

Danish Windmill Quarterly Newsletter

THE BREEZE

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Director's Message:

Dear Members,

It is hard to believe June is already in the rearview mirror. We have so much to share, but only so much space. This issue features a few new elements including a short article from the memoirs of Mildred Andersen, grains of local history, and updates from the community whist clubs. We also had our first annual fundraiser benefitting another local organization and another exciting Tivoli Fest. It has been a very busy year!

We're also excited to share the debut of our next capital campaign, *Back on the Grind*, which focuses on some repairs and improvements we have planned for the windmill. Work begins in October and we are collecting donations now.



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
48 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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Feature Story:

"Harry Pedersen and Our Windmill"

This is a short story written many years ago by Mildred Andersen. It talks about Harry Pedersen, the man credited with located the windmill that would be moved to Elk Horn. Harry lived in Denmark, but had family living in Elk Horn including his cousin, Milo Andersen, Mildred's husband. The story is a snippet of Mildred's memoirs, "Memories as They Come to Mind" which may be accessed by the Museum of Danish America's Education & Genealogy Center.



Nørre Snede Mølle, ca. 1970

When Mr. and Mrs. Harry Pedersen returned home to Denmark from their trip to the United States in 1975, they were very tired but busy returning greetings to friends and relatives.

While they were in the United States, Harry was asked about the town of Elk Horn purchasing a windmill from Denmark to bring to the United States. About three weeks after their return to Denmark, Harry started to look for a windmill for Elk Horn. One evening Harry called Gette Rasmussen, a cousin of his in Fynn, and asked if she knew where he could find a windmill he could buy to send to the United States. Harry knew there were mills on the small islands of Fynn and Langland. Gette thought Harry must be drunk to be talking of buying a windmill that he would send to the United States and as soon as they finished talking, Gette called Harry's sister in Copenhagen, Grethe Bonnesen. Gette said she had just talked with Harry on the phone and that she was sure he was drunk because he kept talking about buying a windmill and sending it to America.

Some days later, Harry and one of his men were out driving in the countryside looking for a windmill. As they drove into Nørre Snede, Harry spotted a windmill. Harry stopped at the house even though he had come straight from his work at the fishing harbor. The farm belonged to Julius and Kristin Hansen. When Kristin answered the

door, Harry asked if the windmill was for sale. She hesitated to answer but when she did, she explained that there had been someone interested in buying it and restoring it on the present site but they had not been able to come up with the money that Julius had asked for it. As time went by, nothing had been done about purchasing the mill.

The Hansen's were not sure they wanted to sell the Mill and have it restored on its present site because it was only about 50 feet from their house. They were afraid that if the mill were restored, many tourists would be coming to their property to see it. Harry finally asked talk to Julius. Kristin said he was taking his noon nap, but Harry insisted that he would like to talk with Julius. Finally Kristin went to tell Julius there was a man from the fishing harbor at Esbjerg who wants to buy a Mill. She said she didn't quite know what kind of a man this was. She wondered about such a man wanting to buy the Mill.

Harry and Julius talked for some time and Harry was able to interest Julius in selling the windmill at the price he wanted. No doubt Julius felt if he put a big price on the windmill, he would find out what kind of man this was. We do not know how many times they met. Julius did not believe Harry at first, but agreed to sell the mill. That's when Harry started making phone

calls to Elk Horn to make the arrangements.

Then one evening, Julius called Harry telling him that the town of Nørre Snede wanted to buy the Mill and that Julius was about to back out of their dealings. Harry drove to Julius Hansen's home that same evening to talk things over. Harry made sure the windmill would be sold to Elk Horn by making up a contract that stated the Hansen's would get a free trip to the United States to see their rebuilt windmill. That night the Hansen's sold the windmill to Harry on behalf of Elk Horn. This was even before Harry had received any money from Elk Horn. He trusted his friends and relatives over here. If Elk Horn had backed out of the deal, Harry would have been stuck with a windmill! The very next day, Harry put in a person-to-person phone call to Mildred Andersen, telling her that he had to have the \$30,000.00 right away. Arrangements were made immediately to send the money over to Denmark. It took three or four men from Esbjerg one month to take the mill down. Some days there was extra help from Nørre Snede to accomplish this task. There were days when the men drove the 40 miles to Nørre Snede only to have it rain and not be able to do any work. Harry and his men drove 200 kilometers every day to help dismantle the windmill; amounting to about 10,000 kilometers.

Taking the Mill down was a tremendous job. A blow torch was used on the rusty old iron of the wings. One wing actually caught on fire. Harry called the fire department but they were not able to put the fire out. They did not dare to climb up the old mill with the water hose to put out the fire. Harry complained to the fire department about their men and there was no charge for the fire call. Harry's son, Kort, was the one who finally climbed out on the wing to put the fire out.

Harry and his men packed the Mill on the flat bed truck and were praised for a job well done. The big machinery used to take the windmill down came from Vejle. The Mill was shipped to New York from Aarhus. I might add, when the money did finally get to Denmark, the banker was not sure he would accept the \$30,000.00 coming to buy a windmill. Again, they wouldn't believe us. At a later date, the

banker apologized to Harry for his attitude towards Harry when he came with the money.

The man that made the little model windmill took such an interest in making it that building it came before his regular work. Most people in Denmark do not work on Sundays, but he did.

When the Mill came to New York, Harry received a phone call asking how old the Mill was. Harry had to call Julius Hansen and two other men to assure them that the Mill was over 100 years old. Harry said it was the biggest thing he has ever done and there were times that it was about to get the best of him. It put tremendous pressure on him and his family.

Harry said was he to do it over he probably could do it cheaper, but the time was then to buy the windmill or we probably would never have gotten a Danish Windmill in Elk Horn.

DID YOU KNOW?

Whist is a classic trick-taking card game that originated in England in the 1700s. It uses a standard 52-card deck and is open to intense strategic play.

Whistles from the Past

Updates from the Elk Horn and Kimballton whist teams

Thursday March 8, 1928
Elk Horn - Kimballton Review

**ELK HORN WHIST PLAYERS
SHOW MUCH IMPROVEMENT**

Once upon a time, long years ago, Peter the Great, czar of Russia coveted a strip of land held by the Swedes. Anything that Peter wanted he went after, but the Swedes were real fighters and lambasted the Russian's time and again. Peter, however didn't lose hope and only said to his soldiers: "They will eventually teach us how to beat them." Ole N. Olsen, manager of the Elk Horn Whist Association, possesses some of the czar's optimism as well as other of his traits and after the whist tournament with Kimballton, Tuesday evening he remarked: "Well we are improving anyhow. It won't be long now."

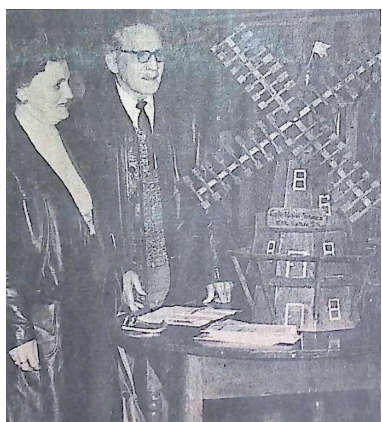
The tournament was played at Kimballton Tuesday evening and was the second time Elk Horn and Kimballton players have been matched. Teams from each town participated and when the score was totaled up, it was found that Kimballton led by a scant margin of 242 points. As on the former occasion seven Kimballton teams won while three lost. These whist tournaments have been thoroughly enjoyed by all participants as well as many spectators, have promoted much good feeling, and it is very probable that next winter will see more of this indoor sport.



Harry and Elva Lydia Brink Pedersen



Mildred and Milo Andersen



As promised, the Hansens had their trip to the United States in October 1976. The pair visited the mill site in Elk Horn where construction remained ongoing. They also toured the neighboring town of Harlan where Thelma "Toots" Heflin gave them a tour of the Shelby County Historical Museum, which had only just acquired a new item, a model of the mill to be built in Elk Horn.

Granular History

History Told One Grain at a Time

Kimballton's Forgotten Mill

Did you know Kimballton had a windmill before Elk Horn ever did? Although it is long gone and not much of is known of its history, its story paints a telling picture of the early Danish-American experience in the United States in the 1800s.

Danish immigrants began to settle what would become the area of Elk Horn and Kimballton in 1800s. Christian Jensen broke ground on the prairie near present-day Elk Horn in 1868, and the initial settling of Kimballton followed soon after. One of Kimballton's earliest settlers was Jorgen Møller.

The surname Møller is the Danish iteration of the English "Miller," and true to his name, Møller built what would be the first windmill in the area. Not a lot is known about either Møller or the windmill.

It is presumed that the mill was up and running by 1879, joining a landscape of mills across western Iowa which including the Chatburn watermill in Harlan, among others. It stood on the hill west of Main St. (following Alfred St.) until at about 1910.

It's initial appearance suggests a strange style of construction. The mill of itself bore resemblance to a classical Dutch windmill that was typical in Denmark for the time including an external gallery that rimmed the outside. Its external components resemble those of the American-style Halladay Standard mill including the turning mechanism and the slatted blades which caught the wind.

The mill operated primarily as a grist mill, grinding flour for local residents. Lacking the equipment to make the gears himself, Møller carved the components he needed out of wood and had them replicated from a foundry.

From genealogical records, we know Møller had a family in Kimballton that included two children. His son, Peter Miller, moved to California. His daughter, Eleanor, remained in Kimballton where she managed a sewing school for girls. Møller died in 1911 in Sharon Township just east of Kimballton. His obituary recognized him as one of Kimballton's earliest settlers.

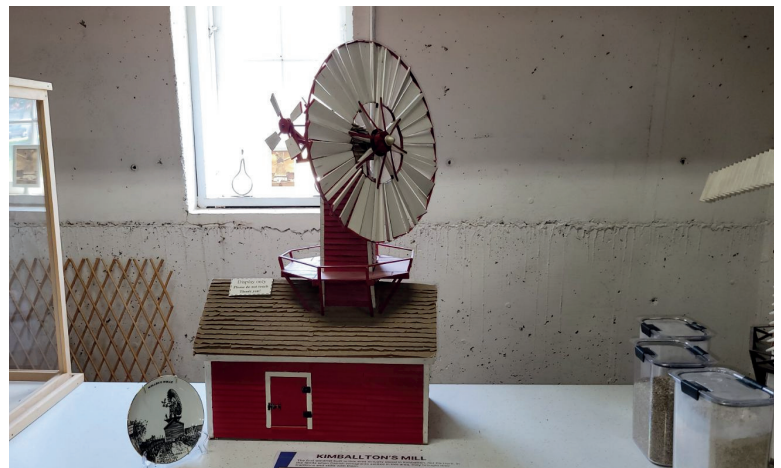
The model shown on the right was built by Pete Jensen and Harvey Sornson.



Winter landscape shot of the Kimballton windmill, year unknown



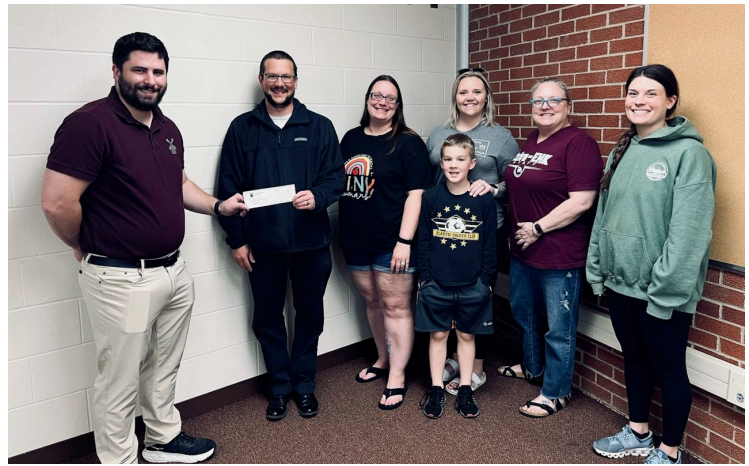
Møller's windmill as it once stood, year and person unknown



News & Updates

It has been a very busy few months at the windmill and it's impossible to cover everything. In April the windmill held its first *It Takes a Village* fundraiser with our first charity recipient, local daycare Kids in the Village. Every Sunday in April we donated all tour admissions from the windmill to the cause. We also partnered with local restaurants and food vendors to help attract Sunday visitors including Kringleman Pastries, Norse Horse Tavern, Master Griller Catering, and Hungry Spartan Pizza. Together we raised over \$1,100 for Kids in the Village and we hope to continue this fundraiser annually going forward.

We also celebrated another Earth Day with EEHK high school students this year. Students and teachers joined us in our annual groundskeeping day, planting flowers and preparing the gardens for another busy travel season. They always do a great job.



Our new entertainment & storage building

In May, we celebrated another fun and successful Tivoli Fest and for many businesses in town including the windmill, it was far and away the best Tivoli we had in years. Scores of new people walked through Elk Horn and the windmill. If you encountered the line on the third floor of the mill you might have thought you were waiting to summit Everest. It was a great time to be in Elk Horn. We're especially thankful to our volunteers for giving tours of the windmill throughout the festival and running the refreshment booth.

Once Tivoli passed, we focused on our recent grant project for a new entertainment and storage building. We're happy to say the project is now complete and we are stilling filling our new building with all sorts of stuff to make room for inventory in the shop. This building will be a huge help for us this Winter in storing the picnic tables, yard games, and various other fixtures so that we can better organize our shop storage and increase efficiency in the store.

Finally, the photography for our virtual tour has been shot and the tour is coming soon!

Capital Campaign

PHASE ONE

October 2024

danishwindmill.org/grind



We are excited to announce the debut of our new capital campaign, *Back on the Grind!* This campaign marks the beginning of our final push to restore our windmill to full functionality with improved operational safety, preservation of key components, and restored authenticity in both function and aesthetic appearance. As we move forward with various repairs and improvements, we will build on preparation for a new set of millstones, the final objective of this campaign.

This campaign will be conducted in three phases. **Phase 1** will be executed very soon in October 2024. We will be working with Møllebygger Petersen ApS to address some urgent repairs on the mill and previous restoration work as well as make some improvements for safety and functionality. Most important, this includes addressing the ongoing issue with our new windshaft as well as newer problem with the limited rotational movement of the cap frame. We will also be adding a grease bank and a brake cable, as well as installing the new sack hoist friction wheel. **Phase 2** will pick up where we left off with other improvements including adding another doorway to the catwalk. **Phase 3** will focus on the acquisition and installation of new millstones and the old ones will be retired for a separate exhibit.

Altogether, we expect this entire campaign to take several years to complete, both due to the type of work involved and the amount of funding that will be required. We are also in a time crunch for a very important anniversary as we celebrate 50 years of our windmill in Elk Horn in 2026. Due to some of the emergent issues at hand and the timing of our upcoming plans, we're moving ahead quickly with certain projects to ensure our focus in 2026 is purely on celebrating our amazing milestone.

That is why we need your help. While some of the projects outlined in this plan are luxuries that we can get by without, funding and executing **Phase 1** is critical for the preservation of the mill's longevity and financial security. If left unchecked, the current issues with the windshaft and cap frame will worsen and become major financial liabilities that we might not be able to overcome. The restoration work done in 2018 was an expensive project that took several years of fundraising that we don't want to repeat in the near future.

For your convenience, the entire project for **Phase 1** is outline in full detail at danishwindmill.org/grind. We encourage everyone to have a thorough look at the project and welcome questions of all kinds. We have already received a number of impressive donations, but we have a long way to go.

PHASE ONE

PRIORITY

- Repair the cap frame
- Dismantle, repair, and reassemble the windshaft

SAFETY & OPERATION IMPROVEMENTS

- Build and install grease bank in cap frame
- Install brake cable pulley onto the brake beam

AUTHENTIC RESTORATIONS

- Repair sack hoist system and install new friction wheel

DID YOU KNOW?

Capital campaigns are very difficult to fund through grant programs or state aid. This project does not qualify for any of the current historic preservation grants offered by the State of Iowa. Those that do fund this type of capital work have additional limitations which disqualify significant expenses such as travel, liability insurance, and even labor. Given that this project involves work on an existing building, requires little in terms of new materials, and is almost entirely labor-based, there is very little grant-based funding available. That is why we are counting on your support to make this project possible.

Read about the entire project with images and illustrations at danishwindmill.org/grind

RAISED: \$10,250

GOAL: \$60,000



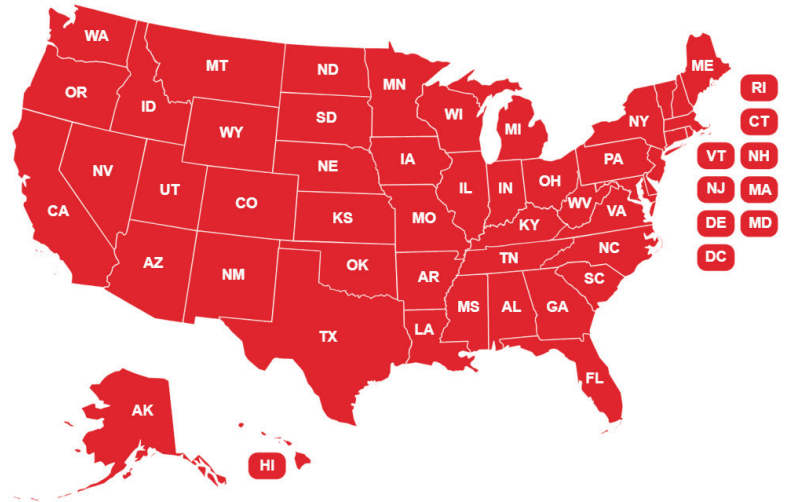
Your generous support is vital. Please consider giving towards this project and helping us preserve and restore our beloved windmill. We counting on all of our friends and supporters.

Donate today at danishwindmill.org/grind

Visitor Information

We have already been visited by all 50 states plus Washington DC and Puerto Rico! In just the month of June, we had visitors from all states except MS and WV.

- 9,645 visitors signed our guestbook
- Visitors from 17 foreign countries including 70 visitors from Denmark
- Top states: IA, NE, CO, MN, CA, MO



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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



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