UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Danes in Alberta, 1903-1939:

A Dynamic Culture in An "Invisible" Ethnic Group

by

Kirstin Bouwsema

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

SEPTEMBER, 2009

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-54394-8
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-54394-8

Abstract

In Alberta's settlement period of the early twentieth century, immigrants from Scandinavia were counted among those deemed ideal new citizens because they were Protestant, Caucasian and from "civilized" Northern Europe and therefore assumed to assimilate seamlessly into society. The Danes became the "invisible" ethnic: not born in Canada nor having English as their first language, yet neither drawing attention to their native traditions or values. The Danes, who made up the smallest number of the "invisible" ethnic groups, established both a rural and urban presence in the province of Alberta. They provide an important case study for examining how Old World culture was maintained and consciously preserved. The church and school are two formal institutions through which the Danes publicly maintained their culture. More privately, secular organizations, language, food and holiday practices represented opportunities for the immigrants to unobtrusively preserve their Danishness.

Acknowledgements

I would not have finished this project without the encouragement and assistance of numerous people. I would like to thank Dr. Herman Ganzevoort for his supervision and for his patience in editing, correcting and advising me in my research. I am also thankful for the mentorship of several other history professors at the University of Calgary and at Red Deer College. I am indebted to my husband Brent for supporting me through two years of graduate school and believing in my abilities even when I did not.

I am also thankful for the lessons in Danish from the late Ralph Jensen, whose gentle humour and grammar lessons I will not soon forget. The Danish American Heritage Society, who through its generous financial assistance made my trip to Denmark possible, has my upmost gratitude. I am beholden to the staff, Lois Parker and Jean Weltz in particular, at the Danish Canadian National Museum at Dickson, and to the librarians and archivists at the Danish Emigration Archives in Aalborg for unearthing valuable material for me. Finally, I gained profound insight into Danish culture and heritage and into the warmth and endurance of trans-Atlantic family ties from the Sveistrups, Thorsens, and Damgaard/Andsbjergs in Denmark. Tusind tak for det.

Table of Contents

Introduction

"We Are a Little Land" is the phrase cultural historian Judith Friedman Hansen chose for the title of her book on Danish culture. The title implies an understatement—that Denmark is a humbly small country and therefore has limited importance in bigger picture of world culture. Yet, as Hansen argues, there is much of value to learn from studying Danish society. Similarly, the Danish population and contribution to Canada and Alberta is also seemingly small. According to the 2006 census, out of total 3 256 355 people in Alberta, 58 825 reported that they were of Danish ethnicity.[1] In other words, 1.8% of Albertans claim some Danish background: a very small number. Regardless of the insignificance implied by this statistic, the Danes have a rich history in Alberta.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, historians have worked to create a continually more inclusive and intricate body of literature on ethnic and immigration history in Canada. In the 1960s, with encouragement and funding from the Canadian government, a whole series of monographs were published on individual immigrant groups. However, the majority of these books have been criticized and condemned for taking on a larger project than could be sustained by the research.[2] There was little secondary research from which the texts could develop; the ground work had not yet been done. There was a tendency among these writers to portray their subjects in a purely favourable light, emphasizing all the good characteristics the group contributed to society. Similarly, the texts argued that their subjects "progressed" through time,

---

[1] Statistics Canada, "Ethnic Origins, 2006 count, For Canada, provinces and territories,- 20% sample data," http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/english/census06/data/highlights/ethnic/pages/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&Code=48&Data=Count&Table=2&StartRec=1&Sort=3&Display=All&CSDFilter=5000

[2] Roberto Perin, "Clio as an Ethnic: The Third Force in Canadian Historiography," Canadian Historical Review 64, no. 4 (1983): 445-446.

becoming successful and established in Canada. These filiopietistic and whiggish histories were a starting point for Canadian ethnic history but they also encompassed a significant number of assumptions and inadequacies.[3]

However, further projects were undertaken in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s to round out these deficits. Historians have striven to write more balanced accounts, encompassing a larger variety of perspectives and questioning previous assumptions. They have tried to allow for different cultural perspectives on "success" (rather than simply financial success).[4] They have pointed out the differences between rural and urban immigrant experience.[5] They have written about the negative contributions as well as the positive, pointing out the practice and experience of nativism and racism.[6] The development of the class-race-gender paradigm has figured dramatically on ethnic history with research on topics like Finnish immigrant women's history[7] or the gendered labour division in immigrant communities in Ontario.[8]

As ethnic/immigration history in Canada has matured in the twenty-first century, historians have further investigated the intricacies of "life on the ground." The story of "Canadian history's marginalized majority" has been further explored through research of immigrants' written records, their letters, diaries, newspapers and organization records, as

---

[3] Franca Iacovetta, "Manly Militants, Cohesive Communities, and Defiant Domestics: Writing About Immigrants In Canadian Historical Scholarship." Labour/ Le Travail 36 (1995): 222. Also Howard Palmer, "Canadian Immigration and Ethnic History in the 1970s and 1980s," Journal of Canadian Studies 17, no. 1 (1982): 36.

[4] Iacovetta, "Manly Militants, Cohesive Communities, and Defiant Domestics," 229.

[5] Anthony W. Rasporich, "Ethnicity in Canadian Historical Writing 1970-1990," In Ethnicity and Culture in Canada: The Research Landscape eds. J.W. Berry and J.A. Laponce, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 161-163 .

[6] Palmer, "Canadian Immigration," 40.

[7] Varpu Lindstrom, Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Immigrant Women in Canada (Beaverton, Ontario: Aspasia Books, 2003).

[8] Joy Parr, The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men and Change in Two Industrial Towns 1880-1950 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

well as through oral history.[9] Rather than simply looking at policy regarding immigration and treatment of the ethnic groups, historians have looked at the "agency" of the people; how individuals responded to life in the New World, rather than viewing them simply as victims of the system.[10] This project of uncovering the experience of the "marginalized majority" is ongoing, as historians discover new angles (like the gender or class lens) and new material (like oral interviews or newly uncovered written material) by which to analyze the past.

In her analysis of the field of immigration history, Franca Iacovetta warns against further narrow study of individual ethnic groups, what she calls "cohesive communities," arguing that in recent attempts this method has resulted in "an overly zealous desire to celebrate agency, resiliency, and immigrant success."[11] However, as she herself points out, more work is needed to understand the history of the "marginalized majority." Throughout Canadian history, certain ethnic groups were assumed to be able to silently fit into the cultural norm. These were the nationalities that were sought after during the settlement period and that, to a large degree, complied with the pressure to assimilate. Their story is important to Canada's history as well, though it has often been obscured by the histories of the more conspicuous and vocal groups. As Howard Palmer points out, the story of the less visible immigrants, like the Dutch or Scandinavians, is equally important for "understand[ing] the total immigrant experience."[12]

Historically, nativists and government officials concerned with cultural assimilation have largely ignored the Scandinavians. Virtually every historian who has

---

[9] Iacovetta, "Manly Militants, Cohesive Communities, and Defiant Domestics," 226-227.
[10] Iacovetta, "Manly Militants, Cohesive Communities, and Defiant Domestics," 228.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Palmer, "Canadian Immigration," 46.

discussed the Scandinavian immigrants, in Canada or for that matter in the United States, observes that they were "unusually assimilable."[13] They were, as David Delafenetre argues, largely invisible as a cultural presence and have therefore not received much scholarly attention as an immigrant or ethnic group.[14] However, as Delafenetre argues, the "silent" ethnic groups are also deserving of study—are perhaps especially deserving of study—since their cultural practices are more elusive and difficult to define.[15]

Among all the Scandinavian groups, the Danes have been characterized as disappearing into the great wash of "Canadian" society particularly quickly. Certainly there was evidence of this being true. The Government of Canada compiled a table from the 1911 census entitled "Country of Origin Ranked According to the Proportion of its Male Immigrants of Voting Age Who Have Become Citizens." According to this table, citizens of Denmark had the highest rate of naturalization in the country, and were ranked first in four of the six provinces listed and second in two others.[16] At least in 1911, male Danish immigrants were quick to become Canadians citizens.

In the early 1970s, sixty years after this table was compiled, folklorist Frank Paulsen traveled throughout Western Canada interviewing Danes from the rural group settlements and searching for evidence that the immigrants had carried folk stories and

---

[13] Jorgen Dahlie, A Social History of Scandinavian Immigration, Washington State, 1895-1910, (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 62. See also Mauri Jalava, "The Scandinavians as a Source of Settlers for the Dominion of Canada: The First Generation, 1867-1897," Scandinavian Canadian Studies 1 (1983): 3-14; Art Genke "The Danes in Canada and Their Archival Record," in 17th Annual Danish Canadian Conference, (Winnipeg: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1998), 67; Per Anders Rudling, "Scandinavians in Canada: A Community in the Shadow of the United States," The Swedish American Historical Quarterly 57, no. 3 (2006): 151-194; "Scandinavian Homesteaders," Alberta History 24, no. 3 (1976): 1-4.

[14] David Delafenetre, "The Scandinavian Presence in Canada: Emerging Perspective," Canadian Ethnic Studies 27, no. 2 (1995), America: History & Life. EBSCOhost, (Accessed July 13, 2009), no page number.

[15] Ibid.

[16] See copy of the chart in Appendix A.

traditions with them into the second and third generation. The conclusion he reached from his research was decidedly negative. He argued that

> the Danes in the Prairie Provinces of Canada are for the most part simply not concerned with the maintenance of their native traditions. This is not to say that they are either ignorant of or belligerent toward them. It is to say that they are apathetic.[17]

Similarly, one local history book writer, summarizing the contribution of early Danish settlers to the area, wrote: "they asked for no bi-culturalism or bi-lingualism, they adopted our customs or helped establish new ones befitting a new land."[18] Here again, the popular argument is that the Danish immigrants quickly assimilated into the society in which they lived.

However, there is plenty of evidence contrary to this view of ethnic invisibility. Scandinavian literature and cultural scholar Christopher Hale has studied and written extensively about the Danish presence in Alberta. While Hale agrees in the end that Danish cultural practices have not been preserved on the Prairies by the 1990s, he does emphasize that they have not completely disappeared. In particular, he notes that ethnic foods are still prepared in some places, and that in at least one settlement, members of the second generation continue to speak the Danish language and keep Danish Christmas.[19] Hale does not see Danish culture as being quite as extinct as Paulsen believed in 1972.

In addition to Paulsen and Hale's conclusions, one final text sheds light on the evolution of the Danish cultural community in Canada. In the 1990s, the Danish Canadian Society of Montreal commissioned Dr. Rebecca Mancuso to write a history of

---

[17] Frank Paulsen, Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies: Folk Traditions, Immigrant Experiences, and Local History, (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974), iv.
[18] See Olds First: A History of Olds and Surrounding District, (Olds, Alberta: Olds Old Timer Association, 1968), 30.
[19] Christopher Hale, "Go West, Young Dane: Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies," Scandinavian-Canadian Studies 11 (1998): 9-11.

the Danish community in the city of Montreal and surrounding area. The resulting text, Faces of Change: The Danish Community of Montreal, recounts the history of the Danish immigrants from the 1920s until the 1990s, both through a broad chronological history researched and written by Mancuso and through biographical sketches of important Danish residents of Montreal.

Though the Danish community in Montreal existed within dramatically different circumstances than the Danish-Albertan community, Mancuso's findings provide an interesting contrast as a localized and specifically urban study. She tracks the waxing and waning of cultural sentiment over the decades among the Danes and ends on a high note. Amidst the Quebecois and Anglophone conflict of the 1970s and 1980s and the rise of multicultural policies, the urban Danish community experienced a "resurgence" of the practice of cultural traditions.[20] Danish culture in Montreal was far from extinct.

With varied conclusions on the trajectory of culture throughout the history of Danes in Canada including its present state, further study of this so-called invisible ethnic group is warranted. The Danish-Albertan community during the settlement era provides a case study of a localized, rural and Western Canadian community, in comparison to Mancuso's localized, urban, and Eastern Canadian research. Both past immigration policy-makers and many present-day historians have assumed that the Danes became quickly assimilated wherever they settled. However, as Franca Iacovetta points out, contemporary immigrant historians need to "redefin[e] the meaning of immigrant adaptation and adjustment"[21] and the process of assimilation fits into this project as well.

---

[20] Rebecca Mancuso, Faces of Change: The Danish Community of Montreal, (Montreal: Danish Canadian Society of Montreal, 1997): 107-119.
[21] Iacovetta, "Manly Militants, Cohesive Communities, and Defiant Domestics," 229.

Danish-Albertan communities offer an opportunity to study how assimilation did or did not occur.

The cultural traditions brought over by an immigrant community and put into practice in the New World provide the necessary subject matter for studying the process of assimilation. As Roberto Perin points out, the "institutions and culture" immigrant communities implemented in their new surroundings were a bridge between the Old World and the New. They "retained Old World forms" but in a way that "had a peculiarly New World meaning."[22] The Danish immigrants brought specific elements of their culture with them to Canada and implemented them as they saw fit, organizing their private lives with parts of their familiar European culture in the unfamiliar Alberta setting.

The cultural transition from Old World to New was altered by the fact that many of the first Danish settlers in Alberta had first spent time in the United States. In Frank Paulsen's assessment of the evolution of Danish culture, the Denmark-United States-Canada migration pattern meant that "the edge of [the immigrants'] "Danishness" had been appreciably blunted."[23] However, on multiple occasions the Danish-Americans had maintained enough affinity with their European heritage to form and settle in Danish group settlements in Alberta. If their "Danishness" had been significantly lost, living in the vicinity of their countrymen would not have been such a priority. In addition, many Danish immigrants came directly from Denmark to settle in Alberta without having the intervening influence of American society.

---

[22] Perin, "Clio As An Ethnic," 444.
[23] Paulsen, Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies, v.

"Danishness" seems a slippery term—how exactly does one define what activities or traditions belong to Denmark and its inhabitants? However, Danishness, or *danskhed*, is a word that exists in the Danish language and consciousness as a way to describe how one feels culturally Danish. Danishness is especially used in connection with the well-known Danish poet and theologian, N.F.S. Grundtvig, who sought to make Danish citizens proud of their cultural heritage, in essence, to make them appreciate their "Danishness."[24] It is a term that exists throughout secondary research on Danish ethnicity[25] to describe the practices or institutions that are commonly found in Danish society, both in Denmark and in North America. Formal and informal cultural institutions that both scholars of Danish immigration and the Danish immigrants themselves deemed "Danish," as opposed to having been founded in the New World, are the subject matter here.

This study of Danish-Alberta culture covers the time period of 1903 until 1939. 1903 was the year the first Danes arrived to settle at Dickson, the first Danish group settlement in Alberta. The settlers who went to Dickson were not the first Danes in Alberta, but their arrival en masse signified a level of intensity of Danish culture not previously seen in the province. Two waves of Danish immigrants arrived in Alberta in the years between 1903 and the 1930s.[26]

---

[24] See for instance E.F. Fain, "Nationalist Origins of the Folk High School: The Romantic Visions of N.F.S. Grundtvig," British Journal of Educational Studies 19, no.1 (1971); Cati Coe, "The Education of the Folk: Peasant Schools and Folklore Scholarship," The Journal of American Folklore 113, no. 447 (2000); Uffe Ostergard, "Peasants and Danes: The Danish National Identity and Political Culture," Comparative Studies in Society and History 34, no. 1 (1992).

[25] Frank Paulsen uses the term in his research in Western Canadian Danish communities, Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies, v. George Nielsen also uses the term in his text on Danish American history, The Danish Americans, 197.

[26] Hale, "Go West, Young Dane," 2.

With the onset of the Great Depression and the accompanying drought that occurred during the 1930s in Alberta as in many parts of Western Canada and the United States, and following, with the international upset of the Second World War, Danish immigration decreased dramatically. The great majority of immigration into Canada ended in 1929 because of the economic situation and because of tighter restrictions the Canadian government put in place to control the number of newcomers. While a small number of Danes continued to arrive in Alberta after 1929, immigration from Denmark largely ceased until after the Second World War.[27] Consequently, 1939 comprises a loose end date for the study.

Both the Great Depression and the Second World War put a damper on the survival of Danish culture in Canada. The Depression years were a time where many immigrant groups discontinued cultural practices because of the economic hardship. For instance, several Danish-Canadian newspapers went out of business during the Depression because they could not afford to continue to publish.

1903 to 1939 denotes an important period in the lives of the immigrants. The period covers what Franca Iacovetta would call the "transitional context,"[28] from when the immigrants were new to Canadian society and their Old World culture was still fresh in their minds until economic and political circumstances caused the intensity of their cultural practice to subside. The intervening years were a transitory time; a historical window through which one is able to track how cultural traditions fared among the Danes in Alberta.

---

[27] Jorgen Dahlie, "Scandinavian Immigration, Assimilation and Settlement Patterns in Canada: Large Landscape Limited Impact?" Siirtolaisuus 4 (1984):10.
[28] Iacovetta, "Manly Militants, Cohesive Communities, and Defiant Domestics," 239.

Researching the cultural character of Danish migration in Alberta has required building on the secondary research on Scandinavian-Canadians as a whole as well as the specifically Danish context written by Hale, Paulsen, Mancuso and several others. A wide variety of primary material was needed to gain an understanding of the cultural history of an immigrant group. Because of the time period examined, oral interviews were not possible, though Paulsen was able to capitalize on this source when he was conducting research in the 1970s. Oral research would also not have been feasible for a project of this size, being quite time-consuming.

Instead, this project has resulted from the study of written material, including newspapers, letters, diaries, second-person biographies and autobiographical memoirs. Specifically, biographical and autobiographical information came from the fonds of several archives, including the Glenbow Archives in Calgary, the Danish Canadian National Museum archives in Dickson, and the Danish Emigration Archives in Aalborg, Denmark. Three Canadian-published Danish newspapers, the Viking, the Dansk-Canadisk Tidende and Kirken og Hjemmet were excellent sources of information on the goings-on of the communities in the 1920 and 1930s, particularly for verifying information in the immigrants' memoirs.

Verification from contemporary newspapers was especially important for confirming information from the local history books. The history of Danish communities in Alberta is well-covered in the local history books published throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. However, many of the books were published after the death of the first generation of immigrants, meaning that many, though certainly not all, of the entries were the memories of the second and third generations. The actual circumstances

have become filtered through the years and have a tendency to be cleaned-up. That said, the local histories are still a valuable resource. Discrepancies are offset by confirmation from other sources, from the inclusion of some first-generation accounts and by the fact that in the case of The History of Dalum, collection and publication occurred early enough to include first-hand material. These local history books provided much information on individual immigrant experiences as well as the history of the Danish churches and schools.[29]

In addition, in several cases there exist published texts written by the Danish immigrants and Danish journalists. One example is the Danish-language text Nybyggerliv I Canada: Fra Poppelkrat til Højfarm – I Breve og Billeder (Settler Life in Canada: From Poplar Bush to High Farm in Letters and Pictures) which are the letters written between 1929 and 1936 by immigrants Hans and Anna Richter from their homestead near Dickson. A number of Danish journalists visited Canada during the 1920s to report on the status and success of the emigrants. Axel Sandemose, who later used his experiences in Canada as the basis for three successful novels, wrote a series of articles for Danish newspapers that have been collected, translated and published as Aksel Sandemose: A Scandinavian Writer's Perception of the Canadian Prairies in the 1920s by Christopher Hale.

Finally, there are number of sources of published individual histories that are a mixture of memoir and recounted second-hand information. The Federation of Danish Associations in Canada produces a yearly "heritage book" in which a miscellany of articles are published, including many biographical and autobiographical histories. The

[29] Hugh Dempsey provides helpful advice on the use of local history books for historical research in his article "Local Histories as Source Material for Western Canadian Studies" Prairie Perspectives 2 eds. A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen, (Toronto: Holt Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1973): 171-180.

Danish Emigration Archive has published a similar collection of biographies in book form and there are also several other monographs of this sort.

This thesis is organized in such a way to give the reader both a sense of the general history of the Danish migration to Alberta, as well as a sense of how Danish culture was preserved and practiced in the early settlement years. However, the greatest bulk of the text is devoted to examining specific cultural institutions and practices and their role in the Danish-Albertan communities.

The first chapter is an overview of Danish immigration history; it summarizes both the "push factors" occurring in the Old World and the "pull factors" that attracted the Danes to New World locations. It includes a description of the situation in Denmark in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and how this situation compelled certain groups within the Danish population to migrate. Following a discussion of the circumstances in the "Old World" is a description of the "New World." Though Danish-American migration began earlier than did migration to Canada, the two paths are similar and blend into one another with the phenomenon of "second stage" migration of Danish-Americans to the Canadian Prairies.

The second chapter looks at the formal cultural institution of the Danish Lutheran Church. The church was incredibly important to the formation of Danish Albertan communities and was the most significant cultural element preserved in the New World setting of Canada. Religion has been a key cultural institution throughout immigration history, providing, as Scandinavian historian F.D. Scott explains, "a continuing bond with [the immigrants'] first heritage" and the venue through which to maintain Old World

"memories, customs and values."[30] Danish-Albertan churches participated in this project of continuing heritage and preserving Old World values.

The third chapter describes another formal institution organized by the Danes in Alberta. The Danish Folk School was a unique educational format developed in the nineteenth century and continued, though with modifications, in several locations in Alberta. As scholars have pointed out, efforts undertaken by immigrants to provide ethnic-specific education are an important focal point by which to examine the cultural transition between the first and second generations.[31] The history of the schools founded by the Danish-Albertans reveals the balance the immigrants sought to find between maintaining Old World culture and enabling newcomers to succeed in the New World. The establishment of schools also exemplifies the importance of education in Danish culture.

The fourth and final chapter explores other formal and informal venues of cultural preservation within the Danish communities. Language, traditional food and particular ways of celebrating holidays are three further means by which to study Danish culture. These three are far more elusive than the formal institutions of church and school and also have fewer obvious historical records pertaining to their practice. However, the

---

[30] Franklin D. Scott, "The Dual Heritage of the Scandinavian Immigrant," In Transatlantica: Essays on Scandinavian Migration and Culture, ed. Franklin D. Scott, (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 32. Per Anders Rudling also argues the "powerful ascent of religion as ethnic marker" in his article "Scandinavians in Canada: A Community in the Shadow of the United States," The Swedish American Historical Quarterly 57, no. 3 (2006): 185. With a non-Scandinavian-specific perspective, Roberto Perin also argues of the importance of examining immigrants' religious practices as one way to understand their community in the New World. Roberto Perin, "Clio as an Ethnic: The Third Force in Canadian Historiography," Canadian Historical Review 64, no. 4 (1983): 456-457.

[31] See Perin, "Clio as an Ethnic," 457; Jorgen Dahlie, "No Fixed Boundaries: Scandinavian Responses to Schooling in Western Canada," In Emerging Ethnic Boundaries, Vol. 7, ed. Danielle Juteau Lee, Vol. 7, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979): 117-129; Cornelius J. Jaenen, "Minority Group Schooling and Canadian National Unity," Journal of Educational Thought 7, no. 2 (1973) 81-93; Cornelius J. Jaenen, "The Public School in Canada: Agency of Integration and Assimilation," Actes Du Congres International Des Sciences De L'Education 1 (1976): 203-215.

immigrants' personal records reveal how informal cultural practices operated within the privacy of their homes. Finally, though the Danish Lutheran Church was the main organizing body for cultural events among the immigrants in Alberta in the settlement period, there were other social organizations existing at that time. These groups, which operated largely out of the cities, were stifled by financial and political circumstances much more easily than were the churches.

As previously mentioned, most immigration historians argue that the Danes who settled on the Prairies dropped all vestiges of "Danishness" almost immediately upon their arrival to the West and became a part of the generally-approved "Albertan" society. However, while it is true that over the course of one or two generations the Danes took up Canadian culture, in the early years of their settlement, when the immigrants still retained their first language and traces of their religious faith, and when their homeland was not far off in their memory, Danish culture played a substantive role in their daily lives. This thesis argues that the formal institutions like the churches, schools and clubs and the informal practices of language, food and holidays were the means by which Danish culture continued in Alberta, allowing the immigrants to maintain a part of their Old World heritage even as they became a part of the "invisible majority" of Albertan society.[32]

[32] A map of Danish communities across Canada is found in Appendix B.

Chapter One: An Overview of Danish Immigration

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, several major changes took place in Denmark that affected the rate of emigration from the country. None of these conditions by themselves were enough to cause mass emigration, but combined they provided the "push" conditions—the circumstances that encouraged individuals to leave the country.

Much more than the rest of Europe, Denmark's agricultural industry was central to its economy. Consequently, changes that occurred in this sector were unsettling for the whole population. Historian Kristian Hvidt emphasizes that "Denmark was an agricultural country to such an extent that many events and trends in the political and social history of the country were basically caused by structural changes in the agricultural sector."[33] The first of these changes were the recommendations developed by the Great Agricultural Commission that were implemented between 1788 and 1794 and slowly took effect into the early nineteenth century. These changes freed the agricultural peasants from serfdom, allowing them to become independent landholders.[34] As a result, a class of farmers with small landholdings emerged and the wealthy landlords with extensive properties were no longer the only agricultural population with the potential for political power. Not all those involved in agriculture were land-owners, however. There was a substantial and growing population of "landless proletariat" who laboured on the farms but had no part in their ownership.[35]

---

[33] Hvidt, Flight to America: The Social Background of 300 000 Danish Emigrants (New York: Academic Press, Inc., 1975), 123.
[34] W. Glyn Jones, Denmark: A Modern History (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 23-24.
[35] Hvidt, Flight to America, 125.

Occurring concurrently with the changes in the demographics of the farming class were two important alterations in agriculture-related land distribution. First, the government decided to take steps to bring into productive use the heath lands of central and western Jutland, and the Danish Heath Society was formed in 1866 to work to this end.[36] Resulting efforts were successful: through careful adjustment of land use and the addition of lime, the heaths were added to the nation's productive agricultural landmass, thereby increasing the number of farmers the Danish countryside could sustain. This new farmland absorbed a number of the landless rural population, for a time decreasing the number of rootless rural labourers searching for employment in Jutland.[37]

Throughout Denmark, as a result of the fluctuation and drop in the price of agricultural commodities, many large landowners sold off parts of their property, thereby again increasing the number of smallholders.[38] Elsewhere in Scandinavia, land holding became more and more fragmented during the nineteenth century as parents divided their property among their heirs, to the point where the property was too small for the owner to survive off of its yields. [39] In Denmark however, restrictions were placed on the division and parcelling out of land in 1819, ensuring that most properties remained large enough to support a family.[40] Danish immigration historian Kristian Hvidt argues that these circumstances meant that if a family obtained some agricultural land, they were unlikely to abandon it to emigrate.[41] Consequently, a substantial percentage of the agricultural population of Denmark succeeded on their smallholdings. However, a growing number of

---

[36] Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 27.
[37] Hvidt, Flight to America, 128.
[38] Byron J. Nordstrom, Scandinavia Since 1500, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 237.
[39] Hvidt, Flight to America, 121.
[40] Hvidt, Flight to America, 122.
[41] Ibid.

landless agricultural workers remained in limbo, dependent upon the employment provided by the small or large landholders.

As these changes took effect in the agricultural world, the Industrial Revolution was occurring throughout Europe, globalizing economies, introducing new technologies and changing labour through the development of the factory system. The Industrial Revolution had an earth-shattering effect on the agricultural world as extraction of raw materials and manufacturing of various kinds grew in importance and overshadowed the place of agriculture in national economies.

In Denmark, however, where agriculture had been a mainstay of the economy for centuries, it managed to maintain its importance to a degree. Rather than be replaced, agriculture itself evolved and became industrialized and able to continue to compete in an international market.[42] Throughout the nineteenth century agricultural products became increasingly available and cheaper from international sources. In particular, grain, which had previously been a mainstay of Danish agriculture, could be purchased at a lower price from Russia and North America than the Danes could afford to produce and sell. Whereas in some other European nations the response to the new international market was simply to abandon agriculture, Danish farmers found innovative ways to continue. They began producing and marketing greater quantities of dairy and swine products and put cooperative philosophies into practice in new ventures.[43]

While innovative changes were made in the agricultural industry, as in other trades, the labour needs on the farms decreased and the landless population, reliant on farm work, became increasingly redundant. These individuals migrated to the larger

---

[42] Nordstrom, Scandinavia since 1500, 237.
[43] Ibid., 236-237.

towns in search of work in the growing industrial developments there, participating in particular in the construction of the railway and in the growth of textile, sugar processing and cement industries. If they could not find work in the bigger centers, the dislocated rural labourers joined the great mass of Europeans migrating to the New World.

Whether large or smallholder or landless farm labourers, the agricultural population as a whole was affected by social changes occurring in the nation. Public education was implemented only slowly throughout the nineteenth century, although the Danish government began educational reforms as early as 1814.[44] In addition to the ordinary public schools that were instituted, alternative methods of schooling for young people and adults created a more knowledgeable rural society.[45] In particular, the Danish Folk School system has been given the credit for imbuing the Danish farming population with the skills they needed to adapt to the changes that took place in the agricultural world.[46]

Throughout the century the number of people who could vote and hold political positions grew slowly but steadily. Through a series of legislative changes in the first half of the nineteenth century, smallholders were given a larger voice in public affairs and municipal government.[47] In addition, following constitutional changes in 1849, more of the citizens were able to vote, and by 1870 many farmers directed their vote in favour of

---

[44] Nordstrom, Scandinavia since 1500, 194.
[45] Erik Helmer Pedersen, "Danish Emigration to America: Some Notes on the Historical Background," in 7th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, (Winnipeg: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1988), 4.
[46] For instance, Nordstrom, Scandinavia Since 1500, 237; Pedersen, "Danish Emigration to America," 4; Begtrup, Lund and Manniche, Folk Schools of Denmark and the Development of a Farming Community, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 50.
[47] Johannes Novrup, "Adult Education in Denmark," in Scandinavian Adult Education, 2nd ed., ed. Ragnar Lund, (Copenhagen: Det Danske Forlag, 1952), 26.

a left-wing party called the *Venstre* that fought for the rights of the agriculture-based lower classes.[48]

While it was not until 1920 that Denmark legislated universal suffrage, enough of the rural class had political power to enhance the smallholders' position in society and in the decision-making realm of politics. In addition, regardless of their social station, the rural population began to feel what Kristian Hvidt calls "social buoyancy": they saw the possibility of life beyond the farmstead and gained a sense of independence and ambition.[49] This new outlook on life was largely the result of the growing political and personal freedom the people had gained.

Cooperative farming organizations established for the purpose of producing and marketing were a relatively new idea that had developed in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century in response to industrialization. The cooperative societies allowed farmers to work together to combat the economic and social problems facing them at that time.[50] In Denmark, historians have credited the Folk School system with teaching the rural community about cooperative organizations that they might adapt to the changes occurring in their agricultural world.[51] Danish farmers developed producer cooperatives to produce and market their dairy products, specifically cheese and butter, and to slaughter their beef and pork. The first dairy cooperative was formed in 1882 in Jutland and by the First World War there were 1200 of them. The first cooperative slaughter

---

[48] Øyvind Østerud, "The Transformation of Scandinavian Agrarianism: A Comparative Study of Political Change Around 1870,"Scandinavian Journal of History 1 (1976): 203; Nielsen, The Danish Americans, 30.
[49] Hvidt, Flight to America, 124.
[50] Ian MacPherson, Each For All: A History of the Cooperative Movement in English Canada, 1900-1945, (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1979), 3.
[51] For instance, Nordstrom, Scandinavia Since 1500, 237; Pedersen, "Danish Emigration to America," 4; Begtrup, Lund and Manniche, Folk Schools of Denmark, 50.

facility was founded in 1887 also in Jutland.[52] These cooperatives became quite successful and the Danes became famous for their butter and bacon, much of which was exported to the United Kingdom.[53]

In addition to the economic and social changes taking place, political and national conflicts occurred that altered the boundaries of Denmark and diminished its international influence. As a result of Denmark's decision to support Napoleon, the English destroyed much of the Danish navy in 1801 and in 1807 bombed Copenhagen and seized the remainder of the navy. In addition, Britain blockaded Denmark, severely impeding the nation's international trade.[54] By 1813 the state was bankrupt and in early 1814 Norway (which had previously been governed by Denmark) was ceded to Swedish control.[55] These events combined to make for a precarious start to the nineteenth century and left Denmark a small and isolated nation.

In addition to the losses resulting from the Napoleonic War, Denmark suffered territorial loss to the German states later in the century. The two duchies of Slesvig and Holstein separated the German states and Denmark and were traditionally part of Danish territory. Holstein was ethnically German and Slesvig had a population mixture of Germans and Danes, becoming progressively more Danish further north.[56] Denmark and the German states both sought to control the territory and tried to influence the region one way or the other. In 1848 the two groups openly fought over the territory and Denmark gained control of Slesvig. However, in 1864, the Germans pushed the Danes completely out of Slesvig, leaving 200 000 Danish-speaking citizens under Prussian and Austrian

---

[52] Statistics from Nordstrom, Scandinavia Since 1500, 237.
[53] Pedersen, "Danish Emigration to America," 3.
[54] Nordstrom, Scandinavia Since 1500, 173.
[55] Ibid., 173-174.
[56] Ibid., Scandinavia Since 1500, 207.

rule.[57] These Danes were required to operate in the German language and serve in the German army, circumstances which convinced many to consider emigration.[58]

Because of the improvements in health care and diet, the population of Denmark grew rapidly in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. One historian states that it grew from less than a million in 1800 to over 2.8 million by the First World War.[59] The changes initiated in nineteenth century Denmark created a growing rural population of relatively educated and informed labourers, many of whom could not be absorbed into the workforce. These "landless proletariat" had difficult lives, receiving low wages and having no political power.[60] Consequently, emigration seemed like a promising alternative. Though there were more opportunities for work in agriculture and in the new industries in Denmark than in the two northern Scandinavian nations, Denmark was not able to employ all of her growing population.

The New World accepted the superfluous Danes with open arms. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the governments of both the United States and Canada followed the principles of social Darwinism as immigration criteria, giving entrance preference to some ethnic groups over others. According to the social Darwinist hierarchy, which placed Oriental and Indian people near the bottom and Anglo-Saxons at the top, Danes, along with the other Scandinavian groups, rated just below the Anglo-Saxons.[61] Danes were Caucasian, Protestant, and were willing to go along with the general American goal of economic success.[62] They also had substantial agricultural

---

[57] Ibid., The Danish-Americans, 27.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Frederick Hale, Introduction in Danes in North America ed. Frederick Hale, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), xi.
[60] Hvidt, Flight to America, 125-126.
[61] Jalava, "The Scandinavians as a Source of Settlers," 3.
[62] Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 11.

experience, which both American and Canadian governments saw as essential for their settlement projects.[63] Consequently, the Danes, along with other Scandinavian groups, were most welcome as immigrants.

Danish-American immigration began substantially earlier than immigration to Canada, and in many ways the American situation set the tone for what later occurred in Canada. The American Homestead Act of 1862,[64] which apportioned available land and determined eligibility for its allocation, encouraged mass immigration of settlers, particularly from Europe. Substantial Danish participation in this movement did not occur until the 1860s, when there were no further possibilities for new smallholdings in the Danish countryside and few opportunities for jobs in the nation's newly developing factories. Between 1869 and 1914, approximately 285 000 Danes left Denmark, almost 90 percent of whom went to the United States and just short of 5 percent to Canada.[65] This group of almost 300 000 was smaller, in proportion to their populations, than the emigration experienced by Sweden or Norway, but more than that experienced by Germany or Russia.[66]

The majority of the Danes who considered emigration were working class. George Nielsen, historian of Danish American immigration, estimates that 69 percent of all the immigrants to the United States were proletariat.[67] The nineteenth century immigrants were usually young people; one source estimates that more than 50 percent

---

[63] Rudling, "Scandinavians in Canada," 154-155.
[64] The act was signed in May 1862 but did not take effect until 1863.
[65] Hvidt, Flight to America, 162.
[66] Frederick Hale, Introduction, xi. By comparison, during the same period, 1 105 000 people emigrated from Sweden and 754 000 left Norway. Hvidt, Flight to America, 9.
[67] Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 36.

were between the ages of 15 and 29.[68] More men than women emigrated, but more families came than unmarried individuals.[69]

In addition to the attraction of cheap and fertile land, there were other important pull factors that appealed to the Danish migrants. Danish immigration grew in an exponential fashion, with initial settlement occurring in relatively small numbers. However, Danish-American historians largely agree that the concept of "chain migration" was an important factor for the Danes, as it was for many other ethnic groups. Settled immigrants would write letters home describing, in rosy terms, their lives in the New World; they would send money or pre-paid tickets to bring family members over; or they would go home to visit and convince people to come back with them.[70] These methods often served as the inducement for individuals considering immigration but who had not made any definite plans towards that end. Historians emphatically agree that "America letters" were exceptionally important as a pull factor, convincing readers to migrate.[71] After analyzing a series of Danish immigrant letters, historian Niels Peter Stilling came to the conclusion that the greatest reason first generation immigrants wrote back to Denmark was out of sheer loneliness as they struggled to survive in the New World. If they could get others to join them, they could naturally recreate a more comfortable and familiar social environment.[72]

Another pull factor, though not as important as the economic factor, was the political and religious freedom individuals could expect in America. Denmark was not a

---

[68] Pedersen, "Danish Emigration to America," 10.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 38, 44-46.
[71] See Franklin D. Scott, Scandinavia, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), 279; Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 38; Pedersen, "Danish Emigration to America," 9.
[72] Niels Peter Stilling, "The Significance of the Private Letter in Immigration History," The Bridge: The Journal of the Danish American Heritage Society 15, no. 2 (1992): 35-50.

particularly oppressive country, but there were certain groups who wished to escape the state's control. A Danish socialist by the name of Louis Pio initiated a politically based exodus from Denmark as a reaction to the great social unrest occurring among the proletariat in the 1870s. However, Pio and the other leader of the socialist emigration movement quietly left Denmark in 1877, having apparently been bought off by the Danish government. While a group of 18 socialists did attempt to start a colony in Kansas, the movement never succeeded and this was largely the end of political emigration efforts.[73]

Religious emigration endeavours were more successful and long lasting than those of a political nature. The Baptist denomination was prohibited and persecuted by Danish authorities and Lutheran laity. Danish emigration historian Kristian Hvidt has found evidence that independent of emigration agents, Danish Baptists undertook to escape these conditions beginning in the 1850s.[74] There is no exact record of how many Danish Baptists immigrated to the United States, possibly because, as one historian claims, the Swedes, Norwegians and Danes were often combined in congregations and records were not kept of each individual ethnic group.[75] However, one source noted that there were ten Danish Baptist congregations in the United States in 1871.[76]

The number of Danish Baptist emigrants was much smaller than the number of Danish Mormons who left Denmark. Kristian Hvidt emphasizes that the Mormons were particularly successful in affecting immigration to the United States because they "painted emigration [sic] to America as a travel to the Holy Land"—for Mormons,

---

[73] Hvidt, Flight to America, 145-146.
[74] Ibid., 147.
[75] Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 92-93.
[76] Jean M. Matteson and Edith M. Matteson, Blossoms of the Prairie: The History of the Danish Lutheran Church in Nebraska, (Lincoln, Nebraska: Blossoms of the Prairie, 1988), 11.

conversion and emigration were congruent actions.[77] Mormon missionaries did not begin their work in Denmark until 1850—later than the Baptists. They endured less persecution than did the Baptists, partly because of a change in laws concerning religious freedom and for a variety of reasons they were more successful in winning converts.[78] In addition, the Mormon proselytizers were a cohesive international organization with world-wide funding, making it much easier to deal with the financial constraints of migrating.[79] Still, as Hvidt and other historians have pointed out, religious freedom was unlikely to be the sole motivating factor for the migrants; they were probably motivated just as much—if not more—by the economic possibilities of the USA as they were by religious reasons.[80]

In terms of their distribution across the United States, one analysis of the Danish settlements argues that the Danes spread out across the States fairly evenly, resulting in fewer group settlements than other ethnic groups. [81] Kristian Hvidt argues that Danish-Americans integrated with local populations much more quickly than did the Swedes or Norwegians, largely because of this scattered method of settling.[82] While the Danes dispersed across the country much more than did other ethnic groups, Danish-specific communities were established throughout the nation, particularly in the Northern States. Some immigrants settled in urban centers, though more often than not, they stayed in the city only long enough to find a rural settlement where they could homestead.[83] American cities that had substantial Danish communities included Chicago and New York.

---

[77] Hvidt, Flight to America, 148, 154.
[78] Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 60.
[79] Hvidt, Flight to America, 151.
[80] Ibid., 155. Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 11.
[81] Hvidt, Flight to America, 166-167.
[82] Hvidt, Flight to America, 168. Also emphasized in Frederick Hale , ed., Danes in North America, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), viii. And finally, also in Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 10.
[83] Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 154.

As Danish Lutheran Church historian Paul Nyholm points out, approximately 30 000 Danes arrived in America before there was any representation of the Danish Lutheran Church.[84] These early immigrants most often chose to join other Scandinavian settlements, and if they were inclined to attend church, would attend a Norwegian or Swedish church.[85] Though they were largely of Lutheran background, these settlers had chosen to immigrate for economic reasons, and consequently were not influenced by the church in where they chose to settle.[86] However, while it was not the initial formative institution in the creation of Danish group settlements, the Danish Lutheran Church played an important role later in Danish-American immigration history.

After the Danish Lutheran Church became established in the United States with officially-endorsed pastors and churches in the early 1870s, immigrants had the option of settling in proximity to an institution with which they were familiar. At a Danish Lutheran Church they could expect recognizable liturgy and to hear the Danish language. This familiarity was attractive to many Danish immigrants and group settlements were formed throughout the United States in conjunction with the establishment of a church.

Following the 1894 schism in the Danish Lutheran Church, the new churches became involved in settlement establishment. They realized that the chances of survival of Danish religious and cultural practices were greater if the Danes could settle in community, so they encouraged this practice.[87] The United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church established colonies at Kenmare and Daneville in North Dakota in 1896 and 1906

---

[84] Paul Nyholm, Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Church, (Copenhagen: Institute For Danish Church History, 1963), 64.
[85] Matteson and Matteson, Blossoms of the Prairie, 11 & 15.
[86] Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 74.
[87] Ibid., 85-86.

respectively and at Dane Valley in Montana in 1907.[88] The Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church was involved in the formation of settlements in Clark County Wisconsin in 1893, at Larimore, North Dakota in 1905, at Dagmar, Montana in 1906, and at Solvang, California in 1911.[89]

The Danish Lutheran Church was not the sole means by which Danish settlements were started. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Danes gathered in colonies throughout the United States, with or without the initial involvement of the church. However, of the settlements that were largely ethnically Danish, the majority did establish a Danish Lutheran Church at some point. The church became an important meeting place for the community and a mainstay for the preservation of Danish culture in America.

The *Dansk Folkesamfund* (Danish People's Society) was an organization associated with one of the branches of the Danish Lutheran Church. The Society had been established largely by the impetus of Pastor F.L. Grundtvig, the son of the Danish Folk School founder N.F.S. Grundtvig.[90] Even more so than the Church, this society was responsible for the creation of new Danish settlements. The organization initiated the groundwork to create group settlements; they helped settlers move to the new location; and they aided in the establishment of a church.[91] The *Dansk Folkesamfund* was involved in the formation of settlements at Askov, Minnesota in 1905, Dannevang, Texas in 1894, and Dalum, Alberta in 1918. Individual Lutheran pastors were also involved in the

---

[88] Matteson and Matteson, Blossoms of the Prairie, 17.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 81.
[91] Ibid., 129.

formation of much smaller settlements that did not last long enough to really register in the history books.[92]

Both the *Dansk Folkesamfund* and the Danish Lutheran Church founded Danish Folk Schools in the United States. These schools served two purposes. To an extent the schools harkened back to the Grundtvigian Folk Schools of Denmark and therefore sought to teach Danish language and culture, specifically in this context in order to preserve Danish culture in the New World. The other purpose was more practical: some of the schools operated as institutions permitting the immigrants to adapt more easily to their new surroundings. At Folk School, the students could learn English, American culture and new farming techniques but with Danish teachers and in the Danish language.[93] In this way the schools assisted the new immigrants in adjusting to life in America.

The Danish American community became established and flourished throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. However, circumstances of the early twentieth century brought much of the ethnic community's growth to a halt. To begin with, the First World War interrupted the flow of immigration. However, much more than the actual war, the anti-foreigner sentiment directed first towards Germans but also towards all obvious ethnic groups in the United States forced many Danish institutions to close or to tone down their "Danishness." For instance, in Iowa, where there was a substantial Danish population and cultural community, the state government banned the use of

---

[92] Matteson and Matteson, Blossoms of the Prairie, 17.
[93] Ibid., 26.

foreign languages at public gatherings in 1918.[94] These circumstances hastened the Americanization of the Danish population already in the United States.[95]

Though there were a substantial number of Danes who wanted to emigrate in the years following the First World War, the circumstances in the United States had changed. The American government introduced new immigration restrictions in the 1920s that severely limited the number of newcomers to the country. Danes were not specifically on the government's list of nationalities to limit, but they were affected along with everyone else, particularly when the American government capped yearly immigration to 150 000 with quotas for each nationality in 1924.[96] The number of Danish immigrants allowed into the United States per year after 1924 was 2, 789.[97]

Making matters worse and completely cutting off this early twentieth century wave of migration was the Great Depression with both its financial and climatic/agricultural ramifications. Danish migration to the United States did not pick up again in substantial numbers until the late 1940s when the Danes again sought to escape the difficult conditions in their homeland.

In addition to the legislated immigration restrictions and the discrimination against "foreigners," there was an additional reason that the United States became less appealing for new immigrants. The rush of settlement that began with the proclamation of the Homestead Act in 1862 had lead to the majority of the fertile land being taken up by 1890. With land no longer cheaply and readily available, both potential immigrants and

---

[94] Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 87; Peter L. Petersen, "Language and Loyalty: Governor Harding and Iowa's Danish-Americans During World War I," Annals of Iowa 42, no. 6 (1974): 404-417.
[95] Matteson and Matteson, Blossoms of the Prairie, 33. Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 196.
[96] Pedersen, "Danish Emigration to America," 10.
[97] Rolf Buschardt Christensen, "Danish Folk Schools in Canada," (Unpublished revised copy provided to author, 2009), no page number.

those who had already settled in the United States starting looking elsewhere for land. Canada had established a Homestead Act very similar to that of the United States and therefore was an acceptable alternative for some Danes and Danish-Americans.

In many ways the Canadian story echoed the American, just in smaller proportions. Danish immigration to Canada began in the late nineteenth century but did not occur in large numbers until the first decades of the twentieth century. Danish immigration to Canada can be divided into three waves,[98] two of which occurred before the Second World War.

The first wave began shortly before the turn of the century, after the Western Provinces had been opened for settlement with the enactment of the Canadian version of the Homestead Act in 1872 and the Canadian Pacific Railway had been built from coast to coast in 1885, making transportation to the west significantly easier. The first Danish group settlement was established at New Denmark, New Brunswick in 1872 when six families and seven bachelors arrived to take up homesteads there.[99] On the west coast, a group of Danes tried to establish a colony at Cape Scott on Vancouver Island in 1896, but ultimately this settlement was abandoned.

While the New Denmark and Cape Scott Danes came directly from Denmark, the first wave of migration, which lasted from 1860 until the First World War[100], was largely

---

[98] Christopher Hale defined these three waves most clearly and described them in his multiple publications.
[99] Palle Bo Bojesen, "New Denmark—The Oldest Danish Colony in Canada," in Danish Emigration to Canada, ed. Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen, (Aalborg: Danish Worldwide Archives, 1991), 61.
[100] Christopher Hale outlined these dates in his description of Danish immigration in "Danes," in Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples, ed. Paul Robert Magocsi, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 406.

made up of what Jorgen Dahlie calls "second stage" immigration.[101] These second stage immigrants had initially intended on settling in the United States but found the rising costs and lack of available land there prohibitive.[102] This problem of getting land, added to the rural and agricultural depression of the 1890s, pushed Danish-Americans to consider Canada as an alternative place to settle. Among these people were both first and second generation immigrants. Some were Danes who had been unable to find land upon their arrival in the United States and others were the children of immigrants who could not find land in the area where their parents had settled.[103]

The first wave of Danish immigration to Canada was to a great extent made up of these Danish-Americans who had previous experience in living and farming in the United States. The fact that they were second stage, however, did not mean they were already assimilated into North American society. As Jorgen Dahlie points out in the case of second stage Scandinavian immigration to the state of Washington, while the immigrants were familiar with life in the United States, they retained their Old World language and culture to a great degree.[104] Likewise, when second stage Danish immigrants came to Alberta, often from Danish group settlements in the United States, their Danish heritage was still an important part of their identity.

The Canadian Pacific Railway, in conjunction with the Canadian government, sought out and courted Danish immigrants for the homesteads and cheap land in the West. CPR propaganda was published in the Danish language and sent out in massive

---

[101] Dahlie, "Scandinavian Immigration, Assimilation and Settlement Patterns in Canada," 9. Also Jorgen Dahlie, A Social History of Scandinavian Immigrant, Washington State, 1896-1910 (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 171.
[102] Hale, "Go West, Young Dane," 3.
[103] Kenneth Bjork, "Scandinavian Migration to the Canadian Prairie Provinces, 1893-1914," Norwegian American Studies 26 (1974): 5; Hale, "Danes," 407.
[104] Dahlie, A Social History of Scandinavian Immigration, 171.

amounts to Denmark.[105] The CPR also encouraged and aided the Danes already living in Western Canada to form societies to assist new immigrants and succeeded in getting them to create two such organizations, the Danish Colonization Board of Alberta and the Danish Lutheran Immigration Board.[106]

In addition to the efforts of the CPR, the Canadian government engaged the assistance of the steamship company the Allan Line.[107] Allan Line had an office in Copenhagen as well as in other major Scandinavian cities and had hired William Mattson to be their representative for these countries. Mattson was also employed in 1873 as a special emigration agent for Scandinavia by the Canadian government.[108] In this way, the government of Canada worked together with transportation companies to encourage Scandinavian immigration. In practice, these early efforts of the Canadian government, CPR and Allan Line succeeded more with other Scandinavian nations, where there were greater motives for emigration than in Denmark, but their actions demonstrate how the Canadian authorities were eager to generate immigration among all of the Scandinavian groups.

Unlike in the United States, where quite a number of Danish immigrants arrived prior to the presence of the Danish Lutheran Church, the establishment of Danish-Canadian communities often coincided with the founding of a Danish Lutheran Church. In Canada, the Church was a very important institution in the initiation and continuation of the Danish settlements. This difference came about because the Danish Lutheran

---

[105] Rudling, "Scandinavians in Canada," 158. See Appendix C for example of such propaganda.
[106] See correspondence in "Danish Colonization Board," M-2269-691, Canadian Pacific Railway Land Settlement and Development Fonds, GA; "Colonization Boards," M-2269-707, Canadian Pacific Railway Land Settlement and Development Fonds, GA.
[107] Pedersen, "Danish Emigration to America," 9.
[108] Bjork, "Scandinavian Migration to the Canadian Prairie Provinces," 6.

Church was already well established in the United States by the time Danish Canadian settlement took place. Consequently, the American branch of the Church was able and willing to financially assist the Canadian Church. It is important to note that similar to several of the Danish-American communities, the Danish Lutheran Church played an integral role in the establishment of many of the Danish group settlements in Canada.

Danes who came to Canada, both second stage immigrants who entered through the United States and those who came straight from Denmark, were more likely to form group settlements than Norwegians or Swedes.[109] While some of the settlers did disperse across Canada, a great number chose to congregate in ethnically Danish communities. The majority of these Danish group settlements were established during the initial wave of migration by the second stage immigrants, including Dickson, Standard, and Dalum in Alberta, and in smaller numbers in Redvers and Alida, Saskatchewan and at Moosehorn, Goodlands and Sperling in Manitoba.[110]

Dickson was the first Danish group settlement established in Alberta. It was chosen and staked out in 1902, with the first settlers arriving in the spring of 1903. Dickson, situated in the parkland area of west-central Alberta, was arguably the most well-established Danish colony. It benefited from several waves of immigration, with settlers from Danish-American communities and directly from Europe. When the area immediately surrounding the town of Dickson had all been sold, immigrants settled around a nearby secondary and associated community called Kevisville. By the 1920s, there were forty Danish families settled in the Dickson area and an estimated twelve more

---

[109] Hale, "Go West, Young Dane," 3.
[110] Art Genke, "The Danes in Canada and Their Archival Record,"62.

at Kevisville.[111] During the difficult years of the Depression, many Danish immigrants moved from the other group settlements to Dickson because the topography and community meant there was a higher change of survival on the land.[112]

The first Danish settlement in southern Alberta, which was initially named Dana until officials in the CPR deemed it necessary to change the name to Standard,[113] was the second Danish group settlement. The land belonged to the CPR, who set aside a block of 17 000 acres for the Danes, and settlement began in 1910. Though the Standard community got off to a rough start with serious grass fires occurring in the area in the first year,[114] the colony became quite successful, with approximately 1000 Danes living there by the 1920s.[115] Standard's first residents were a part of the Denmark-United States-Canada migration but later the community also attracted Danish migrants directly.

The settlement at Dalum was the next colony formed. Like Standard, the land at Dalum was allotted for Danish settlement by the CPR, with 20 000 acres set aside in 1918.[116] The establishment of Dalum was organized by the American *Dansk Folkesamfund* that sought to create ethnic communities in which Danish immigrants could settle collectively.[117] Dalum was a smaller colony and had approximately 200 Danish residents by the 1920s.[118] Like Standard, it benefited from migration both from the United States and from Denmark.

While the second wave of Danish immigration was bookended by the First World War and the Great Depression, the settlement of Dalum actually occurred during the War,

---

[111] Hale, "Go West, Young Dane," 5.
[112] See accounts in Dalum and Area Reflections (Red Deer: Adviser Graphics, 1990): 279, 377-379.
[113] Jens Rasmussen, The History of the Standard Colony From Its Birth, (Standard, 1943), 15-16.
[114] Ibid., 12.
[115] Hale, "Go West Young Dane," 6.
[116] Hale, "Go West Young Dane," 6.
[117] Paulsen, Danish Settlements of the Canadian Prairies, 48.
[118] Hale, "Go West Young Dane," 6.

contradicting hypotheses about Danish discrimination at this time. Scandinavian historian Rudling argues that in both Canada and the United States the disapproval and outright prohibition of foreign languages did much to hasten the assimilation of the Scandinavian immigrant populations.[119] Scandinavians throughout Canada did endure discrimination when they were associated with the German-Canadian population.[120] However, the Danish-Canadians did not seem to be significantly affected by these anti-alien sentiments, at least not in terms of the numbers of their population.

The second wave of Danish immigration began in the years following the First World War and ended with the hardship and disruption caused by the Great Depression and the Second World War.[121] This wave was partly fuelled by a continuation of the pre-war desire for cheap land[122] but was also bolstered by less-than-ideal conditions of postwar Europe.[123] Denmark, along with all of Scandinavia, went through a postwar recession in 1921-22 wherein Denmark's large bank, *Landmansbanken*, went bankrupt, taking with it many smaller financial institutions.[124] This led to general unemployment throughout the country, once again making emigration an appealing alternative for disgruntled citizens.[125]

Because of these conditions in the Old Country, the second wave brought Danes directly from Denmark. Again, many of these individuals were headed for Western Canada. The Dickson area again became a destination for newcomers, along with the

---

[119] Rudling, "Scandinavians in Canada," 176-177.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Hale, "Go West, Young Dane," 2.
[122] Pedersen, "Danish Emigration to America," 10.
[123] Art Genke, "The Danes in Canada and Their Archival Record," 62.
[124] Nordstrom, Scandinavia Since 1500, 268.
[125] Hale, "Danes," 407.

adjoining community of Kevisville.[126] Elsewhere in Alberta, communities that gained substantial large Danish populations included Ponoka, Holden, and Olds and Tilley. Ostenfeld, Manitoba and Pass Lake, Ontario were also settled during this period.

The community in the irrigation district of Tilley in Southern Alberta was the final Danish group settlement founded in the province. Residents of a Danish-American settlement in Nebraska established the Tilley settlement in 1930. These settlers had been dealing with severe drought conditions in Nebraska and did not own land there, so the decision to move to Alberta was relatively easy to make.[127] Approximately thirty people came up from the United States to take up land in the final Danish-Albertan settlement.[128] Tilley's cultural character was significantly less obviously Danish, a circumstance that Christopher Hale attributes to the fact that the residents had spent considerable amount of time in the United States before coming to Canada and had already lost much of their "Danishness."[129] The settlement at Tilley in 1930 was an exception to the ending date of the second wave just as Dalum's settlement was an exception to the beginning. Federal legislation introduced in 1930 and 1931 hindered all immigrants except those with secure financial backing or guaranteed employment[130] and brought to an end the settlement period that had populated the Prairie Provinces.

In the years before the Second World War, far more Danes immigrated to rural Canada than to urban locations.[131] However, both Edmonton and Calgary had Danish

---

[126] "Story of Dickson," 14.
[127] Hale, "Go West Young Dane," 8.
[128] Ibid., 9.
[129] Ibid., 11.
[130] Valerie Knowles, Strangers At Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-2006 Revised ed., (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006), 142.
[131] Dahlie, "Scandinavian Immigration, Assimilation and Settlement Patterns in Canada," 10.

populations, although Calgary's was substantially larger than was Edmonton's.[132] There is evidence, for instance, that Calgary's Danish population included a creamery and dairy owner,[133] a butcher,[134] a watchmaker,[135] a dentist[136] and a baker.[137] Particularly throughout the 1920s, both cities had larger Danish populations during the winter than during the summer, as farm labourers navigated towards the activity of the urban centers during the agricultural off-season.[138] Because of the smaller concentration of ethnic population in the city and because this population fluctuated over the course of the year, neither city experienced the prolonged Danish cultural development that the rural settlements did. Danes living in Alberta's cities, like Danes who moved to cities throughout Canada, lost their ethnic cultural character far more quickly than did the rural Danes because they did not gather as an ethnic community as consistently and continuously.[139]

The third wave of Danish migration to Canada occurred following the Second World War, prompted, like the second wave, by dislocation following the war.[140] This third wave of immigrants was substantially different than those who came earlier. Post-Second World War immigrants were largely professionals and sought to settle in the urban centers in Canada. While there were sizeable pre-existing populations of Danes in

---

[132] Census and Statistics Office, "Special Report on the Foreign-Born Populations," (Ottawa: Department of Trade and Commerce, 1915), 42.
[133] Peter Pallesen, " The Pallesen Family of Calgary," Federation of Danish Associations in Canada Annual Publication (1998).
[134] New Central Market on 7th Ave W. Owned by Chr. W. Jensen. Kirken og Hjemmet, 1, no. 6, May 1931.
[135] M. Clausen, owner of The Reliable Jewlers [sic] on 8th Ave. E. Kirken og Hjemmet, 2, no.1, November 1931.
[136] Margot Heimburger, Southam Building. Kirken og Hjemmet, 3, no. 9, August 1933.
[137] Crescent Bakery on 16th Ave. NW, owned by Christian Nielsen. Kirken og Hjemmet, 2, no.1.
[138] Hale, "Danes," 409.
[139] Ibid., 409.
[140] Ibid., 407.

several cities in Canada, third wave immigrants increased their numbers in cities such as Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal.

Chapter Three: Cultural Endeavours of Danish Albertan Churches

Many historians have pointed out the importance of the church in the establishment of cultural communities. In an article entitled "Scandinavians in Canada: A Community in the Shadow of the United States," historian Per Anders Rudling argues that religious activity is the only "ethnic marker" by which to measure the continuation of Old World traditions in North America, since the acquisition of English for necessary assimilation made measuring language continuity an impractical method. [141] Similarly, Western Canadian historian Gerald Friesen credits three institutions, the church, social clubs and "language-based institutions," with being vital to creating unity within a community.[142] While there are other "ethnic markers" by which Danish cultural continuity can be measured, religious activity is one fundamental way to examine the Danish communities in Alberta.

As Western Canadian historian Howard Palmer observed of the Scandinavian-Albertan settlements as a whole, "the church played more than just a spiritual or social role...church organizations often played a part in the very foundation of the communities."[143] Palmer's observation holds true in the case of the Danish settlements. The churches established in Alberta were involved in the founding of the communities; they fulfilled the obvious role as the spiritual bulwark; and they also provided an important venue for social interaction. The work of spiritual enlightenment and cultural maintenance occurred simultaneously and in most cases, each was equally important.

---

[141] Rudling, "Scandinavians in Canada," 164.
[142] Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 255.
[143] Howard Palmer, "Immigration and Ethnic Settlement, 1880-1920," in Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity, eds. Howard and Tamara Palmer (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985), 14.

Danish Lutheran Pastor and historian Paul Nyholm summarized the dual role of the church in creating community and maintaining culture in the immigrant community best when he explained that:

> [it] met the early immigrants with the Gospel in the only language which could reach the hearts of these people and for this reason many persons who had been estranged from the church in "the old land" became active church members in "the new land." The churches assisted the immigrants in making adjustments to new conditions in a new world. They bridged the gap between the first and second generation in a difficult and hazardous transition period. And they helped to transplant some of the heritage from the mother church...particularly from her rich treasure of hymns.[144]

Nyholm was primarily referring to the church as it existed in the United States, although he did mention Canadian churches briefly and he himself was the pastor of the Danish Lutheran church at Dickson for several years. Still, his words apply just as much to the Alberta situation as they do to the American. The Danish Lutheran Church, regardless of denomination, was integrally involved in the maintenance of Danish culture and community in the new settlements in Alberta. A journalist who visited the Danish-Albertan settlements in the 1920s, made the following observation:

> First and foremost, [the immigrants] gather to a Danish church. The church is the seed and glue in such a little Danish society. How many there are, I couldn't decide, but there are around 300 Danish congregations in America and Canada. The total of Danish American pastors is smaller than the number of churches because there are several of them that serve many congregations. It is an unprecedented work these pastors carry out both practically and spiritually. They give many a lending hand to the people that are in need, support schools and help newcomers. And it follows that all are volunteers. The congregations must themselves maintain their church and take more part in the congregation work and churchly life than at home [in Denmark]. In such a Danish colony, where all contribute voluntarily to the church, there also all their interest lies.[145]

---

[144] Nyholm, Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Church, 480.
[145] C. Mikkelsen, Canada Som Fremtidsland [Canada as the Land of the Future], (Copenhagen: Aschehoug og Company Dansk Forlag, 1928), 53.

Similarly, the author Aksel Sandemose visited the Danish settlements in 1927 and wrote very emphatically that "cultural life on the Canadian prairie revolves around the church. There is little room for anything else."[146]

The Danish Lutheran Churches were the most important venue for community and for the continuation of Danish culture in Alberta. At the same time that they had to respond to the conditions of the New World in order to remain relevant to their audience, they were also a reminder of the congregants' cultural heritage in Denmark. Paul Nyholm claims that the Danish Lutheran Church in North America functioned wholly differently from the Danish Lutheran Church in Denmark and consequently was part of the Americanization of the Danish immigrant community.[147] However, despite the fact that the North American church *was* distinctly different than the "museum" churches of Denmark, it was not simply part of the move towards assimilation. Its greatest function in Alberta was as a cultural reminder of Old World traditions when the immigrants needed cultural continuity and stability in a strange and unfamiliar new land.

In the late nineteenth century, the Lutheran Church in Denmark underwent substantial philosophical changes that significantly altered the course of the church. More importantly, these changes reverberated in the North American Danish Lutheran Church, causing a schism in the late nineteenth century that affected the direction of the church in the United States and in Canada.[148]

Two Danish theologians initiated the doctrinal debate that affected the direction of the church. The first of these was Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872), a

---

[146] Aksel Sandemose, in Aksel Sandemose and Canada : A Scandinavian Writer's Perception of the Canadian Prairies ed. & trans. Christopher Hale, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2005), 71.
[147] Nyholm, Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Church, 352.
[148] See Appendix D for a chart that makes the history of the schism much clearer.

Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Denmark, a philosopher, poet, social critic and theologian. N.F.S. Grundtvig was an important leader from about 1840 until his death in 1872.[149] He held a number of radical ideas regarding the centrality of the Bible to church doctrine, believing that other church creeds and sacraments were more important than a strict literal adherence to the Bible. [150] In addition, Grundtvig argued in favour of the church being a cultural center that epitomized the Danish national spirit. As a result, he wrote many romantic nationalistic hymns for the Danish church and sought to inspire Danes to appreciate their cultural heritage.

After Grundtvig's death, another theologian rose to prominence. Vilhelm Beck (1829-1901) disagreed with Grundtvig's cultural emphasis and argued rather in favour of a narrower spiritual and pious version of Christianity.[151] Beck was far more mission-oriented than was Grundtvig. He led an evangelical movement called the *Inner Mission*. The *Inner Mission* followed a literal interpretation of the Bible and set about trying to rekindle the laity's religious life through conviction of sin and conversion.[152]

In addition to these two widely differing doctrinal views, there was a third body of church thought called the *Centrum*. The *Centrum*, as one might guess from its name, was a middle-of-the-road ideology that avoided involvement with doctrinal extremes and advocated an "institutional church with its dignified ritual and administrative procedure."[153] Many Danes were drawn to either Grundtvigianism or the *Inner Mission* movement, but in Denmark, through strong church leadership the factions reconciled

---

[149] Nyholm, Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Church, 62.
[150] Nielsen, The Danish Americans, 71.
[151] Trygve Skarsten, "Danish Contributions to Religion in America," Lutheran Quarterly 25.1 (1973), 45-47.
[152] Nielsen, The Danish Americans, 73.
[153] Ibid., 70.

their differences enough to work together within the structure of the Danish state church.[154]

In North America, however, the diverging theological ideas were debated at greater length than in Denmark. In the early years of immigration, Danish congregants were served under the umbrella of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in the United States, which had established a synod in 1853.[155] Danes could easily understand the Norwegian language and since the Norwegian and Danish church organizations were similar, a joint ministry made sense.[156] The Norwegian Church added Danish to its name in 1870, becoming the *Norwegian Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, in attempt to appeal to Danish-American immigrants.[157] This conference of Norwegian and Danish pastors was anti-Grundtvigian and all new pastors were required to ascribe to this view.[158]

The first solely Danish Lutheran Church organization was the *Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church Association in America* (DELC), or the *Danish Church*, formed in 1872. Compared to the Norwegian-Danish Church, the Danish Church was far more accepting of Grundtvigian theology. However, a passionate minority of Danish-American pastors and laity disagreed with the Grundtvigian emphasis maintained by the DELC, wherein the pastors took it upon themselves to aid in the maintenance of Danish culture and language in addition to their roles as spiritual advisers.[159]

---

[154] Skarsten, Danish Contributions to Religion in America, 47.
[155] Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), 132.
[156] Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 74.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism, 124.
[159] Henrik Bredmose Simonsen, "The Early Life of the Danish Churches in Canada," In Danish Emigration to Canada, ed. Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen, (Aalborg: Danish Worldwide Archives, 1991), 92.

Those in the DELC who adhered to Beck's mission-centered doctrine split from the Grundtvigians in 1894. They formed their own church, which became the *United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church* (UDELC), or what is often referred to as the *United Church.*[160] The new United Church was more interested in evangelism than in the preservation of Danish culture in North America.[161]

The church schism and the two distinct denominational branches that resulted from it significantly shaped the American Danish Lutheran Church.[162] Abdel Wentz, who has written the history of the Lutheran church in North America, argues that the Danes were far less successful than other ethnic groups in bringing immigrants into the church fold and retaining their membership because of their doctrinal conflict.[163] Paul Nyholm, UDELC Pastor and author of The Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Church, argues that denomination did not significantly matter to the laity—that the immigrants attended whatever church was closest to where they settled.[164] Nevertheless, as Nyholm also acknowledges, the two denominations operated differently. Most significantly, the Grundtvigian DELC, which attached great importance to Danish culture, took far longer to become 'Americanized' than did the UDELC.

Both the DELC and the UDELC were represented in Danish communities in Alberta. Dickson, Standard and Tilley all had UDELC congregations. Dalum had the sole DELC congregation in Alberta. The first church in Calgary (Saron) was a UDELC

---

[160] Nyholm, Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Church, 79. The United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, although often referred to as the United Church, *must not* to be confused with the United Church in Canada, which was a merger between Presbyterian and Methodist churches and was *completely distinct* from the UDELC.
[161] Nielsen, The Danish-Americans, 79.
[162] The two Danish Lutheran Church denominations resulting from the schism will from now on be referred to as the United Church and the Danish Church.
[163] Abdel Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism, 188.
[164] Nyholm, Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Church, 80.

congregation, although there was an attempt in the late 1920s to form a DELC.[165] The congregation in Edmonton was an oddity in that it received funding directly from Denmark and therefore was not involved in American denominational issues.

The Danish Lutheran Church that the immigrants were familiar with from Denmark was continued in the New World but with some major differences. In Denmark, the Lutheran Church was funded and directed by the Danish government. Regardless of whether the general population attended regularly or not, the church continued to exist. Nyholm describes the churches in Denmark functioning more as museums than as venues for fellowship and worship. While important in the past, the Danish churches were neither geographically nor culturally important any longer, but they continued to exist.[166]

In North America, however, the churches had to be self-sustaining in order to survive, and therefore they had to continue to be culturally and geographically relevant. To meet the continually changing needs of potential congregants, the church had to engage the people and meet their needs. The Danish Lutheran Churches in Alberta did that to varying degrees and correspondingly had varying levels of longevity and popularity.

In the early history of Danish immigration to the United States, it was common practice for Danish immigrants to settle where economic opportunities were best and only later to consider forming or joining a church, Danish Lutheran or otherwise.[167] Once the Danish-American churches were more established, it became a priority for the church leadership to direct new immigrants to settle where they could simultaneously form

---

[165] A Danish Church congregation was later successfully organized in Calgary in 1964, but this church was a product of the third wave of Danish immigrants, under much different circumstances.
[166] Nyholm The Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Church, 352.
[167] Ibid., 64.

Danish communities and Danish Lutheran congregations.[168] For instance, concurrent formation of settlements and congregations took place in association with the DELC in places like Tyler, Minnesota, Dagmar, Montana and Danevang, Texas.

The Danish colonies in Alberta came later than those in the United States. Consequently, the Danish Lutheran Church in the United States, with its two denominational branches, was able to exert substantial influence over the church and cultural direction in Danish communities in Alberta.[169] The entwined nature of the Danish Lutheran Church with the Danish immigrant communities in Alberta is evident from the chain of events leading up the formation of the settlements, both in the instigation of a new colony and in the early settlement years.

Dickson, the first Danish colony in Alberta, is a prime example of how the Danish Lutheran Church was integrally involved in the settlement process. The original settlers of the Dickson settlement came from a Danish community in Omaha, Nebraska. The congregation there was initially very reluctant to have a group of their young people stray so far away from their mother church. However, Pastor G.B. Christiansen achieved a compromise agreeable to all when he brought all the settlers together and formed them into the Pella Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church congregation. The idea was that since they would have a church even before they arrived, a church service and building would be an early priority in the new settlement and their spiritual well-being would be looked after.[170]

---

[168] Ibid., 115.
[169] Simonsen, "The Early Life of the Danish Churches in Canada," 92.
[170] Bethany Lutheran Congregation, Dickson Koloniens Historie: Et Mindskrift om Vore Pionerer [History of the Dickson Colony: a Memorial Volume About Our Pioneers], (Blair, Nebraska: Lutheran Publishing House, 1948), 4.

While the pre-organization of the congregation did not necessarily guarantee the establishment of a church in the new community, in the case of Dickson it worked. The congregation continued to exist when the settlers arrived in Alberta, and it functioned like the Omaha church had hoped. The settlers were provided with spiritual edification and the congregation also served as a social gathering place. Mrs. L.B. Christiansen described what services looked like in the first summer of the settlement in 1903:

> On Sundays we gathered together and read church services (*læsegudstjeneste*) in our homes. We sang much and God was near us. After the church service we discussed the week's events with a cup of coffee and we were like a large family.[171]

The establishment of a physical church with a full-time pastor was always a priority for the Dickson settlers. A site for a church building and parsonage was set aside from the very beginning of the settlement, although it took until 1911 to actually build a church building because of internal debate about the exact location of the church. In the interim, services were held in the congregants' or the Pastor's home.

Throughout the early years, church functioned as one of the few existing venues for the community to gather. In addition to the typical church events like Sunday morning services, baptisms and Sunday School, the church congregation celebrated Christmas. The Pella congregation came together both on Christmas Eve and Christmas, and not just for the traditional Christmas church services, but to eat, sing around the Christmas tree and generally enjoy fellowship.[172] Christmas is an important time in Danish culture, and the church congregation was an automatic "family" with which the settlers could assemble on that occasion to participate in Danish Christmas traditions.

---

[171] Bethany Lutheran Congregation, Dickson Koloniens Historie, 13.
[172] C. Svendsen, "Koloniens Første Julen [The Colony's First Christmas]," in Bethany Lutheran Congregation, Dickson Koloniens Historie, 18-19.

Like Dickson, the settlement of Standard was tied to the UDELC in the States. The organization of the Standard congregation, however, was not as formal as the creation of the new Pella Church. Still, the colony was directly connected to the Danish Lutheran Church. At a Danish Lutheran Church convention in Iowa in 1908 it was decided that some scouts should be sent to Alberta to investigate the possibility of starting a colony there.[173] The four scouts, including three laymen and one pastor, were impressed with the land and its price, so the United Church colonization committee persuaded the Canadian Pacific Railway to set aside 17 000 acres for the formation of a Danish group settlement.[174] The project was advertized in the UDELC weekly newspaper The Dane.[175] The project attracted settlers from established UDELC congregations in Iowa, North Dakota, Colorado and Wisconsin. The majority of settlers came from the congregation in Elk Horn Iowa, where the original discussion regarding a new colony had occurred. [176]

The settlers, who began arriving in 1910, formed a church congregation *after* their arrival. However, the founding of the Nazareth Danish Lutheran Church occurred very shortly after the arrival of the bulk of the settlers in 1911.[177] Nazareth was affiliated with the UDELC. Though it took a while for the settlers to raise enough money for a church building, they did so in 1917, with the assistance of a loan from the UDELC Synod in the United States.[178]

---

[173] Metha Laursen, "Nazareth Lutheran Church History," in From Danaview to Standard, (Standard: Standard and Area Historical Book Society, 1979), 117.
[174] Jens Rasmussen, History of the Standard Colony From Its Birth, 9.
[175] Rasmussen, History of the Standard Colony, 6.
[176] Simonsen, "The Early Life of the Danish Churches in Canada," 96. Also the Danish settler accounts in From Danaview to Standard.
[177] Metha Laursen, "Nazareth Lutheran Church History," in From Danaview to Standard, 117.
[178] Ibid., 118.

The events leading up to the founding of the community of Dalum offer another example of the intertwined nature of community and church. The Danish group settlement at Dalum occurred at the instigation of and with encouragement from a Danish-American cultural organization, the Danish People's Society (*Dansk Folkesamfund*). The Danish People's Society was associated with the Grundtvigian DELC, although they were two distinct institutions. The Danish People's Society was started in 1887 by F.L. Grundtvig, the son of the N.F.S. Grundtvig, who was a pastor of a Danish Church congregation in Clinton, Iowa.[179] The Society was founded before the schism in the church and created much agitation among *Inner Mission* followers, who "feared [it] was a way of organizing a Grundtvigian bloc in the congregations through the local chapters that would tip the balance against the Inner Mission group."[180] In other words, from the very beginning, the Danish People's Society was both formally and informally tied to the DELC.

In 1916, the Danish People's Society negotiated with the Canadian Pacific Railway and received approximately 20 000 acres set aside for a Danish settlement.[181] They earned 5% commission selling the land on behalf of the CPR.[182] The Society created an additional stake in the colony when it invested some of the commission earnings back into the colony by purchasing 160 acres and renting that land to Danish settlers.[183]

---

[179] Nielsen, The Danish Americans, 81.
[180] Nielsen, The Danish Americans, 81.
[181] Simonsen, "The Early Life of the Danish Churches in Canada," 96.
[182] Peter Ostergaard, "Dansk Folkesamfund," in The History of Dalum, (Drumheller, Alberta: Big Country News, 1968), 6.
[183] Ibid., 7.

While the Danish People's Society did not specifically insist upon the establishment of a DELC congregation at Dalum, it was well known that Dalum had been instigated by the Society and was therefore likely to be a Grundtvigian settlement. Among potential settlers, this fact would have been a draw to some and a deterrent to others, particularly among Danish-Americans interested in immigration, since the division between the *Inner Mission* and the Grundtvigians was so much more pronounced there than in Denmark.[184]

When the Dalum settlers went about forming Bethlehem Danish Lutheran Church shortly after their arrival in 1918, they were affiliated with the DELC, and they called a DELC Pastor, Peter Rasmussen.[185] The congregation received assistance from the Danish People's Society to build a meeting hall for the church and to pay Rasmussen's salary.[186] In this way, from the very beginning, the community was associated with the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church denomination, a fact that had a significant effect on its development.

The settlement at Tilley was the last Danish group settlement attempted by the American Danish Lutheran Churches. The project at Tilley resembled that of Dickson, though almost thirty years later and with significantly different results. With prompting from the CPR, who was desperately trying to sell irrigated land in Southern Alberta, the United Church put into motion the steps towards founding Tilley's Danish colony in 1929. A UDELC Pastor, A.N Skanderup became a CPR agent. Skanderup convinced a number of Danes in his congregation in Laurel Nebraska to immigrate to Alberta, and

---

[184] Simonsen, "The Early Life of the Danish Churches in Canada," 99.
[185] Rolf Christensen, "The Establishment of Danish Lutheran Churches in Canada," The Bridge: Journal of the Danish American Heritage Society, 27, no. 1-2 (2004), 135.
[186] Peter Ostergaard, "Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Dalum," in The History of Dalum, 10, 12.

formed the Bethany Lutheran Church congregation before their departure. He also agreed to be their pastor in Alberta.[187] The UDELC's support of the Tilley settlement was considerably less than that provided in the other settlements; it seems that no monetary help was given for the pastor's salary or for the building of the church.[188]

In the Tilley settlement, the role of the pastor as originator of the colony was very important. As a CPR agent as well as the leader of the congregation, Skanderup had a monetary incentive to persuade Danish settlers to settle in the area. A number of the settlers mentioned how central Skanderup's encouragement was to their decision to immigrate:

> The fall of 1930 found us near Worthing, South Dakota. There we again met Pastor A.N. Skanderup. Dad and Mom knew the Skanderups from Blair [in Nebraska; another Danish settlement]. He had come to persuade us to move to Canada.[189]

In other cases, Skanderup picked settlers up from the train station to bring them to the settlement, found them jobs upon their arrival, or allowed them to live in his granary until they could find or build a house of their own.[190] However, Skanderup only remained at Tilley until 1935, when he took a call to another United Church congregation in Redvers Saskatchewan.[191]

The Danish settlements were deeply influenced by the specific denominations with which they were associated and their development as communities was therefore far from uniform. Dalum, the only settlement affiliated with the Danish Church, developed considerably differently than did the neighbouring community of Standard, which was a

---

[187] Church history is from Tilley Trails and Tales, (Tilley, Alberta: Tilley Historical Society, 1980), 33.
[188] Bethany Lutheran Church, Tilley, Alberta, 1930-1980, (Tilley, AB: Bethany Lutheran Church, 1980), 2-3.
[189] Christine Hendricksen, "The Otto Pedersen Family," in Tilley Trails and Tales, 310.
[190] All of these instances are in the settler accounts in Tilley Trails and Tales.
[191] Matteson and Matteson, Blossoms of the Prairie, 221.

UDELC colony. The community of Dickson, although associated with the UDELC, was a special case that did not fit the precedent set by other UDELC colonies.

In his examination of the historical development of the Danish Lutheran Church in the United States, Paul Nyholm discusses the process of Americanization in Danish Lutheran congregations. He acknowledges that as a whole, when the Danes settled in colonies, as opposed to dispersing across the country, they were integrated into American society much slower.[192] However, Nyholm also differentiates between colonies associated with the DELC and with the UDELC. He argues that the DELC became Americanized much more slowly than the UDELC did for a variety of reasons. The most obvious of these was that the Grundtvigian emphasis on Danish culture and language meant that those associated with the DELC worked harder to preserve "Danishness" than did their UDELC compatriots.[193]

By contrast, the UDELC relinquished its "Danishness" relatively quickly and voluntarily.[194] Influenced by *Inner Mission* doctrine, one tenet of the UDELC was to participate in evangelistic endeavours. When the Synod felt that its work among the Danish immigrants was finished, it sought to expand its audience to the general American public. In order to do this, it had to deliver its message in English, not Danish, and become a more universal Lutheran church rather than a Danish Lutheran Church.[195] Nyholm also points out that many of the pastors of the UDELC were trained in the United States whereas for many years, the leaders of the DELC received their education

---

[192] Nyholm, Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Church, 81.
[193] Ibid.,, 79.
[194] However, compared to other ethnic Lutheran Churches of what would later unite to be the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, including the Norwegians and the Germans, the United Church held onto its Danish ethnic traditions relatively long. See George O. Evenson, Adventuring for Christ: The Story of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada , 128.
[195] Nyholm, The Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Church, 131-135.

in Denmark. Consequently, the DELC pastors were more inclined to maintain the Danish language and Danish cultural practices than the UDELC pastors who had been trained in more Americanized practices.[196]

Nyholm argues that the speed of language transition within the church was the greatest indicator of the rate of 'Americanization' of the congregation.[197] He emphasizes that the DELC focused on language preservation, drawing this focus from Grundtvig's belief that "only through the Danish language could true spiritual life among the Danish people be created and maintained."[198] The endurance of the Danish language in the churches in Alberta is therefore another way to measure cultural maintenance and the difference between Danish and United Church communities.

As Nyholm points out, there were considerable differences between the ways the two denominations operated in the United States. Specifically at stake was each church's attachment to Danish culture and language. Consequently, in order to understand how Danish culture prevailed or became irrelevant in immigrant communities in Alberta, one has to consider the effect of the denomination with which the community was affiliated.

Denomination significantly affected the settlement of Dalum. Dalum was founded by the Danish People's Society, and the church congregation formed was done so under the DELC affiliation, the only church of this denomination in Alberta. The Grundtvigian value of culture was followed up on very early in the church's history. Pastor Peter Rasmussen arrived at the colony in May 1920. In the summer of 1921, the first *Folkefest* was held, and in the fall of that year, with the support of the congregation, Rasmussen had organized a folk school.

---

[196] Ibid.,, 81.
[197] Ibid., 45.
[198] Ibid., 222.

Folkefest was a two day event in the summer to which Danes throughout Alberta were invited. While it was not wholly a religious occasion, the church was certainly central. The Dalum congregation set up the venue, cooked all the food, and organized the program. As well, the Sunday activities were set up like a large-scale church service. One of the early settlers explained it thus:

> Sunday was the big day of the festival. It started with church services in the coulee. Speakers were mostly from the States, or from Denmark when a known pastor from there was on tour in the States. Those I especially remember are Pastors E. Wagner and Blickfeldt from Denmark and E. Christensen and S.D. Rodholm from the States...Some of [the Danish settlers] brought babies to be baptized or older children to stay and attend confirmation classes.[199]

While *Folkefest* also involved lectures and singing and fellowship for the dispersed Danes, it had a specifically religious tone. In this way, the DELC combined religion and culture.

The Dalum Folk School was more separate from the Bethlehem Lutheran Church at Dalum than was *Folkefest*. However, it too had important ties that demonstrate the cultural inclination of the DELC. The school was instigated by Pastor Rasmussen a year after his arrival at Dalum, and it was held at his house. In 1918, the Dalum congregation had built a small assembly hall to serve as a meeting place until they could afford a proper church (the church was not completed until 1936). When Rasmussen decided to run a Folk School, he asked the congregation if the assembly hall could be moved to his homestead where it could be used for the Folk School during the week and for church on Sundays. The congregation agreed and this arrangement continued for as long as the Folk School existed.[200]

---

[199] Ada Petersen, "Wintermeetings and Folkefest," in The History of Dalum, 19.
[200] Peter Ostergaard, "Bethany Lutheran Church of Dalum," in The History of Dalum, 12.

In addition to participating in cultural events throughout the years, the pronounced Grundtvigian cultural emphasis of Bethlehem Church is evident in the transition of the services from Danish to English. The move to English-language services at Bethlehem Church was relatively slow. Only in 1939 did the congregation establish a once-a-month English language service. In 1947 this was changed to twice a month and finally in 1955 all the services were in English.[201] This final transition came thirty-seven years after the first settlers arrived in a country where English was *the* language for commerce and communication.

The community of Standard provides a counter-example to Dalum. As previously mentioned, Standard was a UDELC colony. The majority of the settlers had immigrated by 1911. By May of 1911 they had founded the Nazareth Lutheran Church congregation; in October 1911 they bought land for the church and parsonage; in 1912 they built a parsonage and called a pastor; by 1917 they had built a church. Throughout this whole process of establishing a church they were aided by the UDELC Synod in the United States. In 1921 and 1932 they hosted the West Canada District Convention for the United Churches from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. [202] Nazareth's connection to the United Church was thus maintained over the years.

Nazareth's *Inner Mission*-styled non-Danish specific evangelism is seen in the steps the congregation took towards including English-language services. The English language was introduced earlier in Standard than Dalum and more quickly replaced Danish as the favoured language of communication for the church. In 1919, only eight years after the congregation began, they voted to start an English Sunday School. In 1928

---

[201] Peter Ostergaard, "Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Dalum 1937-1965," in The History of Dalum, 22-23.
[202] Metha Laursen, "Nazareth Lutheran Church History," in From Danaview to Standard, 117.

when the congregation had to call a new pastor, they took into consideration the fact that if they called a pastor who could preach in Danish *and* English, English-speaking people could attend and help pay the pastor's wages. Kirken og Hjemmet (Church and Home), the newsletter for all the Danish Lutheran Churches in Western Canada, included a summary of past and future events in each congregation. The entries submitted by Nazareth Church started being written more consistently in English in 1934, significantly before any of the other congregations made the change.[203]

By 1945 the church had only one Danish-language service a month and all the administrative paperwork was done in English. Thirty-three years passed between the formation of the church and the transition of most church dealings to English. In 1954, the congregation decided to change the name of the church from "Nazareth Danish Lutheran Church" to "Nazareth Lutheran Church of Standard."[204] This last change effectively made the church a truly inclusive community church and removed an important final association with the congregation's Danish heritage.[205]

Whereas in the Dalum community, cultural activities affiliated with the church played an important role in daily life in the early years, contemporary observations of the Standard community show how Danish culture played a limited role there. A number of Danish journalists visited Standard in the 1920s and described the community for potential settlers. The journalists noted how successful the Danish settlers were, and how

---

[203] See Kirken og Hjemmet 4, no.4, March 1934.
[204] All of the changes and dates on which they occurred are recording in Metha Laursen's chapter entitled "Nazareth Lutheran Church History" in From Danaview to Standard, 117-122.
[205] This conclusion of the early demise of Danish culture in Standard is corroborated by the findings of folklorist Frank Paulsen. Paulsen, Danish Settlements, 44.

comfortably they lived.[206] Sometimes they mentioned the existence of a church but rarely did discussion of culture go any further than that.

Olaf Linck, who traveled through Canada in 1925, recorded the following interview. A Danish immigrant explained to the journalist that his wife had returned to Denmark.

> "I have come to the conclusion," continued the landowner, "that it is a sin to bring a young woman from the city [Copenhagen] out on the prairie. She suffers with the desire for "civilization" and furthermore, much work to which she is unaccustomed has been laid upon her shoulders."
> "Don't the Danes [at Standard] have any societies?"
> "Not to have large parties and that kind of thing; they don't fool around with that kind of thing here...[People] only have one topic of conversation, agriculture, and I don't wonder that it drives some people away. Eventually, my wife could repeat them by heart and so she stayed home."[207]

At least for this particular woman, there was so little familiar culture that she could not handle life in Alberta. She moved back to Denmark and her husband would follow her as soon as he sold the farm. From this interview, it is evident that Danish culture was not a priority in the UDELC colony of Standard.

The immigrant's observation seems to suggest that the Danish settlers at Standard were completely un-interested in the social aspects of their community. However, community history accounts relate that the settlers were very involved in the church and attended services, taught Sunday School and organized church-affiliated functions.[208] As a part of their intercultural evangelistic efforts, the church sought to include the *whole* community, not just those familiar with Danish culture. The church announcements in Kirken og Hjemmet were always careful to explain when there would be English services

---

[206] See for instance, C. Mikkelsen, Canada Som Fremtidsland [Canada as the Land of the Future], (Copenhagen: Aschehoug & Co. Danish Forlag, 1927); Olaf Linck, Kanada Det Store Fremtidsland [Canada the Great Land of the Future], (Copenhagen: E. Jespersen, 1926).
[207] Linck, Kanada: Det Store Fremtidsland, 111.
[208] See the individual histories of Danaview to Standard.

as well as Danish services. Bible Summer School was offered twice, two weeks taught in English and two in Danish.[209] The church's young people's society met twice a month for English gatherings and twice for Danish gatherings.[210]

In this way, the congregation at Standard fit the ideal of a UDELC community. They were unconcerned with purely social or cultural activities but rather focused their efforts on serving as missionaries to their community through events like Sunday School, Bible Summer School and Young People's Societies. They quickly progressed towards English language inclusion in order to serve the non-Danish population of the area.

The community of Dickson did not fit the norm. It was the first UDELC colony in Alberta and if it had followed the course of the Standard congregation, it would have become integrated into Albertan society by the second generation. However, Dickson was affected by a peculiar situation involving the land availability in central Alberta and the way Danish immigration flowed into Canada. The cultural development that grew out of the Dickson's Bethany Lutheran Congregation was partly a response to the additional settlement interest of the 1920s. The church and community had to remain relevant for the newcomers, many of whom had just arrived from Denmark. Consequently, the transition from Danish language and culture to English was slowed.

The Pella Lutheran Church congregation had been formed prior to the arrival of the Danish-American immigrants in Alberta. As the Pella congregation, the settlers held church services even before they had a pastor in the community.[211] Shortly after the Dickson settlement was formed, the congregation changed the name to Bethany Lutheran Church. The church building was completed in 1911, the same year English was first

---

[209] Kirken og Hjemmet 4, no. 9, June 1934.
[210] Kirken og Hjemmet 3, no. 15, December 1933.
[211] Hale, "Go West, Young Dane," 5.

introduced in a congregational meeting. However, not until 1928 was an actual service conducted in English, and not until 1936 did the congregation require their pastor to speak both languages (this compared to Standard's 1928 decision). Still, the language transition within the church was more or less complete by the 1950s, with Sunday School classes taught only in English after 1945.[212]

Bethany mission endeavours began fairly early. In 1912, the congregation gave money for the foundation of a Danish Lutheran congregation in the city of Calgary and sent their pastor to the city once a month to hold a service there, prior to the Calgary Danes getting their own pastor.[213] When nearby Kevisville was settled by Danes who arrived after most of the land around Dickson had been taken up, the Dickson congregation expanded their church work to the new settlement. The pastor from Dickson came out to Kevisville twice a month and held services, first in congregants' homes, and later in the Kevisville church. The Kevisville congregation, operating under the name Immanuel Danish Evangelical Lutheran Congregation was formed in 1912.[214]

In the 1920s the Dickson church initiated several important new methods of serving Danish immigrants in the community. The first of these was the Dickson High School, which was one of the first—if not *the* first—rural public high school in Alberta[215]; the project was unusual and required substantial support from both the church and community. The relationship between the Dickson School and the Bethany church is

---

[212] All church dates are taken from congregational records printed in Grub Axe to Grain: A History of Craig, Dickson, Happy Hill, Heckla, Hola Markerville, New Hill, North Raven, Raven, Red Raven, Rich Hill, Spruce View, (Spruce View: Spruce View School Area Historical Society, 1973), 35.
[213] Esther Thesberg, "Dickson, Alberta: First Danish Lutheran Congregation in Canada," 3rd Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, (Calgary: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1984), no page number.
[214] "Kevisville Church," in Grub Axe to Grain, 189.
[215] George Evenson, Send Out Your Light: A History of the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute (Camrose: Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute, 1997), 16. Frank Paulsen also says it was the first rural public high school. Paulsen, Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies, 12.

particularly evident from the 1934 minutes for the West Canada District of the Danish Lutheran Church. The District encouraged its congregations to send their young people to the school because "it operat[ed] under [the] church's influence."[216] A visiting missionary and a pastor of Bethany Church established the school. The pastor involved also served as one of the instructors. Prior to the construction of an actual school building, classes were held in the church. The whole project was funded by the church congregation through the economically depressed years of the 1930s until it was taken over by the Alberta government in 1938. Finally, confirmation classes were offered alongside the public school curriculum, integrating Lutheran education into the school. [217]

The Bethany congregation also hosted a Danish summer school for children for a number of years.[218] The summer school combined Bible classes and Danish language training.[219] Danes from across Alberta could send their children to this two week program. The program was organized by the pastor of the church and the schooling and room and board were offered free of charge by members of the congregation.[220]

Also following the influx of settlers of the 1920s Bethany congregation bought land and organized a summer camp for Danish immigrants. The camp was constructed on Sylvan Lake in 1931 and Danish immigrants from Alberta were invited to attend for a week in the summer. The first camp event was held in the summer of 1930 (prior to the construction of camp buildings) and had an attendance of approximately 250 people.[221] The camps involved both religious and cultural activities, including Bible lectures and

---

[216] Kirken og Hjemmet 4, no. 10, July 1934.
[217] Kirken og Hjemmet 4, no. 12, September 1934.
[218] There is concrete evidence that children's Danish language school ran from 1931-1934 but in all likelihood it started earlier than 1931.
[219] Kirken og Hjemmet 1, no. 6, May 1931; Kirken og Hjemmet 1, no. 7, June 1931.
[220] Kirken og Hjemmet 1, no. 8, July 1931.
[221] Paul Nyholm, "The First Danish Summer Holiday in Canada," Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly July 18, 1930.

church services on one hand and gymnastics, folk singing and social times on the other.[222] In at least one year, 1931, the camp involved a week of Danish language school for children.[223]

Though the congregation at Dickson was affiliated with the UDELC and therefore more concerned with missionary efforts than with cultural preservation, Bethany Church also initiated Danish culture-oriented settings and events like the alternate-denomination congregation at Dalum did. In this way, the Bethany congregation was an oddity and certainly deserved the nickname "dynamic Dickson" bestowed by Danish Canadian historian Rolf Christensen.[224]

Denomination thus made a great difference between the cultural character of the settlements and congregations of Standard and Dalum. Based solely on the church's denomination, Dickson should have followed a trajectory similar to Standard, but because of its unique situation, ended up acting like the Danish Church community of Dalum.[225]

While it is clear that the denomination with which a community was affiliated had a great effect on the cultural character of the settlement, just as important were the pastoral leaders involved. John Jensen, historian of the United Church explained the pastoral role thus: "[the pastors] did everything possible to help and advise [the Danish immigrants], to find them jobs, and places to live. They acted as advisors, employment agents, teachers of English, and welfare workers, and also tried to minister to the spiritual

---

[222] See Kirken og Hjemmet 4, no. 8, June 1934; Kirken og Hjemmet 4, no. 9, June 1934; Kirken og Hjemmet 5, no. 11, June 1935.
[223] Kirken og Hjemmet 1, no. 7 June 1931.
[224] Christensen, "The Establishment of Danish Lutheran Churches in Canada," 131.
[225] In their late twentieth century comparison and analyses of Dickson, Dalum and Standard, Hale and Paulsen disagree on the level of cultural retention in each community. Hale argues that Dalum maintained its Danish heritage the longest and Dickson the shortest, with Standard in the middle. Hale, "Go West, Young Dane," 10. Paulsen agrees that Dalum's Danishness was the most long-lasting, but he virtually dismisses Standard as a Danish settlement in the 1970s. Based on the evidence from this study's time period, Paulsen's findings seem more likely. Paulsen, Danish Settlements, 44, 83.

needs of the newcomers."[226] The settlements that managed to acquire the services of a dynamic and enthusiastic pastor who could accomplish all of the above benefited greatly. These men had specific visions for an ideal Danish Lutheran community, and it was because of their energy that the community operated as a cohesive cultural unit.

The first place where specific leadership affected the direction of a congregation and community was at Dickson. Pastor G.B. Christiansen was the pastor of the Omaha Nebraska congregation from which the settlers emigrated. He took it upon himself to organize the settlers into the Pella United Church congregation before they left. He bought property in the settlement, which he later sold to the new pastor.[227] Christiansen visited the community in the first year of settlement, encouraging the Danish settlers and holding church services in their tents. He helped the settlers call their first pastor in 1904.[228] When the church building site conflict occurred, Christiansen stepped in to try to solve the problem. He met with all the congregants and tried to get them to come to an agreement, and was the go-between among the two sides of the congregation and their pastor.[229] In those early difficult years of settlement and community-formation at Dickson, Christiansen was instrumental in leading the settlers to unite and solve their conflicts.

Christiansen was far from the most involved leader in the Danish-Albertan communities, important though he was. Pastor Peter Rasmussen, called by the Bethlehem Church at Dalum in 1920, is the best example of how a vibrant and charismatic leader

---

[226] John M. Jensen, The United Evangelical Lutheran Church: An Interpretation, (Minneapolis: Augsberg Publishing House, 1964), 241.
[227] "The Life Story of Jes Christian Gundesen As Told By His Wife Petrea," Jes Christian Nielsen Gundesen (1857-1920), A 752, DEA.
[228] Bethany Lutheran Congregation, Dickson Koloniens Historie, 15.
[229] "The Life Story of Jes Christian Gundesen As Told By His Wife Petrea," Jes Christian Nielsen Gundesen (1857-1920), A 752, DEA.

could make a community. As one journalist explained in 1929, "the spirit of the [Dalum] colony is one Pastor P. Rasmussen, who with tireless eagerness has worked to keep the colony together as church and school."[230] Rasmussen, who had been the headmaster of a Danish Folk School in Ashland, Michigan prior to his arrival in Alberta, was a passionate Grundtvigian. Because of his strong beliefs in the connection between the Danish church and Danish culture, Rasmussen implemented numerous practices and events in the Dalum congregation. The cultural life at Dalum would not have been the same without such a vibrant and involved leader.

Rasmussen arrived at Dalum in 1920 to be the pastor of the Bethlehem Danish Lutheran Church congregation. He began to lead services immediately upon his arrival and he remained as Dalum's spiritual leader until 1955, when he finally retired. Thirty-five years was substantially longer than the stay of the average pastor in the Danish communities in Alberta. Rasmussen was very concerned with the preservation of the Danish language in the church and it was not until he retired that the Bethlehem congregation switched to complete use of English for normal church services.[231]

Mere longevity was not Rasmussen's most vital contribution, his organization of a number of cultural activities outside of routine church services was. In addition to leading the church, it was under Rasmussen that the Dalum Folk School was begun, and that the wintermeetings and summertime *folkefests* occurred. The Rasmussen home was also the venue for *Fæstelavn* parties (Danish version of Shrove Tuesday).[232] Rasmussen ran an elementary school at Dalum until the Alberta Government established a proper school, and he ran a Danish "Saturday School" and "Vacation School" after the establishment of

---

[230] Author unnamed, "Danish Colonies in Canada," Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, September 13, 1929.
[231] Peter Ostergaard, "Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Dalum, 1937-1965," The History of Dalum, 23.
[232] Earl Nelson, "Early Days in Dalum," The History of Dalum, 31.

the public school in order to continue to teach subjects important in Danish culture, like story-telling, Danish history, and Danish folk songs.[233] As one settler explained, "the Rasmussen home became a kind of community center."[234]

The fact that the congregation's assembly hall was moved to the Rasmussen farm yard in 1921 where it was used for church as well as other community events until it was outgrown demonstrates how Pastor Rasmussen was central to the community's cultural life. Dalum's central gathering place was at the Rasmussens'. One Danish immigrant ended her entry in the Dalum history book thus: "I personally am filled with gratitude towards Reverend Rasmussen and his family for the hospitality they showed all the Danish immigrants. There was always an open house where as many as twenty guests assembled for a Sunday dinner."[235] The role of Rasmussen's wife Kathrine as cook and hostess is evident in this sense of hospitality. She was the less-recognized but equally important partner in the work of creating a church community.

Pastor Paul Nyholm was another figure integral to the cultural development of a Danish settlement in Alberta. Nyholm was called to the settlement of Dickson in July of 1930 and he stayed there until September 1935. While Nyholm's term as pastor was much shorter than Rasmussen's, his contribution was also vital. His enthusiasm for the church and support for the people in the community resulted in several important initiatives. George Evenson, who wrote a history of the Lutheran Church in Canada explained: "there [are few] pastors in the history of the ELCC [Evangelical Lutheran

---

[233] "Schools and Teachers in Dalum," The History of Dalum, 42.
[234] Earl Nelson, "Early Days in Dalum," The History of Dalum, 31.
[235] Marie Skytt, "The Skytt Family," in The History of Dalum, 204.

Church of Canada] who have as many living memorials to them as does Dr. Paul Nyholm."[236]

The first institution that Nyholm supported and promoted was the Dickson High School. He was not the initial instigator of the project; that honour belonged to a missionary who filled in as a preacher between the departure of the previous pastor and Nyholm's arrival. However, after his arrival Nyholm was immediately enthusiastic about the project. His father-in-law, Anton Holm-Møller was a well-known Danish-Canadian architect who was convinced to design the dormitory for the school.[237] Nyholm encouraged the young people to attend the newly built high school, and would often speak to the parents on the children's behalf to convince them of the value of secondary education.[238] He would arrange for living accommodations for students who came from great distances.[239] Nyholm also taught Bible classes and Latin at the school in the early years.[240]

With the approval of the West Canada District of the United Church Synod, Pastor Nyholm took it upon himself to start a newspaper for the Western Canadian UDELC congregations.[241] The first issue of Kirken og Hjemmet (Church and Home) was published on December 18, 1930. The paper provided space for all UDELC churches in Western Canada to present their news and upcoming events. Nyholm edited this paper throughout his time as a pastor in Canada, and wrote many of the articles in it as well.

---

[236] George Evenson, Adventuring For Christ, 124.
[237] George Nissen Sr., "The Dickson High School Dormitory," Grub Axe to Grain, 36.
[238] For instance, see the memoirs of Archie Morck in Irene Morck, Five Pennies: A Prairie Boy's Story, (Allston, Massachusetts: Fifth House Publishers, 1999), 149-150.
[239] For instance, he offers to do so in an advertisement for the school in Kirken og Hjemmet 2, no. 10, September 1932.
[240] Paul Nyholm Autobiography, August 17, 1950, Paul Christian Edvard Nyholm 1895-1977), A 544, DEA.
[241] See the write-up of the West Canada District Church Meeting in Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, August 16, 1929.

As the secretary of the West Canada District of the United Church Synod, Nyholm also wrote articles for another Danish-Canadian weekly newspaper, The Viking. In particular, he wrote about upcoming events related to the United Church, giving his name and address for readers to apply for further information. As well, he wrote synopses of past events.[242]

It was at Nyholm's initiative that the Dickson congregation organized a summer camp for Danish Lutherans in Alberta. In 1929 Nyholm decided that the West Canada District of the United Church needed a summer camp where all the congregations could meet. With assistance from members of the congregation, Nyholm was able to secure a piece of land on the shores of Sylvan Lake where the UDELC could build a summer camp.[243] The camp's program was developed by a committee, of which Pastor Nyholm was the president.[244]

Finally, Nyholm also promoted the Lutheran Bible School at Camrose, Alberta. The college was in fact established by the Norwegian Lutheran churches in Alberta, but was supported and attended a lesser degree by Danish Lutherans as well.[245] Nyholm reported on the events of the College in Kirken og Hjemmet.[246] He served as the College's Dean from 1932 to 1934 and taught part-time at the college in the 1930s (while still pastor at Dickson) when the Dickson congregation could not afford to pay his

---

[242] For instance, see Nyholm's write up about an upcoming United Church convention at Dickson in the Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, July 19, 1929, and the write-up following the convention in Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, August 16, 1929.
[243] Camp Kuriakos, "Camp Kuriakos History," http://www.kuriakos.ab.ca/index.php/kuriakos/history/
[244] Paul Nyholm, "Danish Summer Camp in West Canada," Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, May 2, 1930.
[245] Chester Ronning, "A Study of an Alberta Protestant Private School: The Camrose Lutheran College, a Residential High School" (Master's Thesis, University of Alberta, 1942). Also "The Lutheran Bible School at Camrose," Kirken og Hjemmet 3, no. 16, December 1933.
[246] For instance, Paul Nyholm, "The Lutheran Bible School In Camrose, Alberta," Kirken og Hjemmet 3, no. 1, December 1932.

salary.[247] He was offered the position of principal at the college when he left the Dickson congregation in 1935.[248]

Other pastors also played significant roles in the cultural life of their congregations, though their actions were not as apparent as Nyholm's and Rasmussen's. Jens Dixen, for instance, was a missionary who filled in as a temporary pastor in the Dickson congregation prior to Pastor Nyholm's arrival. Dixen was instrumental in the first efforts to establish a high school at Dickson. He was a guest speaker at churches and folk schools through Alberta. He was also a vocal supporter of Danish migration to Alberta during his missionary travels throughout Denmark.[249]

Pastor Jes Gundesen, the first pastor of the Dickson congregation, was also a vibrant and adaptable leader. He came to Dickson to serve the Pella congregation in 1904 and served both parts of the congregation after the church split took place in 1905. When the church reunited in 1905 and the congregation no longer wanted Gundesen as their pastor, he continued to homestead in the area and served the Danish Lutheran congregation at Olds and occasionally in Calgary until his death in 1920.[250]

Pastoral leadership also became vitally important in the case of the traveling pastors. Both the DELC and the UDELC Synods wanted to reach out to the Danish settlers spread out throughout the province. Consequently, they encouraged their pastors to travel to places that had enough Danish settlers to warrant attention but that were too

---

[247] George Evenson, Send Out Your Light, 17; Kirken og Hjemmet 3, no. 16, December 1933.
[248] Paul Nyholm Autobiography, August 17, 1950, Paul Christian Edvard Nyholm (1895-1977), A 544, DEA.
[249] Jens Dixen history taken from the following: Paul Nyholm, "A Former Pastor Writes of Memories and Experiences," in "Story of Dickson, Alberta," 34. George Nissen, "Dickson Dormitory and High School," in "Story of Dickson, Alberta," 39. Soren Jensen memoir in "Story of Dickson, Alberta," 52. Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, February 8, 1929.
[250] Gundesen history from S.P. Lonneberg, "Building of the Church and School" in "Story of Dickson, Alberta," 12; "The Life Story of Jes Christian Gundesen as Told By His Wife Petrea Gundesen," Jes Christian Nielsen Gundesen (1857-1920), A 752, DEA.

small to support a resident pastor. Interestingly, the two pastors who did the most traveling were Pastor Peter Rasmussen who, as the only Danish Church pastor in the province, acquired the position partly by default, and Pastor Nyholm, who was hired by the United Church Synod to look after the dispersed small congregations.

In the case of Pastor Rasmussen, the settlement of Holden in north-central Alberta is a prime example of the role of the traveling pastor in creating a community out of an ethnic population in an area. Rasmussen traveled to Holden on numerous occasions to hold Danish Lutheran Church services for the immigrants there. Holden is over 200 kilometres from Dalum, a great distance in the 1920s. A number of the Danish settler accounts in the local history book mention Rasmussen's visits to the area. Chris Sorensen explained his church work:

> A Danish minister, Pastor Rasmussen from Wayne, Alberta [a larger town close to Dalum] came to the Sorensen home several times every summer to have Danish church services. If the weather was nice it was always held outside, and after the service a lunch was served and visiting took place. There would be as many as sixty or seventy people attending, and sometimes more. It was always enjoyed by everyone. Pastor Rasmussen started coming in 1923 and came very summer until his health failed.[251]

Holden never established a Danish Lutheran Church of its own, but for a time in the 1920s and 1930s, Rasmussen's visits created a much-welcomed occasion for the Danish settlers to gather together as an ethnic community.[252] Rasmussen was also an ongoing guest lecturer at Dannevang Folk School in Calgary for the years it existed[253] and he held

---

[251] Chris Sorensen, in Hemstitches And Hackamores: A History of Holden and District, (Holden, Alberta: Holden Historical Society, 1984), 665. See also Hans Jorgen and Family Christensen account; Thomas Christensen account; John and Sofie Larsen account, all in Hemstitches And Hackamores: A History of Holden and District. Also Section entitled "Our Danish Churches" in undated autobiography, Christen Anders Christensen (1886-1976), A 296, DEA.

[252] See also articles concerning Holden Danish community in Kirken og Hjemmet. For instance, the entry entitled "The First Danish Confirmation in Holden," Kirken og Hjemmet 3, no. 14, November 1933.

[253] For instance, as detailed in the Dannevang school write-up in Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, November 29, 1929.

Danish Church services for the Danes of Grundtvigian inclination in Calgary for a time.[254] He was always eager and willing to be a guest pastor whenever he was asked. [255]

While Pastor Rasmussen did pastoral work throughout the province on a volunteer basis, Pastor Nyholm was paid by an organization in Denmark to do traveling pastor work.[256] Consequently, he visited a considerable number of places to hold services. Even prior to his traveling pastor position, Nyholm was called to serve not only the Dickson congregation but also the nearby congregation at Kevisville.[257] Nyholm visited at least thirteen Danish settlements throughout the province on a semi-regular basis, including places like Stettler, Camrose, Rocky Mountain House, Trochu and Ponoka. He also regularly visited the Danish settlement at Edgewater, British Columbia.

Nyholm and Rasmussen were particularly active in their roles as traveling pastors. However, other Danish Lutheran Church pastors also functioned as "pulpit supply." Pastor Skanderup, who served the Bethany Danish Lutheran Congregation at Tilley, also held services occasionally in the nearby settlements of Brooks, Duchess, and Scandia, among others.[258] Pastor Nommesen, who served the Ansgar Danish Lutheran Church in Edmonton from 1931 to 1940 traveled to Mayerthorpe and Camrose to hold services there.[259] The history of the Danish Lutheran Congregation in Olds illustrates the importance of these ministers to the church. The Olds congregation began meeting in 1914 but did not have a resident pastor until 1951. For thirty-seven years the church was

---

[254] Johannes Pedersen Autobiography, January 1937, Johannes Pedersen (1900-1960), A 152, DEA.
[255] For instance, in September 1933 he traveled to the community of Huxley to hold a service and baptize babies. Kirken og Hjemmet 3, no.10, September 1933.
[256] Kirken og Hjemmet 1, no. 1, December 18 1930.
[257] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, May 3, 1929.
[258] Kirken og Hjemmet 1, no. 1, January 1931.
[259] Seen in church and community reports in Kirken og Hjemmet.

served by pastors from other Danish settlements, including Dickson, Calgary, and Ponoka.[260]

Throughout the early years of Danish settlement in Alberta, several pastors actively worked to meet the spiritual needs of the settlers in both established ethnic communities and in isolated and remote settlements. These pastors believed that so long as the Danes continued to be a part of a Danish Lutheran Church congregation, some semblance of a spiritual and cultural community would be maintained.

Aside from the individual directions the congregations took because of their denomination or the dynamism of the leaders, as a collective body devoted to meeting the needs of Danish immigrants, the churches cooperatively operated to create community. First, in settlements lacking in community infrastructure, the churches were one of the few meeting places for the immigrants. As Chris Christiansen wrote of the Bethany Church at Dickson, "it became the spiritual and social center of all activities at Dickson."[261] Whether the churches were established buildings with resident pastors or small groups who met semi-regularly in someone's home when a traveling pastor visited, church services provided a setting for the preservation of the Danish cultural community and the continuation of Danish cultural traditions.

Similarly, the yearly meetings of the churches throughout Western Canada provided a cultural community on a larger scale. The West Canada District of the United Church met in 1929 in Dickson. Though it was a UDELC gathering, the article detailing the meeting claimed that laity from *all* the Danish settlements in Alberta came, including Standard, Dalum, Calgary, Olds, Edmonton and Ponoka. Two DELC pastors, including

---

[260] "St. Paul's Lutheran Church," in Olds: A History of Olds and Area, (Olds: Olds History Committee, 1980), 242.
[261] C.M. Christiansen, "Dickson Church Through 20 Years," in "Story of Dickson, Alberta," 30.

Pastor Rasmussen from Dalum, also attended. The writer emphasized how important and special it was that Danes from all over Alberta could come together—particularly those from settlements with few Danes—because the District meeting was a place to have community with fellow Danes.[262]

The Danish Lutheran congregations also put on more informal Alberta-wide gatherings. A "Danish *Folkefest*" was held for a number of years in the late 1920s and early 1930s at Ponoka and Dickson. The gatherings were attended by pastors and congregants from across the province and were structured as a collective church service, a choir concert, a series of lectures and a time of fellowship and mealtime.[263] The Dickson congregation also held a celebration for the birthday of the Danish Flag on June 15th (Valdemar's Day or *Valdemarsdag*) or on Danish Constitution Day (*Grundlovsfest*) to which Danes from across Alberta were invited. Like at the summer *folkefest*, the Valdemar's Day or Constitution Day celebrations included guest speakers, singing and a time of fellowship. [264] There is no record of how many years the *folkefest* or the Valdemar's Day gatherings were held, but in the years that they did operate, they were clearly a venue where Danish Lutheran congregants from across Alberta could gather and participate in Danish cultural activities on a larger scale than just within their individual churches—regardless of denomination.[265]

---

[262] Paul Nyholm, "Church meeting in Dickson, Alberta, Canada," Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, August 18 1929.
[263] Paul Nyholm, "Danish Folkefest in Alberta," Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, September 27, 1929. "Summer meetings in Dickson," Kirken og Hjemmet 2, no. 8, July 1932.
[264] Paul Nyholm, "Dannebrog's birthday celebration at Dickson," Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, June 27, 1930. "Danish Constitution Day Part in a Basement," Kirken og Hjemmet 5, no. 11, June 1935.
[265] Dalum also held yearly *folkefests* in the summertime and week-long winter meetings in which there occurred similar cooperative efforts between denominations. However these meetings served a slightly different purpose and will be discussed at length in the following chapter. See Kirken og Hjemmet 4, no. 3, February 1934.

The fact of the matter was that if the Danish Lutheran Church as a whole was going to survive in Alberta, they could not afford to be divisive or put too much emphasis on denominational differences. In the United States, the UDELC and DELC churches never fully reconciled their differences, but rather endeavoured to simply get along with one another.[266] The American churches could survive this divisiveness because there were enough individual congregations and members to support both denominations.[267] This situation could not occur in Alberta if the congregations hoped to maintain cultural and spiritual unity. The churches' cooperation shows how the most important goal was bringing the immigrants together and maintaining Danish community, not segregating and isolating congregations based on denomination.

This interdenominational cooperation seems to have succeeded, because the immigrants themselves rarely commented in their letters, diaries or memoirs on the schism or differences between the two sects.[268] When the Danish population in Alberta was so small and the churches so far between, it was of greater importance to belong to a Danish Lutheran Church at all than to be particular about denominational differences.

---

[266] John M. Jensen, The United Evangelical Lutheran Church, 199.

[267] For a study of two adjacent American communities that each supported a different Danish Lutheran denomination, see Jette Mackintosh, "'Little Denmark' on the Prairie: A Study of the Towns Elk Horn and Kimbalton in Iowa," Journal of American Ethnic History 7, no. 2 (1988): 46-68.

[268] One account does relate that the family moved from Dalum to Dickson to join a more Inner Mission-oriented congregation. Memoirs of Hans H. Hindbo, DCNMA. Karl Dresen, a short-term resident of Dalum ,also noted that Standard and Dalum were distinguishable by denomination, but he also notes that resulting rivalry was short-lived. "Jeg kom, Jeg Så [I Came, I Saw]," 1966, Karl Kristian Hansen Dresen (1893-1975), A 336, DEA.

Chapter Four: Danish Schools in Alberta

The educational practices initiated and supported by the Danish immigrants are one example of how the Danish settlers maintained elements of their Old World cultural heritage. However, the schools also provided an opportunity for the development of a hybrid of Canadian and Danish ways; a place where useful, practical and applicable elements of Danish culture were preserved for the advancement of the Danish immigrants in their new adopted homeland.

Danish immigrants came to Alberta being familiar with a formidable philosophy and methodology regarding formal education. The Danish "Folk School" (*folkehøjskole*) was an important form of popular education that began in the mid-nineteenth century, and continues to exist today. From the very beginning, the Danish Folk Schools endeavoured to provide both a cultural and a practical education to their students, emphasizing the cultural component as a most important tool for life-long learning.

The concept of the Danish Folk School was an innovation of the nineteenth century Danish clergyman, N.F.S. Grundtvig. While he contributed many influential ideas to Danish culture in the late nineteenth century, one of his most important initiatives was the concept of the Danish *folkehøjskole*, which translates literally as folk high schools, but which might be better understood as "People's College" or "folk school."[269]

Grundtvig envisioned a school where students would gain an understanding of and appreciation for Danish culture and an awareness of their civic responsibilities. In his school, "young people from all regions and classes met and lived together to study their mother tongue, their country's history, and its present condition" and in this way they

---

[269] Rolf Buschardt Christensen, "Danish Folk Schools in Canada," in Danish Emigration to Canada, ed. Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen, (Aalborg: Danish Worldwide Archives, 1991), 107.

would "acquire the foundations for Life's Enlightenment."[270] The schools were not directed towards academics and did not grant any kind of certification. The students would be young adults, who recognized the importance of cultural and personal education in a way that children would not. They would learn to think for themselves, and to work in collaboration with their peers.[271]

Grundtvig was especially interested in teaching Danish young people their "mother tongue." In nineteenth-century Denmark, as elsewhere in Europe, the intellectual and upper-class people used Latin, French, German and Greek in their correspondence and their daily lives. Danish was considered a crude language appropriate only for uneducated farmers.[272] Grundtvig was opposed to the prevailing "Classical Latin School" model because these schools favoured foreign influences and isolated students from the language and culture of their country.[273] His Folk Schools would do away with Latin grammar and would instead teach subjects specifically pertinent to living in and contributing to Danish society.

Grundtvig's school model was not, however, specifically directed towards the agricultural community. His vision was a school for all people as he believed everyone deserved to be spiritually and culturally enlightened.[274] Nevertheless, the early schools were directed towards the agricultural community, where the need for education was the greatest. The principals of the schools ultimately had control of the curriculum, and they chose to recruit rural students. Christian Flor, principal of the Rødding School, argued

---

[270] Steven M. Borish, The Land of the Living: the Danish Folk High Schools and Denmark's Non-violent Path to Modernization, (Nevada City, California: Blue Dolphin Publishing, Inc., 1991), 172.
[271] Scott, Scandinavia, 106.
[272] Borish, The Land of the Living, 170.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid., 17-18.

that the farmers were handicapped by their lack of education, and were unable to properly participate in civic governance.[275] He believed that these were the people who would benefit most from cultural and civic training.

The programs developed by the Danish Folk Schools were designed to specifically meet the farmer-students' needs. The schools were set within rural communities and ran during the winter months when there was less work to be done on the farms. Gymnastics were practiced daily so that the students used to the daily physical labour of the farms would not feel confined.[276] As well, each school attempted to balance the two different curriculum goals. Grundtvig's original idea was for the schools to give the students an understanding of Danish language and history. He wanted the schools to focus on cultural education. Some schools did follow this model. For instance, Christian Flor maintained that it was more important to teach a student "a point of view that unites [him] with common human experience" than to "teach him to sow and plough his fields more effectively."[277] In this way Flor and Grundtvig agreed on the humanistic purpose of the Folk School model.

However, other schools recognized the need for practical technical training as well. Some provided more classes on current agricultural practices and economics and others were geared towards technical training for artisans.[278] As a rule, however, even if the schools did place some emphasis on practical skills, they also taught Danish language, history of literature, the world, the Church and the Bible, arithmetic and Gymnastics.[279]

---

[275] Borish, The Land of the Living, 183-184.
[276] Begtrup, Lund and Manniche, Folk Schools of Denmark and the Development of a Farming Community, 133.
[277] Borish, The Land of the Living, 184.
[278] Begtrup, Lund and Manniche, Folk Schools of Denmark and the Development of a Farming Community, 125.
[279] Ibid., 136.

The first practical application of Grundtvig's ideas for a Folk School was in the contested area of Southern Denmark. The school, founded in 1844 by educator Christen Flor, was established in the town of Rødding in Slesvig. Slesvig, a province situated between Denmark and Germany, had been battled over for many years. The founding of the school was a deliberate attempt to strengthen Danish culture in the face of growing German influence.[280] The inaugural address delivered at the school opening argued that angrily holding the Germans accountable for the faltering Danish culture was useless because it was up to the Danes themselves to "advance [the] cause [of Danish language and literature] along the longer and quieter, but safer and surer road of enlightenment and improvement."[281] This first intentional defence of the Danish minority became one of the great Grundtvigian legacies; minority cultures should have the "right to establish schools founded in and for their own culture."[282]

The Rødding School was forced to close in 1865 when Germany seized the territory of Slesvig. However, by then the idea of teaching the Danish language and history in order to preserve Danish culture had become well-established as the purpose of the Danish Folk Schools. The Rødding School was replaced by another school, Askov, which was built fifteen kilometres further north—three kilometres north of the new border with Germany—and which continued Rødding's work to provide the Danes living under German influence with a Danish cultural education.[283]

---

[280] Bent Rying, Danish in the South and the North vol. 2 of Denmark: A History (Denmark: Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1981), 266-267.
[281] Quoted in Johannes Novrup, "Adult Education in Denmark," 23.
[282] Ove Korsgaard and Susanne Wiborg, "Grundtvig—the Key to Danish Education?" Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 50, no. 3 (2006): 373.
[283] Begtrup, Lund and Manniche, Folk Schools of Denmark and the Development of a Farming Community, 111.

Grundtvig's original idea was that the folk schools should be state-sponsored so that they would be universally available. While Rødding did receive some government funding, none of the schools were begun as a government initiative. Rather, as anthropologist Steven Borish emphasizes, the schools were an "authentic grass roots institution": they were started by farmers who recognized the need for education within agricultural communities[284]and each school's direction was determined by the principal who organized and managed it. Consequently, each school had a slightly different focus depending on the vision of the administration and the specific needs of the particular community.

The original Folk Schools were developed with only male students in mind, as the school administrators believed that the men of the farming communities were the ones who needed the cultural and civic education for development of rural Denmark.[285] However, Christian Kold started a school in 1851 at Ryslinge which had two terms: a winter term of five months for young men and a summer term of three months for young women. Kold's school was the first one to open its doors to female students,[286] and this co-education quickly became the norm. By 1900 women could receive instruction in domestic skills, and take part in the gymnastics classes and the collective lectures and discussions.[287]

Grundtvig's goal of creating schools where mature students could gain a cultural and civic education achieved great success within the agricultural community in Denmark. However, modernization, mechanization and increased efficiency meant a

---

[284] Borish, The Land of the Living, 185. See also Novrup, "Adult Education in Denmark," 70.
[285] Novrup, "Adult Education in Denmark," 26.
[286] Ibid., 31.
[287] Borish, The Land of the Living, 199-200.

smaller labour force was required and many agriculturalists began leaving rural Denmark. They went to the urban centers, becoming a part of the workforce for growing industries there, or they joined the mass emigration to North America that caught up so many Scandinavians. As a result, the Danish immigrants who settled in North America brought with them an established set of ideas about adult cultural and civic education.

The Danes who settled in Alberta became involved in the development of several different education projects in the first decades of their immigration. Many of the supporters of the schools that emerged were concerned with maintaining some elements of Old World culture in their new homeland, believing that there was inherent value in Danish traditions, language, religion and stories and songs. At the same time many people also recognized the need to integrate into "Canadian" society in order to succeed in agriculture and be accepted as fellow-citizens. The schools that emerged within the Danish-Albertan communities each negotiated the prime focus of their existence, balancing and prioritizing between cultural maintenance on the one hand and social integration on the other. Each school project found a distinctive approach to dealing with this problem of balance.

These Danish-founded schools developed alongside a formidable federal policy on education in Canada. As historian Howard Palmer points out, in the early twentieth century the federal government saw public education as the one sure-fire method of assimilating immigrants. By imposing a mandatory Protestant Anglo-Saxon schooling on all Albertan children, they believed that the children of the immigrants would be brought

up acknowledging the 'proper' cultural norms of "British-Canadian nationalism, citizenship, individualism and the Protestant work ethic."[288]

The alternative education programs founded and supported by Danish-Albertans operated concurrently with this assimilation-oriented system. While they did not explicitly contradict the government goals, the education offered by the Danish schools assumed certain cultural ideals that were not practiced in the public school system. The federal and provincial governments targeted and prohibited schools initiated by other Western Canadian ethnic groups, such as the Ukrainians, because they were afraid ethnic-specific education would hinder these groups from becoming part of the Anglo-Saxon Protestant social norm. [289] However, no restrictions were placed on the Danish community. The Danish school alternatives did not threaten the public system but worked around it, offering a complementary education to those who had either missed out on Canadian public schools or wanted further education.

Dana Folk School was established in 1924 in Calgary and operated until 1935. It operated under the auspices of the UDELC in Alberta, with a seven member board with two members from Standard, three from Calgary, one from Dickson and one from Olds.[290] The headmaster was Pastor J. Knudsen, the Pastor of Sharon Danish Lutheran Church in Calgary, a UDELC congregation. According to one report four hundred students were served during the school's eight years of existence.[291]

---

[288] Howard Palmer, "Strangers and Stereotypes: The Rise of Nativism, 1880-1920," in The Prairie West: Historical Readings, eds. R. Douglas Francis & Howard Palmer, (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1992): 322.
[289] Cornelius Jaenen, " The Public School In Canada: Agency of Integration and Assimilation," in Actes Du Congres International Des Sciences De L'Education (Paris,1976): 209-215.
[290] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, August 2, 1929.
[291] Qtd in George Evenson, Adventuring For Christ: The Story of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada (Calgary: Foothills Lutheran Press, 1974), 118.

A brief competitor to Dana was the Dannevang Folk School, also of Calgary, which operated from 1928 until 1930. Dannevang was run by Oscar Petersen, who adhered to Grundtvigian philosophies, and wanted to provide an alternative to the UDELC-run Dana School.[292] Pastor Rasmussen, the only DELC pastor in Alberta, often gave guest lectures at Dannevang.[293]

Edmonton also had a Folk School, called Danebod, which operated from 1929 until 1932, but there are few records relating the history of this school. Of the three, the Dana school lasted the longest and was, by all accounts, the most successful, although Dannevang also seems to have contributed significantly to the Danish community in Calgary.

The Folk Schools founded in Calgary and Edmonton deliberately invoked the image of the Danish Folk School but did not generally follow the model in practice. The schools borrowed some elements of the Folk School design and added and altered others so that the schools were specifically relevant to their target audiences. As Danish-Canadian historian Rolf Buschardt Christensen points out, the schools incorporated practical knowledge about settling in Canada with the civic and cultural education from the Folk School model in Denmark.[294] However, tied up with and operating concurrently with the education program were provisions for the more basic needs of the immigrant students. These provisions turned out to be vitally important in aiding the Danes in their new homeland.

---

[292] Hale, "Danes," 411.
[293] See Viking Danish Canadian Weekly articles on Dannevang events. For instance "Lecture at Danevang [sic] Young People's Home," Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, November 29, 1929.
[294] Christensen, "Danish Folk Schools in Canada," (Unpublished revised copy provided to author, 2009), no page number.

There were several ways the folk schools in Alberta corresponded to their predecessors in Denmark. They sought to offer a similar education to a similar population. Grundtvigian Folk Schools were specifically directed towards the agricultural community where people had work experience but little time or energy for more literary or personal pursuits like history, mythology, folk singing and dance, or civic participation.[295] The schools in Alberta also sought to give young farm workers knowledge of Danish culture and traditions and a sense of social and civic responsibility that they could not receive in isolated rural Alberta communities.

The Grundtvigian model sought to address the educational needs of mature young adults who were concerned about the preservation of Danish culture and who understood the necessity of learning cooperation and civic responsibility. The Alberta schools also directed their attention to adult learners who recognized that education was integral to making them better citizens. In addition to attracting new immigrants, they also acknowledged that because of the lack of educational infrastructure in rural Alberta, there were many children who grew up with a limited experience of school. Consequently, Danish-Albertans who missed out on education as children were invited "to catch up on what was neglected."[296] In this way the schools strove to attract adult students both from the new immigrant population as well as from among those who had spent their childhood on homesteads.

Finally, the schools built their programs around their students' schedules. In order to encourage enrolment from the farm community, the Danish schools operated in the winter months when there were fewer farm duties to be attended to. Similarly, the schools

---

[295] Samuel S. Corl, III, "The Danish Folk High School Adapts to a New World," Educational Leadership 38.4 (1981): 338-341.
[296] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, September 12, 1930.

in Alberta usually ran from November until March, from the end of harvest until spring cultivation began.[297]

Depending on their particular student audience, Folk Schools in Denmark taught economics and agriculture or technical training in order to make their students more knowledgeable about farming and help them contribute to broader society. The Alberta Folk Schools also taught practical skills. A 1928 Danish Emigration Aid Society brochure asked, "Are you new in Canada and are you a farmer? Then you should spend the first winter at a Folk School or agriculture school."[298] The Alberta Folk Schools modified the Danish curriculum model to teach Canadian agricultural practices and other subjects that would assist Danes interested in becoming better farmers in Canada. When the droughts of the 1930s devastated the land, Dana School again adjusted its curriculum to ensure that students would learn how to farm in the new conditions.[299]

For several years, Dana School also offered classes in building construction, bringing in Danish-Canadian architect Anton Holm-Møller as the instructor. Holm-Møller had designed, among other things, the Danish Lutheran Churches in both Calgary and Dalum. The school explained that training was provided so that students would understand Canadian building methods and their difference from Danish design. As a part of this program, students would get the opportunity to visit industrial building sites in the city of Calgary. This technical education was a way the schools endeavoured to meet the

---

[297] See ongoing school advertisements in Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, for instance, to see start and ending dates.
[298] Holger Rosenberg, Hvorledes Komme Frem I Canada? Rådgiver For Enhver Der Vil Udvandre Til Dominion of Canada [How Do You Get Ahead In Canada? Advice for Everyone That Will Emigrate to the Dominion of Canada], (Copenhagen: V. Pios Boghandel, 1928), 47-48.
[299] Kirken og Hjemmet 1, no. 12, November 1931.

students' employment needs, since teaching them Canadian terminology and practice would make them eminently more employable.[300]

Like the Danish Folk Schools, the schools in Alberta attempted to maintain Danish culture in ways other than the academic curriculum. Dana School offered gymnastic training of a specifically Danish style, invented at the Ollerup Folk School in Denmark by gymnastics instructor Niels Bukh.[301] Gymnastics was a mandatory part of Dana's curriculum.[302] As well, both schools promoted Danish culture through theatre arts. On numerous occasions the students put on plays written by Danish playwrights and performed in the Danish language.[303]

The schools also endeavoured to preserve Danish tradition in a way that was not a part of the Grundtvigian model. While the Grundtvigian model was faith-based, religion was not a specific focus for the Danish Folk Schools, because Grundtvig wanted the school system separated from the Danish Church. [304] Grundtvig believed that people's cultural needs were just as important as their religious needs and that those outside the Lutheran Church needed and deserved education as much as those within the church did.[305]

However, several of the schools in Alberta, including Dana, were associated with or run by Danish Lutheran Church congregations. Dana's school building was largely funded by the Danish Lutheran Congregation in Standard, Alberta and was run by the

---

[300] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, October 17, 1930.
[301] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, March 14, 1930. Also, Christensen, "Danish Folk Schools in Canada," in Danish Emigration to Canada, ed. Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen, (Aalborg: Danish Worldwide Archives, 1991), 112.
[302] Christensen, "Danish Folk Schools in Canada," in Danish Emigration to Canada, 112.
[303] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, March 7, 1930.
[304] Korsgaard and Wiborg, "Grundtvig—the Key to Danish Education?" 372.
[305] Borish, The Land of the Living, 170.

Sharon Danish Church in Calgary.[306] The schools regarded the Danish Lutheran Church to be an essential part of Danish culture and they embraced Christianity and specifically Danish Lutheranism as an integral part of their curriculum.

Dana School had as a part of its class schedule Bible lessons and mission history.[307] The school also offered confirmation classes for those who had been too far from a Danish Lutheran Church to take part in this process as teenagers.[308] This enthusiasm for the Church must have caught on among the students, because in 1930, the students of Dana School raised money towards the construction of a Danish Lutheran Church building in Calgary.[309] While Dannevang was not as closely tied to the Church as Dana was, it also regarded religious teachings as integral knowledge. Dannevang's guest lecturers were often pastors of Danish Lutheran Churches from Western Canada or from Danish communities in the United States.

The difference between the Danish schools and those in Alberta comes into focus in the Alberta schools' balancing of Old World culture and New World integration. The Danish Folk School model emphasized the need to preserve minority culture even within a foreign setting.[310] The curriculum in Denmark reflected this emphasis and offered intensive study of Danish language and cultural subjects, such as mythology, and folk songs and dances. Likewise, the Alberta schools taught Danish literature, and world history as a part of the program to make the students culturally-aware individuals.

---

[306] Christensen, "Danish Folk Schools in Canada," In Danish Emigration to Canada, 110-112.
[307] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, September 12, 1930.
[308] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, September 12, 1930.
[309] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, June 27, 1930.
[310] See Korsgaard and Wiborg, "Grundtvig—the Key to Danish Education?" 361-382. Korsgaard and Wiborg discuss both 19th examples of Danish cultural preservation as well as late twentieth century Muslim cultural education within the Danish state.

However, instead of concentrating on the instruction of Danish language, culture and social practices, the Alberta schools chose to teach Canadian history, geography, and "Civic Life." In effect, they endeavoured to make the students aware of Canadian cultural practices in order that they might be good Canadian citizens—while still maintaining elements of their Danish culture. This course of action turned them sharply away from the Grundtvigian emphasis on Danish language and culture.

The most important element of the Alberta Folk Schools was English language instruction. The schools were very insistent on their immigrant readers' need for English language lessons. For instance, one Dana School advertisement read:

> The question of language is a burning one, and the sooner one decides to take up schooling for the winter, the more quickly one will gain the ability to succeed in Canada.[311]

Consequently, the schools taught reading, writing, grammar, spelling, and dictation. By one account, 68 lessons in English were taught each week at Dana School.[312] In Denmark, the emphasis was on teaching the Danish language and culture. Therefore, the modification was a specific adaptation to the North American environment, where knowledge of the English language was important for finding a job and for becoming a successful citizen.

The need to integrate through knowledge of the language and culture became particularly clear as unemployment soared during the Great Depression. A 1931 Dana school article informed its readers "If in previous years, one has been able to succeed without some actual education, it is no longer possible to do so. The new hard times are

---

[311] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, November 7, 1930.
[312] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, September 12, 1930.

difficult everywhere, and more than ever, one needs all the education one can get."[313] The Alberta schools prioritized integration through thorough language instruction and modified the Grundtvigian ideal of cultural preservation to meet their specific needs.

From 1931 onward, Dana offered the Alberta government-approved Grade Nine and Ten public high school curriculum to its students.[314] The students would be able to gain a standard of education recognized throughout the province. The schools again moved away from the cultural preservation goal of the Danish schools in favour of enabling the immigrants to prosper in Western Canada through Alberta-specific education.

Thus, the Calgary-based Danish Folk Schools copied from the Folk Schools of Denmark what they regarded as essential. However, they had to balance the curriculum between preserving Danish cultural heritage and providing the Danish immigrants with knowledge and skills that would allow them to succeed in Canada. The demographics of students at Dana and Dannevang reveal a clear departure from the traditional Danish Folk School model. In Denmark, the schools ran concurrent programs for men and women as early as 1851 and certainly by the turn of the century both sexes were active members of the student body. The Alberta Folk Schools' most desired and targeted demographic was young men who were recent Danish immigrants and who did not have a permanent home. These men often worked as farm labourers during the growing season until they had saved up enough money and gained enough experience that they could buy their own homestead. However, working as farm labourers meant that often they were unemployed and homeless during the winter months.

---

[313] Kirken og Hjemmet 1, no. 12, November 1931.
[314] Kirken og Hjemmet 1, no. 12, November 1931.

Records reveal that very few women attended the schools, despite the fact that one of the forty seven students in the 1928-1929 school term was female and beginning in 1930 Dana advertised a curriculum specifically for women along with private rooms for women. While the schools never specifically addressed this disparity, it is clear from reading immigrant records that single Danish women rarely came to Canada. The women came either as a part of an immigrating family unit as wives or daughters, or they came as the result of a marriage proposal from a resident Danish immigrant. Danish immigrant women simply were not part of the school model of Dana and Dannevang as they were in the Folk School model that occurred in Denmark.

While in part drawing on the Danish Folk School model, the Alberta schools also attempted to entice pupils on a more basic level. The advertisement that ran in several Danish-Canadian newspapers read "Dana Danish High School in Calgary, Alta. Large, light rooms. Single beds. Gymnasium."[315] The advertisement first and foremost dealt with the housing situation of its readers. It stressed the school's practical role in attempting to meet the Danish immigrants' basic needs while at the same time maintaining Danish culture.

The young men who worked as farm labourers often found themselves homeless in the winter, or at least looking for a better accommodations than the often squalid and lonely conditions they experienced in the farming communities.[316] Robert Hauge had emigrated from Denmark to work as a farm labourer in 1925. During his first winter in

---

[315] For instance, Viking: Danish-Canadian Weekly, November 3, 1928.

[316] Noted by Jakob Andersen, "Sandheden Om Canada: Landet Som Det Fretræder For Emigranten [The Truth About Canada: The Land As It Appears For the Immigrant]," Originally published in Calgary, 1926, A 515, DEA. See also Cecilia Danysk, " 'A Bachelor's Paradise': Homesteaders, Hired Hands, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1880-1930," in Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement, eds. Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Mouat, (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996), 154-185.

Alberta, he froze his hands so badly that his fingernails fell off. As a result, he lost his job and his room and board. He decided to enrol as a student at Dana School until his hands healed and he was able to work again.[317] The offer of room and board with his fellow countrymen was appealing to the young immigrant. Thus, the Alberta Folk Schools filled an essential need for Danish boarding houses along with providing educational instruction.[318] In fact, the school's role as a boarding house actually outlasted the school. The facility operated under the name Dana House until 1939, though the school had closed in 1935.[319]

In addition to the search for winter accommodations, the young immigrants had recreational needs. Harvesting time, when the hours were long and difficult and leisure was hard to come by, was replaced by the search for temporary jobs and amusement. Jakob Andersen, a journalist who toured Canada in 1926 and wrote a book of advice, described the situation of these young farm labourers:

> ...many Danish men, former [Danish] high school or trade school students, that at home would not think of squandering their time away, do it here. They let themselves be persuaded to take up an existence which is no existence at all...They sleep until noon, perhaps longer, play cards, smoke tobacco, eat and go to the theatre...I know people who have come into the habit of not working all winter. They are so idle in town, and when spring comes, they have used up all that they earned the previous summer.[320]

Andersen had a low view of the Danish farm labourers, arguing that without the sound advice and education offered by Danish Folk Schools, the unemployed men would

---

[317] Robert Hauge, "Stranger in a Strange Country: Experiences and Impressions from Canada," 1925, 2002.081.002a, DCNMA.
[318] Dana School's role as a boarding house is particularly emphasized in the chapter on Sharon Lutheran Church in C.M. Cherland's The Lutheran Legacy: Growth of Calgary's Lutheran Churches (Calgary: Century Calgary Publications, 1975), 24.
[319] Christensen, "Danish Folk Schools in Canada," in Danish Emigration to Canada, 114.
[320] Andersen, Sandheden Om Canada, 82.

squander their money and get into mischief. As an example, he cited the case of five Danish young men who robbed a Calgary bank.[321]

Robert Hauge corroborated the fact that many of the young Danes who came to the city with a substantial amount of money, looked for and succeeded in finding ways to spend it. They wanted new clothes, entertainment and an opportunity to socialize with their friends. Hauge explained that the "White Lunch" on 8th Street served as the local Danish hang-out, where the men spent many hours socializing during the 1920s.[322]

Dana School mentioned the presence of a gymnasium in its advertisement and throughout the school term, the school administration organized a variety of extra-curricular activities to meet their boarders' needs. These included gymnastics courses and presentations, parties on Danish holidays, dances, plays and musical evenings. As well both Dana and Dannevang hosted lectures by Danish personalities, among them were missionaries, representatives of the United Farmers of Alberta, the Alberta Wheat Pool, Canadian Pacific Railway settlement agents and world travelers.[323] A fall 1930 article in The Danish-Canadian Weekly explained that pupils of the Dana school would have access to the city library and museum and "other things that the city ha[d] to offer."[324] Finally, a trip to the mountains was planned for the 1930-1931 school year; yet another way the school tried to fulfill the students' recreational needs.[325]

The schools offered a cultural haven for Danish immigrants in a foreign country. An advertisement for Dana School from November 3, 1930 invoked this idea particularly

---

[321] Ibid., 84-85.
[322] Robert Hauge, "Stranger in a Strange Country: Experiences and Impressions from Canada," 1925, 2002.081.002a, DCNMA.
[323] See for instance Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, December 14, 1929; November 7, 1930; November 28, 1930.
[324] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, September 12, 1930.
[325] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, November 7, 1930.

well. It read "To celebrate Danish Christmas at a Danish Folk School, in the Danish Church and Congregation, who would not enjoy that?"[326] Traditional Danish Christmas was three days long, beginning on Christmas Eve and extending through Boxing Day. Many Danish immigrants noted that Canadians only celebrated on December 25th, a startling difference for them indeed.

The promise of cultural continuity was well-known to Danish newcomers. Niels Berthelsen came to Calgary in 1928. Dana School was his immediate destination, as he had no contacts in Calgary and because he knew that Dana was run by Danes for Danish immigrants.[327] The school advertised in Danish-language newspapers and obviously aimed their message at Danish readers. The school emphasized that boarders and students could expect to be fed good Danish food. Both schools celebrated Danish Christmas[328] and placed a significant emphasis on Lutheran education, thereby upholding religious traditions familiar to Danish immigrants even if they would not have existed within the Danish Folk Schools.

Another way that the Canadian schools did not follow the Danish model had to do with finding jobs for their pupils at the end of the school year. Dannevang School promised that in conjunction with an organization called the Scandinavian Employment Club, it would try to find jobs for both the boarding house guests and the school's pupils.[329] Similarly, Dana School also claimed to find employment for its students,

---

[326] Viking: Danish-Canadian Weekly, November 7, 1930.
[327] "Niels Berthelsen" in In Denmark Born-To Canada Sworn: Danish-Canadian Lives, ed. Birgit Flemming Larsen, (Aalborg, Denmark: The Danish Emigration Archives, 2000), 95-96.
[328] Rolf Buschardt Christensen, Biography of Robert A. Hauge, 1987, 2002.081.001, DCNMA.
[329] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, August 30, 1929.

though a school report published on September 12 1930 admitted that it was becoming more difficult to find jobs with the onset of the Depression.[330]

While traditional Danish Folk Schools were specifically tied to the rural agricultural community, the Albertan schools' presence in the two big cities in Alberta was no accident. In order to capture the attention of young Danish men, the schools had to be situated in the cities. The men wanted to leave the isolated rural communities in which they spent most of the year. They wanted to spend their money and participate in recreation activities. They wanted to meet with fellow Danes and socialize. If the schools wanted to attract this population, they had to meet these requirements, even if that meant they strayed quite far from the traditional Grundtvigian school model.

Dana and Dannevang had to balance the prioritization of Danish culture with the demands of the Alberta environment. Danish immigrant agricultural labourers had specific needs and desires that the schools had to attempt to fulfill in order to attract their interest. The young men wanted a place to live during the winter; they wanted to be entertained; and they wanted to find jobs in the upcoming year. They also wanted to learn English and Canadian customs so that they could find better jobs and prosper in their new homeland.

Dana, Dannevang and Danebod schools were all closed during the 1930s. As the result of the financial collapse, immigration for all intents and purposes ended, potential students had less expendable income for school tuition and the schools would not have been able to fulfill their promise of securing employment for their students at the end of the school year.

---

[330] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, September 12, 1930.

While the majority of historical sources name the Danish Folk Schools in Calgary—and specifically Dana School—as the educational resource most of the Danish immigrants relied upon when they first arrived in Western Canada, the Danes founded and operated several other important educational projects in Alberta. The community at Dalum was an energetic proponent of Danish education beginning in the late 1910s, shortly after the settlement began, and running through until the 1950s, although the format of the programs changed during those forty years.

The Dalum school project involved three parts. First, there was a Danish Folk School, which had a program similar to the Dana and Dannevang Folk Schools in Calgary. Second, there was Winter School that ran for a week, usually in January. Third, there was *Folkefest*, a three-day affair in the summer. All three projects were ways that Dalum endeavoured to preserve Danish culture through education.

The Dalum education projects balanced cultural preservation and social integration just as the Calgary schools did. Dalum aided the immigrant students in their quest for success in Canada. The difference between the schools in Calgary and the Dalum projects lies in how they worked towards this goal. In Calgary, the schools provided practical education for living in Alberta and concerned themselves with the students' housing, entertainment and employment needs. Dalum focused on cultural preservation and concerned itself most specifically with providing the immigrants with a sense of community in a foreign land.

Dalum's unique valuation of culture and community was the result of several factors. These included Dalum's being a rural center; the specific denomination that Dalum church belonged to; and the individual vision of the first pastor called to serve the

congregation there. The three school projects undertaken at Dalum operated in different ways but each cultivated a sense of community among the Danes and emphasized cultural preservation.

The urban location of Dana, Dannevang and Danebod was no coincidence. Danish labourers were drawn to the city and the schools attempted to serve that demographic. Dalum, however, was a rural community, involved both in agriculture and the coal-mining industry at the nearby town of Wayne. Consequently, while the population surrounding Dalum did include single Danish men, the community also had a second important audience. Dalum's educational project also sought to meet the needs of the Danish families who were part of the group settlement of Dalum and who were labouring to establish farms on the CPR land in the area. Attempts to educate these people about their cultural heritage required different tactics than those of the Folk Schools in the urban centers.

Because the *Dansk Folkesamfund* had founded the community of Dalum and because Bethlehem Danish Lutheran Church was of the DELC denomination, the Dalum congregation was very involved in education and the preservation of Danish culture in Alberta. The cooperation of the church in the Dalum education projects affected the kind of education offered. The most important connection between the Dalum Danish Lutheran Church and the school projects was in their leadership. The driving force behind the education projects at Dalum was Pastor Peter Rasmussen. Commentators on the Danish Folk School system have noted that the administrative position of the Grundtvigian schools in Denmark ultimately determined the success or failure of the schools. The widely-held belief in a principal's "personal charisma" would result in

greater attendance.[331] The architect behind Dalum's school projects is a prime example of how an energetic principal could carry a school.

While the Dalum settlers formed the congregation of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in 1918, their new Pastor, Peter Rasmussen did not arrive until May of 1920 from Ashland Michigan with his wife and seven children. Rasmussen would be the Pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church at Dalum until 1955. By the summer of 1921 he had organized the first *Folkefest* and following the harvest of that year he opened the Dalum Folk School, with 28 students enrolled. Rasmussen's own house and the church's assembly hall were used as classrooms and living quarters for the students and staff in addition to Rasmussen's family. Rasmussen's personal vision for Grundtvigian cultural education was an incredibly important factor in the projects that developed at his initiative.

Dalum Folk School operated in a manner similar to the Dana and Dannevang Schools. Like the Calgary-based schools, it operated in the winter months when the demand for labour was practically non-existent in the farming communities and it served the same demographic as the Calgary schools, seeking students from among young newly-immigrated Danish men. Like at Dana and Dannevang, English language instruction was the most vital part of helping the immigrant students. Rasmussen himself explained that the Folk School existed so that new Danish immigrants "could learn the language and customs of the new land."[332] New immigrants knew that they could count on the community at the Dalum Folk School to provide needed education in the early

---

[331] Borish, The Land of the Living, 196.
[332] Peter Rasmussen, "Moving to Dalum" in The History of Dalum, 30.

years.[333] As one of the school's teachers pointed out, the students were incredibly eager to learn the language, to the point where they sat through ten hours of class instruction per day to learn as quickly as possible.[334] The Danish journalist Aksel Sandemose, upon observing the English language instruction also commented that although this training strayed far from the original Grundtvigian Danish Folk School model, it was an important and necessary task to aid the immigrants.[335]

Similar to the Calgary schools, Rasmussen had to negotiate between maintaining Danish culture and aiding the immigrants in their quest towards integrating into Canadian society. However, whereas the Calgary schools weighed in heavily towards the integrationist side of the equation, Dalum School operated far more as a place of cultural preservation. While the school did endeavour to aid the students in becoming accustomed to life in Canada, Danish language and culture also played a substantial role in the school's programs.

Rasmussen emphasized that the Dalum Folk School existed to impart "cultural and spiritual values" to the young people who enrolled. This role of cultural and spiritual enlightenment placed Dalum directly in line with the Grundtvigian Folk School model. The school taught Danish gymnastics and folk dancing.[336] Evenings at the school were spent singing and playing Danish music.[337] The students put on Danish plays for the

---

[333] See account of Inger Rasmussen Holmen, daughter of Peter Rasmussen. Inger Rasmussen Holmen, "The Alfred Holmen Family" in Dalum and Area Reflections, 199.
[334] Ada Petersen, "The T.A. Petersens" in The History of Dalum, 188.
[335] Sandemose, in Aksel Sandemose and Canada, 103.
[336] Nora Andersen, "Olaf and Marie Jensen," in Dalum and Area Reflections, 228.
[337] Peter Rasmussen, "Glimpses From the Folk School: the First Winter, 1921," in The History of Dalum, 33.

entertainment of the Dalum community.[338] In this way, the Dalum School also endeavoured to maintain Danish culture.

While the Dalum School never functioned solely as a boarding house, it did operate as more than simply a venue for the education of young immigrants. Aksel Sandemose described the school as "a haven for more or less homeless Danish young people in Canada."[339] While offering an education, the school also filled the basic need for a place to gather during the winter months. Adolf Skinberg explained that his attendance had as much to do with the fact that Pastor Rasmussen had "several good-looking daughters" as it did with the religious education he received.[340]

Nis Christensen worked as an agricultural labourer for fifteen years after his emigration from Denmark. Every winter, he would enrol in Danish Folk School somewhere in North America. One year it was in Solvang, California, another year in Des Moines, Iowa. He spent two winters at Dalum Folk School. For Christensen as for many others, Folk School was simply something to do during the winter months.[341] Dalum School was an engaging and entertaining place where Danes could be together.

The need for community, and specifically Danish community, was particularly important at Christmas time. Dalum, like the schools in Calgary, offered a place for the immigrants to be together for this important Danish holiday. Rasmussen detailed the first Christmas spent at Dalum:

> We concentrated on making things homey and pleasant for [the church congregation] and the children. We got hold of a beautiful Christmas tree, we invited 10 or 12 of the bachelors to Christmas eve dinner. They came and we gathered at the table, sang as always "The Bells Proclaim Christmas," read the

---

[338] Peter Ostergaard, "Early Days in Dalum," in The History of Dalum, 31-32.
[339] Sandemose, in Aksel Sandemose and Canada, 102.
[340] "Alf and Barbara Skinberg," in Dalum and Area Reflections, 343.
[341] Norman Christensen, "History of Nis Christensen Family" in Dalum and Area Reflections, 166.

> Christmas message, prayed that God would spread peace in our hearts, home and all other places both in the colony and throughout the wide world. Yes, then Christmas was here and happiness rose at the candlelit tree and given expression as we sang carols and hymns until the midnight hour was struck.[342]

Enrolment at Dalum Folk School dwindled as the conditions worsened in the Depression. However, Dalum's response to these changes was significantly different than those of the schools in Calgary. Dana chose to operate simply as a boarding house for a number of years, thereby continuing to meet the immigrants' need for housing in the winter months. Dalum adopted a different tactic. When winter-long school terms became unsustainable, the school decided to run weeklong courses, which would draw a larger audience and continue the project of cultural education. Like the longer programs, the one-week school was intended to impart cultural and spiritual values through Bible studies, classes in literature, lectures on various subjects, and time for personal development through reading or tutoring.[343] For Rasmussen and his Dalum Folk School, the Grundtvigian model of cultural and spiritual enlightenment was the most important element of the school; the element that ought to be preserved as long as possible.

The Folk School at Dalum, just like the Folk Schools in Calgary, was specifically designed to educate young immigrant men in order to maintain Danish culture. However Rasmussen recognized that the many Danish families settled in Alberta were another audience for cultural education. Consequently, he organized two additional projects that engaged families and sustained Danish culture in the farming community. These projects were a distinctive application of Danish culture to the Alberta environment, providing both cultural education and community to the Danish settlers.

---

[342] Peter Rasmussen, "Peter Rasmussen's First Christmas at Dalum" in The History of Dalum, 26.
[343] Peter Rasmussen, "Dalum One-Week Folk School," in The History of Dalum, 45.

The first of these two projects overlapped with the changes forced on the Folk School in the 1930s. It is not clear exactly when Dalum began running "Wintermeetings," although Rolf Christensen suggests that they were initiated during the 1930s, when the Folk School closed.[344] While Christensen's dating of the Dalum Wintermeetings suggests that they were a continuation of the project to teach the young bachelors, they were emphatically meant to minister to the needs of families.

Early settler Ada Petersen described the wintermeetings thus:

> The first years these meetings lasted a whole week and speakers came up from our sister congregations in the States. The parsonage was filled to overflowing, as people came long distances to attend. As roads were bad and cars few, many stayed the week. Homes were small; but where there is room in the heart there will be room in the home.[345]

Families could generally manage to attend a program that was only a week long, even when it meant driving long distances every day or staying the week in someone else's home. As in the case of the young bachelors, there was less work to be done on the farms in the winter, so families had time to spare for such gatherings.

The Dalum Wintermeetings operated similarly to the Folk School except that they focused solely on cultural and spiritual education. Pastors from Danish Lutheran Churches in the United States came to give lectures on various subjects, including history and literature; Pastor Rasmussen led Bible Studies and time was spent singing Danish folk songs.[346] In addition, the Saturday was specifically "children's day" for area children who were in school all week and therefore could not attend. Children's day, which was

---

[344] Christensen, "Danish Folk Schools in Canada," in Danish Emigration to Canada, 110.
[345] Ada Petersen, "Wintermeetings and Folkefest," in The History of Dalum, 18.
[346] Ibid.

held in Danish, included songs and prayers for children, Bible stories and Danish folk tales and, to add to the appeal, chocolate and cake were served.[347]

While the Dalum Wintermeetings put into practice the Grundtvigian principle of cultural and spiritual enlightenment, at the same time they also filled a more basic need for the rural settlers. Peter Rasmussen's daughter explained:

> January and February on Alberta Prairies are cold, dull months when the human spirit sags. To bring a new surge of life into a humdrum existence, Father urged people to gather for a week of winter meetings.[348]

To another attendee, the fellowship experienced at these meetings was as important as any knowledge gained.[349] In this way, the Wintermeetings were an adaptation of the Grundtvigian school model. The settlers came together to socialize as well as to learn about their Danish culture. In effect, they came to be part of a Danish-Albertan community.

The Dalum *Folkefest* was an event very similar to the Wintermeetings, except that it took place over the course of two days, usually in late June. *Folkefest*, first held in the summer of 1921, took place outside until 1945 in a coulee used as a natural amphitheatre, after which it was moved into the Dalum Church. Like the Wintermeetings, *Folkefest* was aimed at families. Invitations were given to people from the Danish communities at Dickson, Standard, Hussar and Edmonton, and it was also common for Danes from isolated non-Danish communities to come.[350] Observers claimed that up to four hundred people would attend the event in the early years.[351]

---

[347] Kirken og Hjemmet 4, no. 4, March 1934.
[348] "The Peter Rasmussen Home," in The History of Dalum, 40.
[349] Ada Petersen, "Wintermeetings and Folkefest," in The History of Dalum, 18.
[350] Ibid.,, 19.
[351] "The Peter Rasmussen home," in The History of Dalum, 40.

Like the urban school projects, Dalum's *Folkefests* involved the Church much more than did the traditional Danish Grundtvigian schools. The *Folkefest* was initiated by Pastor Rasmussen and was organized with the cooperation and efforts of Bethlehem Danish Lutheran Church in Dalum. Consequently, an open-air church service was one mainstay of the event. Danes from isolated non-Danish communities were given the opportunity to baptize or confirm their children into the Danish Lutheran Church, something they could not otherwise do.[352]

The format of *Folkefest* was not that of a typical Danish Folk School. However, it did offer an abridged version of the cultural education seen at the Alberta Folk Schools. Guest speakers gave lectures on various subjects. There were Danish songs, folk dancing and plays and church services with Danish hymns were a part of the program.[353] The assembled Danes, though they came from mixed-ethnic communities and from distant locations throughout Alberta, were given the chance to remember and share their Danish cultural heritage. The event fulfilled an important role as an educator and preserver of Danish culture.

Like the urban and the Dalum Folk Schools, *Folkefest* provided much more than just education, either cultural or practical. *Folkefest* created an opportunity for the attendees to be a part of a Danish-Albertan community, and this sense of community was as important to the people as any cultural education. Numerous observers remarked that *Folkefest* was a place to meet up with long-lost Danish acquaintances from across the province. As one of Pastor Rasmussen's daughters explained, *Folkefest* was a time of "relaxing, resting and fellowship sorely need by these lonesome, hard-working

---

[352] Ada Petersen, "Wintermeetings and Folkfest," in The History of Dalum, 19.
[353] Ibid.

pioneers."[354] This time of fellowship was particularly precious during the Depression. A write-up of the 1933 *Folkefest* observed that around five hundred people attended the "enjoyable and worry-free days" though it was evident all around that crops were doing very badly and there had been no rain in three months.[355] *Folkefest* provided a rare occasion for them to get together, participate in "Danish" activities, and forget for a time their normal lives.

Because it created much-needed community among the otherwise far-flung Danish immigrants, *Folkefest* lasted much longer than the Folk Schools did. Records show that it took place into the 1950s, although in a different venue than before. Whereas the young Danish bachelors were an unsettled and changeable group, the demographic of Danish families was a ready audience for cultural education. The families desired to be a part of a Danish community and were interested in preserving their Danish cultural heritage, and the event of the *Folkefest* presented an opportunity for this.

The Dickson school project offers an example of a completely different direction taken by a Danish community organizing cultural and practical education. Rather that operating outside the provincial education system like the Folk School projects did, at Dickson the community took the initiative to ensure a public high school education for the Danish settlement, even when it meant they had to build and staff the school themselves. The Dickson school projects worked within the existing system but still managed to insert elements of "Danishness" into the education provided.

By the late 1920s, the community of Dickson had been settled for twenty-five years and was relatively stable and prosperous. However, a second wave of Danes came

---

[354] "The Peter Rasmussen Home," in The History of Dalum, 40.
[355] Kirken og Hjemmet, 3, no. 9, August 1933.

to Alberta during the 1920s and a number of these people settled at Dickson or in neighbouring communities. Dickson was the earliest-established Danish community in Alberta, destined to quietly integrate into the Alberta cultural landscape. However, the later wave of settlers provided fresh Danish blood, a reminder of the older settlers' Danish cultural heritage and new group of school-aged children. The community responded to this additional influx of Danes by initiating school projects not previously undertaken.

The education opportunities for the children of the first generation of immigrants were limited. Life was very hard in the early settlement years at Dickson. The land was covered in scrub bush that had to be cleared and many of the farms were on swampland that needed to be drained. As well, a conflict developed that threatened to split the church, and which required a great deal of effort to solve and soothe hard feelings. The settlers had little extra energy to put towards organizing cultural events. Dickson's first minister, Pastor Gundesen, taught Danish-language school for his and some other local children for the two years prior to the establishment of the public school, but this Danish education ended when the "official" school began.[356]

The Kingo (the government authorities misspelled it as Kings) primary school was built at Dickson in 1906.[357] As was common throughout rural communities in Alberta, the school was funded and staffed by the Alberta provincial government, enabling the children in the community to receive an English education. The public school education was designed to integrate immigrant children and make them "Canadian." However, this education ended at grade eight and if students wanted any

---

[356] Connie Potter, "H.P. Jorgensen," in Grub Axe to Grain, 52.
[357] "Dickson School No. 1452," in Grub Axe to Grain, 36.

further schooling, they had to go to Innisfail, some thirty kilometres away, and would be forced to board away from home.

Following the new wave of Danish immigration in the 1920s, the Bethany Church congregation realized that it would be an excellent church outreach, fitting nicely into their mission-oriented purpose, to start a high school at Dickson. The congregation could oversee the school, providing further education for the students who wanted it, and offer Biblical training at the same time.[358] Jens Dixen, a missionary who was temporarily serving as Bethany's pastor while they called another one, began the first "high school" in 1928 and taught Bible lessons. The school was conducted in the basement of the church and had between eight and ten students.[359] However, this program was by no means a "proper" high school. What the school project was lacking was a charismatic leader like the successful Folk Schools in Denmark and in Dalum had. In 1929, such a leader appeared in the person of the newly called Pastor Paul Nyholm.

When Nyholm arrived as the new pastor of the Bethany congregation, the Dickson community gained an enthusiastic and energetic leader and new vision for the high school project. Although Nyholm only served the community for seven years, he initiated many outreach projects; including a more formal school than the one Jens Dixen operated the year before he arrived.

The mandate of the school changed at the same time its leadership did. Jens Dixen had originally suggested that the community build a Folk School at Dickson. However, the school board decided it would be more beneficial to provide an English-language

---

[358] "Building of the Church and School" in "Story of Dickson Alberta," 13.
[359] "Dates and Events to Remember," in "Story of Dickson Alberta," 20.

provincially-approved public school.[360] The need for education universally recognized throughout Alberta was greater than the Danish culture-centered training common in Folk Schools. Nyholm was a well-educated individual and could better meet the provincial standard than could his predecessor. As a result, by 1933, the school was granted government endorsement up to grade twelve.[361]

While the school's curriculum was government-approved, the teaching staff was not provided by the government but came from within the Danish community at Dickson and was paid by the church congregation. The first teacher of the school was Else Gundesen, who was the daughter of the first pastor of the Dickson community. Gundesen was teaching at Dana Folk School in Calgary when the community at Dickson contacted her about teaching. Gundesen offered to teach at the Dickson high school for whatever wages the congregation could gather together.[362]

Pastor Nyholm also taught some classes, including Latin and Bible study, and was the acting principal.[363] While Dickson High School was emphatically not a Folk School, the fact that the teachers would have been familiar with the Danish language and culture would have made the school less intimidating to immigrant students than a different, non-Danish, high school.

The high school student body was partly made up of school-aged teenagers from the Dickson area. The school advertised cheap room and board so that students from more distant communities could attend. This offer was extended to both male and female students. In 1933, a dormitory was built so that female students could stay in Dickson and

---

[360] George Nissen, "Dickson Dormitory and High School," in "Story of Dickson, Alberta," 39.
[361] Kirken og Hjemmet 3, no. 10, September 1933.
[362] George Nissen, "Dickson Dormitory and High School," in "Story of Dickson, Alberta," 39.
[363] Andy Dyrholm, in "Story of Dickson, Alberta" 48.

go to school.[364] Male students were expected to stay on nearby farms and do chores for their room and board or live with a local widow and help pay for groceries.[365]

The school also offered education to adults who had missed out on school during their teenage years. Similarly to those running Dana Folk School, the administration at Dickson recognized the opportunity to fix a deficiency caused by the minimal provincial education infrastructure and ensured that settlers who wanted high school education were given the opportunity. Some of the students from Dana Folk School in Calgary followed instructor Else Gundesen when she left Calgary to teach at Dickson. [366] Niels Thesberg, for instance, began his studies at Dana and continued them at Dickson in 1930.[367]

Another individual, Archie Morck, had to quit school at sixteen after completing grade eight to work on the farm, but when he was twenty-one, was able to take advantage of the Dickson School and return and continue his education. He finished grade twelve at Dickson when he was 26.[368] These older students were nicknamed the "Pilgrim Fathers" because they were older than normal for High School and because they were all first-generation immigrants.[369] For several years the high school also ran programs beginning in November for those who had to take part in harvest and therefore could not begin in September.[370] In these ways, the high school was modified, expanding to non-traditional enrolment that would accommodate more of the Danish immigrant students.

The church saw the school as a mission opportunity. Pastor Nyholm explained:

---

[364] C.M. Christiansen, "The Dickson Story," in Grub Axe to Grain, 32.
[365] Andy Dyrholm, in "Story of Dickson, Alberta" 48.
[366] Esther Thesberg, "Else Gundesen," in 10th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, (Copenhagen: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1991), 151.
[367] "Niels Thesberg," in Grub Axe to Grain, 101.
[368] Morck, Five Pennies, 150.
[369] Andy Dyrholm, in "Story of Dickson, Alberta," 49.
[370] Kirken og Hjemmet 1, no. 11, October 1931. Kirken og Hjemmet 2, no. 10, September 1932. Kirken og Hjemmet 3, no. 10, September 1933.

> Many of the students in Dickson High School came from unchurched homes. Some were baptized or confirmed during their stay at Dickson. Others who had been baptized as children were converted or received renewed spiritual life. Others again were strong, confessing Christians and brought rich blessings to the Dickson congregation and community.[371]

Stressing the mission agenda, Dickson high school was continually mentioned in the Canadian Danish Lutheran Church newspaper. The paper, Kirken og Hjemmet (Church and Home), was edited by Pastor Nyholm. In its thorough account of the activities of many of the Danish congregations throughout Canada, Kirken og Hjemmet also often contained information on Dickson High School. There were entries about the start and end dates of the school, on the scholastic success of the students, on the attendance numbers of the school and detailing upcoming school events. Those interested in the school were advised to write to Pastor Paul Nyholm for further information. The fact that a church newspaper gave space for the activities of a public high school again speaks to the fact that the school was tied to the Danish Lutheran Church in Dickson.

The Dickson High School, while it was a public school funded partly by the Alberta government, was first and foremost the result of the efforts of the Danish church community at Dickson. Until 1938, the school was run entirely by the Dickson community, with the help of a $2.25 per day grant from the provincial government and a tuition of forty dollars a year per student.[372] The high school was run entirely by the Dickson community until 1938, when the cost of maintaining it became too burdensome for a community suffering from the Depression and as result the provincial government took over its running.[373]

---

[371] Paul Nyholm, "A Former Pastor Writes of Memories and Experiences," in "Story of Dickson, Alberta," 35.
[372] C.M. Christiansen, "The Dickson Story," in Grub Axe to Grain, 32.
[373] Ibid.

However, as Andy Dyrholm, member of the 1930 student body, explained,

> It was truly a community school founded and started as a community effort. It was a public school as it received a small grant through the public school board. First and last it was a Christian school. It was to educate young people to prepare themselves for Christian service wherever they were to go.[374]

Bethany Church and the community at Dickson took the initiative to found a high school and developed the curriculum in such a way that it met provincial standards and at the same time, served as a mission outreach and provided a Biblical education.

In addition to the Dickson High School, the Dickson community also organized Danish language classes in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The earlier generation had not had time for teaching the second generation the Danish language, but with the arrival of more Danish immigrants, maintenance of the language became more important. Among the second wave of Danes, the children could understand oral Danish and speak it but they could not read and write it, something the parents thought absolutely necessary.[375]

The children's Danish language classes were another outreach program of Bethany Church. They were organized by Pastor Nyholm and ran for two or three weeks in the summer months. The program included Danish language lessons and Bible study and play time.[376] Classes were free for all children, from the Dickson community and elsewhere. In 1931, the school apparently had students from Kevisville, Markerville, Trochu, Ponoka, Calgary and, of course, Dickson.[377] In 1932, while the children's home communities were not recorded, Kirken og Hjemmet did relate that the program had thirty-eight students, seven of whom were from outside of Dickson.[378] There are no

---

[374] Andy Dyrholm, in "Story of Dickson Alberta," 48.
[375] Andy Kjearsgaard, unpublished manuscript entitled "Tales From an Immigrant Boy," DCNMA.
[376] Kirken og Hjemmet, 1, no. 8, July 1931.
[377] Kirken og Hjemmet, 1, no. 9, August 1931.
[378] Kirken og Hjemmet, 2, no. 10, September 1932.

records to indicate how long this children's Danish language school operated, but it was another example of the Danish Lutheran Church at Dickson running education programs as outreach to the community.

In summary, Dickson's most important education project was the Dickson High School, which was founded at the initiative of the church congregation and was run for a number of years largely by the community. Dickson did not create specifically Danish schools as existed in Dalum and Calgary, but rather enabled the creation of a government-approved school. Still, neither the curriculum nor the student body were entirely traditional for a high school. In addition, by running a children's Danish language program, the church capitalized on an opportunity to minister to the educational and spiritual needs of a younger generation. The community and the church, under the leadership of Pastor Nyholm, succeeded in creating, for a time, a space where the Danish immigrant students' needs for education, as well as religious and cultural familiarity, were met.

All told, as Christensen emphasizes, the schools filled the role of educating and assisting new Danish immigrants in their first years in Alberta.[379] The Alberta schools provided their students with elements of Danish culture, giving them a sense of familiarity, but rather than working to preserve Old World culture, they worked to ease the immigrants' transition into Canadian society. The schools helped the students make sense of the Albertan environment, in terms of language, its customs and its agricultural and building practices.

Because of the Alberta Folk Schools' non-threatening and integration-aiding service to the Danish-Albertan community, the federal and provincial bureaucrats

---

[379] Christensen, "Danish Folk Schools in Canada," in Danish Emigration to Canada, 114.

concerned with proper education for immigrants had no need to react negatively to them. While the Alberta Folk School projects tried to maintain some semblances of Danish tradition and culture, they also enabled and aided the assimilation process that the public school system was supposed to accomplish.

Chapter Five: Informal Cultural Institutions

The church and the school were the two formal institutions most visible in the Danish-Albertan communities. The written records of these institutions make it relatively easy to research and write about their history, and to learn how Old World culture continued to prevail in the new settlements. However, the discussion of these two institutions alone gives the impression that there was no Danish community outside of church and school. There was in fact an informal Danish community that pre-dated the establishment of the church. For instance, the account written by the pioneers of Dickson speaks of a Dane named Hans Madsen who lived between Innisfail and Dickson. Madsen aided the Danes in their first journey to the Dickson area, volunteering to guide them, hauling their freight, and offering them a place to stay for the night, all simply because they were fellow Danes.[380]

At the same time as many Danish immigrants depended on the Danish Church for the retention of their native culture, there was also a cultural community among those who chose not to go to church. Ole Nissen, who came to Hussar, Alberta in the late 1920s, was a part of an extensive Danish community in the southern and central Alberta area. In all his letters he never mentions the formal church. His Danish cultural community was outside of any structured church experience.[381] Similarly, the Christensen family lived in the area around Standard and chose not to be involved in the Danish

---

[380] Bethany Lutheran Congregation, Dickson Koloniens Historie, 4-6. Grub Axe to Grain mentions that fellow Dane Daniel Morkeberg also helped out those first immigrants when they arrived. Eva Castella "Carl Christiansen, 1877-1945," in Grub Axe to Grain, 43.

[381] Ole Nissen, A Paradise For the Poor: Hussar, Standard and Caroline, Alberta, Letters of Ole Nissen, 1923-1937. Ed. Joan Walter. (Alberta: Alberta Records Publication Board, 2001).

Church there. However, they too were a part of a Danish ethnic community that existed outside of the Church.[382]

Danish culture was also maintained in homes throughout Alberta in less formal and public ways than the Church or the schools offered. The use of Danish language within the home, the celebration of Danish holidays, and the preparation of ethnic food were three relatively unobtrusive ways that the Danes maintained their heritage in the early years of their settlement in Alberta. In addition, the Danes established other relatively informal cultural organizations that served to bring the immigrants together for limited times.

Ethnic historians have often used language as an "index of acculturation."[383] The transition an ethnic community living in the New World made from speaking their native tongue to English, the struggles to retain this language or the imperative to give it up, is one way to track the assimilation process. In the case of the Danish communities in Alberta, the immigrants' native tongue was indeed one way the people continued an element of their Old World culture. The language was a familiar and comfortable means of communication within homes and the Danish community at large, and it was a vehicle through which broader Danish culture could be transmitted to the later generations.

While the immigrants were required to learn English in order to attend public school and to participate in Canadian society, at home the Danish language did not cease to be spoken. Danish communities in the United States experienced considerable discrimination during the First World War and the 1920s when they attempted to

---

[382] Barbara Holliday, To Be a Cowboy: Oliver Christensen' Story, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003), 24; 29; 39. Oliver Christensen explains that the founding members of Nazareth Lutheran Church in Standard were quite unfriendly towards those who were not regular attenders.
[383] Dahlie A Social History of Scandinavian Immigration, 63.

continue speaking Danish.[384] In Canada, where ethnically based racism against the Danes was never substantial, the immigrants were not discouraged from speaking their mother tongue at home. Individual families made their own decision on whether or how to continue the use of Danish.

The "tragedy of the first generation" is the term journalist Aksel Sandemose used to describe the difficult predicament of the Danish immigrants—and in particular the immigrant women—as he observed it during the 1920s. In Sandemose's opinion, the first generation never truly learned the English language, and when their children became Canadianized and Anglophone through the public school system, the parents and children had great difficulty relating to one another. The children could speak to one another in English without the parents understanding and thereby caused the parents to feel estranged.[385] While Sandemose presents a rather dire version of the situation, he does draw attention to an important fact: language was an important part of the Danish settlers' cultural identity and therefore it was difficult for many people to watch their language lose ground.

Partly, speaking Danish was merely a matter of convenience. Particularly within the Danish group settlements, it was easier to continue speaking a familiar language than try to express oneself in English. Aksel Sandemose observed that the first generation immigrants rarely truly learned to speak English but rather spoke a mixture of Danish and English which Sandemose thought a bastardization of the original Danish.[386] Since many of the immigrants remained a part of a Danish community in Alberta, they were never

---

[384] See experiences of Danish-Americans in Matteson and Matteson, Blossoms on the Prairie, 33; Petersen, "Language and Loyalty."
[385] Sandemose, in Aksel Sandemose and Canada, 57.
[386] Ibid., 100, 150.

fully immersed in English-speaking society, and could get away with a scant knowledge of the language. Olaf Linck, another journalist visiting Canada in the 1920s, asked of the community of Standard "What does it signify to live in a little closed society in an enormous foreign land?" Linck thought the insular quality of the colony, illustrated by the fact that few of the immigrants learned English by choice, hindered the immigrants from fully participating in society.[387]

All judgements aside, using Danish was simply easier. Many Danish parents decreed that when the children were at home they would speak Danish, not English, for the benefit of parental comprehension. In the Christensen home, Danish was the language of choice, particularly among the first generation but also in the second and third generation. Since the old grandparents could not speak English, Danish was the language all three generations could speak and understand. It was often the case that second generation immigrant children did not learn to speak English until they started school.[388] Written communication, however, was most often done in English, and Christensen children born in Canada never learned to read or write Danish.[389]

Many of the immigrants strove to cultivate an oral knowledge of the language among their children. In part, this nurturing of the language was done in an attempt to preserve Danish heritage for generations to come. The valuing of Danish culture and preserving the language for its own sake occurred especially in the Rasmussen household in Dalum, since Pastor Peter Rasmussen was a firm and outspoken Grundtvigian. Not

---

[387] Linck, Kanada: Det Store Fremtidsland, 89-90.
[388] For instance, see Morck, Five Pennies, 6-7. Bill Mortensen, "Bill Mortensen Family," in Tilley Trails and Tales, 296. Vera Nielsen Autobiography, in 13th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, (Edmonton: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1994), 45. Nielsen Children, "Aksel Nielsen Family History," in Danaview to Standard, 67; Inger (nee Jacobsen) Iwaasa, Biography of Peter and Asta Jacobsen, January 10, 1997, 2000.020.077, DCNMA.
[389] Holliday, To Be a Cowboy, 60. See also Nielsen children, "Aksel Nielsen Family History," in Grub Axe to Grain, 69.

only were his children and the students of his Folk School to keep up their Danish language skills,[390] but anyone who stayed in the Rasmussen household for any length of time could also expect to converse in Danish. One journalist who stayed at the Rasmussens' during the Dalum Wintermeetings explained that during his stay at the house he was expected to converse, read and sing in the Danish language in order to be a part of the household.[391]

Knowledge of the Danish language was necessary for passing on many other important parts of Danish culture. Danish folk stories and songs made far more sense when related in their original language than when they were translated. Consequently, parents who sought to teach their children Danish folklore and music also taught them the language. For instance, one immigrant woman remembers deliberately teaching her children a bedtime song entitled "*Jeg er træt og går til ro*" (I am tired and go to sleep) and singing it often during their childhood years in the 1930s.[392] Other families also took measures to ensure their Canadian-born children learned Danish so that they could understand folk stories and songs from the Grundtvigian Folk High School Songbook. [393]

For some parents, it was particularly important that their children be able to converse with their grandparents and other relatives in Denmark, so they ensured their children acquired knowledge of written Danish. One second generation girl learned Danish at the Rasmussen house in Dalum so that she could read letters written by family

---

[390] Interview with Esther Rasmussen Schultz, in Paulsen, Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies, 49-57.
[391] Kirken og Hjemmet 5, no. 5, March 1935.
[392] Vera Nielsen autobiography, in 13th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, 50.
[393] For instance, Knud Elgaard, "The Early Life of One Immigrant" in 13th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, (Edmonton: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1994), 172; Else Toebes, "Einer and Marie Thomsen and Family," in Dalum and Area Reflections, 360; Inger (nee Jacobsen) Iwaasa, Biography of Peter and Asta Jacobsen, January 10, 1997, 2000.020.077, DCNMA.

members in Danish.[394] One family, who immigrated to the Dickson area in 1929, worried about the children losing all connection with their grandparents in Denmark, particularly once they started school. Teaching their children Danish was how the parents sought to combat the distance and potential loss of family relationships. [395]

Historians often argue that when immigrants intermarried with other ethnics, their native culture was increasingly watered down and their language abandoned.[396] However, this was not always the case among the Danes. In some instances, the non-Danish partner (usually the woman, as there were more Danish men in Canada than women) would, by choice or otherwise, learn the Danish language in order to fit into their husband's family.[397] Marrying into the Danish group settlements made learning the language particularly important. Lily Enevoldsen did not know she had married a Dane until she arrived in Standard and met his parents who only spoke Danish in their home. She quickly had to learn the language in order to communicate with her in-laws.[398] A similar situation occurred in the Dalum area, when a female school teacher married one of the Danish immigrants and was immersed in the ethnic enclave there.[399] There would have been a lesser need to learn Danish when an ethnic intermarriage occurred in a settlement that was not specifically Danish. However, when the brides became part of one of the

---

[394] For instance, Karen Sandford, "Kaj and Anna Petersen," in Dalum and Area Reflections, 312; Inger Jacobsen Iwaasa, Biography of Peter and Asta Jacobsen, January 10, 1997, 2000.020.077, DCNMA.
[395] E. Sevelsted, ed., Nybyggerliv I Canada: Fra Poppelkrat til Højfarm- I Breve og Billede [Settler Life in Canada: From Poplar Bush to High Farm- In Letters and Pictures], (Oustrupland, Denmark: Amtscentertryk, 1998), Hans Richter, 114, 149.
[396] For instance, Howard Palmer, "Immigration and Ethnic Settlement, 1920-1985," in Peoples of Alberta eds. Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer, (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985), 36.
[397] While he does not mention specific cases, Aksel Sandemose mentions that these circumstances were far from uncommon. According to Sandemose, the Danish group settlements had a powerful "converting" effect, convincing English-speaking Canadians to learn Danish in order to fit in. Sandemose, in Aksel Sandemose and Canada, 68.
[398] Lily Enevoldsen, "Enevold Enevoldsen: Memories of the Pioneer Town of Standard," in From Danaview to Standard, 198.
[399] Mae Jorgensen, "Jorgensen, Mads and Family," in Dalum and Area Reflections, 237-238. See also Mildred Rasmussen, "Holger and Mildred Rasmussen," in Dalum and Area Reflections, 329.

Danish communities, they had to learn the language or feel lonely and excluded, as did one American woman who married into the Dalum community.[400]

Danish-language newspapers were an important means by which the language was continued in Canada. Jorgen Dahlie notes that for all the Scandinavian groups in Canada, the press served both as an educational resource and a "forum for reiterating the cultural values of the homeland."[401] Several Danish-Canadian newspapers were published in the years prior the Second World War although few of them survived for any substantial length of time. Three secular Danish newspapers published in Canada and available in Alberta households included the Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, published in Toronto, the Dansk-Canadisk Tidende (Danish Canadian Times) published in Montreal and Danskeren (The Dane), published in Calgary. None of these publications lasted through the Depression.[402]

Kirken og Hjemmet (Church and Home), a Danish Lutheran Church publication of the UDELC branch, was published in Dickson from 1930 until 1961 and was one of the longest lasting Danish language periodicals.[403] Whereas the secular papers tried to provide coverage of Danes across Canada, Kirken og Hjemmet focused only on Western Canada. It was a resource on the events of the Danish community, particularly those affiliated with the Church. Danish-language publications, both secular and religious, were also available from the United States.[404]

These periodicals served an important purpose for the Danish-Canadian immigrants. They filled the very practical role of informing the readership of upcoming

---

[400] Mike Andersen, "Andersen, Martin P. and Family," in Dalum and Area Reflections, 131.
[401] Jorgen Dahlie, "Scandinavian Immigration, Assimilation and Settlement Patterns in Canada," 11.
[402] Art Genke, "The Danes in Canada and Their Archival Record," 66-67.
[403] Hale, "Danes", 411.
[404] Ibid.

events, Danish-owned businesses and job opportunities and other sundry news from within the Danish communities across the country. The Viking, for instance, reported on news for both denominations of the Danish Lutheran Church, advertised upcoming Danish-community events across Canada and ran editorials on issues concerning Danish-Canadians. It published stories on Danish-Canadian personalities and visits of important people from Denmark. Finally, it also published lost-persons column so that Danes across Canada could keep track of one another. Because for the most part these periodicals were written in the Danish language, in addition to any functional practical role that they served in informing their readership, they were also simply an ongoing resource of Danish-language printed word. For those immigrants who could not read English, they provided an opportunity to read and stay connected with the Danish North American community that was otherwise hard to come by.[405]

The Danish language played an important role in the lives of the first generation of immigrants, reminding them of their homeland and providing an easier method of communication than English. Whether or not they used it on a regular basis, many of the second generation still could understand Danish. However, by the time this group reached adulthood, English more or less won out as the language of choice for daily communication. The native language was maintained for the benefit of the older generation and for the preservation of cultural traditions. The Danes sought to fit into broader society, not become an isolated ethnic bloc, so English comprehension was vital. When the immigrant children started school, they began to learn to function in English

[405] Bjork, "Scandinavian Migration to the Canadian Prairie Provinces," 22-23.

and, as a 1930 article in The Viking deplored, this was the first step towards the loss of Danish culture and language among the immigrants.[406]

While the Danish language served a limited and brief purpose in the immigrant communities, other important parts of Danish culture lasted much longer. As one cultural historian explained it, "language is important, but [it] is only the fabric in which we clothe our thoughts and feelings."[407] Danes are very passionate about their *fester*; their celebrations and holidays.[408] Consequently, the practice of traditional holidays is another way to gauge how Danish culture was maintained. As Friedman points out, Christmas has been and continues to be a very important part of Danish culture and a season on which many Danish traditions are centered.[409] Christmas is and was an important holiday in Denmark and in the early years many of the Danish immigrants sought to continue its observance in the new settlements in Alberta. Many of the immigrants' letters, diaries and memoirs record the surprise they felt upon arriving in Alberta and discovering that Christmas was celebrated differently here than in Denmark. In Denmark, Christmas celebrations begins with *Lillejuleaften* (literally Little Christmas Eve) on December 23 and continues in various forms until as late as January 6, which is *Hellige Tre Kongers Aften*, also known as Twelfth Night or Epiphany.[410]

Of course, Danes who had first lived in the United States understood that these twelve days of celebration were not practiced in North America. However, Danes who came directly from Europe had no such previous knowledge. In particular, young men

---

[406] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, August 2, 1929.
[407] Scott, "The Dual Heritage of the Scandinavian Immigrant," 31.
[408] Judith Friedman, We Are a Little Land: Cultural Assumptions in Danish Everyday Life, (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 26. Friedman goes into great detail on the place of *fester* in Danish society.
[409] Friedman, We Are a Little Land, 30.
[410] Ibid., 33.

who worked as labourers for non-Danish farmers were shocked to discover they got only one day off at Christmas-time. One homesick immigrant wrote

> Christmas is the time of year when the immigrants' thoughts drift most strongly towards home. That Christmas Eve we spent here in the train car we talked of the Christmas Eves we had celebrated back home in Denmark.
>
> I remember we comforted each other by saying that those back at home did not know what we were dealing with here.
>
> Christmas is not so important an event in America as it is back home. Only Christmas day is holy and an extra good dinner is served, most often turkey. Otherwise one lives on Christmas as on any other day.[411]

This lack of proper observance of Christmas was a common complaint among the Danes.[412]

When the immigrants established their own farms and group settlements were formed, the Danes could carry out the Christmas-time cultural practices. Otto Christensen, who was surprised when his employer expected him to work on December 26th, implemented a different way of doing things once he was on his own farm in the Standard area. He and his Danish hired man ceased work between Christmas Eve and January 6th, as was traditional in Denmark.[413] Likewise, A. Vester, the immigrant whose comments on the difference between Danish and North American Christmas appear in the previous quotation, also later settled in a Danish community in Eastern Alberta. Once he bought land in a group settlement, Vester could once again take part in the comparatively lengthy Christmas celebrations the Danish settlers organized.[414] The Calgary-based

---

[411] A. Vester, Blandt Danske På Kanadas Prærie: Virkelighedsskildring Af Ni Års Ophold I Kanada Og U.S.A. [Among the Danes on Canada's Prairie: A Realistic Representation Of Nine Years' Stay Among the Danes on Canada's Prairie], (Viborg, Denmark: Chr. Wolhert's Forlag, 1922), 23.

[412] See also Holliday, To Be A Cowboy, 15; Svend Jensen, "Early Years in Canada," in 11th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book (Dickson, Alberta: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1992), 102.

[413] Holliday, To Be a Cowboy, 46.

[414] Vester, Blandt Danske På Kanadas Prærie, 66.

Danish Folk Schools also advertised that their students and boarders would be able to be a part of Danish Christmas celebrations.[415]

Settlers in the Danish group settlements laboured to preserve "Danish Christmas" in a variety of ways, though only rarely did they extend the Christmas season to the full twelve days like the Christensens did. However, they did extend it beyond the 25th of December. Many accounts talk about events on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Second Christmas Day, meaning that the holiday season extended at least three days in some instances.[416] Even in the difficult conditions endured by the first Danish settlers at Dickson in 1903, Christmas celebrations were continued. On Christmas Eve, all the settlers came together in the house that was the biggest and had the most furniture, and on Christmas Day they met at another immigrant's house, bringing the community's sole Christmas tree with them.[417] They decorated their tree with gifts to be shared, including toys, handkerchiefs, cookies, and hairbands.[418]

In Danish tradition, Christmas Eve is far more important than Christmas Day.[419] Consequently, when all of the other Christmas days were forgotten, Christmas Eve remained the main celebratory day among the immigrants. Christmas Day held secondary importance, contrary to the North American tradition. One Danish-Albertan memoir describes the practice:

> To a Dane, Christmas is really Christmas Eve, December 24th. That's when Danes have their big Christmas meal and family Christmas celebration, and that's when

---

[415] Viking: Danish-Canadian Weekly November 7, 1930.
[416] For instance, see Christmas celebrations at Kevisville, Alberta in the early years in Verner Castella correspondence, 1911-12, DCNMA.
[417] Bethany Lutheran Congregation, Dickson Koloniens Historie, 10-11.
[418] "The Life Story of Jes Christian Gundesen As Told By His Wife Petrea," Jes Christian Nielsen Gundesen (1857-1920), A 752, DEA.
[419] Friedman, We Are a Little Land, 33-36.

> Danes open their Christmas presents. December 25th was simply for church and visiting.[420]

Immigrant accounts comment specifically on how Christmas Eve was celebrated. Usually a big meal was eaten, then the nativity story read, then the family took part in singing and dancing around the Christmas tree, and finished off with opening of gifts.[421] Christmas Day was a day off work, but was of less importance than the 24th. In Dickson, December 26th was the day of the church Christmas concert, an important event in its own right.[422]

Aside from the specific days on which festivities occurred, Danish Christmas in Alberta commonly involved several other particular elements. One of these was the Christmas tree (*juletræ*). The tree was the center of attention Christmas Eve, often quite literally. The parents would decorate the tree and the children would not see it until the evening of Christmas Eve. The family would then sing and dance around the decorated tree and sometimes presents would be tied to its branches. The fact that the tree was one of the elements the cash-strapped and isolated Danish community at Dickson preserved that first year they were in Canada demonstrates how important the tree was to the celebration of Christmas.[423] In addition, Danish Christmas usually involved singing traditional Danish Christmas songs, both religious and secular.[424]

While the immigrants did endeavour to carry on Christmas traditions in their new homeland, input from Denmark was much appreciated. *Julebreve* (Christmas letters) and *julepakke* (Christmas packages) were anticipated and received with great joy. Many of

---

[420] Morck, Five Pennies, 65.
[421] See Chris Christiansen, "Anna Marie Christiansen [Nee Petersen]: An Early Pioneer Woman of Dickson, Alberta," DCNMA; Morck, Five Pennies, 67-69; "Aksel Nielsen Family History," Danaview to Standard, 69.
[422] Morck, Five Pennies, 70-72.
[423] Bethany Lutheran Congregation, Dickson Koloniens Historie, 10-11. See also Vester, Blandt Danske På Kanadas Prærie, 66,74 for another community where the Christmas Tree was preserved.
[424] For instance, Vester, Blandt Danske På Kanadas Prærie, 66; Ellen Hansen, "My Story," 26th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, (Edmonton: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 2007), 203.

the immigrants wrote Christmas letters home every year and expected a letter and often a package back. Hans and Anna Richter, for instance, wrote a Christmas letter home to his parents every year they were in Canada. [425] Among some of the immigrants, a Christmas letter was the only update they sent home all year. Such was the case of Hans Axel Dilling, who in the years following his emigration in 1924 seems to have rarely corresponded with his family in Denmark except at Christmas.[426]

Great anticipation surrounded the packages from back home. The Richter family's letters show how much they looked forward to their arrival. Often beginning in November, the family began mentioning the *julepakke* and asked anxiously after the boxes when they had not yet been received. They also wrote grateful responses when the packages did arrive.[427] One immigrant remembered *julepakke* thus:

> Gifts [at Christmas] consisted of one large parcel sent from Tante Karen in Bornholm, Denmark. It was really a care package, ingeniously wrapped in a linen table cloth, tightly sewn around its contents. We kids watched in anticipation as Dad performed the operation to avoid damaging the table cloth. As its contents were unwrapped, there was something for everyone—knitted woollen mitts and socks, chocolate, etc., as well as a specially luxury item for each of us kids. Finally, Mom tearfully read the enclosed letter from her sister Karen.[428]

Christmas packages were a reminder of home. They contained items that were not available to the immigrants in Canada and they held sentimental value as gifts chosen by and sent from faraway family members. Another immigrant remembers how significant and sad it was for the family when her grandmother in Denmark died and the Christmas packages came no longer.[429]

---

[425] E. Sevelsted, ed., Nybyggerliv I Canada, 29, 48-49, 74, 96, 119, 136.
[426] Journal from 1924-1931, Hans Axel Dilling, A564, DEA.
[427] For instance, E. Sevelsted, ed., Nybyggerliv I Canada, 101.
[428] Andy Kjearsgaard, unpublished manuscript entitled "Tales From an Immigrant Boy," DCNMA.
[429] Inger (nee Jacobsen) Iwaasa, Biography of Peter and Asta Jacobsen, January 10, 1997, 2000.020.077, DCNMA.

The aspect of Danish Christmas dwelt upon most thoroughly in immigrant accounts is food. When the Danes dispensed with all other cultural traditions, food usually remained and, often, North American Christmas food would not do. As one immigrant remembers, traditional Christmas pudding was just not to his liking.[430] A traditional Danish Christmas meal contained certain elements. Ellen Hansen specifically remembers the traditional food: "Christmas was a wonderful time with roast goose and prune stuffing, red cabbage, small potatoes that were glazed with sugar and butter. The dessert was always the traditional Danish rice pudding with plenty of whipped cream mixed into it and served with raspberry sauce."[431] While Hansen's description may be somewhat nostalgic, remembering only the best parts, it contains all of the elements that a proper Danish Christmas dinner should.

Immigrant accounts from all over Alberta, both from those in group settlements and those settled in mixed-ethnic communities, refer to specific foods including roast goose or pork (as opposed to turkey), sugar-glazed potatoes, red cabbage and rice pudding with almonds for dessert.[432] Hans Richter's letters reveal that the family was able to have a proper Danish Christmas meal *because* of the Danish community at Dickson—the immigrants there raised geese and grew red cabbage specifically for Christmas dinner.[433] In all likelihood, it was easier to get the proper ingredients for the traditional food in the group settlement than it was in a more ethnically-isolated community.

---

[430] Svend Jensen, "Early Years in Canada," in 11th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, 102.
[431] Ellen Hansen, "My Story," 26th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, 203.
[432] See E. Sevelsted, ed., Nybyggerliv I Canada, 51,79, 119; Morck, Five Pennies, 67; Paulsen, Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies, 63; "Dickson Church History," in Grub Axe to Grain, 34.
[433] E. Sevelsted, ed., Nybyggerliv I Canada, 97.

Several other Danish holidays were maintained for a time, though none as assiduously as Christmas. In the early years, the Danish communities sporadically celebrated Valdemar's Day,[434] a national holiday on June 15th, Grundlov's Day,[435] the Danish Constitution Day, June 5th, and *Fastelavn*, which is the Danish equivalent of Mardi Gras or Shrove Tuesday.[436] However, particularly in the communities where more of the settlers had come as second stage immigrants from the United States than directly from Denmark, the holidays celebrated were rarely specifically those of Denmark. Instead, the immigrants celebrated an international mixture of holidays, including Canada Day, Independence Day and Victoria Day, in addition to Grundlov's Day.[437] Scandinavian groups throughout Canada commonly practiced this impartial intercultural holiday calendar. [438] The group settlements became more and more Canadianized as time went by, recognizing as the Bingley community did that in order for the greater multi-ethnic society of Alberta to get along, the Danes could not remain insular, even in the celebration of the Danish Constitution Day.[439]

Food is another area where the continuation of culture can be examined. As cultural historian Margaret Visser explains, "changing (or unchanging) food choices and presentations are part of every society's tradition and character."[440] In keeping with this line of thinking, both folklorist Frank Paulsen and scholar of Scandinavian literature

---

[434] Ibid., 41. Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, June 27, 1930; Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, July 18, 1930.
[435]Celebration at Bingley: Vester, Blandt Danske På Kanadas Prærie, 71. Celebration at Kevisville: Kirken og Hjemmet 5, no.11, June 1935.
[436] Celebration at Dalum: "The Christian Lokken Family," in Dalum and Area Reflections, 129; Peter Ostergaard, in Dalum and Area Reflections, 291.
[437] E. Sevelsted, ed., Nybyggerliv I Canada, 66. "A.C. Lorenzen," in Grub Axe to Grain, 59; Erna Boe, "Chris and Sine Boe," in Dalum and Area Reflections, 147.
[438] Bjork, "Scandinavian Migration to the Canadian Prairie Provinces," 29.
[439] Vester, Blandt Danske På Kanadas Prærie, 74.
[440] Margaret Visser, Much Depends on Dinner: The Extraordinary History and Mythology, Allure and Obsessions, Perils and Taboos, Of An Ordinary Meal, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1986), 12.

Christopher Hale have discussed Danish traditional food in their analyses of Danish communities in Alberta.[441] However, Paulsen argued in favour of the diminishing importance of ethnic food in the immigrants' lives.[442] Hale, on the other hand, observed that ethnic food is one Danish tradition that has been maintained through to the second and third generations.[443]

In the settlement years of Danish-Albertan communities, traditional food preparation was one cultural practice that the Danes found easy to maintain. They did not continue to prepare Danish fare all the time, but the immigrant accounts continually refer to "*rigtig god Dansk mad*" or "proper good Danish food."[444] The accounts are often vague as to what elements were required for food to be properly Danish. However, the immigrants continually alluded to several particular dishes that required specific skills and utensils that the Danes brought with them from home.

Danish food was a traditional element the immigrants maintained particularly carefully at Christmas. However, Danish traditional food continued to be cooked and served in the settlements into the second and third generations, and not only at Christmastime. *Æbleskiver* (loosely translates as apple pancake balls) are a Danish speciality mentioned repeatedly in accounts.[445] This treat required a special *æbleskiver* pan for frying the balls of dough. Therefore, making them required some forethought: the immigrants had to have brought the pan over with them or had someone send it to them. This reflects a concerted effort of a sort to preserve one Danish traditional food. There are

---

[441] Danish-American historian Enok Mortensen also singles out food as an important ethnic marker in his article "The Acculturation of the Danish Immigrant" The Bridge 3, no. 2 (1980): 83-91.
[442] Paulsen. Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies, 47.
[443] Hale, "Go West, Young Dane," 9.
[444] For instance, Holliday, To Be A Cowboy, 81 & 133.
[445] For instance, Paulsen, Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies, 17, 63; Mae Jorgensen, "Jorgensen, Mads and Family," in Dalum and Area Reflections, 238, "A tribute to a Special Grandmother, Ada Petersen," in Dalum and Area Reflections, 319.

also several references to Danish-specific sausages being made in Alberta, such as *rollepølse* (rolled sausage) and *leverpostej* (liver sausage).[446] Here again, substantial labour went into the endeavour in order to process the meat in the traditional way, reflecting the desire to preserve the Old World fare.

However, as with the other Danish cultural traditions, Danish food slowly but surely lost out to Canadian alternatives. In his letters back to Denmark, Hans Richter boasted that his wife was learning to cook Canadian food instead of what she already knew how to make. In one letter, he wrote "Anna has completely figured out Canadian cooking and speaks exceptional English now."[447] For Richter, acquiring the ability to cook "Canadian food," whatever he thought that meant, was part of the transition to becoming part of Canadian society just as was learning the language. Aksel Sandemose observed that Danes in Canada stopped eating rabbit and especially horsemeat, because Canadians found these practices distasteful.[448] Sandemose apparently thought that when culinary traditions seemed no to fit into the cultural norm, the Danes dropped them. While the situation may not have been as stark or severe as Sandemose believed, it seems likely that the Danes did not persist in preparing ethnic food that might be socially unacceptable.

Within the Danish communities, several groups or clubs were organized in the early years that operated as a cultural focal point for the immigrants for a time. A number of these organizations were a product of the demographics of the community, providing an opportunity for certain groups of people to get together. Each of the group settlements

---

[446] For instance, Paulsen, Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies, 64; Vera Nielsen autobiography, in 13th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, 51.
[447] E. Sevelsted, ed., Nybyggerliv I Canada, 47; see also 21-22.
[448] Sandemose, Aksel Sandemose and Canada, 71, 77.

and both Edmonton and Calgary had these groups, which included women's organizations or Ladies' Aid (*kvindeforeninger*), girls' clubs (*pigeforeninger*) and young people's societies (*ungdomforeninger*). These societies were not specifically concerned with cultural preservation. Rather, they set out to bring people together and build relationships. Consequently, the majority of the organizations' energy went towards regular meetings and special events like "ice cream socials,"[449] camping trips and picnics.[450] With this unifying goal in mind, the clubs were quick to switch to English to include non-Danes. For instance, the Dickson-area formed an English-language women's society in 1932,[451] the Standard Ladies' Aid started publishing their news in Kirken og Hjemmet in English in 1934[452] and the Standard-area Young People's Society alternated between conducting their weekly meetings in English and Danish in 1933.[453] Danish culture prevailed in these clubs only as long as their members deemed it important.

These demographically organized clubs were not independent but rather were affiliated with the Danish Lutheran Church. The women's groups were the labour force for congregational events requiring food and coffee and they were an important financial contributor to the church through their bazaars, bake sales and teas.[454] In Edmonton, the *Ansgar Menigheds Kvindeforening* (Ansgar Congregation's Ladies' Aid), formed at the Pastor's prompting in 1930, was instrumental in bailing out the congregation when they were short of money, which was often.[455] The young people's societies sought to protect

---

[449] Kirken og Hjemmet, 3, no.10, September 1933.
[450] Kirken og Hjemmet, 1, no.09, August 1931.
[451] Kirken og Hjemmet 2, no. 07, June 1932.
[452] Kirken og Hjemmet 4, no. 14, November 1934.
[453] Kirken og Hjemmet 3, no. 15, December 1933.
[454] See news write-ups of the churches in Kirken og Hjemmet. See also the chapter entitled "And the Ladies, 1930-1990" in 60 Years Old: A Story of the Danes and the Ansgar Danish Lutheran Church, (Edmonton: Ansgar Danish Lutheran Church of Edmonton, 1991), 53-64.
[455] "And the Ladies, 1930-1990," 60 Years Old, 54.

and cultivate the spiritual well-being of their members through regular meetings and rallies, thereby ensuring a future for the church.[456] Religious matters were the priority, not cultural preservation.

One demographically organized club did exist independent from the church. From 1929 until 1947, the Dalum area had a Bachelors' Club. Reflecting the fact that so many Danish men immigrated as singles and only considered marriage after they were established, the Dalum Bachelors' Club required members to be thirty years old and to own property.[457] This was the same demographic of men who had attended the Danish Folk Schools in the province. The Bachelors' Club held regular meetings for its members and put on an annual supper and dance for the community. The club's purpose ceased when the demographics changed: it folded when the majority of the bachelors got married.[458]

While the demographically organized clubs did not prioritize the maintenance of Danish ethnicity or culture, there were a few secular groups that did. These alternative organizations varied in their longevity but largely disappeared during the Second World War. Many of these were reintroduced and reinvented in the 1950s and 1960s to meet the needs of the third wave of Danish immigrants.[459] There was only one Alberta-wide cultural organization that was not specifically urban. Former members of schools in the Haslev area of Denmark created a province-wide society in 1929.[460] The club was called

---

[456] For instance, see the write-up of the Young People's Rally in Calgary in 1932. Kirken og Hjemmet 3, no.1, December 1932.
[457] Hans Holmen, "Dalum Bachelors' Club," in The History of Dalum, 54.
[458] Ibid., 55.
[459] Hale, "Danes," 409.
[460] "Alberta's Haslevkreds," Kirken og Hjemmet, 1, no. 3, February 1931.

Albertas Haslevkreds (Alberta's Haslev Club) and had at one point twenty-two members.[461] It is unclear how long the *Haslevkreds* existed.

In the rural communities most social organization was centered on the church, but in Alberta's urban centers, secular cultural organizations existed in greater numbers.[462] There are many passing references to Danish social groups in the city of Calgary. However, concrete evidence of these clubs is scant. One immigrant referred to attending a *Happy Denmark Society* existing in the 1930s.[463] Danish –Canadian historian Rolf Buschardt Christensen makes reference to a *Logen Dansk Samarbejde I Canada* (The Lodge: Danish Cooperation in Canada) being formed in 1931.[464] The Danish-Canadian newspaper The Viking mentioned a *Danish Social Society* that aided immigrants and organized a burial society[465] and financed and ran a Danish soccer club.[466] The Danish Social Society also put on Danish-language humorous plays (*dilletantkomedier*), carnivals and dances as well as regular get-togethers for the Danish community in Calgary.[467] According to the organization's website, the *Danish Canadian Club* (DCC) that exists in Calgary today came into being in 1933 through the amalgamation of three unnamed pre-existing clubs.[468] From other sources, however, the activities of the

---

[461] Kirken og Hjemmet, 1, no.5, April 1931.
[462] Hale, "Danes," 409. Jensen argues that in American urban centers, Danes chose secular cultural organizations over religious ones to find cultural community. John M. Jensen, The United Evangelical Lutheran Church, 22-23. In Albertan cities, however, the churches endured the 1930s and 1940s far better than did the secular organizations. Apparently Danish-Albertans were more likely to continue attending a church than keep up membership with a club.
[463] Ole R. Hansen, in 6th Annual Danish Canadian Conference, (Kolding, Denmark: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1987), 155.
[464] Rolf Buschardt Christensen, "The Federation of Danish Associations in Canada," in Danish Emigration to Canada, ed. Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen, (Aalborg: Danish Worldwide Archives, 1991), 205.
[465] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, May 24, 1929; Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, June 21, 1929.
[466] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, May 24, 1929.
[467] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, December 6, 1929.
[468] Danish Canadian Club of Calgary, "About the Danish Canadian Club," http://www.danishclubcalgary.com/aboutclub.htm

organization are unclear until the post-war years[469] and archival records for the organization do not begin until 1986.[470]

There were also ongoing discussions of a health insurance organization for Danish-Canadians out of Calgary called *Sygkasse Finsen* (Finsen Sickness Fund). For a time, *Sygkasse Finsen* seems to have been quite active in helping Danish immigrants finance doctor visits, surgery and hospital stays.[471] The organization seems to have been working towards creating national coverage for all Danish-Canadians,[472] but it is unclear if they were ever successful in reaching this goal. There is no evidence for how long this organization existed past 1934.[473]

In the city of Edmonton, there was a social club for Danes begun in 1921 called the *Dania Club*. There is very little evidence of this organization: its minutes have been misplaced and accidentally destroyed[474] and it was not referred to in contemporary Danish-Canadian newspapers. Dania Club apparently maintained a very low profile during the Depression and Second World War and was revitalized in 1953 by a group of third wave immigrants.[475]

---

[469] Niels Berthelsen, in 6th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, (Kolding, Denmark: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1987), 152; Carl Gaede, in 6th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, (Kolding, Denmark: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1987), 152-153; Ole R. Hansen, in 6th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, (Kolding, Denmark: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1987), 155. Axel Wade, 1987 Danish in 6th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, (Kolding, Denmark: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1987), 157.

[470] Danish Canadian Club (Calgary) Fonds, 1985-1992, M 7353, GA.

[471] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, April 26, 1929; Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, February 21, 1930; Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, July 18, 1930; Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, January 31, 1930.

[472] Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, January 31 1930; Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly, July 18, 1930.

[473] Kirken og Hjemmet last printed information about the Sygkassen in March of 1934.

[474] "The Danish Society 'Dania,'" in 2nd Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book, (Montreal: Federation of Danish Associations in Canada, 1983), no paging.

[475] Vera Nielsen autobiography, in 13th Annual Danish Canadian Conference Book , 54; Hale, "Danes," 409.

For the most part, Danish cultural activities in the settlement period were centered on the church. The few secular organizations that were begun did not thrive to the same extent—at least not according to the very limited records they have left behind. Historical records largely track their existence up until the 1930s and then do not record any activity until after the Second World War. In the post-Second World War period, Danish immigrants were far more likely to organize and participate in Danish cultural societies and both Edmonton and Calgary had active Danish clubs.[476] During the settlement era, the Danish Lutheran Church, in both denominations and in all of its various locations, remained the primary organizing force.[477]

[476] Art Genke, "The Danes in Canada and Their Archival Record," 66. Hale, "Go West, Young Dane," 11. Similarly, Christensen's article "The Federation of Danish Associations in Canada" skips from 1934 to the late 1950s in the history of Danish organizations in Canada. Buschardt, "The Federation," 206.
[477] Hale, "Danes," 409.

Conclusion

The Danish-Albertan cultural community, though a part of the so-called "invisible" ethnic groups, has a distinct and vibrant history. While the immigrants arguably were one of the most assimilable ethnic groups to settle on the prairies, their culture played an important role in the early settlement years. Folklorist Frank Paulsen's dire assessment of the Danish settlements in the Prairie Provinces, that the immigrants were "apathetic" towards their Old World heritage,[478] is not evident from the cultural activity in the communities during the settlement era. This study of the combined role of formal and informal cultural practices of the Danish immigrants demonstrates that Danish culture had a vibrant and varied role in the lives of the settlers as they arrived and established themselves in Alberta.

Danish immigration took two different courses into the province in the pre-Second World War period. A large number of the initial immigrants arrived to Alberta having first attempted settlement in the United States. Paulsen holds this Denmark-United States-Alberta migration pattern largely responsible for the decreased importance of Danish culture in the prairie settlements.[479] However, the fact that the Danish-Americans chose to establish four ethnic group settlements in Alberta demonstrates their prioritization of cultural community. These ethnically Danish communities displayed and maintained their cultural heritage to varying degrees but none dismissed it quite as much as Paulsen emphasizes, at least not in the initial decades after their arrival. For the immigrants who came directly from Denmark, Danish language, culture and traditions were still close at hand and important to their daily lives. The direct Denmark-Alberta

---

[478] Paulsen, Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies, iv.
[479] Ibid., v.

migration that occurred particularly in the 1920s gave both the motivation and the means for communities to further develop and maintain cultural resources that would be familiar to the newcomers.

As Paulsen and many others have argued, the church was the primary preserver of Old World culture in the settlements. The Danish Lutheran Church, regardless of the specific branch, was a substantial formal cultural institution that brought with it specific traditions and practices and had a powerful effect on the future of the ethnic community. In many of the Danish communities, the creation of a church congregation preceded or followed closely on the heels of the establishment of the settlement. The leadership and initiative of individual pastors in many cases had a significant effect on the quality and quantity of cultural events that took place. The denomination, DELC (Danish Church) or UDELC (United Church), also definitively affected the role Danish culture played in the community. The DELC sought specifically to preserve the Danish language and cultural traditions. The UDELC focused instead on missionary endeavours, removing Danish-specific elements of the church in order to reach non-Danish settlers. However, despite the differences between the denominations, the churches did work cooperatively to preserve Danish culture at times.

The schools patterned after the Danish Folk School tradition were another important example of the Danes preserving Old World heritage in Alberta. The urban Folk Schools in Calgary and Edmonton specifically sought to address the needs of male immigrant labourers, providing them with a Canadian-specific education and winter-time living accommodations and recreation, all within a Danish cultural context. The Dalum school projects provided for a single young male student body, but they also developed

programs to meet the needs of the many Danish families. Finally, the public high school in Dickson had one foot in the door of public education while at the same time including elements of Danish culture and Danish Lutheranism. All of these projects had a sense of Danish cultural familiarity but at the same time they provided the students with the education that would enable them to communicate and thrive in the new province of Alberta.

As several immigrant historians have observed, the transition that immigrants made from using their native tongue to using the language of the New World is perhaps not the best marker to observe the preservation of ethnic or cultural heritage. The Danes needed to know English in order to communicate in society outside of the group settlements. Therefore, learning the language was not necessarily a matter of preferring English over Danish, it was a necessity. The Danish language was reserved for the home, for communicating with the older generations, especially those still in Denmark, and for the passing on of original Danish songs and stories. Still, Aksel Sandemose's term "the tragedy of the first generation" aptly describes the situation wherein the Danish tongue became progressively less used among members of later generations.

Longer than anything else, the Danish immigrants maintained their traditions surrounding Christmas and certain elements of their culinary heritage. While other holidays were laid to rest after several decades of living in Albertan society, the Danes continued to prefer to celebrate Christmas on the 24th of December and they continued to prepare traditional Danish Christmas food. In some cases, the Danes continued to make traditional food even when it required utensils and knowledge that were not easily come by in Alberta.

Examination of the secular cultural or ethnic-specific organizations to which Danes belonged leads to several important observations. First, the short-term existence of several secular clubs points again to the great cultural force of the long-lasting influence of the Danish Lutheran Church. In the settlement era, secular clubs did not have the staying power that the church did. If immigrants belonged to any organization long-term, it was more likely than not associated with the church. In addition, the secular organizations shed a small amount of light on how Danish immigrants fit into an urban/rural dichotomy. Those living in rural communities maintained ties to their native culture largely through the church and did not often organize secular clubs. Urban immigrants were more likely to found or join secular organizations but they tended not to maintain those organizations for any significant length of time. As Christopher Hale has observed, urban Danes did not come together as a cultural community to the same degree as the rural Danes, largely because they simply were not as concentrated in numbers as the rural group settlements were.[480]

The Great Depression and the Second World War permanently changed the character of the Danish cultural communities in Alberta. The Great Depression signified a time of economic hardship that made it difficult for the immigrants to afford to maintain their heritage. Danish Folk Schools closed with the cessation of substantial immigration and the inability of students to pay tuition. Danish-language newspapers throughout Canada folded during the Depression. Secular organizations faltered and failed with lack of funding. The churches survived, though they too struggled.

The Second World War had multiple effects on Danish culture in Alberta, in terms of ethnic discrimination and the flow of cultural resources, unlike during the First

[480] Hale, "Danes," 409.

World War.[481] During the Second World War, it seems likely that the Danes in Alberta dealt with similar prejudice to the Danes in Montreal.[482] Some historians suggest they felt that they needed to prove their loyalty to Anglophone Canada by downplaying connections with Germany and German-occupied Denmark.[483] The war also ended the flow of goods from Denmark to Canada as Denmark was under German occupation and Allied blockade. Immigrants could no longer expect *julepakke* with Danish treats. Communication was also limited as the German occupiers regulated and censored mail leaving Denmark.[484] Edmonton's Ansgar Lutheran Church stopped receiving financial assistance from the Danish mission society *Dansk Kirke I Udlandet.*[485] In the post-war period, Denmark and its people underwent a period of great economic hardship, and Danish-Albertans were more likely to send their own packages filled with goods like tobacco, nylons, spice and other goods that were scarce and expensive in Denmark than to expect packages coming to them.[486]

In the final analysis of the retention of the Danish culture in Alberta by immigrants of the first and second waves, it is clear that the Danish Lutheran Church played the most significant part. The Church had the ultimate determining role in a community's cultural essence, shaping it both by the denomination of the church, DELC or UDELC, and by the actions of the individual pastors. The three largest Danish group

---

[481] There is at least one well-known example of Danish immigrant serving with the Canadian army during the First World War. See Thomas Dinesen, Merry Hell: A Dane With the Canadians (London: Jarrolds, 1930).
[482] Mancuso, Faces of Change, 51.
[483] Hale, "Danes," 412. Hale briefly mentions ethnic discrimination during the Second World War but is doubtful as to its significance upon the Danish community.
[484] For instance, see Thesberg letter collection, uncatalogued, DCNMA.
[485] 60 Years Old, 13.
[486] For instance, Oliver Christensen's family sent "coffee, tea, raisins, spices, yarn and needles" back to Denmark in 1946 because they knew the family there could not get these items easily. Letter to Oliver Christensen from his mother, February 5, 1946, Oliver Christensen Fonds, M 8807, GA.

settlements in the province exemplify these determining factors. Dalum's great cultural energy and longevity resulted from the community's being part of the DELC synod and from the efforts of Pastor Peter Rasmussen. "Dynamic Dickson," though the earliest-begun settlement and part of the UDELC, benefited from the motivational leadership of Pastor Paul Nyholm. Finally, Standard, with its UDELC congregation and its lack of culturally focused leadership, was the quickest of the three to drop its ties to Danish culture and language in its efforts to reach a more universal audience.

In multiple cases, the church congregation was the initial enticement for settlers to come together in a group settlement. The Church offered an opportunity to maintain the Danish language. It was a gathering place for Danes living throughout the province, providing a setting for them to meet and "be Danish." The Church provided the funding and leadership for cultural projects outside of the church's doors as well, including for many of the Danish school projects, for women and young people's clubs and for a Western-Canadian Danish language newspaper. In the period 1903-1939 evidence of a dynamic and vibrant homeland culture, among the so-called "invisible" immigrants, was clearly to be found in the projects and activities of the Danish Lutheran churches, their pastors and congregants.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Archival Fonds:
Glenbow Archives (GA).
Canadian Pacific Railway Land Settlement and Development Fonds. GA.

John Glambeck Fonds. GA.

Nissen Family Fonds. GA.

Oliver Christensen Fonds. GA.

Danish Canadian National Museum archives (DCNMA).
Castella, Verner, correspondence. DCNMA.

Christensen, Rolf Buschardt. Biography of Robert A. Hauge. DCNMA.

Christiansen, Chris. "Anna Marie Christiansen [Nee Petersen]: An Early Pioneer Woman of Dickson Alberta." Excerpts of original text published informally in 1968, compiled by Linda Glenfield. Held by DCNMA.

Hauge, Robert A., journal article. DCNMA.

Hindbo, Hans H. Memoirs. 1993. Unpublished text held by DCNMA.

Iwaasa, Inger Jacobsen. Biography of Peter and Asta Jacobsen. DCNMA.

Kjearsgaard, Andy. Unpublished manuscript entitled "Tales From an Immigrant Boy." DCNMA.

"Story of Dickson, Alberta." Informally published, translated and revised version of Dickson Koloniens Historie by Bethany Lutheran Congregation. Held by DCNMA.

Danish Emigration Archives (DEA).
Canada Kasse. DEA.

Christensen, Christen Anders (1886-1976). DEA.

Dilling, Hans Axel. DEA.

Dresen, Karl Kristian Hansen (1893-1975). DEA.

Gundesen, Jes Christian Nielsen (1857-1920). DEA.

Nyholm, Paul Christian Edvard (1895-1977). DEA.

Pedersen, Johannes (1900-1960). DEA.

Newspapers:

Danmarksposten: Udgivet af Dansk Samvirke. October 1928 and November 1928; 1984.

Dansk-Canadisk Tidende [Danish Canadian Times]. March 25-October 7, 1931.

Kirken og Hjemmet [Church and Home]. 1929-1935.

Viking: Danish Canadian Weekly. August 16, 1928 - March 13, 1931.

Local Histories and Biographies

Bethany Lutheran Church. Bethany Lutheran Church, Tilley, Alberta, 1930-1980. Tilley, Alberta: Bethany Lutheran Church, 1980.

Candlelight Years: A History of Innisfail and Area Pioneers. Innisfail: Innisfail and District Historical Society, 1973.

Dalum And Area Reflections. Red Deer: Adviser Graphics, 1990.

From Danaview to Standard. Standard: Standard Historical Book Society, 1979.

Grub Axe to Grain: A History of Craig, Dickson, Happy Hill, Heckla, Hola, Markerville, New Hill, North Raven, Raven, Red Raven, Rich Hill, Spruce View. Spruce View: Spruce View School Area Historical Society, 1973.

Hemstitches and Hackamores: A History of Holden and District. Holden, AB: Holden Historical Society, 1984.

Hussar Heritage: Through the Years in Hussar and Surrounding District, From Its Earliest Beginnings to the Present Day. Hussar Historical Society Book Committee, 1994.

Larsen, Birgit Flemming ed. In Denmark Born—To Canada Sworn: Danish-Canadian Lives. Aalborg, DK: Danish Emigration Archives, 2000.

Memories Of Samis and Nearby Districts. Samis History Book Committee, 1985.

Morkeberg, Carl. Markerville Story. Innisfail: Innisfail Province, 1980.

Nissen, Margarethe, Esther Thesberg and Andy Kjearsgaard. "A History of Dickson, Alberta, Canada." In Danish Emigration to Canada, ed. Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen. Aalborg: Danish Worldwide Archives, 1991. 71-90.

Olds: A History of Olds and Area. Olds: Olds History Committee, 1980.

Rasmussen, Jens. History of the Standard Colony From Its Birth. Standard, Alberta: 1943.

Scandinavian Connections: A Guide to Sites in Alberta. Edmonton: Scandinavian Trade and Cultural Society, 2007.

See Olds First: A History Of Olds And Surrounding District. Olds: Olds Old Timer Association, 1968.

The History of Dalum. Drumheller, Alberta: Big Country News, 1968.

Tilley Trails and Tales. Tilley, Alberta: Tilley Historical Society, 1980.

Published Primary Sources in Danish and English:

Andersen, Jakob. "Sandheden Om Kanada: Landet Som Det Fremtræder For Emigranten [The Truth About Canada: The Land As It Appears for the Immigrant." Original published in Calgary, 1926. A 415. DEA.

Bethany Lutheran Congregation. Dickson Koloniens Historie: Et Mindskrift om Vore

Pioneerer [History of the Dickson Colony: a Memory Volume About Our Pioneers]. Blair, Nebraska: Lutheran Publishing House, 1948.

Danish Immigration Aid Society. Hvorledes Komme Frem I Canada? Rådgiver For Enhver Der Vil Udvandre to Dominion of Canada. Copenhagen: V. Pios Boghandel, 1928.

Hale, Christopher, ed. and trans. Aksel Sandemose: A Scandinavian Writer's Perception of the Canadian Prairies in the 1920s. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2005.

Hauge, Robert. "Stranger in a Strange Country: Experiences and Impressions from Canada." Baptisternes Jolefla 1928. [Missing information]. In the fonds at Danish Canadian National Museum.

Holliday, Barbara. To Be A Cowboy: Oliver Christensen's Story. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003.

Linck, Olaf. Kanada Det Store Fremtidsland [Canada the Great Land of the Future]. Copenhagen: E. Jespersens Forlag, 1926.

Mikkelsen, C. Canada Som Fremtidsland [Canada as the Land of the Future]. Copenhagen: Aschehoug og Company Dansk Forlag, 1927.

Morck, Irene. Five Pennies: A Prairie Boy's Story. Calgary: Fifth House Publishers, 1999.

Nissen, Ole. Paradise for the Poor: Hussar, Standard and Caroline, Alberta, letters of Ole Nissen, 1923-1937. Edited by Joan Walter. Alberta: Alberta Records Publication Board, 2001.

Rosenberg, Holger. Hvorledes Komme Frem I Kanada? Rådgiver For Enhver Der Vil

Udvandre Til Dominion of Canada [How Do You Get Ahead in Canada? Advice For Everyone Who Will Emigrate to the Dominion of Canada]. Copenhagen: V. Pios Boghandel, 1928.

Sandemose, Aksel. Aksel Sandemose and Canada: A Scandinavian Writer's Perception of the Canadians Prairies in the 1920s. Edited and Translated by Christopher Hale. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2005.

Sevelsted, E. Nybyggerliv I Canada: Fra Poppelkrat til Højfarm-I Breve og Billeder [Settler Life in Canada: From Poplar Bush to High Farm in Letters and Pictures]. Denmark, 1998.

Vester, A. Blandt Danske På Kanadas Prærie: Virkelighedsskildring Af Ni Års Ophold I Kanada Og U.S.A [Among the Danes on Canada's Prairies: A Realistic Representation of Nine Years' Stay in Canada and the USA. Viborg, Denmark: Chr. Wolhert's Forlag, 1922.

Secondary
Articles

Bjork, Kenneth. "Scandinavian Migration to the Canadian Prairie Provinces, 1893-1914." Norwegian American Studies 26 (1974): 3-30.

Bojesen, Palle Bo. "New Denmark—The Oldest Danish Colony in Canada." In Danish Emigration to Canada. Edited by Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen. 49-70. Aalborg: Danish Worldwide Archives, 1991.

Camp Kuriakos. "Camp Kuriakos History." http://www.kuriakos.ab.ca/index.php/kuriakos/history/

Christensen, Rolf Buschardt. "Danish Folk Schools in Canada." In Danish Emigration to

Canada. Edited by Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen. 106-124. Aalborg: Danish Worldwide Archives, 1991.

Christensen, Rolf Buschardt. "Danish Folk Schools in Canada." Unpublished revised copy provided to author, 2009.

Christensen, Rolf Buschardt. "The Establishment of Danish Lutheran Churches in Canada." The Bridge: The Journal of the Danish American Heritage Society 27, no.1-2 (2004): 126-165.

Christensen, Rolf Buschardt. "The Federation of Danish Associations in Canada." In Danish Emigration to Canada. Edited by Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen. 203-210. Aalborg: Danish Worldwide Archives, 1991.

Corl III, Samuel S. "The Danish Folk High School Adapts to a New World." Educational Leadership 38, no. 4 (1981): 338-341.

Dahlie, Jorgen. "No Fixed Boundaries: Scandinavian Responses to Schooling in Western Canada." In Emerging Ethnic Boundaries Vol. 7. ed. Danielle Juteau Lee. 117-129. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979.

Dahlie, Jorgen. "Scandinavian Immigration, Assimilation and Settlement Patterns in Canada: Large Landscape Limited Impact?" Siirtolaisuus 4 (1984): 9-12.

Danish Canadian Club of Calgary. "About the Danish Canadian Club." http ://www.danishclubcalgary.com/aboutclub.htm

Danysk, Cecilia. " 'A Bachelor's Paradise': Homesteaders, Hired Hands, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1880-1930." In Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement. Edited by Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Mouat. 154-185. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996.

Delafenetre, David. "The Scandinavian Presence in Canada: Emerging Perspective." Canadian Ethnic Studies 27, no. 2 (1995). America: History & Life, EBSCO*host* (accessed July 13, 2009).

Dempsey, Hugh. "Local Histories as Source Materials for Western Canadian Studies." In Prairie Perspectives eds. A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen. 171-180. Toronto: Holt Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1973.

Federation of Danish Associations in Canada. Annual Conference Publications. Various places of publication, 1982-2008.

Hale, Christopher. "Danes." In The Encyclopaedia of Canada's People. Edited by Paul Robert Magocsi. 406-413. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

Hale, Christopher. "Danish Emigration to the Canadian Prairies: A Collage From the Sandemose Perspective." Scandinavian Studies 60.4 (1988): 497-510.

Hale, Christopher. "Ethnic Minorities on the Canadian Prairies in the Writings of Aksel Sandemose and Sven Deblanc." Scandinavian-Canadian Studies 7 (1995): 37-55.

Hale, Christopher. "Go West, Young Dane: Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies. Scandinavian-Canadian Studies 11 (1998): 1-14.

Hale, Christopher. Introduction to Aksel Sandemose and Canada: A Scandinavian Writer's Perception of the Canadian Prairies in the 1920s. Edited and Translated by Christopher Hale. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2005.

Iacovetta, Franca. "Manly Militants, Cohesive Communities, and Defiant Domestics: Writing about Immigrants in Canadian Historical Scholarship." Labour/Le Travail 36 (1995): 217-252.

Jaenen, Cornelius. "The Public School in Canada: Agency of Integration and

Assimilation." Actes Du Congres International Des Sciences De L'Education 1 (1976): 203-215.

Jalava, Mauri A. "The Scandinavians as a Source of Settlers for the Dominion of Canada: The First Generation, 1867-1897." Scandinavian-Canadian Studies 1 (1983): 3-14.

Korsgaard, Ove and Susanne Wiborg. "Grundtvig—The Key to Danish Education?" Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research 50, no. 3 (2006): 361-382.

Mackintosh, Jette. "Ethnic Patterns in Danish Immigrant Agriculture: A Study of Audubon and Shelby Counties, Iowa." Agricultural History 64, no. 4 (1990): 59-77.

Mortensen, Enok. "The Acculturation of the Danish Immigrant." The Bridge: Journal of the Danish American Heritage Society 3, no. 2 (1980): 83-91.

Novrup, Johannes. "Adult Education in Denmark." In Scandinavian Adult Education. ed. Ragnar Lund. 2nd Ed. 7-81. Copenhagen: Det Danske Forlag, 1952.

Olsen, Poul Erik. "Emigration from Denmark to Canada in the 1920s." In Danish Emigration to Canada, ed. Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen. 125-145. Aalborg: Danish Worldwide Archives, 1991.

Palmer, Howard. "Canadian Immigration and Ethnic History in the 1970s and 1980s." Journal of Canadian Studies 17, no. 1 (1982): 35-50.

Palmer, Howard. "Strangers and Stereotypes: the Rise of Nativism, 1880-1920." In The Prairie West: Historical Readings. Edited by R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer. 2nd Edition. 308-334. Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1992.

Patterson, R.S. and LeRoy Wilson. "The Influence of the Danish Folk High School in

Canada." Paedagogica Historica 14, no. 1 (1974): 64-79.

Perin, Roberto. "Clio as an Ethnic: The Third Force in Canadian Historiography." Canadian Historical Review 64, no.4 (1983): 441-467.

Perin, Roberto and Harold Troper. "Immigration Policy." In The Encyclopaedia of Canada's People ed. Paul Robert Magocsi. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

Petersen, Peter L. "Language and Loyalty: Governor Harding and Iowa's Danish-Americans During World War I." Annals of Iowa 42, no. 6 (1974): 404-417.

Rasporich, Anthony W. "Ethnicity in Canadian Historical Writing 1970-1990." In Ethnicity and Culture in Canada: The Research Landscape. 153-178. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994.

Ronning, Chester. "A Study of an Alberta Protestant Private School: The Camrose Lutheran College, a Residential High School." Master's Thesis, University of Alberta, 1942.

Rudling, Per Anders. "Scandinavians in Canada: A Community in the Shadow of the United States." 57, no. 3 (2006): 151-194.

Scott, Franklin D. "The Dual Heritage of the Scandinavian Immigrant." In Transatlantica: Essays on Scandinavian Migration and Culture. Ed. Franklin D. Scott. 25-37. New York: Arno Press, 1979.

Simonsen, Henrik Bredmose. "The Early Life of the Danish Churches in Canada." In Danish Emigration to Canada. ed. Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen. 91-105. Aalborg: Danish Worldwide Archives, 1991.

Skarsten, Trygve R. "Danish Contributions to Religion in America." Lutheran Quarterly

25, no. 1 (1973): 42-53.

Statistics Canada. "Ethnic Origins, 2006 counts, For Canada, Provinces and Territories – 20% sample data." http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/english/census06/data/highlights/ethnic/pages/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&Code=48&Data=Count&Table=2&StartRec=1&Sort=3&Display=All&CSDFilter=5000

Stilling, Niels Peter. "The Significance of the Private Letter in Immigration History." The Bridge: The Journal of the Danish American Heritage Society 15, no. 2 (1992): 35-50.

Wonders, William. "Scandinavian Homesteaders." Alberta History 24, no. 3 (1976): 1-4.

Wonders, William. "Scandinavian Homesteaders in Central Alberta." In The New Provinces: Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1905-1980 edited by Howard Palmer and Donald Smith. 131-171. Vancouver: Tantalus Research Limited, 1980.

Østerud, Øyvind. "The Transformation of Scandinavian Agrarianism: A Comparative Study of Political Change Around 1870." Scandinavian Journal of History 1 (1976): 201-213.

Books

60 Years Old: A Story of the Danes and the Ansgar Danish Lutheran Church. Edmonton: Ansgar Danish Lutheran Church of Edmonton, 1991.

Begtrup, Holger, Hans Lund and Peter Manniche. Folk High Schools of Denmark and the Development of a Farming Community. 3rd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1936.

Bender, Henning and Birgit Flemming Larsen, eds. Danish Emigration to Canada. Aalborg: Danes Worldwide Archive, 1991.

Borish, Steven M. The Land of the Living: The Danish Folk High Schools and Denmark's Non-Violent Path to Modernization. Nevada City, California: Blue Dolphin Publishing Inc., 1991.

Cherland, C.M. The Lutheran Legacy: Growth of Calgary's Lutheran Churches. Calgary: Century Calgary, 1975.

Census and Statistics Office. Special Report on the Foreign-Born Population. Ottawa: Department of Trade and Commerce, 1915.

Dahlie, Jorgen. A Social History of Scandinavian Immigration, Washington State, 1895-1910. New York: Arno Press, 1980.

Evenson, George O. Adventuring For Christ: The Story of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada. Calgary: Foothills Lutheran Press, 1974.

Evenson, George O. Send Out Your Light: A History of the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute. Camrose, Alberta: Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute, 1997.

Friesen, Gerald. The Canadian Prairies: A History. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.

Hale, Frederick, ed. Danes in North America. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984.

Hansen, Judith Friedman. We Are A Little Land: Cultural Assumptions in Danish Everyday Life. New York: Arno Press, 1980.

Hansen, Thorvald. Church Divided: Lutheranism Among the Danish Immigrants. Des Moines, Iowa: Grand View College, 1992.

Hvidt, Kristian. Flight to America: The Social Background of 300, 000 Danish Emigrants. New York: Academic Press, Inc., 1975.

Jensen, John M. The United Evangelical Lutheran Church: An Interpretation. Minneapolis: Augsberg Publishing House, 1964.

Jones, W. Glyn. Denmark: A Modern History. London: Croom Helm, 1986.

Knowles, Valerie. Strangers At Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-2006. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007.

MacPherson, Ian. Each For All: A History of the Cooperative Movement in English Canada, 1900-1945. Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1979.

Mancuso, Rebecca. Faces of Change: The Danish Community of Montreal. Montreal: Danish Canadian Society of Montreal, 1997.

Matteson, Jean M. and Edith M. Matteson. Blossoms of the Prairie: The History of the Danish Lutheran Church In Nebraska. Lincoln, Nebraska: Blossoms of the Prairie, 1988.

Nielsen, George R. The Danish Americans. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981.

Nordstrom, Byron J. Scandinavia Since 1500. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Nyholm, Paul C. The Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Churches in America. Copenhagen: Institute for Danish Church History, 1963.

Palmer, Howard. Land of the Second Chance: A History of Ethnic Groups in Southern Alberta. Lethbridge: Lethbridge Herald, 1972.

Palmer, Howard and Tamara Palmer, eds. Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985.

Paulsen, Frank M. Danish Settlements on the Canadian Prairies: Folk Traditions,

Immigrant Experiences and Local History. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974.

Rying, Bent. Danish in the South and the North. Volume 2 of Denmark: A History. Denmark: Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1981.

Scott, Franklin D. Scandinavia. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975.

Visser, Margaret. Much Depends on Dinner: The Extraordinary History and Mythology, Allure and Obsessions, Peril and Taboos, of an Ordinary Meal. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1986.

Wentz, Abdel Ross. A Basic History of Lutheranism in America. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955.

Appendix A: 1915 Chart of Foreign-Born Male Citizens

From Census and Statistics Office, Special Report On the Foreign-Born Population, (Ottawa: Department of Trade and Commerce, 1915), 26.

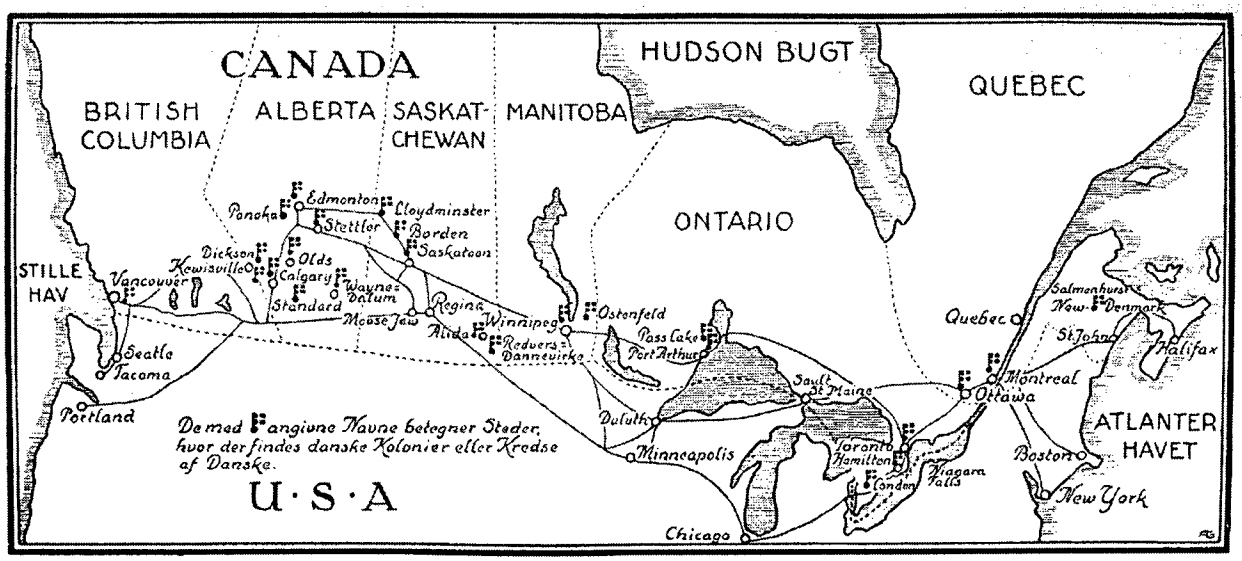
Province of residence of immigrants.	Country of origin ranked according to the proportion of its male immigrants of voting age who have become citizens, 1911.					
	First Rank	Second Rank	Third Rank	Fourth Rank	Fifth Rank	Sixth Rank
Canada[1]	Denmark	Germany	France	United States	Austria-Hungary.	Belgium.
British Columbia.	Denmark	Germany	Belgium	France	United States	Norway and Sweden.
Alberta	France	Germany	Bulgaria	Denmark	Austria-Hungary.	Norway and Sweden.
Saskatchewan	Denmark	Germany	Austria-Hungary.	France	Holland	Russia.
Manitoba	Denmark	France	Bulgaria	Russia	Germany	Norway and Sweden.
Ontario	Germany	Denmark	France	United States	Norway and Sweden.	Russia.
Quebec	United States	Germany	Russia	France	Bulgaria	Denmark.
New Brunswick.	Denmark	Germany	United States	Norway and Sweden.	Holland	Belgium.
Nova Scotia	United States	Greece	Norway and Sweden.	Holland	Denmark	Germany.

[1]Includes totals for Prince Edward Island, Yukon and Northwest Territories.
Note.—Roumania is included with Bulgaria, Iceland with Denmark and Finland with Russia.

Appendix B: Map of Danish Settlements in Canada

Map taken from Danish Emigration to Canada, ed. Henning Bender and Birgit Flemming Larsen, (Aalborg: Danish Worldwide Archives, 1991), 8.

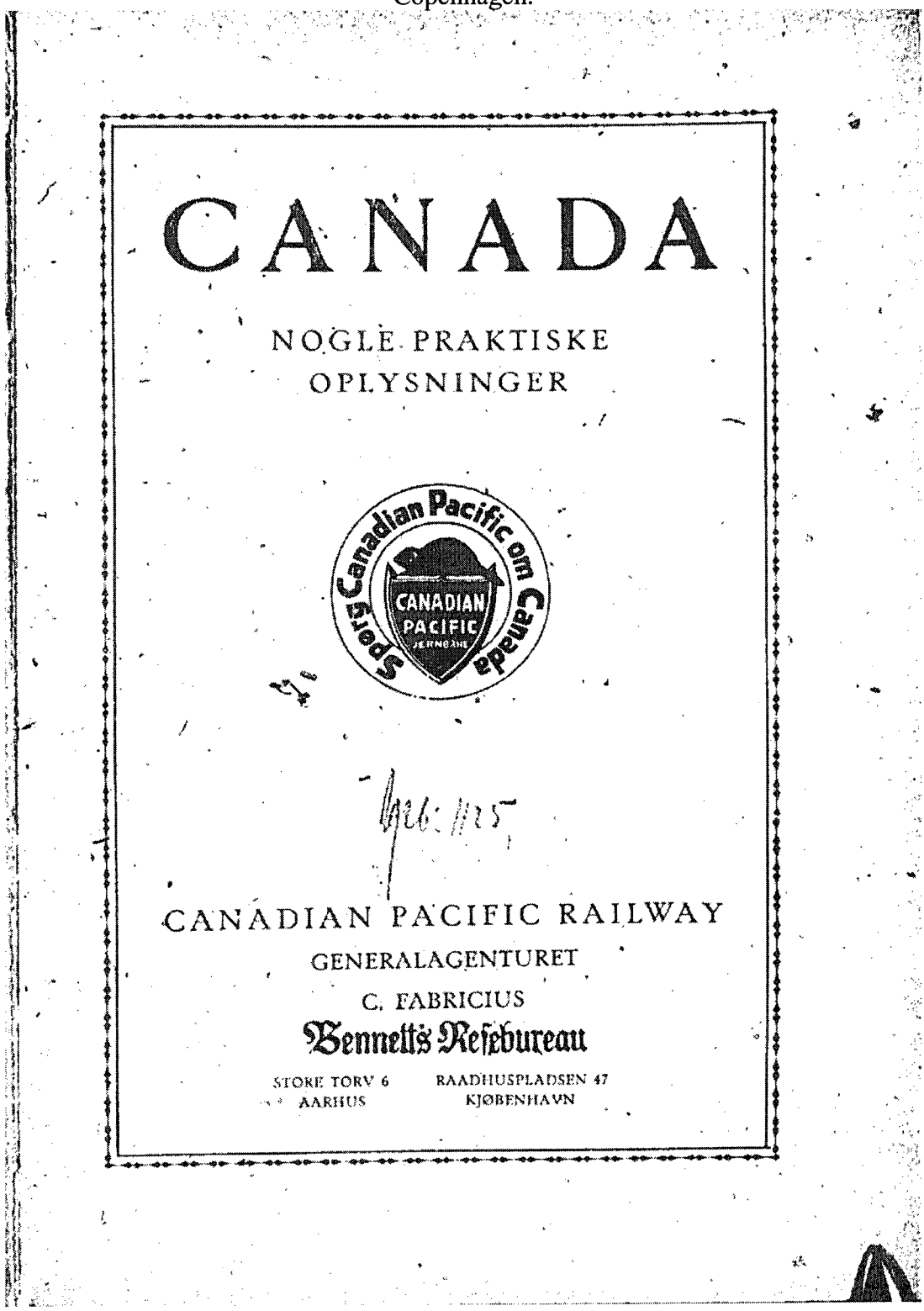
In Alberta, the Danish group settlements of Dickson, Kevisville, Dalum and Standard are shown (the Tilley settlement is missing from the map). The cities of Edmonton and Calgary also had substantial Danish populations, and the communities of Ponoka, Stettler, and Olds were also well-known for their Danish communities.



"Those with flags denote the names of places where a Danish colony or a community of Danes is found."

Appendix C: Danish Language CPR Promotional Literature

Canadian Pacific Railway promotional literature written in Danish and published in Copenhagen.



CANADA

NOGLE PRAKTISKE
OPLYSNINGER

Spørg Canadian Pacific om Canada

CANADIAN PACIFIC

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY

GENERALAGENTURET

C. FABRICIUS

Bennetts Rejsebureau

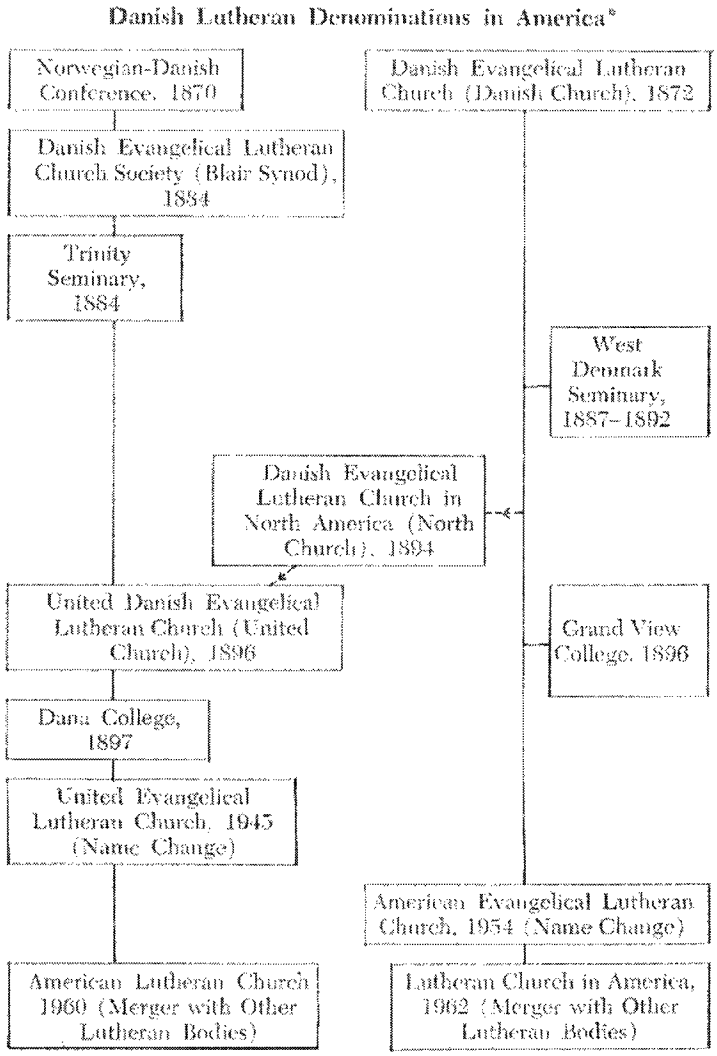
STORE TORV 6 AARHUS

RAADHUSPLADSEN 47 KJØBENHAVN

Appendix D: Historical Chart of Danish-American Lutheran Church

Chart taken from George R. Nielsen, The Danish Americans, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 75.

The left side of the chart is the timeline of the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church (also known as the UDELC or United Church). The UDELC synod included the churches in Dickson, Standard and the first Danish Church in Calgary. The right hand side of the chart represents the Danish Evangelical Lutheran (DELC or Danish Church), which included the Dalum congregation.



*Adapted from Thorvald Hansen, *School in the Woods: The Story of an Immigrant Seminary* (Askov, Minnesota, 1977), p. 135.