

Danish Windmill Quarterly Newsletter

THE BREEZE

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 **Nørre Snede, DK 1848-1975**
Celebrating
47 years in
Elk Horn
Elk Horn, IA 1976-present 

Director's Message:

Dear Members,

We have another very special issue to share with everyone. The long-awaited news about our grindstones is finally here. We had a millwright from Denmark visit with us in September to look at them in conjunction with a full inspection of our windmill. We've shared the results and an outline of our future plans.

It has been a very busy Summer. Repairs to the gearboxes were finally completed in July and we have been running it regularly since. Business in the gift shop has maintained the incredible pace from last quarter, and the online orders have been rolling in as we get closer to the holidays. We've had new events, a bus tour of Danes, and our container shipment of Danish imports will be here any day now. As always, you'll find a short summary of everything we've been up to inside. There is a lot of wonderful news to be excited for as we prepare to close out a very good year.



Thank you for supporting the Danish Windmill. We are so appreciative for the passionate following we have built over the years. Your enthusiasm puts the wind in our sails.

Mange tak!

Shaun Sayres, M.A.
 Manager

In 1975, local farmer and Danish-American Harvey Sornson approached the Elk Horn community with an unthinkable idea: to relocate a windmill from Denmark to the United States. It was no easy feat, but to the amazement of most, Harvey's "impossible dream" became reality.

During the winter of 1975-76, an authentic Danish windmill from Nørre Snede, DK was dismantled, ferried across the Atlantic, and transported cross-country to Elk Horn, Iowa. Once arrived, community volunteers set about putting together the pieces one by one until eventually, the old Danish windmill towered over downtown Elk Horn where it remains to this day.

For nearly 50 years, the windmill has stood as a tribute to Danish-American heritage, agricultural history, and the power of community.



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Feature Story:

"The Turning Point: A Millwright's Visit from Denmark and the Future of Our Windmill"

The wait is over and we have some wonderful news, a millwright from Denmark has inspected our windmill. In September, Erik Batenburg made the lengthy trek from Løgumkloster, Denmark to Elk Horn, Iowa to conduct a full inspection of our windmill. There were many firsts during his stay—his first trip to the United States, his first taste of Mexican food, and his first time seeing our windmill in person. It was a whirlwind trip. He arrived at midnight Tuesday morning and flew back out of Des Moines on Friday, but we made the most of the time we had. It was a wonderful experience that we believe will be foundational in our organization's transition towards a fully functioning windmill and everything else that goes along with that. We're excited to be working closely with Erik over the coming years to make all necessary improvements to both our windmill's performance and appearance, inside and out. With that in mind, we would like to introduce Erik and what his visit means for us.

Erik isn't actually Danish. He was born and raised in Schiedam, an urban borough of Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Schiedam is famous for having the tallest windmills in the world that were once dominant in the genever industry (a juniper-flavored malt spirit from Holland and Belgium). Of the 200 or so windmills that once dotted the city, 7 remain. The tallest easily clear over 100 feet tall. Most are still fairly old as well, having been built between 1770 and 1803.

Erik's father worked on these windmills all his life, and raised both Erik and his twin brother, Bas, to be excellent



Erik and Shaun Lifting the Top Millstone

millwrights themselves. When the boys turned fourteen, their father gave them each a key to a windmill and told them to play with them. Both boys had been learning about windmills since their early days, building their own models out of Legos before going to work with their father to watch him operate. As a result, Erik and Bas both are accomplished millwrights today. Bas now runs his retired father's company in the Netherlands, while Erik works with Møllebygger Petersen in Denmark.

But Erik's career wasn't so straightforward. He spent the first years of his adult life building replica schooners and other wooden ships based on 17th- and 18th-century Dutch models. It was during this time that he learned how to work with wood and historical woodworking techniques that are invaluable to millwrights today. He and his brother still race these ships in contests off the coast of Amsterdam on a regular basis. When he was 19, Erik moved out of his house and into the cottage of the last remaining poldering mill in Schiedam, Babbersmolen. After his father completed the restoration work, Erik lived there as the miller

with his wife before moving to Denmark in 2014.

The two never looked back. After vacationing there for many years, it was his wife's idea to move there permanently and escape the crowded city life. The two live on a farm with their daughter in Løgum Kloster, a small hamlet outside of Tønder in southern Jutland. After spending some time as a dairy farmer, Erik met Morten Anker Petersen, eventually accepting Morten's offer to come work for him at Møllebygger Petersen. The two make quite the team with Morten handling the business operations while Erik oversees the "hands-on" work.

Møllebygger Petersen, as a construction company, has been in Morten's family for six generations. When Morten learned of the company's previous history in rebuilding windmills in the 1920s and 30s, he decided to return to the industry. His passion for windmills and historic buildings is second only to Erik's. Over the last five years, they've restored countless windmills and watermills in Denmark to good working condition. However, as we are aware here in Elk Horn, restoration is only the first step.



*Erik (left) and Bas (right) Batenburg rigging a sail
Photo by Bas Koster*

What Morten and Erik came to realize after restoring these mills, was just how infrequently they would be used and run. This is especially detrimental since maintaining a windmill, like any sort of machine, is typically best accomplished through regular use and maintenance. As a result, the company is expanding its focus onto education. Today, the groundwork is being laid for an institute, to be run by Morten and Erik, that will teach new generations of Danish millwrights how to build, operate, and care for historic mills.

It's this line of work that makes partnering with Møllebygger Petersen so special. They aren't just an ordinary company or even specialists. They care immensely about the longevity of their work and the mills they help restore may continue to self-sustain themselves. Today, it is more likely for a Dane to see our windmill operating than a windmill in Denmark, and that is what they hope to change. We're thrilled to be part of this historic transition, and firmly believe that Erik's recent visit with us will be foundational to one of our own.

And we owe it all to Erik's

mother, Hanny, for making this happen. The daughter of a millwright herself, Hanny in many ways has passed on the family passion of windmills to her children. She had been following along with our windmill's social media for years. In 2020, when we ran into problems with the shutters and one of the gearboxes, Hanny shared our troubles with Erik and Morten, who began to follow the mill's journey themselves before finally connecting with Lisa and Shaun in-person last year.

Erik spent three days inspecting and working on our windmill last week. The inspection began in the cap on Tuesday where Erik immediately noticed misalignment in the brake wheel, a potentially hazardous situation, which he immediately addressed. The rolling thunderstorm made for some interesting weather, and Shaun and Erik spent the day working through the cap of the windmill under the dark clouds, making sure all bolts were tightened and that everything was in good working order. Some more serious issues were noted, and these will be addressed in more detail in the near future.

On Wednesday, work in the cap was finished. Erik then took some time to climb outside and inspect the fantail. Some issues

were noted and will be addressed soon, but overall everything was considered to be in good shape and he made some suggestions for further preserving the massive oak beams that hold everything together. Then, we moved down to the second floor to check the shutter mechanism and the wings. As it turns out, the wings that were replaced in 2018, were severely imbalanced which affects the windmill's ability to turn in the wind. Mike Mortensen of Mike's Welding in Kimballton lent some industrial clamps for us to attach weight to the beams and figure out how much would have to be added later on. One beam needed 29.5 lbs, the other only about 6.5. The difference with the weighted beams was immediately clear as the sails began to turn with just a low breeze of 5 mph gusts. We've since returned the clamps to Mike with plans to add permanent weights to the sails soon.

The rest of Erik's time on Wednesday and Thursday were focused on the stones. More will be said on this in the future, but for now we can happily announce that their condition was better than expected and we will be able to get at least 5-7 years out of them before a new set is required. Erik did some work to get them properly balanced, and the make-shift lever our builders put in was modified to



Erik inspecting the gearbox

be more accurate and functional. Every nook and cranny got new grease and the pieces went back together nicely. Erik even showed us some tricks of the trade, such as mixing a paste of water and rye flour to caulk gaps in the bottom stone, preventing flour from escaping into unwanted places.

Finally, when it seemed like the wind for the day had gone, the gusts picked back up just in time for Erik to test out the stones and see how they performed. We ran the stones through a full bushel of rye the rest of the afternoon. With more time, Erik probably would have found the proper settings to get the flour to his liking, but the results were still more than satisfactory for our purposes. They now sit balanced and hungry for regular use, which we hope to carry on soon.

Other notes and suggestions were taken as Erik laid out his ideas on how to improve the mill's operation and aesthetic qualities. We will be looking to add new doorways to the second floor that will look and function as the ones the windmill originally had in Nørre Snede. Exposed concrete will be appropriately covered, and other wooden tools or pieces of equipment the mill originally had and used will be manufactured. An exhibit layout will also be planned for the current set of stones when they are ready to be retired for preservation. These will be moved to another part of the second floor eventually, with the new set put in their place so as to keep and reuse the current iron work.

More importantly though, he was pleasantly surprised with the solid state of the mill generally and even more stunned by just how well it had been built by our volunteers in 1976. He pointed out its various quirks, like the enormous cast-iron spurwheel that was installed upside-down, but overall our builders did a remarkable job for what they had. He returned to Denmark on Friday confident that the mill is in good condition and safe to use, which we will continue to do as we work with Erik and Morten to develop a plan for improvements over the next several years.

Some of these ideas were discussed during a special event at the Elk Horn Town Hall when we



Hanny Batenburg and a small windmill Erik built on his farm in Denmark. It grinds coffee and is used to make butter and buttermilk. Hanny made the canvas sails.

hosted a small, informal gathering for townspeople to meet Erik and learn about his background. We want to thank everyone that came out to meet Erik and ask questions about his thoughts on the mill and what our plans are. Erik and Morten will now begin preparing a full report based on his observations, which we will receive in the coming weeks. This report will be the basis for our strategic plan for the windmill as we map out necessary or desired upgrades and improvements for the next several years, culminating with the acquisition of a new set of stones several years from now. We will be hitting the ground with a comprehensive fundraising campaign as soon as possible.

We are thankful that Erik was able to spend some time with us and are confident his visit will be a massive turning point for our organization as look towards the future of the windmill. We also want to thank a number of local people that made his visit run smoothly while he was here including Mike & Lisa Riggs for offering Erik a place to stay and copious amounts of food, Mike & Lou Howard for treating Erik to a fun evening of

Mexican food, and our staff here at the windmill for keeping the shop open so Shaun could shadow Erik and learn from him through the whole process.

Nowadays the windmill spins happily in the wind almost every day, to the delight of locals and our visitors who love to record the sails spinning against the rustic backdrop of our lovely town. We hope to have regular, predictable run times in the future, but for now we will run it whenever we can, and you can even watch it turn remotely from our livestream at millcam.metc.net. Keeping the windmill turning is the best thing for its preservation and longevity. And while we still have some work to do, it won't be long before we're grinding inside regularly. Our visitors love just being able to see some of the rye flour that was ground inside, and we know our grinding demonstrations will be even more popular. We're very excited for everything to come, and we hope everyone else is, too.

Shaun Sayres

News & Updates

We took a small hit in our visitor counts for July, but nobody ever would have known if we didn't keep count. Sales maintained a steady pace and our staff spent hours keeping the gift shop fully stocked. Work on the upper gearbox was finally complete thanks to Mike's Welding in Kimballton who acted quick to get it repaired and ready for installation. Trey Juelsgaard and Tim Palmer both assisted in the installation as well as helping Shaun give the fantail a fresh coat of paint. Trey's help makes him the fourth generation of Juelsgaards to work on the windmill since it arrived.

Things didn't slow down in August either. We coordinated with local vendor Spartan Pizza to have a family night at the windmill, keeping the gift shop open late and offering free tours while board members dished out fresh watermelon and musk melon outside for guests to enjoy. As always, our axe throwing games were a big hit with both the kids and adults. The month concluded with a bus tour of Danes organized by Museum of Danish America Board Member and long-time friend of the windmill, Erik Nørkjær. The Danes spent 3 days in Elk Horn before continuing their adventures further west. A welcome banquet was organized on their behalf at the Town Hall with Dwight Lamb's band performing. Best of all, and only briefly,



*Shaun Sayres & Tim Palmer working
on the fantail
Photo by Brandon Baggett*



*Lisa & Mike Riggs, Minna Parker, and Mike & Lou
Howard enjoying our Family Night*

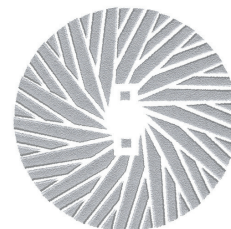


*Bill Peterson, Dwight Lamb, and Tom Carlson
performing Danish folk music*

they got to see the windmill spin in the wind. For many of them, it was the first time they had seen a Danish windmill in operation.

Then in September, we had the highly-anticipated visit from Erik. The windmill has been running regularly since he left and we've received numerous notes of appreciation from both locals and tourists. Erik has also made himself available to Shaun for consultation at any time, a move he be regretting by now, but one that has been tremendously helpful to us.

In the meantime, we kept ourselves busy stocking up for the coming Christmas season. We organized our container shipment for the year and are expecting it to arrive shortly. We also have made significant progress in expanding our own windmill merchandise including new long-sleeve t-shirts, crewnecks, and hoodies, new custom tumblers of various sizes, and new artwork commissioned with local artist, Deborah King. She did an amazing job, and we've already started converting her new art of the windmill and millstones into stickers, magnets, and more.



New Christmas Catalog



We've completely overhauled our Christmas catalog this year and it is being mailed out to all of our members as we speak! We're very excited to debut a completely new format, featuring some new brands from collectibles to custom goods as we begin to roll out our own Danish Windmill souvenirs and merchandise.

One of the newer brands we have picked up is Klarborg, a beautiful line of Christmas- and Easter-themed collectible figurines and ornaments from Denmark. We're the first store in the US to carry them and are excited to inspire others to start their collections. See our website for their 2023 collectibles and past favorites.



Visitor Information

July

2591 Visitors

1199 Travel Parties | 48 States | 14 Countries

August

1984 Visitors

960 Travel Parties | 46 States | 9 Countries

September

1535 Visitors

742 Travel Parties | 46 States | 10 Countries

*These visitor counts are based on guestbook entries only.

LEADERBOARD

1	IOWA	4224	★
2	NEBRASKA	2731	▲
3	CALIFORNIA	601	▲
4	MINNESOTA	528	▲
5	COLORADO	523	▲

Iowa leads the 3rd quarter with 4224 visitors!

Project Forecast

A map of some of the future projects for the windmill including critical repairs and future improvements.

Priority Repairs

- **Adjust Upper Gearbox**
- **Re-Locate Cap Frame Rollers**

These are the most emergent repairs as of today and require immediate attention. We hope to have both resolved before Winter.

The Upper Gearbox currently doesn't sit quite square with the fantail, meaning the pin will likely shear again in a year or two. A lift will be brought back soon to correct its positioning. We will also make some modifications to the fantail so that it can be securely disabled as needed.

The 12 iron rollers or feet upon which the cap frame rotates need to each be pushed outward about 3/4 of an inch. The drying out of the frame has caused the wood to shrink, pulling the rollers inward to the point some now ride up the inner rail, adding unnecessary stress to the gearbox. Plans to address this are being made now, and we might try and bring Erik back for this repair if necessary. It is a routine procedure, and does not require the use of any lift equipment, but the fantail needs to be adjusted first so it can be disabled for this repair.

Public Programming

- **Regular Spin Times**
- **Scheduled Grinding Sessions**
- **Periodic "Living History" Tours**
- **More Special Events**

With the stones now operational, it is time to show the public what they can do. We will begin plans for new interactive programs designed to educate on the history of windmills and what they do. These include regular run times for the sails, and scheduled performances (wind-permitting) of the grind stones. These programs are intended to offer experiences closer to those of "living history" museums, enabling visitors to figuratively walk into the past and experience authentic Danish history.

Exhibit Development

- **Ground Floor Fantail Exhibit & Grain Exhibit (Farm-to-Table)**
- **Second Floor Reader Rail**
- **Third Floor Millwright Exhibit & Work Site**

Enhanced programs demand improved exhibit spaces inside the windmill. We will begin developing plans for exhibits on the three main floors of the windmill that showcase the most important functions of the windmill and other related themes including how they are built and maintained and the farm-to-table journey of grain.

Necessary Improvements

- **Cut Down Cottonwoods**
- **New Doorways**
- **Fix Windshaft**
- **De-Couple Gearboxes**
- **Add Brake Cable**
- **Install New Friction-Drive Pulley Wheel**

These projects ensure the best overall operation of the windmill for both function and safety.

The historic cottonwood trees surrounding the windmill are blocking significant wind from the South and West, affecting the mill's ability to function properly and keep up with changing wind directions during storms. The Southern tree has also lost large branches recently, threatening the Vikinghjem.

New doorways are planned for the second floor in the same style as had been on the mill originally in Nørre Snede. In addition to a more authentic look, these also offer operational safety as another doorway can be used when one is blocked.

The new windshaft installed in 2018 is having issues related to the history of those repairs. A long delay in funding kept the shaft from being installed at the correct time, causing it to shrink beyond the dimensions of the original shaft. The result is an inaccurate fit that causes the windmill to make unnecessary noise when turning and will also contribute to additional wear. We hope to have Erik back in the future to help address it.

De-coupling the gearboxes allows us to override the fantail when the windmill requires maintenance or repairs. It would also be useful in rare emergencies.

Adding a brake cable also restores the mill's authentic operation while boosting the safety and ease of use during operation, as the brake can be engaged from the second floor instead of the cap.

The friction pulley wheel is ready for installation, but we also need to make additional changes before its operation. These including moving part of the sprinkler system that was installed through the vertical lane of the pulley system, and widening the trap doors through which the grain passes.

New Stones

- **Retire Current Stones**
- **New Stones Installed**

Erik estimates that our current stones will last another 5 to 7 years under expected use. The intent is to continue using these stones to boost programming and spur our business as a museum. This will continue until they are in a state that can still be appropriately preserved, and they will be retired to a new exhibit space for them on the second floor.

In the meantime, we can begin saving funds and planning for our next set of stones. We will work with Møllebygger Petersen to obtain a new set either from the Netherlands, Denmark, or elsewhere depending on regional availability during that time.

Denmark on the Prairie

In 2013, a Danish film crew visited Elk Horn and Kimballton for the purposes of producing a documentary on our Danish villages for audiences in Denmark. They did a fabulous job, but due to licensing rights on some of the music used, we have never been able to air them publically in the US. We've since learned they are permitted on YouTube and are happy to announce that both the 2013 documentary, *Denmark on the Prairie*, and the 2016 sequel, *Back to the Prairie*, are now available for public view on our YouTube channel:

@DanishWindmill1848



Danish Windmill

@DanishWindmill1848 71 subscribers 18 videos

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Are you a member?

Become a member today and receive direct copies of *The Breeze* by mail or email.

Additional benefits include:

- Free tours of the windmill & vikinghjem
- 10% off in the gift shop and online
- Direct access to news, updates, and catalogs
- Exclusive digital access to historical materials related to our windmill (coming soon)
- Pride of supporting a local museum

**Family
membership
coming
soon!**

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