

Danish Windmill Quarterly Newsletter

THE BREEZE

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Director's Message:

Dear Members,

Better late than never! We are almost caught up after what has been a very busy several weeks to end out the year between the mill, Julefest, Christkindlmarket, and everything in between. This is another compact newsletter for us as we have combined it with our annual appeal letter due to the timing. If you have already donated this year, we sincerely thank you for your continued support.

We have some exciting news to share about some of our recent projects as well as some events coming up. We hope you receive this issue before the year's end, and wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.



As always, thank you for following along on our windy journey. We look forward to what comes next and thank you for coming along with us.

Mange tak!

Shaun Sayres, M.A.
Manager

 Nørre Snede, DK 1848-1975

Celebrating
49 years in
Elk Horn
Elk Horn, IA 1976-present 

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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Education & Preservation Center

Work on our new Education & Preservation Center is well underway with upgrades and repairs to the building's electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems as well as new siding.

The building's orange color has been very well received and blends nicely with a coppery-brown trim intended to mimic the classic half-timbered frame look. Orange was a deliberate choice made with historic colors in mind.

Taking a look at the open-air museums in Denmark, particularly Den Gamle By, most of the structures were red, orange, yellow, or white. This is primarily due to the dyes and materials that were available and typical when most of these historic structures were built. In the vicinity of downtown Elk Horn, we already had the large 'Grace on Main Building' in Skagen Yellow. Directly south is a replica railroad depot building (in progress) which will be red. The next building is gray, and the windmill's buildings are all white. We wanted to make a statement, but also try to maintain a commitment to an historically-informed aesthetic, so orange it was.

The trim pattern is not quite finished yet, but as paint and caulk can only be applied above certain temperatures, and we still do not have full electricity, we opted to focus on closing up the exterior until Spring. Thankfully we had a few warm days in November to get the final touches on to ensure we are weather-proof and ready for any rain and snow coming our way. Unfortunately, the new windows we ordered for the east side are delayed, so we can't quite finalize the trim work until those are installed.

On the inside, we've replaced the furnace with a heat pump, run new plumbing lines, and upgraded the electrical panel so we could easily handle electric heat and an array of amp-heavy equipment. The woodshop portion has been repainted from the ceiling down and the concrete finished



with a chemical-resistant epoxy. It took awhile to get 25+ years of sawdust off the walls, but the dust collection system to be installed should eliminate that going forward.

We wish to thank all of the local volunteers who have helped us during this project. Mike Howard and Gene 'Beaner' Thomsen have been involved throughout, while many others have stepped in here and there as we took on various projects including Erik Andersen, Andy Anderson, Nicole Butler, Joanie Heuton, Kodie Haas, Lou Howard, Dan Nissen, Tim Palmer, Mike & Lisa Riggs, and Sarah Sayres.

Progress will likely delay a bit as the holiday season approaches. Although the woodshop is mostly finished, the educational space still needs to be cleaned, painted, re-floored and re-furnished.

As expected, there have been some hiccups along the way. The building's water supply, which has been shut off for many years, is not quite turning back on as expected. Meanwhile, we are still waiting for our electricity to be restored as our supply of daylight continues to shrink. These issues will be resolved eventually, but our lofty goal of being moderately presentable by Julefest is a tad out of reach.

That being said, there is plenty to look forward to in this space when work resumes. We are hoping to raise enough funds to put a new roof on next year, and this will allow us to explore solar panels which could cover power the building with 100% green energy.

Barring an unusual heatwave this Winter, we will finalize the building's exterior look in Spring. One of the buildings from Den Gamle By that inspired our final design can be seen below. Until then, we will continue to work on the inside so we can open the building with some programs in 2026.



DID YOU KNOW?

The architectural style pictured here is commonly known as "half-timber framing." A structure is framed with exposed timber beams, usually oak, that are joined with sturdy mortise and tenon joints. The gaps could be filled in with brick, stone, plaster, or other materials that were available. These structures were commonplace in northern Europe and often ornately decorated with carvings in intricate detail.

Do you recall a building currently in Elk Horn with similar colors to the one shown above?

There is no doubt this new center will serve as a major boost for our organization. With so much space dedicated to our gift shop, there has always been a need for an adequate space for educational programming, meetings, and other needs.

We approached this project with two goals in mind. The obvious one is that having a woodshop nearby has been essential for maintenance on the mill and our other facilities. The other is the need for a space to host public programs and workshops. And these two goals are more closely aligned than one might assume. Preserving structures such as the windmill and vikingjem requires specialized skills and knowledge of woodworking and blacksmithing. If we are serious about preserving these structures multiple generations into the future, we need people around who will know how to attend to them.

We've been fortunate to have many skilled craftsmen within our community who have been able to assist with the windmill over the last several years, but it is also no secret that these skills are thinning out. Less and less individuals are seeking trade and craft jobs while demand for these lines of work continues to rise.

We feel as though the windmill's own story offers us a unique position to take on this issue. Afterall, it wasn't a band of millwrights who reconstructed the mill from its parts in 1976, but over 300 community volunteers with virtually no prior experience in milling at all. These were everyday people with different skills and backgrounds, but they possessed intuition and (by today's standards) a rare ability to work with their own hands.

By combining the inspiring legacy of the windmill with a new space outfitted for creation and hands-on activity, our hope is to utilize this space as a means to nurture a new generation of creators - a generation not primarily defined by age, but by common interest in the preservation of historic skills and sites. The skills that built our communities are still relevant today. They must be preserved.



The woodshop before work began



The woodshop after some elbow grease

As I write this towards the end of 2025, the woodshop half of the building is nearing completion. We still have some work to do to make it functional, but we are getting closer. The color scheme you see here, with the exception of the floor, is what will be used in the classroom half as well, but we need to get this room done before we can begin working on the other.

With that in mind, we still have the flooring to install in the classroom, two windows to replace, a lot of paint and interior trim to finish, and hopefully we might get water back on once the crew is finished with the main city projects currently ongoing.

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New Fundraising Options

Interested in supporting our new Education & Preservation Center? We've created a new fund just for the center and its related projects and exhibits including the maintenance of Morning Star Chapel, the Vikinghjem, and our miniature Ebeltoft Village. All gifts to this fund will be earmarked for maintenance, repairs, and improvements related to these buildings to ensure we may continue to preserve Danish-American cultural heritage, knowledge, and skills.

Preservation Fund

Preserve cultural heritage



Did you know we can accept Danish plates and collectibles as in-kind donations? If you inherited a collection or are looking to downsize, consider donating your collection to us. We will find new homes for your beloved plates and all proceeds are put towards the windmill. A receipt is returned acknowledging the financial value of your donation for potential tax benefits or deductions.

NEW FOR 2025: We can now accept appreciated stocks, bonds, securities, and other long-term investment funds as donations. This is a great way to make the most of your charitable gift while also avoiding taxes on capital gains incurred during the year.

Please contact us for more information.



NEW FOR 2025

We can now accept appreciated stocks and securities as donations. Save on capital gains tax by making a charitable donation from this year's earnings.

Contact us for more information including the account information to provide to your broker.



YOUR GIFT MATTERS

Visit **danishwindmill.org/donate** to view all of our charitable gift options including monetary donations, in-kind donations, and security donations as well as all of our ongoing fundraising campaigns.

Annual Appeal

December 2025

Dear Friends of the Danish Windmill:

As the year draws to a close, we wish to extend a sincere thank you to all of those who supported us this year. We are proud of the achievements set this year and of the projects we completed to further our mission of preserving Danish-American cultural traditions. We are especially excited for the opening of our new Education & Preservation Center next year and how that will transform our organization going forward.

Like in years past, however, 2025 was not without its challenges. The costs of operation continue to climb and the recent successes we have seen in the gift shop can only carry us so far. Our insurance costs alone have risen nearly 50% within the last 3 years. Billboards become more expensive, the costs of production have gone up, and the tariff hikes have not gone away. We need your support now as much as ever to ensure we may continue to serve our Danish-American community.

With that being said, we are introducing a new way to donate this year: we can now accept appreciated stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and other long-term securities. This is a great way to maximize your charitable giving while potentially avoiding exposure to capital gains taxes. We have also created a new Preservation Fund as well as codified our Plate Recycling Program that rehomes beloved Danish plates and collectibles.

Considering adding wind to our sails and explore all of our current fundraising campaigns, both via donations or in-kind options. We realize this is arriving late in the year and may be too late for 2025, but we hope you will keep us in mind the next time you are looking to give. Charitable giving is an essential source of support for our organization. We wouldn't be here without your support.

Thank you for sticking with us another year. We are excited for the arrival of 2026, the windmill's 50th year in Elk Horn! More news on anniversary plans and some exclusive offers will be coming in due time.

Glædelig Jul og Godt Nytår,



Shaun Sayres, M.A.
Manager



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News & Updates

We've already covered much of the news regarding the Education & Preservation Center, but that's not all that's been happening at the mill lately! In October, we added new LED lights to the sails. These lights are permanent, meaning we no longer have to put them up and take them down every year. They fit perfectly on the shutter brackets so that they are barely noticeable when off, and best of all, they change color! We can program these lights for all kinds of events or occasions. We do still have to make sure they are safely unplugged to run the mill, but they will be on most weekends provided we aren't expecting any major windstorms.

And speaking of storms, we regret to say that snow really dampened our spirits this year. A snowstorm forced Julefest to end early, coming in Friday afternoon and staying the day on Saturday. We were happy to see some familiar faces of those who braved the



The Mill Gets New Lights



Julefest Gets Snowed-out



Christkindlmarket in the Snow

roads, but traffic in general was understandably slow. It doesn't often snow on Julefest, but when it does, it hurts.

Christkindlmarket Des Moines had a similar experience. This year, the market expanded to two weekends, and we joined Kringleman Bakery in working both. However, between the cold and the snow, attendance definitely suffered this year.

We gamble every year on a good holiday season with reasonable temperatures and good foot traffic, but the snow hit where it hurts this year and we'll be feeling it until Spring. All told, we likely lost an estimated \$30,000 in sales this holiday season as a result of the weather, and those are usually the funds that help us get to the next tourism season in Spring. We're hoping for the best.

On a positive note, we wish to thank Nicole Butler and Jon Adams for volunteering to help us out during Christkindlmarket this year. Their help made everything easier during a difficult couple of weeks.

Windmill Expo & Membership Drive, 50th Edition

**Monday, January 26
5:00 PM
Hygge Inn & Suites**

Snow date - February 9
Please RSVP for meal by Jan. 16



Featuring **DANISH MEAL served by Master Griller Catering & Concessions**

Meal is **FREE for members and \$20 for non-members. Doors open at 5:00, meal served at 5:30. Membership can be renewed at event.**

This year we're trying something different to kick off our 50th anniversary. As a thank you to our members, we are offering a full Danish meal, free, with attendance of our annual meeting in January. This is a great way for members to learn more about what we do and volunteering opportunities, and a great way for us to recognize those who have helped us throughout the year. Come join us as we inaugurate the windmill's 50th year in Elk Horn.

Board Members Needed:

We will have multiple vacancies on our board of directors in 2026. Board members are elected during the annual meeting for a three-year term of service. Anyone interested in joining the Danish Windmill's Board of Directors is encouraged to contact us. Local residency is preferred.

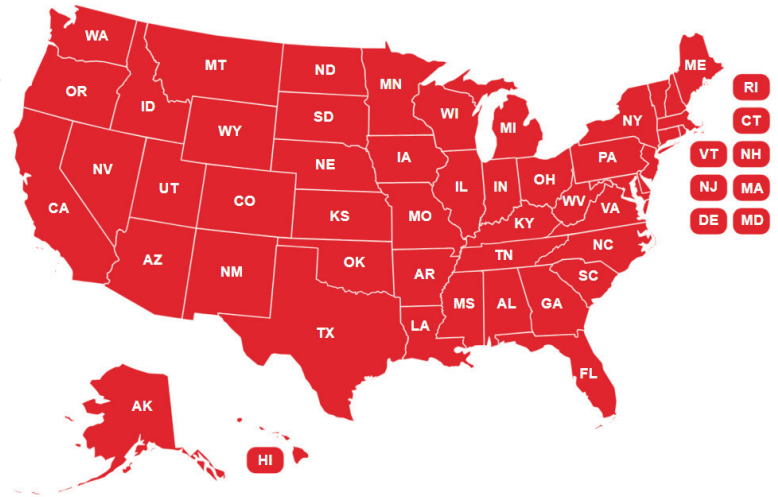
The Danish Windmill's Board of Directors meets quarterly. Board members may serve up to (3) consecutive three-year terms.

Visitor Information

From July to September, we are up slightly in visitors compared to last year:

- 5,699 visitors signed our guestbook including 135 from Denmark
- Visitors from all 50 states and at least 21 foreign countries

Top 5 states: IA, NE, CO, CA, and IL



VIEW THIS ISSUE ONLINE

View this issue and past issues of *The Breeze* online at danishwindmill.org

Are you a member?

Become a member today and receive direct copies of *The Breeze* by mail or email. Scan the QR code to learn more.

Family memberships now available!

Additional benefits include:

- Free tours of the windmill & vikinghjem
- 10% off in the gift shop and online
- Direct access to news, updates, and catalogs
- Access to our digital archive
- Pride of supporting a local museum



Become a member today:
call (712) 764-7472 or visit danishwindmill.org/membership