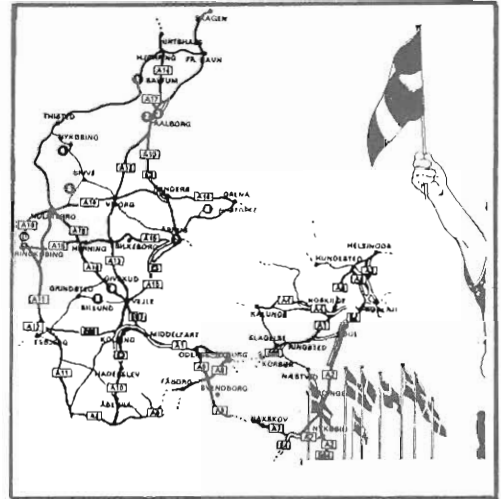


# Migration Studies on the Rise in Denmark



Things have begun to happen in recent years in the field of migration affairs in Denmark. This is partly due probably to the fact that Denmark has admitted thousands of new immigrants, including refugees, from different parts of the world. Certain popular reactions against alien elements have aroused widespread interest in ethnic questions.

The study of migration history has long traditions in Denmark. As early as 1932, migration archives - called the Danes World-wide Archives - were founded, but up to recently the institution saw little activity - at least internationally. At the beginning of 1984, the young and energetic Helle Otte took charge and vigorously entered into international collaboration. Calling at the Institute of Migration in the autumn of 1984, she extended an invitation to me to visit Aalborg, which I had an opportunity to do during my trip to Denmark August 7-13 this year.

## The Finns in Denmark/Copenhagen

Some 2 500 Finns live in Denmark, most of them in the area of Copenhagen. According to the official statistics, the number of Finnish citizens in the country on Jan. 1, 1985, was 1 853. The number has decreased

since 1975, mainly because of the poor employment situation in Denmark. One of the world's oldest Finnish immigrant societies is the **Suomalainen Seura** of Copenhagen, which was founded in 1904. Right after my arrival in Denmark on Aug. 7, Mr. Matti Isoviita, the press and cultural attaché from the Finnish Embassy in Copenhagen, made arrangements for me to become acquainted with the society and have discussions with its representatives. Isoviita is an old friend of mine; and while he was serving in a similar capacity in 1980-81 in Stockholm, we organized in Sweden a tour for the Institute of Migration's exhibition dealing with Finnish emigration to Sweden through ages. Isoviita appears to be performing his duties in Denmark with the same zeal. When my Danish colleague Helle Otte observed that Finland and its culture are now more prominently in view in his country, she added - quite correctly - that my friend working in Copenhagen deserves credit for this state of affairs. It should be pointed out in this connection that Isoviita has an able assistant in Marja Vasala-Fleischer, a former resident of Turku.

But, back to the Finnish Society in Copenhagen with its membership of some 200. According to the president, Maija-Liisa



Members of the Executive Committee of the Suomalainen Seura (Finnish Society) of Copenhagen, which was founded in 1904. Seated at the head of the table is the president, Maija-Liisa Nilsson, and on the right Press and Cultural Attaché Matti Isoviita of the Embassy of Finland in Denmark. (Photo: O. Koivukangas)

Nilson, the society's biggest problem is the small size and poor condition of the premises where its meetings are held. One can only imagine the demands made on the one water closet at the end of the courtyard on festive occasions. The society's hopes are now centered on the chance of its obtaining a better meeting place when and if a Finnish pastor is appointed at the beginning of 1987 to take up clerical duties in Copenhagen. Here, then, are the greetings I promised to pass on to Jaakko Launikari, department chief of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Evang.-Lutheran Church of Finland. Remembering how Finland participated in establishing the Finland House in Stockholm, it would seem reasonable to expect Finland to support the activities of the Finnish Society in Copenhagen as well. After all, it is one of the most effective representatives of Finnish culture on Danish soil.

On the same occasion, Pirkko Kuorehjärvi, social attaché of the Embassy of Finland, reported that Finns, numbering about 200, are giving Danish welfare officials headaches. These Finns' biggest problem is alcohol — not drugs. Besides immigrants, there are Finnish business men and students in Denmark. Horticulture and the arts are among the subjects studied.

I also met my old friend Kristian Hvidt, who holds the post of librarian of the Danish Parliament, and he showed me around the parliamentary building. I poked around the Royal Library too and saw that publications of our Institute were included in its collections.

### **Det Danske Udvandrerarkiv**

Established over 50 years ago, these archives are located in the center of the city of Aal-

# DET DANSKE UDVANDRER- ARKIV

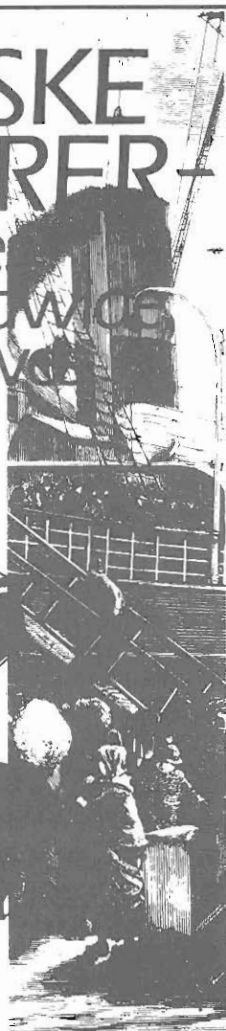
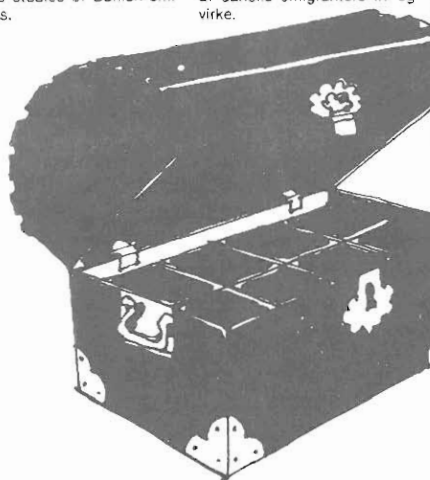
Danes  
Worldwide  
Archives

The Danes Worldwide Archives are the library and archives for the study of Danish emigration history.

The Archives are a center to professional as well as laymen's studies of Danish emigrants.

Det danske Udvanderarkiv er bibliotek og arkiv for studier af dansk udvanderhistorie.

Udvanderarkivet er centrum for såvel slægtsforskeren som faghistorikerens udforskning af danske emigranternes liv og virke.



borg. Owing to the length of its existence, the institution has accumulated an estimable collection of archival material dealing with Danes in different parts of the world. Its picture collection is likewise noteworthy, as is also its extensive library. Searching for descendants of Danes who have moved abroad has kept the archives busy to an increasing extent — and this seems to be quite a worldwide phenomenon. Director Helle Otte thought that it would be necessary before long to hire someone full time to carry out such tasks as finding out when some inquirer's grandfather or grandmother had emigrated and how to get in touch with distant relatives.

At the same time as I familiarized myself with the section of the archives dealing with Australia, Helle Otte and I discussed the matter of assembling a joint Nordic exhibition for participation in the celebration of the bicentennial in 1988 of the settlement of Australia by Europeans. We agreed, further, that it would be important for the Nordic countries to participate in the symposium on Scandinavian immigration to Australia to be held then in Melbourne.

Near Aalborg is the Rebild National Park, which Danish Americans donated in 1912 to their former homeland. The association that maintains the park arranges every Fourth of July, America's Independence Day, a big

festival in honor of the Danish emigrants. This year, some 20 000 people, half of them from America, attended the festival. The festival is very important to the local tourist trade as well as to the promotion of business relations between Denmark and the United States.

One of the sights of Aalborg is the North Jutland Museum of Art, which was designed by the great Finnish architect Alvar Aalto. On exhibition there right now were works by Australian aborigines and erotic pictures by Picasso. How could these exhibits be brought to Finland too?

### **DRØMMEN OM AMERIKA – Denmarks's Great Emigration Exhibition**

In May 1984, the National Museum of Denmark opened at its Brede branch, 15 kilometers to the north from Copenhagen, an exhibition called "Drømmen om Amerika" (The Dream of America). The show was put up in collaboration with the Moesgaard Prehistoric Museum, situated in Århus,

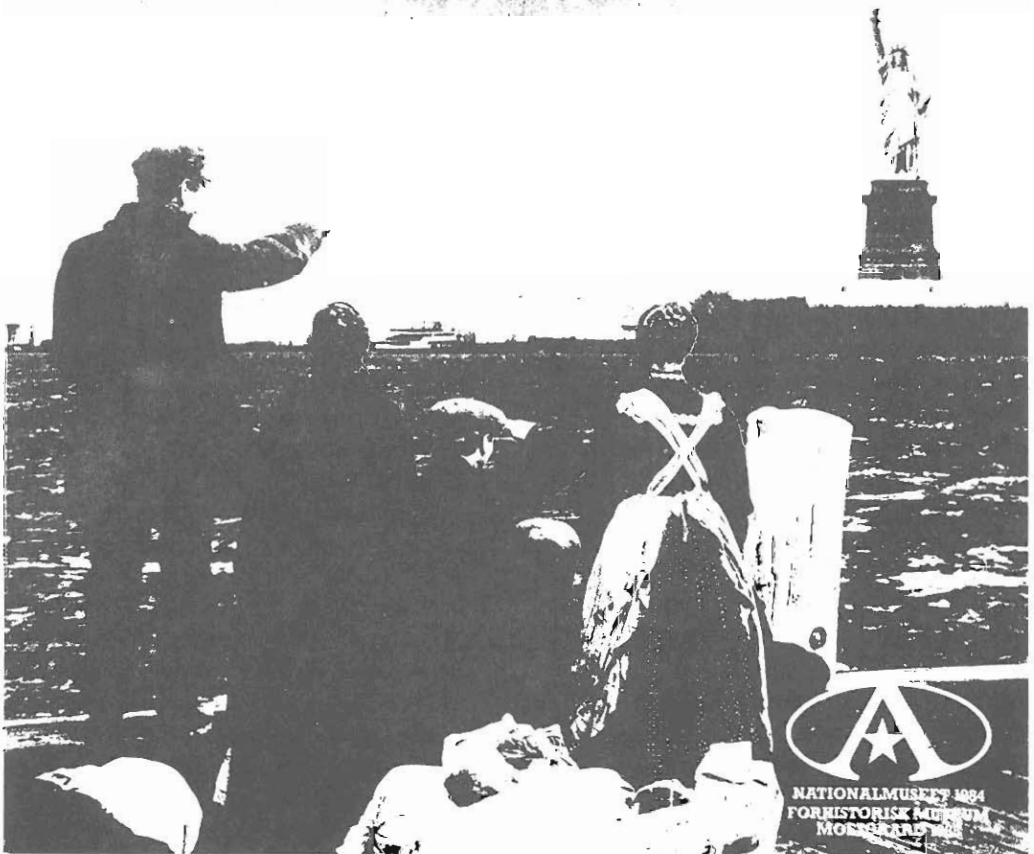


Main entrance to the Rebild National Park. Appearing in the picture are Helle Otte and Otto Simonsen of the Migration Archives in Aalborg. (Photo: O. Koivukangas)



The Rebild National Park near Aalborg. (Photo: O. Koivukangas)

# ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ DRØMMEN ★ OM AMERIKA



under the expert guidance of men like Kristian Hvidt. Numerous organizations and private people have loaned objects for display, some all the way from the United States. The purpose of the exhibition is to tell why and how and under what conditions 300,000 Danes migrated to the United States between

1840 and 1914. The exhibition is now open to the public in the Moesgaard Museum on the outskirts of Århus until Oct. 21.

Danish emigration to America reached flood tide between the 1860s and 1880s, the peak year being 1882. The emigrants were mostly young men and women from farms

and the handicrafts. Special mention should be made of 16,000 souls who migrated for religious reasons, mostly Mormons, who settled in the Great Salt Lake area of Utah, the heart of the Mormon country.

The exhibition gives a graphic picture of Danish emigration as a whole. The viewer himself is swept along by the migratory tide, which carried people away from their primitive agrarian surroundings to the land of opportunity across the Atlantic. The journey takes off from the office of the emigration agent, whose authentic antique furniture conjures up the atmosphere of the old days. From there, one steps on the deck of an old steamer and down stairs to a furnished III-class cabin for ten passengers. After a stormy voyage, one lands on Ellis Island, where immigration officers examine all arrivals. In the distance, across the bay, there looms the New York City skyline, with myriad lights gleaming. Many of the features of the exhibition represent brilliant solutions to problems, simple but effective. With tall pictures of skyscrapers and narrow mirrors, downtown New York is made vividly real, reflecting the wealth of the New World along with the cramped and dingy housing of immigrants in the city's slums. The localities settled by Danish immigrants and their spread westward are depicted on an electrically lighted map. Gold digging in California, covered wagons trekking across the prairies, homes build of sod — such are features marking the fortunes of Danish settlers. The exhibition pulses with life in that, for instance, one can buy products dating back to the pioneering days from a general store representing the "Wild West". Finally, one sees how Danish emigrants have kept in touch with the Old Country — SAS, for instance, has a display section of its own, which suggests active sponsorship of the show from this direction too. Connected with the exhibition is also the book *Drømmen om Amerika* (Århus 1984) dealing with Danish emigration to America. This Danish exhibition is the best one on the

theme of migration I have so far seen. Since, with respect to their basic structure and processes, the emigrations from European, or at least Nordic, countries are very similar, it is only natural that interest in this exhibition should be evinced in other countries as well. I heard that Norway, at least, would be interested in having the exhibition brought over there. So there would be reason to look into the possibilities of having it set up in Finland too. In any case, the Danish show could serve as a suitable model when steps are taken in Finland to organize a corresponding exhibition intended for immigrants and their descendants as well as the nation as a whole.

### Migration Research Increasing in the University of Copenhagen

Passing through Copenhagen again on my return journey, I called on Mr. Erik Helmer Pedersen, an instructor on the faculty of economic history at the University of Copenhagen. He has recently published a book on Danish emigration to America and is at present doing research on prominent Danish emigrants and their achievements. We discussed in particular the chances of his getting some student interested in doing research on Danish emigration to Australia with the aim of bringing to light some new knowledge about it in time for the Melbourne Conference in 1988. In other departments of the university as well, interest is growing in studies of migration and ethnic minorities. This can probably be attributed to the timeliness of immigration problems in Denmark.

My stay of less than a week in Denmark proved interesting and stimulating. The Institute of Migration in Turku has also played host to visitors from Norway, where research in the field of migration is on the increase, along with archival and exhibition activity. A visit to Norway would certainly be worth while.