

The Voice:



UPCOMING EVENTS:

- ♦ February 15
10 A.M. - Museum
General
Membership
Meeting
Lunch Provided

Due to illness, holidays and computer problems, this special issue has been delayed. This is truly a rough copy. Our regular newsletter schedule, with editing, will resume in March. Thank you for your patience.

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Sharing the story of historic Danevang— past, present, and future.

SPECIAL 125TH CELEBRATION EDITION

Founder's Day Celebration

What a beautiful day and a tremendous crowd to celebrate our 125 years of existence. Yes, In October 1894 the first settlers arrived in the Danevang community area and decided to settle here. Mr. J.C.Evers, a landman from the Midwest, found 25,000 acres of land available for purchase by a cooperative of Danes who were willing to gamble all on a new location and, unbeknown to them, a new crop. Seventy-eight (78) men agreed to purchase pieces of land and our museum is fortunate to have copies of a number of their sale agreements. Most purchased land for \$9.00 an acre! All of it was undeveloped which meant they had to build homes with few

resources, acquire seeds, equipment, livestock, dig water wells and break the ground which was dense prairie grass. Added to the normal stresses of farming, the first years lacked rain, had a new pest to deal with – mosquitoes and they had to learn a new language. These people were tenacious and ambitious. These were our ancestors.

Our celebration began in February with DHPS hosting the Danish Gymnastics Demonstration Team, then the 7th Annual Fun Run and has continued through the year, culminating in our celebration on October 19. We will continue celebrating until

June 2020 when the Danevang Lutheran Church hosts its 125th anniversary.

Our special day began with the presentation of colors by Boy Scout Troop 368, singing the national anthems of the US and of Denmark, a prayer by Pastor Turner of the Danevang Lutheran Church and greetings from Anna Holiday Thomsen, the Honorary Consul of Denmark (Ret.). A celebration of our Founding Fathers who found their eternal rest in the Danevang Lutheran Cemetery followed. The entire cemetery was ablaze with red, white and
Continued on pg. 3

Celebrating
125
YEARS



SCENES OF THE DAY FROM TOP LEFT TO RIGHT - 1. Enjoying the meal 2. Song leaders at the church 3. Buying a souvenir cup at the Museum 4. Scandinavian Dancers 5. Among the flags 6. Opening ceremony 7. An example of the land contracts 8. Flags of our two countries waving in the breeze 9. Working hard in the kitchen 10. What good food for the day.

Founders' Day Celebration - cont.



Patty Jensen, Ralph Petersen and Dean Hansen share the history of the Cemetery.

blue of the American flag and the red and white cross of the Danish flag. A small Danish flag was placed on the grave of each Founding Father buried there. Patty Jensen, Ralph Petersen and Dean Hansen, members of the cemetery Board, each presented a short history of the cemetery and its importance to the community. Folks were welcomed to explore the cemetery; utilize cleaning materials distributed by Bridget Jensen Howard to clean their loved one's tombstones, and many used the opportunity to take family group pictures. Once the outdoor activities of the morning were concluded,

everyone was welcomed into the Community Hall to join in the wonderful meal prepared by volunteers. These wonderful folks had spent hours preparing typical Danish food including: *frikadeller* (meat balls), *karøfler* (buttered potatoes with parsley), *gluerødder* (glazed carrots), *rødkål* (red cabbage), *syltede rødbeder* (pickled beets), *agurkesalat* (pickled cucumber salad) and *brød* (bread). Of course, our traditional *aebleskage* (apple cake) was served for dessert with lots of coffee and tea or water to drink. There were over 225 guests served; all raved about the meal. The tables were set with red and white table run-

ners with small Danish and American flags serving as centerpieces. During our lunch we were serenaded with Danish folk music played by Ginny Blood, a friend of Bridget Jensen Howard. The haunting but lyrical music gave an authentic touch to the festivities.

We weren't finished yet! After lunch everyone joined in singing beloved songs from the past in the church. Led by a small group that included Kenny Christensen, Cynthia Priesmeyer, Darlene Miksik, Ann Schaer, Bridget Jensen Howard accompanied by Annette Marek. Most of the songs were in English but a few were in Danish and all were sung with gusto.

*Continued
on pg. 4*



Bridget Jensen Howard among the Flags



Scouts prepare the Flags

New Displays at the Museum

Founders' Gallery

Map to Your Family's Origins in Denmark

Land Purchase Documents

Map of the Locations of Early Homes

Please Stop By for a Visit

Founders' Day Celebration - cont.

Once the singing was completed, we returned to the Community Hall where we were treated to an hour of dancing performed by the Scandinavian Dancers of Houston. Our own Bridget Jensen Howard is a member and was instrumental in inviting the group to join our celebrations. As they twirled and whirled around the dance floor, we all clapped

and "danced" in place. A few were asked to join in with the group to learn a dance or two. What fun! We may have a few budding experts in our number.

Following the festivities in the Community Hall, we journeyed to the Museum to see pathways to our past. A special thanks to Suzan Berndt, the Museum Director, who helped in a myriad of ways to gather information we had in our archives and assist in moving displays around. She is invaluable to our organization. Also,

special kudos go to Michael Hansen, Cynthia Priesmeyer and Bridget Jensen Howard for creating the Founders' Gallery. While many others helped, these three together with Suzan, did the lion's share and are



Founders' Gallery

to be commended for their efforts. You will be surprised when you visit and see the work they did. Our history reaches beyond 1894 when the first Danes arrived in Danevang; it goes back to their roots in Denmark. Please find time to appreciate this outstanding work.

Other displays added thanks to many people: Bridget Jensen Howard, Sandra Petersen, Ralph Petersen, Cheryl Lucas, Suzan Berndt and others who assisted in a myriad of ways. Examples are: 1) Bridget's work that dis-

plays the direct connection between Denmark, the Midwest and Danevang is especially fascinating. Take time to review it carefully. 2) Sandra's project was to display a few of our land purchase documents.

We don't have all for the original purchases, but enough to give you an idea of the detail with which they were described, the total cost and the payment schedules. We have 20 on display. 3) Ralph compiled a detailed map of the locations of the original farms and the homes. He also has developed one for homes up to the 1950s.

The Museum changes its displays a few times a year to share the valuable and interesting artifacts we have. If you are interested in history and are willing to learn how to accession and input data into our computer system, please contact Suzan. She would love to teach others so that the work can continue.

More to Celebrate!

Until 2024 and 150 years!

How the Research Was Done - A guide for you

The 78 men listed on the Pioneer Monument provided the scope of the investigation into those who came to establish the Danevang colony. Jeanette Lucille Larsen's 1993 compilation *DANEVANG TEXAS: A History & Genealogy of the Danish Colony* provided valuable information. Her original research included references to census and naturalization and Wharton County records and personal recollections, newspaper clippings, and church and cemetery records from Danevang and El Campo. Using the writings from the first generation, translated later by others, that were included in Jeanette Larsen's compilation and the notes about people buried in the cemetery that were included in the book published for Danevang's Fiftieth (50th) Anniversary, we gleaned information about where people were from in Denmark, where they had lived in the U.S. before Danevang, when they came to Danevang, and where they may have gone if they didn't stay. The Museum's collection of original land purchases in the colony offered some information as well. Having an [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) account was useful, especially to get access to records in



the United States. It led to [FindAGrave.com](https://www.findagrave.com), which was useful for U.S. burial information, and finding probable relatives. While helpful, these tools can also lead to erroneous assumptions since the same or similar name

was shared by several individuals. Another difficulty is that people often changed the spelling of their name or went by a middle name or an Americanized version and officials sometimes misspelled names. To track connections among Danevang families, Bridget Lois Jensen started a family tree named Danevang Settlers in her [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) account, separate from her personal family tree, that can be viewed by others. The goal is to expand it to include families who came to Danevang in the early years after 1900.

A helpful search engine to find Danish census and sometimes church records is [danishfamilysearch.com](https://www.danishfamilysearch.com). Having a sense of when someone was born and what part of Denmark they were

from is helpful. Trying alternative spellings for names is sometimes necessary. This database is incomplete, however, and seems to reflect the limits encountered using the search engine associated with the Danish Demographic Database. (ddd.dda.dk). Danish Emigration Archives are accessible at udvandrearkivet.dk. Original documents of church and census records can be found in the Danish National Archives (www.sa.dk) and, even

though the site is mostly in Danish, becomes familiar after some use. When available online, church and county marriage records for couples married in the U.S. were used as evidence of the family's location

In the past, the Museum has had a family wall where descendants from a Danevang family have gotten together to display their history, photos, and mementos related to Danevang. This practice was suspended for the celebration of the community's 125th anniversary celebration

By trying to acknowledge all the 1894-1900 settlers, families have responded by sharing information and photos. *Continued on pg. 6*

“Another difficulty is that people often changed the spelling of their name or went by a middle name or and Americanized version and officials sometimes misspelled names.”

Thank you Bridget for compiling this information to share with everyone.

Research - cont.

Hopefully, family's ties to their Danish heritage and to Danevang have been renewed and strengthened. The Museum recognizes that more people came to Danevang after the initial years and hopes

to feature these families some time. The response of all who came to initiate the celebration of Danevang's 125th year is appreciated. Continued involvement and support of the Danish Heritage Preservation Society of

Danevang is also needed and very much appreciated.

If you would like to make a Family Wall for the Museum, please contact Suzan for information.

You Too Can Help Keep Our History

So much history, so many stories that we know and still are unearthing. If you search your family's boxes, trunks and letters, you will find treasures to share with your family and with all of us. While we think of the difficulties of our ancestors, we too have stories to share, especially with our young ones. Just think of the changes we have gone through in the past 100, 75, 50 and 25 years. Miracles have happened in our lifetimes and we need to be prepared to share them with future generations. One way to

to share is to write them down, or at least print a copy of your life's story. As archivists we are concerned with the lack of written documentation for future study. Most of us use our computers to share information with others. This often is erased within a few days or weeks. What will happen in 2040 without written records of your family's history and your older generation is gone? Who will tell the stories of how they endured the hardships of life before new technological developments and the events of the world that impacted their lives?

We encourage you to make copies of pictures and written documents for future generations. Be sure to identify who is in the picture and how they are related to you. There is no guarantee that we will be able to use flash or zip drives in 5 years much less 20! It is a concern for those of us who are responsible for keeping a group's history. Your help is needed in our preparing for the celebration of 200 years!

In the meantime, the Danevang Heritage Museum will continue to build its archives, adding artifacts, documents and more as you provide them. We look forward to celebrating 200 years in 2084!!

We have been and are blessed.

Obituary

Kermit William Harton Jr. - born in El Campo on January 4, 1954. He was a farmer and a farm equipment salesman with Jackson County Equipment Company later with Hlavinka Equipment Company as the first manager of their dealership in Victoria. He retired in 2018 and returned to farming at the Krutilek farms.

He is survived by his wife of 43 years, Theresa Bartek of El Campo; parents, Kermit and Esther Harton; sons, Trey (Audrey) and Kyle; daughter, Kristie Pacer

(Daniel); eight grandchildren; brother, Glenn (Cherie); sisters, Pam Fleming (Jim) Sherry Long (David) and sister-in-law, Sharon Harton.

Kermit was preceded in death by his brother, Gary and infant sister, Sharon Marie.

Funeral Mass was held on October 24 at St. Philip Catholic Church in El Campo and burial followed at St. John's Cemetery in New Taiton.

Memorial donations may be made in his memory to St. Philip School or Church in El Campo.

May he rest in peace and God watch over his loved ones..

Donations Received Prior to October 19

Donations to the General Fund

Dr. John & Cecilia Bell
Marie Poage
Pam & Paul Pope
Bridget Jensen

In Remembrance

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Ralph Petersen | In memory of Verner, Louise, Lawrence Petersen |
| Sandra Petersen | In memory of Elwin Petersen |
| Sheila Harrington | In memory of Ingeborg Berndt Atchetee |

Donations for the Founding Fathers' 125 Celebration

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Corinna Harton | William Hansen |
| Marie Poage | Frances & Curtis Reece |
| Mike & Suzanne Stanfield | Kenneth Nygard |
| Country Living Rentals | |

Donations to the Endowment Fund

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Cathy & David Dybala | In memory of O.V. & Elsie Christensen |
| William Valigura | In memory of Virginia Longwood Valigura, Ted & Myrtle Longwood, Marie Teat |

Thank you for your generosity.

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Museum Hours: Tuesday-Sunday, 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Closed Mondays and Holidays

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