DANMARK

Author Unknown

Danmark is a land made up of the people from the tribe of Dan. The name means Dan's field or meadow. In Europe it is Danmark. In the Western world we call it Denmark. Esther Whitherell remembers "I climbed that high mountain. It is called Heaven's Mountain. On top is a 'torn' column the king could ascent and watch his troops in battle. Today it is a tourists attraction and they charge twenty-five cents to ascent the mountain and sell souvenirs at every turn, such as yardsticks, canes, umbrellas, etc." Danmark, Scandinavia's smallest country, two national characteristics needed to deal with so restless a neighbor. "Sea" defines much of the country as the land mass includes a peninsula and some 500 islands grouped together. The coastline is l4,622 miles long, and no Dane lives more than 35 miles from the coast. The faces the and courage highest point is about 568 feet above sea level North Sea with competence.

Inserted from the Ensign magazine of July 1974:

"Although Denmark lacks coal and iron deposits, about two- thirds of its fertile land produces food, much of it for export; it also has become a major processor of raw goods. The largest shipyard in Europe is on the Island of Funen."

Temperatures range from 23 to 96 degrees with an average from 30 to 60 degrees. Severe winter time temperatures can fall to 60 degrees below zero. Buses do not take on passengers on the southwest and northeast streets because the winter winds do not permit passengers to stand so they swing around the corner and make their drops and pickups. Rainfall is about 23.6 inches with 150 to 225 frost free days.

School is compulsory for all children ages seven to fourteen. Then children can choose to go either into an academic or vocational program. However, at that time the average Danish farm youth did not continue education. Military training also was compulsory for young men. Before the census was instituted all male births had to be reported so they would not be missed at military age.

The homes were built different from here in America. Timber was not plentiful, therefore homes and farms were constructed as half-timbered, which means the framework is of timber with the open spaces of the walls filled in with clay, tile, or brick. The roofs were thatch with straw or reed, even sometimes heather or a combination Thereof, Earth and sand made the roof tight. Today earth and thatch is not combined for roofing. Dirt rots the thatch material. Thatch materials are reeds and are rot resistant. It is harvested in the winter when the ice is thick enough to walk on. The reeds are cut parallel with the ice and bound in bundles for use or sale. The ridge was the trickiest to get tight. The thatch would extend way over the walls to offer protection.

Doors were usually made of planks and board if available. One-half doors were popular. They kept the little ones in and the domestic animals out. The top half let in light and fresh air and was great for conversation areas. If an unwelcome person knocked on a closed door they opened the bottom door. With a wooden mallet they could conk him while he was still bent over ducking under the top one-half door. Flooring in most rooms consisted of pounded, hardened clay.

Floors in main entrances and in the scullery were of stone work consisting of small granite rocks. The ceilings were built of planks, boards or branches placed over the cross beams. In poor cottages, peat moss or clay was laid over this framework. Windows were mainly only in daily living rooms and faced so as to view the courtyard instead of outward to the fields. They often were not clear but had a greenish tint. Windows were stationary and not made to open or shut until the 1850s. Later, when glass became less expensive windows were added to other rooms.

The hearth area was the area in which food was cooked and the house heated. The hearth itself was placed along the wall facing the living room. It was like a built up clay bench upon which the fire burned to cook the food. It was located on inner walls of clay and in a U shape. The fuel was dried peat moss, wood, heather, scrub brush and even cow-pats and sheep manure were used if necessary.

In place of bedrooms the beds were built into the walls. Just a square hole with a mattress and a draw curtain for privacy. As the beds were short the people slept in a semi-sitting position. Large puffy comforters, preferably filled with goose down, were used. Straw, hay, heather and chicken feathers for filling was used as a last resort. Pillows were large and blankets were one or more overdyner.

Bathrooms, rest rooms, and outhouses. There were no rest rooms, not even outhouses except for city folk and the well-to-do. The side of the house, a latrine, the ash pile, or the shallow trench behind the cows in the stable were the places to use. Bathing and swimming were for the young. Washing was restricted to face and hands using plain water or spittle. Women went to fetch the water from a well or the village pond. Today bathrooms are large. All fixtures are water proof. The shower head is built into the middle of the bathroom ceiling so everything gets hosed down when ever a shower is taken. Toilet paper hangs on a hook against the wall so it is easily removed during showers and put in one of the cabinets. Plumbing is exposed up the inside wall of the bathroom from apartment to apartment. The shower drain is in the middle of the tiled bathroom floor.

The well water was usually polluted from a nearby manure pile, and the pond was the watering place for live-stock. The water ponds are ground level water tables and the water moves up and down with the tide. Therefore they are never stagnant. People had no idea about sanitation. All drank from the same ladle or mug hanging on the water barrel. Because the water was so poor beer was used instead. No one drinks water today. If one asks for a drink of water they say "You want goose wine?" This saying is because the ponds are home for geese and ducks. Non-alcoholic beer and soda-pop are used instead of water.

The Dailey Routine

What time is it? A most treasured timepiece was an old reliable rooster. Sundials and length of shadows were also used. Time was referred to by sunrise, sunset, dinner time, and when the shepherd came and left with the animals. Few people had calendars. Terms such as spring, sowing time, threshing, when the sow went to the boar were common. In the summer at 3:30 or 4:00 a.m. and in the winter at about 5:00 or 6:00 a.m. the house wife got up and did the milking and prepared the breakfast. A quick splash of water to face and hands constituted one's toilette. In the summer you have to go to bed by your watch or you will stay up all night. In June the sun can set at 10:30 - 11 P.M. and rise two hours later. The birds start to sing at 1 A.M.

Breakfast was cold cooked coarsely-cracked barley mush served with warm milk or beer and a slice of rye or whole wheat bread. "Beer and bread" was called "Olog brod" - a staple for all ages. It was sweet, young and unfermented. After breakfast the men went into the fields and women cleaned the house and fixed brunch ready by 9:00 a.m. Brunch was usually two large pieces of rye bread topped with cheese, butter or suet. If the men had heavy work in the fields brunch would often be buckwheat mush with bread.

After brunch it was time for baking, or tending the vegetable garden, and preparing the noon meal. This was the biggest meal of the day. Bread and mush were the mainstay of every meal. Some fish, pork and maybe a few vegetables, all washed down with home brewed beer, was the usual. There were no deserts. After this heavy meal the men slept while the women would tidy up and prepare milk and coffee for when the men woke up. Then the men returned to the fields. The women could follow or stay and tidy up. About 4:00 p.m. was mid afternoon snack time. It was usually the same as brunch - then more work.

Supper was at 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. - again barley mush cooked in cream served with bread and beer. Then the men returned to the fields until 10:00 or mid-night. It was light enough so they could see. After dinner the women's milking chore began again. A type of desert was rye bread cooked in water and sugar, and sweet beer as a soup. Later Aebleskiver, which are like miniature pop-overs, filled with applesauce or other fruit. A large wooden mug in the center of the table held beer. All could help themselves. There was 5 to 6 percent alcohol in the strongest homemade beer.

In 1800 coffee, tea, and chocolate began to be generally used. Rum in coffee was good, as was grog, which is rum diluted with sugar and warm water. But beer and coffee were the most common drinks.

Meals were eaten at a long table by the windows in the living room. The head of the house sat at the head of the table on a short bench. On the long bench underneath the window sat farmhands in order of age and importance. At first women stood at the other side and end of table and then years later a bench was provided. Esther Whitherell reports: "when I visited my family three women stood near the table to pass food and pick over the choicest chops for guests. They vied to serve my husband. Men are just a niche above women in Danmark.

Meals were served, at first, with only a piece of small wooden board to cut bread and meat on. Plates were not normally used. Only spoons and knives were used at first. After meals, while the three women ate, the folks would sit around and smoke, chew or use snuff. Dishes were done by men wiping spoons clean on their sweater sleeves and women used their aprons. Knives were cleaned off on the cutting boards and beer mugs were just left to stand. The main thing was to clean off the table, the spills and drips left as people took food from the common food bowl. Later dishes were used and rinsed in a water, lye, salt solution.

Except for dusting and straightening up, the main thing was to sweep the clay floors and strew sand. This sand was a special type and had to be of correct coarseness. It could not be so fine that it ground into dust or so course that it crunched when wooden shoes passed over it. White sand was used on special occasions. Prior to sweeping the floors they are hand sprinkled with water to keep dust from rising.

Other daily household chores were the never ending jobs of churning, making butter and cheese, and baking bread. Baking was done every three to four weeks. It was a big job to make enough dough for about thirteen to fourteen large loaves of bread weighing thirteen pounds a piece. Early in the morning the oven was heated to scorching, the coals raked out, and the dough kneaded into loaves. In the first loaf, a small stick with a rag wrapped around it dipped in tallow was inserted. It caught fire and served as the light placing the other loaves in the oven. The bread was put on a long wooden paddle which had been soaked in water to withstand the heat. It didn't matter if bread became moldy, as it could be washed down with beer, and moldy bread made one strong.

The Danes had a fear of sickness and disease. Mortality rate among infants was high. Ignorance and unsanitary living conditions contributed to disease. There were no doctors. Doctoring consisted of home remedies and superstitious acts. Each parish usually had an appointed midwife who often served as the doctor. Vaccinations for smallpox were generally required in 1810.

Their religious belief brought about more fear. Ministers preached the only thing the peasant understood - hell fire and damnation, toil, trouble, hoveri, worries, subjugation, taxes, destitution, hunger, and a God that was fearful and full of punishments. Superstition had and would continue to rule their lives for generations. The peasants were expected to attend church. They were fined if they didn't partake of Holy Communion at least once a year. Due to the enormous church tax to be on the church roll the people are falling away. Esther Witherell reports on visiting churches on Sunday. "The doors were open but there was no service and no people. Preachers are state paid and given a whole district of churches. They rise early and motor from church to church. They hope no one will be

there asking for a sermon because that would cut their income by five or six other church visits. Preachers are paid by the number of churches they visit on Sunday. We approached one minister entering a church. He was so happy to learn that all we wanted was tomb stone information. He referred us to the gardener hopped in his car, and took off for the next Lutheran church."

The Danes had colorful national costumes which they wore on special occasions. The women's costumes, especially the headdresses, typified the area from which they came. Also special weaving patterns and embroidery work indicated an area. Men's costumes usually didn't vary much. For everyday wear they used sturdy leather pants (usually Knickers) or regular homespun knickers, long gray or homespun long sleeve shirt (which also served as a nightshirt) and over that a knitted striped vest with knit sleeves and a knitted cap. If jackets were worn, these would be long-sleeved and would reach half way between the knee and the hips, or they would be a vest-type with combination of wool and linen called linseywoolsey instead of plain wool. Shoes were usually wooden, but low leather shoes with a large buckle in front were also worn. In cold weather, wisps of straw would be put into wooden shoes for insulation. Women usually wore full, street-length, long-sleeved dresses often dyed blue or black, or a jumper-type dress with a long-sleeve blouse or a full skirt and long-sleeve blouse. The blouse could be striped or plain white. They always wore larger aprons over their dresses for protection. Sometimes they would wear a vest-type jacket with or without sleeves over their blouses. A shawl was often worn or a large shawl-like collar, which draped around their shoulders. A hat or scarf was worn as a head covering. Later calico became a favorite with younger women, and cloaks were used instead of shawls. Under clothes, for both men and women, were not worn until the last half of the 1800s. Every day summer clothing was often made of white bleached linen.

Often Sunday best for young men was boots, long blue pants, sweaters, vests buttoned nearly to the neck, and long-sleeved waist-length jackets with wide lapels. Silver buttons followed the outline of the labels. Instead of a collar, they wore scarves tied around the neck. Hats were caps with wide brims, which stuck out in front. Farmers dressed like the young men except that they often had a high-top felt hat and a long dress coat, sometimes with short tails. More than one vest could be worn. Farmers often went bare foot to church, putting on their boots just prior to entering. Children usually were clothed in home spun knickers, long socks, and long-sleeve shirts. They were often barefoot. Young girls had long-sleeve dresses, often with a shawl wrapped around their shoulders to cross in front of their chest with the ends tucked in with their aprons holding the ends secure. Their head covering was a scarf or a wrapped-around bandanna. Many of the poor peasants found Jewish used-clothes merchants a source of clothing for them. Prices were reasonable.

Depending on the weather, spring cultivation generally began after Ash Wednesday (4 February through 3 March) or earlier if Lent fell late in the year. The men first fertilized from the precious dung pile, then plowed, always during Easter (22 March through 25 April). Plowing was an art, and not everyone could use and adjust the old heavy wheel plows correctly. Then came the harrowing; next the sowing, which also was an art, and then the rolling. Thereafter thoughts turned to house repair, road repair, fence repair, digging and cleaning drainage ditches, gathering peat moss and other fuel.

One big chore was the semiannual clothes wash. The big wash occurred normally twice a year - about May and November. Starting time was midnight and was usually finished in a day and a night. Extra help was needed. One person soaped down the clothes, another hand washed them and soap them down again, and then washed clean again. Next they would either be boiled or put through a lye-soak process called bygning. Clothes were placed in a large vat and hot water was poured through a sheet holding ash. The clothes would soak, the water would be drained, and the process repeated. This took eight to ten hours. Later, clothes were rinsed in a stream or in cold water in a vat and then beaten by a short paddle stick on wooden bench wrung dry, and placed on bushes or the ground to dry. Linens could still go through a bleaching process. In places where clothes were only washed once

a year, the clothes were often put in a hot oven between washing. This did not make them clean but killed all the lice. One can imagine the hardship of washing outside in November. Linen clothing was hand mangled with a wooden roller and a board. Later hand irons were used.

Haying began after midsummer on about June 24th. A day was set for the cutting. Then later the hay was turned for even drying. Meadow grass was dried for hay by being piled on top of wooden stakes and cross stakes driven into the moist meadow soil to let the air get at the bottom of the pile. Then the big raking and hauling day came. It was a festive day, and most everyone would be dressed in white. Men, women, and grown children all helped. It was the women's work to tread the stacks. When harvesting grain the dress was again white. Everyone possible in the village helped. A scyther cut the grain while one or two persons gathered it and tied it into sheaves. Later, the fields would be raked, but enough was left for the gleaners, and the poor to gather. The grain was left until the lade-fogden picked out the tying sheaves, then it was gathered and hauled to the barns. Harvesting was generally finished by the end of September but could drag on to the middle of November.

Shearing occurred in May and on St. Michael's day (29 Sept.). Then carding parties and spinning began, to be completed by Christmas. Weaving began after the Christmas planning for the new year's patterns. After the flax was harvested, it went through a long and difficult process before it could be made into linen yarn. After Christmas, the women began working the flax fiber and scutchings to produce the yarn.

Brewing took place in the spring and fall. A good batch of brew could take as long as two months to complete. After infusion, the first batch of work was the gammeltol, the second batch the mellemol of medium strength, and the third batch the beggars' beer.

Slaughtering could begin in October and often continued, off and on, until December depending on farm size and number of animals to be killed. Then the meat was dried, pickled, smoked, and salted for food storage. If possible, the Danes tried to have enough food for two years in case of bad harvests. The farmers tried to have threshing and grain cleaning completed before Christmas, but this was not always possible.

After the harvest, the people went into a winter schedule until the next April. This was the time to make and repair tools, braid straw and home-grown hemp into strands of rope, make and repair ropes, and knit. Men were some of the best knitters because they could get the strands so tight. Many made baskets, mats, and pottery. Anything produced in surplus would be sold for extra income.

The Danes loved to party. Nearly any special accomplishment and all holidays were an excuse to hold a party. Parties were held in homes, barns, or outside in good weather. Decorations in general were flowers, garlands, and wreaths made from tree boughs, and large linen sheets hung down the walls from the ceiling. Music was always by a fiddler, maybe accompanied by a clarinetist. They usually played on an upraised platform. The general entertainment was plenty of good food, and plenty of beer, brandy aquavit, sometimes rum, wine, coffee or tea, old-fashioned games, card-playing, and dancing and more dancing. Depending on the occasion, parties could last from one day through a whole week. Quite often they would go all night long, breaking up at dawn. Lent was the first big holiday after Christmas.

During Shrovetide many parties were held throughout Denmark. A common occurrence during this mad week was a game called cat in the barrel. A cat was placed in a barrel suspended by ropes between two poles. Riders, at full gallop, tried to club the barrel to pieces to allow the cat to escape.

The quiet week before Easter was a holy week, and people usually acted the part. Today, Easter is celebrated much as we celebrate it in America. On May Day, the young men of many areas held a grand parade to bring summer to the farms and villages. Men and horses were gaily decorated. Strong men bore tall staffs

bedecked with brightly colored silk cloth, streamers, and liners. Some areas lit bonfires or long torches to ward off the witches on their way to Bloksbjerg. Witches were thought to be burned on built brush piles and their Sjel (soul) would fly to Blokerjerg, Germany. They wished their witches on Germany, their most feared enemy since their independence from that country.

On 23 June, Midsummer's Eve, parties were held everywhere. Most of Denmark believed the witches rode again this night, and again fire and torches burned in most places. The harvest festival included all those who helped in any way with the harvest. Christmas was celebrated from 24 December to 6 January.

For many years the state law regarding marriage age for men was twenty-four years old - to come after the draft and military enlistment. A couple who wanted to get married could not do so without their parent's or guardian's permission. Parents could be helpful in establishing new homes and for this reason a marriage between a couple was often arranged regardless of whether they loved each other. A betrothal normally took place in the minister's presence with at least two witnesses who would attest that the two were not related, had no other marriage obligations, and were free to be married. The following Sunday the banns would be read from the pulpit or posted on the door to the church for three consecutive weeks. This was to give notice to the people of the intended marriage and allow anyone who had anything against it to come forth. Afterwards, the couple were free to be married the following Sunday or at a more convenient time. After the formal betrothal, a party was usually held. The betrothal was as binding as the subsequent marriage vows. The couple could live together lawfully. The bride made a special long-sleeved mid-leg length wedding shirt with the customary light fine embroidery. She also made other gifts such as knitted stockings, gloves, and wristlets.

Wedding celebrations lasted two or three days to a week. Many marriages occurred on Friday or Saturday. An oral invitation was delivered to the anticipated wedding guests by a bedsman, who would either have the message memorized or written on a paper hidden in his hat. "I bring you greetings from so and so. And request your presence to come and eat breakfast with us at 9:30 a.m. and then follow us to the church and witness our marriage and return back home with us and have a meal or two and enjoy yourselves with dancing and music all night long, and then return the next day and resume your places as on the first day. You are requested to reciprocate by donating a pail of milk and two pots of cream." At each home where he delivered the message, he would be invited in for a drink before he resumed his errand. After several recitals, he began getting tipsy and must have been something else to see and hear near the end of his rounds.

Guests were requested and expected to help with the food Wedding preparations took several days. In addition, musicians, waiter, ushers, and cooks had to be obtained. At the appointed time, the guests assembled for the wedding breakfast. Each wagon load of guests was greeted by fiddler's music or gunfire. Festivities were held inside or out depending on the weather and season. After breakfast, the bridal procession formed. The first wagon contained the musicians, followed by the bride and her attendants, then came the groom and best man, then the others. The procession proceeded to the church very slowly like a funeral march. When the church was spotted the several outriders rode at full gallop to the church, turned, and galloped back to the procession. On the third time to the church, they faced the procession and waited around to ring bells, shout, and possibly to use gunfire. As the bridal pair knelt before the altar and said their vows, the minister married them. No exchange of rings was made. Then the procession formed again, but this time the bride and groom were in the lead wagon and it was a mad dash home. If the procession didn't return fast enough or all wagons didn't keep closed up, then the wife would have the say in the marriage, not to mention the bad luck. Sometimes no wagons were used. The bridal procession would form a train and walk to the church and return similar to the way described.

The newly weds ate first from a single slice of bread and drank the same "Schnapps."

Two candles were lit representing the bridal pair. The candle that burned out first was seen as a sign that the person it represented would die first. The meal was heavy and substantial. The main dish may have been mush, dried fish, or a meal stew with vegetables and dumplings in a mustard sauce. Four or more guests ate from a common bowl (fad).

After the dinner came the dance. At some point during the days of festivity, the bride and groom would have to dance out of their single youth society and into the ranks of the married society. An exchange of hats or caps took place. The groom wore a red cap to signify that he was now an honorable married man. The bride exchanged her white cap for a black one. In some areas, the exchange was done formally.

In some regions, it was customary to send for the minister to christen a newborn baby immediately after birth, especially if the child was sickly. It was also customary that a child be christened later in the church--or presented in church--as it came to be called. The christening in the church usually occurred on the first Sunday after birth or as soon thereafter as possible. Witnesses or godparents were chosen by the parents to be present. Witnesses, usually relatives, often presented gifts to the child. On the way to the church, the name of the child was whispered to the godmother in secret. At the church, the father handed the baby to her saying, "I deliver to you a heathen; bring me back a Christian." The child slept in its christening clothes - a long dress decorated with all kinds of crotchet and embroidery border work - kept from generation to generation, and used for both sexes. The godmother had the place of honor at the table.

When a death occurred, a family member notified friends and relatives of the death and to invited them to the wake held the day and night prior to burial. There were no morticians at that time. People took care of the corpse the best they could. Married men were dressed in their marriage shirt with a white linen cap. The big toes were tied together with woolen yarn to "keep the corpse from walking". A coin was placed over each eyelid to keep them closed and a psalm book under the chin to keep it from drooping. The body, wrapped in one of the marriage sheets was placed on a layer of straw on the table with an open pair of scissors on the chest forming a cross. Three straw crosses were placed alongside the body. A coin was put in the coffin along with three handfuls of home soil, and the body was placed in the coffin. The coffin was left open. The guests ate dinner, then sang psalms, and drank brandy intermittently. Early on Sunday, the coffin was closed and carried on a bier to the church yard by six or eight pallbearers.

If the family could afford church services the bells would ring in a series of two rings for an adult. Otherwise there were no bells and only grave-side services were held. At the burial the minister cast the first three shovel fulls of earth onto the coffin. The widow and her children cast the next and the other mourners the rest. Stones in the shape of a cross or a single large stone was placed on top of the grave. Later a carved wooden heart plaque or a wooden cross might be added. A verse might also be inscribed. The burial took most of the day, but the funeral feast could last all night and often into the next day. There was eating, drinking, and cards, but usually no dancing. The entertainment was not considered disrespectful as the wailing and laments hindered the peace of the deceased. The funeral, in honor of the deceased, was intended to please him as well as cheer his survivors.

Ensign magazine of July l974 reports

"Like most Scandinavian countries, Denmark's freewheeling laws on pornography and morality threaten homes already imperiled by economic condition that make having more than three children a sacrifice and send a majority of mothers out of the home to work.

"One section of downtown Copenhagen has been refereed to as "a Sodom and Gomorra situation" At the age of 14 or 15 they have to resist temptations that most people never see in their entire lives. Sex education starts in kindergarten; the legal age of consent is 14; and the illegitimate birth rate is about 25 percent.

"In Denmark its like this: If you don't drink, you're not an adult. Youngsters start smoking

when they feel like it - frequently at the age of eight or nine and
many employers offer a daily beer as a "fringe benefit".

"Yet things are beginning to happen. The Brigham Young University Folk dancers taught Danish teens some dances in l966 and the idea caught on. A group of young people from the Copenhagen North Branch meet weekly in its own "milk bar" for European classical dancing and American square dancing. They are also called to dance for schools, governments agencies, youth conferences and festivals. All Danish districts have large dance teams and compose their own numbers. A five-year-old camping program has about 50 girls each year working for camp crafter certificates.

In l972 there were 18 native Danish missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ serving in Denmark, England, Germany and Norway. Convert baptisms in Denmark have varied between 50 and 1200 annually since l966.

A bright future is seen for Denmark. It is "a wonderfully sweet, green little land that's been preserved for some great people."