – Storytime Costumes – 2 – 4 All ages
- June 13 – Storytime in the Prairie ‘Going to Town’ by Laura Ingalls Wilder 10 am
- June 13 – Adult Murder Mystery at the Circus 6 – 8 pm Sign up by June 6th!
- June 14 – Writing Your Own Story with Anna Redsand
- June 16 – Monday Matinee 1:30
- June 16 – Outlook Study Club 85th Celebration
- June 17 – Bucky Jones – Cartoonist and Illustrator 2 pm All Ages
- June 17 – Adult Author Zoom – Tim Johnston 6:30 pm
- June 18 – Author Zoom with Christina Wyman 1 – 2 pm
- June 18 – Storytime- Puppets! 2-4 All ages
- June 20 – Library Gnome and Super Mario 2 – 4 pm
- June 20 – Summer Cinema Spectacular in the park with ‘Super Mario’ 8:30 pm
- June 21 – Young Adult Coffee and Silent Book Club 2 – 4 pm (Child Care Provided)
- June 23 – Monday Matinee 1:30 All ages
- June 24 – Pollinator Protectors with Kamryn Waymire 2-3 pm
- June 24 – Healthy Lawns, Healthy People with Kamryn Waymire 6 – 7 pm
- June 25 – Community Coffee 9 am, Making Gnomes 10 am
- June 25 – Storytime Storylines! 2-4 pm
- June 26 – Library Gnome visits Fairy Tales at the Kimballton Park 2 – 4
- June 27 – Book Discussion on ‘The Notebook’ by Nicholas Sparks 2-4 pm
- June 30 – Monday Matinee 1:30 pm All Ages

We have a compost bin below our library for your use, it is easy to get to from the alley. We hope you can make use of it.

it came together all by itself – even over billions created things around us in the world. If one takes the approach of coming to know God with a scientific point of view and starts with a true biblical worldview, He is there for us to both understand and know! Let’s follow this trail of knowledge for a while.

King David, the author of most of the Psalms, writes this, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day after day they pour forth speech, and night after night they reveal knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.” Psalms 19:1-6

So, the creation of God is visible all around us and day by day, scientists with a biblical worldview have been making discoveries that do declare the glory of our God! In fact their study of the DNA structure in all things living, is now seen as a messaging code and that which is messaged must have a messenger. And if we have this biblical worldview we will know this messenger as the Creator; “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Gen. 1:1

And yet some are in denial still. So let me ask the question again, “Do you know God?” Are you seeking to know Him?

Holy Danes, Inner Mission plus Adventists and Baptists. In the mural, if Christian were to be included, one would also see in a back pocket his accounting book. Christian, being a ‘thrifty’ Dane, became a very successful farmer.

Johnson would be very influential in recruiting many families in the fatherland to come to America. He would build not one but two log cabins. One for his family and another to house newly arrived Danish immigrants until they could provide for themselves. Christian was also engaged in breeding and raising Holstein cattle as well as other high-grade purebreds. Johnson was also the proud owner of a pair of the finest draft horses in the county, maybe in western Iowa. His two thoroughbred Percheron were the envy of every other Dane. It would take horses of this stature to turn the tall grass prairie into oceans of grain. Stories abound describing the challenges of transforming a wilderness.

To be continued...