

Historically Speaking

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Over the years Dannebrog has flooded many times. Oak Creek would leave its banks and flood Dannebrog's Main Street and many of the residential areas.

Dannebrog's Danish Roots Run Deep

Dannebrog was founded by Lars Hannibal, president of the Danish Land and Homestead Company, with headquarters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Company was to secure a tract of land consisting of eight or more townships for settlers of Danish origin. A committee of five was sent to Nebraska in early 1871 to find a suitable location. They chose land about a day's ride from the Platte. The families started arriving soon thereafter and on May 28, 1871, Pentecost Sunday, a primal celebration and feast was held in a beautiful grove on Oak Creek, a mile north of the Loup River, to commemorate the beginning of their new life in Howard County, Nebraska.

In 1872, permission had been given to have a Post Office. Hannibal, the first postmaster, named the settlement "Dannebrog", the romantic name for the Danish flag. In 1886, a railroad came from St. Paul to Dannebrog and

on to Loup City. Assured of the continued existence of the village, the village took formal steps to incorporate. School and church services were held in the homes until proper buildings were constructed. At present, Lutheran and Baptist churches serve the people in the area. The children from this community are educated at the re-organized Centura District school, built in 1968. It is located five miles from the towns of Dannebrog, Boelus and Cairo.

The community has had its share of hardships, but the sturdy stock of Danes pulled together to survive, and in so doing have flourished. Dannebrog has been known as Park City which means a city of celebrations. Dannebrog hosts an annual festival called "Grundlovsfest" the first weekend in June honoring Denmark's Constitution Day, June 5, 1849. An annual "Old-Fashioned Danish Christmas" festi-

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A Message From the President *Evelyn Dvorak*

The Howard County Historical Village and Gruber House is now closed after a successful summer season. We will open during the early fall months by appointment. Call any board member and we will gladly assist you.

We were hosts to many, including various organizations and those who were attending family reunions. How interesting it is to check our guest book and see names of out-of-state visitors. Some out-of-town guests brought another group to visit, which we feel was an indication that their first was enjoyed.

I am very grateful to all individual volunteers, organizations and board members who said yes when called upon to assist in many ways. Dave Sprague gave a living demonstration on blacksmithing almost every Sunday afternoon and many others helped make the facilities something of which we can be proud.

The agriculture building committee and board members are planning and getting bids to get the building near the city swimming pool moved to the area east of the Historical Village depot. The goal is to have it open for tourists by the Spring of 2006. We all know any project like this takes money. We are accepting donations (earmarked at building) large or small. Send the donations to Howard County Historical Society, P.O. Box 1, St. Paul, NE 68873.

The post office flag is taken down and the beautiful flowers tenderly cared for by Carl Huebner, will soon freeze, but we will reorganize to greet guests again in the year 2006.

Dannebrog's Danish Roots Run Deep

(Continued from Front Page)

val celebrating themes of the family, native traditions and spirituality is also observed the second weekend in December.

On February 29, 1989, the Nebraska Legislature proclaimed Dannebrog the "Danish Capital of Nebraska". To honor this privilege, an Historical Marker was erected in the downtown area. Today, Dannebrog, population 354, is a romantic Danish setting of "Old World" shops and colorful designs. The small village is nestled in the Middle Loup

Valley, surrounded by beautiful mighty oak trees and quaint Danish-American Romantic style homes. ● Oak Creek gently winds its way through the village and a "hike/bike trail" skirts its way around the town, crossing ● Oak Creek via an antique trestle bridge. You also can capture the sights and sounds of nature as you stroll "Hannibal Woods".

Dannebrog has survived the coming and going of the railroad, as well as the reorganization of schools. As a community, it continues to maintain a healthy attitude in its cycle of businesses and enterprises—making it a prime example of small town Nebraska!

Shirley Johnson of Dannebrog provided the information and pictures on Dannebrog and Nysted.

"Entering Howard County" Makes a Great Christmas Gift. Order a Copy Today!

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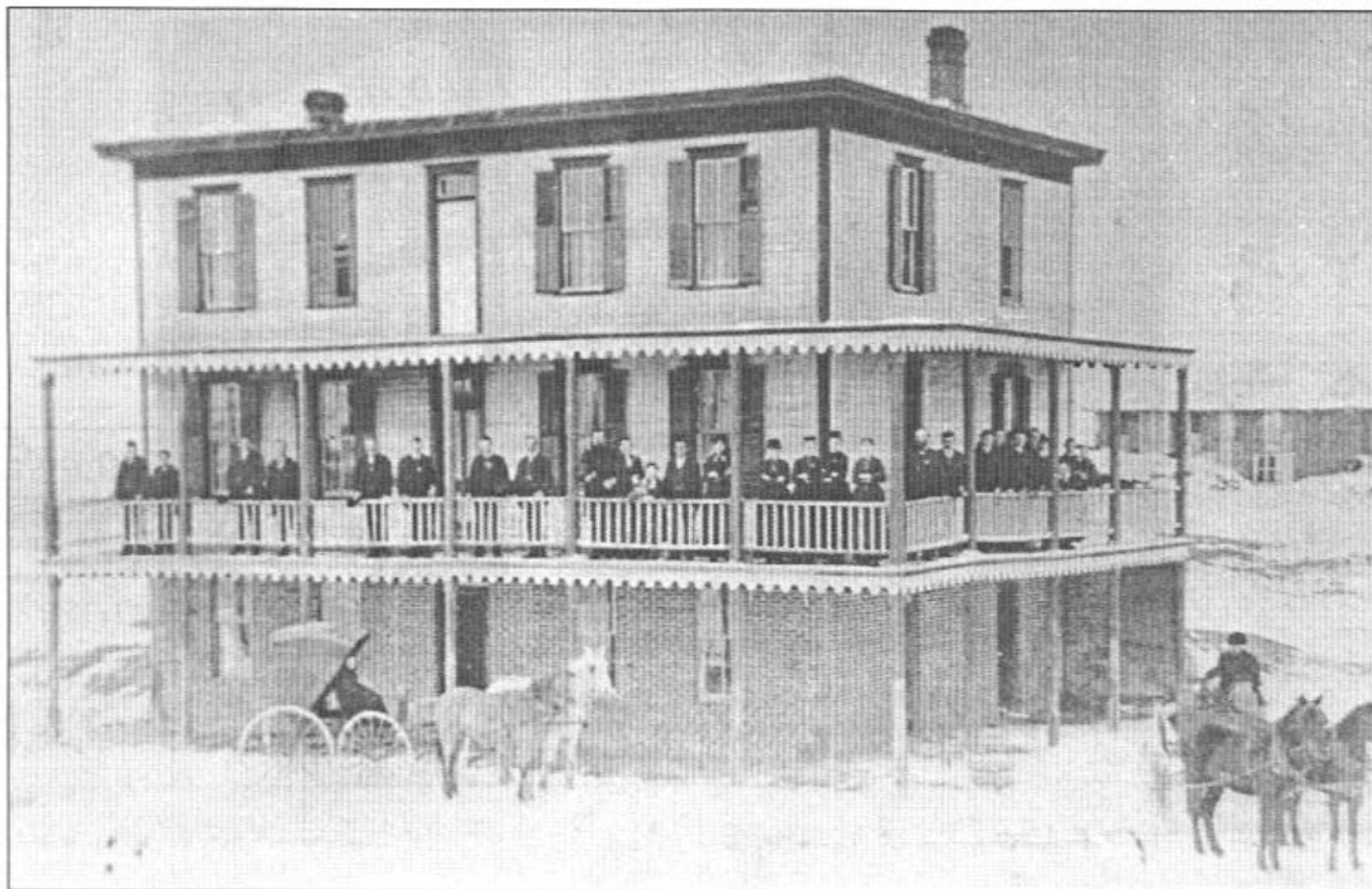
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Dannebrog had a large hotel in 1871 that was located where Elaine Grim's house is on Highway 58. The hotel was north-west from Main Street, across the bridge and on the north side of the street. A dance hall was located on the third floor, the family residence on the second floor and a tavern on the first floor.



Dannebrog's Main Street as it looked around 1912.



This is a reproduction of a "Greetings from Dannebrog Postcard" dated January 5th, 1911. The postcard displays the Lutheran Church, the old High School, Columbia Hall and Park City Hotel, plus various Dannebrog scenes in 1911.



The home of Dannebrog founder Lars Hannibal was located west of the present day highway bridge by the north park entrance and was on the south side of the highway. Lars and Karen Hannibal are standing on the balcony and P.M. (Peter) Hannibal is standing in the foreground. —Picture provided by Bertram Christensen of Fremont



Dannebrog boosters have restored a Dannebrog landmark—Columbia Hall. The 6,000 square foot building was constructed in 1908 and the restoration project began in 1991.

Columbia Hall

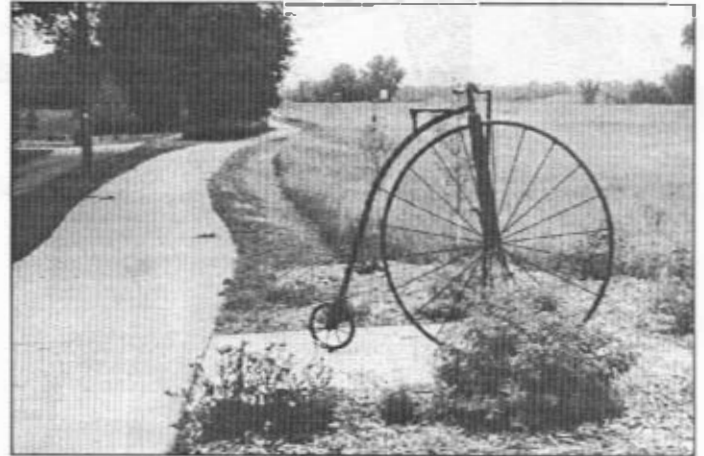
The Dannebrog boosters, the town's leadership force, are preserving a two-story brick landmark located on the town square. The second story features an open room, complete with a stage at one end and kitchen space. The ground level floor has been a meeting house for various lodges and other community functions. The two floors total 6,000 square feet.

A Danish Brotherhood Lodge organized in Dannebrog in 1892 and within a month's time installed "Danas Minde Lodge, No. 54" as a legal and authorized lodge of the Danish Brotherhood Society of America. Later, in 1899, a Danish Brotherhood Hall Association was incorporated for the purpose of erecting a building for a meeting place for the Lodge and for other purposes. Columbia Hall was built in 1908 and for many years housed many meetings, entertainment, and even businesses. The Hall gained national notoriety in August of 1941 when a bomb was detonated in an upper closet during a farewell party for troops departing for armed service.

Even though the original Danish Brotherhood and Sisterhood Lodge emblems are still intact on the front facade of Columbia Hall, the building continued to deteriorate and further blemish the downtown area because it had been vacant for many years. This prompted the boosters to buy Columbia Hall and its lots in December of 1991, and since that time, they have worked hard to restore the building as funds have become available.

In 1999, an Historical Marker, entitled "Dannebrog, Nebraska's Danish Capital," was erected on Columbia Hall premises at the town's annual Grundlovsfest celebration. In 2005, Columbia Hall was presented for consideration of

National Register Historical Listing at the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Board meeting and received a positive recommendation. The nomination was forwarded to the National Park Service for final approval. Columbia Hall was declared a national historic building July 22, 2005. The ground level of Columbia Hall is now completely restored and houses many activities and a Dannebrog Archives and Information Center. The Dannebrog boosters are proud of the community's Danish forefathers and want this landmark to serve once again as a center for community activities and history information.



Dannebrog's hike/bike trail winds through the community, along Oak Creek to Hannibal Woods. The symbolic bicycle-built-for-two was created and donated by Edwin and Berniece Baasch of Cairo.



This historic and ethnic mural was painted by local artists Carol Trumler and M.J. Lamberson in 1991. The mural's images document Dannebrog's history.





A sign outside of Columbia Hall in downtown Dannebrog proclaims Dannebrog as Nebraska's Danish Capital.

Nebraska's Danish Capital

In the spring of 1871 several members of the Danish Land and Homestead Company from Wisconsin claimed land along Oak Creek. The migrants, led by Lars Hannibal, were drawn by fertile soil and the idea that Danes from across the U.S. and the Old Country could form a colony in Howard County. Hannibal called the settlement "Dannebrog," the name of the red and white national flag of Denmark.

Construction of a waterpowered grist mill on Oak Creek sparked the village's early growth, and Dannebrog unsuccessfully sought the county seat in 1874. The town almost disappeared in the early 1880s, when businesses relocated to Nysted, but the coming of a railroad in 1885 brought new life. Dannebrog was incorporated in 1886. By 1920 the population peaked at 436.

Germans, Czechs, Poles and Swedes also settled at Dannebrog. Although the founders' dream of an exclusive colony of Danes was never realized, Dannebrog and the nearby towns of Nysted and Dannevirke preserved the Danish heritage. In 1989 the Nebraska Legislature proclaimed Dannebrog as Nebraska's Danish Capital.

Our Six Years In the Dannebrog Park

By Lucile (Grim) Fox



Lucile (Grim) Fox when she was 16 months old.



Lucile (Grim) Fox grew up in Dannebrog and years later authored "Our Six Years in the Dannebrog Park."

The Grim family, Lemuel Floyd, (L.F.) or "Lemmie" as he was called,

was our daddy and his lifetime wife, Elta (Lingford) and their kids lived in the big house east of the school in Dannebrog . . . After the bank crash of 1929, the place had to be sold. The Grims had to move. But—where?

The only way for us to stay in town was to move into the old park with a dance hall and barn, owned by Charlie Taylor of St. Paul. So, move we did . . .

I was ten years old; Ruth, eight; Ray, seven; Leonard, five; Dean, three; Verna, two; and Dale got here almost as soon as we were settled in. George, Clyde, and Mel came along while we lived in the park.

By Gale Pemberton

So begins the delightful family history written by Lucile in 1984. The book chronicles not only the Grim family history but Dannebrog's as well. She remembers blacksmiths and creameries, Christmas and 4th of July. For Christmas she recalls "Stockings always had animal crackers and oranges, and yet to this day, it is not Christmas without my animal crackers."

Do any of the rest of you remember—"Little kids in Dannebrog used to play games under the street lights in the summer. Games like geese-a-flying, hide and seek, punch the icebox, chalk mark, etc.?"

Lucile's family lived for six years in what is now the Dannebrog City Park. She and her family added so much to the history of the town.



The carved pulpit at the church in Nysted depicts Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and the carved altar has a painting of Jesus with Mary and Martha. They are the work of Danish craftsman Jes Smidt.

Nysted—The Church

In 1872 the Lutheran Circuit Pastor, Soren Madsen, came to America from Denmark. In 1879 he began holding services among the Danish immigrants in a school house one-half mile east of Nysted. St. Peder's congregation was organized in 1883. In 1887 they built their first wooden church building, just to the west of the site of the present building. In 1919, under the leadership of Pastor C.P. Hoilberg, the cornerstone of the new, present day, brick building was laid. Due to prevailing circumstances, the church was not fully completed until 1921. The church is noted for its unique architecture; and especially by the carved pulpit, depicting Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The carved altar with the painting of Jesus with Mary and



A historical sign at St. Peder's Church in Nysted was dedicated on June 4, 2005. The sign was an Eagle Scout project for Joseph Voorhees of Troop 103. His father is the church's pastor, Don Voorhees.

Martha, along with the pulpit, were the work of Danish craftsman Jes Smidt. During the depression, it was difficult for the congregation to keep a pastor. In 1971, St. Peder's entered into a unique relationship of sharing a pastor with the Baptist Church in Dannebrog.

Nysted—The Folk School

The spiritual father of the folk school movement was N.F.S. Grundtvig, sometimes called "the prophet of the North". This Danish poet, preacher, historian, and patriot believed that "every Dane should be an enlightened, useful citizen." In 1887, the same year construction of the old church began, the east wing of the Danish Folk School was constructed. In 1904, the west wing was added, and the middle part was removed in 1946. The folk school had no academic entrance requirements, no examinations, grades, diplomas, and no degrees. Grundtvig believed that the school was to teach its pupils "to love God, their neighbor, and their country." It served as a school for fifty years. During the depression, it was used by St. Peder's as a Retreat Center, and is now the site of a Wesleyan Holiness Church Bible Camp.

Nysted—The Town

In 1882, a post office was started and a general store was opened four miles west of Dannebrog. Many immigrants had come from a city in Denmark named Nysted, which meant "new place". By 1895, the small community had arisen to include a church, folk school, blacksmith shop, creamery, flour mill, lumber yard, dance hall, and several homes. Nysted was one of the shining stars of the Danish Lutheran Church, drawing people from several states to attend festivals and meetings at the Folk School. Throughout the depression, people started leaving Nysted and moving to Dannebrog, or even returning to Denmark.

ST. PEDER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
Nysted, Community
1880 - 1983



The above postcard depicted St. Peder's Lutheran Church when it celebrated its Centennial in 1983.

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Note:

This is the first in a series of “*Historically Speaking*” issues that will feature communities in Howard County. This Fall 2005 issue features Dannebrog and Nysted.

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