

NARRATIVE TEXTS

Danish Texans

Danish Texans, perhaps, are the best model of a small group going through the acculturation process—that is, becoming Texans and adding to the concept of what it is to be Texan.

Never numbering more than one in 3,000 Texans, persons of immediate Danish heritage are nevertheless notable in the last 170 years. Danish immigrants came for varied motives, but for most the reasons were land and economic prosperity. They are often known for their individuality...in some cases, eccentricity.

Informal groups of Danish families settled in northern Lee County, known as “Little Denmark,” as well as in Williamson County and in Rocky Hill near Fredericksburg, but the rural Wharton County colony of Danevang, the Danish Field, is the only coherent Danish colony in the state.

In the late summer of 1894, the first settlers of Danevang, mostly Danes who had spent some years on the United States’ northern plains, arrived in Texas, finding land south of El Campo.

In the face of adverse weather, Gulf hurricanes, and the necessity of raising unfamiliar crops, the colony did not initially prosper. The Danes came with the idea of showing off their north-country farming skills and preserving a distinctly Danish way of life. They did neither. But they stayed, eventually a hundred families strong.

Two questions were posed, in Danish verse, by P.J. Agerskov-Petersen for the 50th anniversary of Danevang in 1944:

Er der ikke Spor tilbage	Is there nothing left whatever
fra de gode, gamle Dage?	from the good, old days?
Er der mon et lille Minde,	Is there, I wonder, a small reminder
om en enkelt Mand og Kvinde?	of any single man or woman?

The questions can be raised not only of Danevang but of all settlement in Texas. And the answer is yes, there are many accomplishments—and many memories.



The P.J.A. Petersen family on their farm near Danevang, c. 1906



The Carl Jensen family home near Danevang