

= Danebod =

Danebod (pronounced " DAHN @-@ a @-@ bo " , or " DAN @-@ a @-@ bo ") is a historic district at the south edge of the railway town of Tyler in southwestern Minnesota . Founded in 1885 by Danish Evangelical Lutherans led by Rev. Hans Jørgen Pedersen (1851 ? 1905) , the district comprises a group of buildings dating back to 1888 from Minnesota 's oldest Danish immigrant settlement . Danebod remains until this day a predominantly Danish Lutheran , close @-@ knit religious community . An annual celebration named Æbleskiver Days , held on the fourth weekend of July , celebrates Danish heritage and culture and includes a parade that goes down the town 's main street with floats that are made by the various Danebod neighborhoods .

On the basis of its cultural and architectural significance , four buildings from Danebod were added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places on June 30 , 1975 as the " Danebod Historic Complex " .

= = Etymology = =

The name " Danebod " honors Denmark 's first queen , Queen Thyra Danebod , the consort of tenth @-@ century Danish king Gorm the Old . Queen Thyra is thought to have directed the building of a stone wall across the Danish peninsula of Jutland as protection against foes to the south , and in gratitude she was given the name Danebod . The name Danebod originally meant in Danish " one who mends , comforts , or saves the Danes " .

= = History = =

The native inhabitants of the area which later became Danebod were the Dakota Sioux people .

= = = Establishment = = =

On September 8 , 1872 , two Danish pioneer pastors , Adam Dan and Rasmus Andersen , established a small organization in Neenah , Wisconsin , which later became the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America . At one of the churches ' conventions in Clinton , Iowa , in 1884 , the Danish farmer Rasmus Hansen of Elk Horn , Iowa , suggested that " the Danish Church should help all the families living around in cities , who would prefer living in the countryside , where they could find a fitting spot for a Danish colony . " A committee was appointed for the purpose of finding a piece of land for the scattered Danish immigrants to settle . The committee consisted of the Grundtvigian Evangelical @-@ Lutheran pastors F. L. Grundtvig (the son of N. F. S. Grundtvig) , Kristian Anker , Rasmus Hansen , Jens C. Kjær , and C. Bruhn . This committee soon made arrangements with Winona and the St. Peter Railroad Company to purchase 35 @,@ 000 acres (140 km2) of land in the southeastern part of Lincoln County , Minnesota . An agreement with the land agent , A. Bojsen , stipulated that for three years this land was to be sold only to Danish people . The land was rolling prairie by the hills of Buffalo Ridge , just south of the community of Tyler , Minnesota . By June 27 , 1885 , seventy settlers from various states , towns , and communities had made the area their home .

The pioneer settlers were all Grundtvigians ; a faction within the Danish National Church . The Grundtvigians represented a nationalistic and liberal religious tradition , in staunch contrast to pietists and fundamentalists in the Church Association for the Inner Mission in Denmark . Grundtvigians believed in celebrating life , but they lived for the present , and were often nicknamed " Happy Danes " . While salvation was the gift of Christianity , being saved was not a focus . The Bible was the Holy Book , but was not to be taken literally , and the Apostles ' Creed rather than the Bible was their source of Christianity . Grundtvigians were also nationalists who wanted to " awaken the Danes in appreciation of their identity " , and its founder , Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig , is quoted for his writing : " first a Dane and then a Christian " in 1848 . The Grundtvigians stressed four elects of a " true people " : a common land , a common language , a common history and forefathers

, and common culture through songs , folk dancing , language , cuisine , etc . Grundtvigians established Danebod to " save the Danes from total Americanization " , and the colony 's only written and spoken language remained Danish for several decades after its establishment . On Sunday , June 28 , 1885 , the pioneers arranged a festival to celebrate the new colony . The population grew rapidly in the early 1890s , and by the year 1895 , 222 people lived in the Danish Colony of Danebod .

= = = Late 19th century = = =

On July 11 , 1886 , a meeting was held at the home of P. N. Clausen at which the Danebod congregation was formally organized with fifteen members . The church council consisted of its president , P. N. Clausen , secretary M. Lauritsen , and treasurer Jørgen Jacobsen . At first there were no regular church services and no resident pastor . Instead , the people met in various homes to sing Danish hymns and listen to a reading of the sermon by a layman . The pastor of Sleepy Eye , Minnesota , S. C. Madsen , and other ministers occasionally conducted services in town . The congregation later hired the Danish settler , pastor Hans Jørgen Pedersen (1851 ? 1905) of Gowen , Michigan . He arrived with his family on April 12 , 1888 . Pedersen had a humble upbringing in Denmark , where he later studied at Ryslinge Folk High School before emigrating to America in 1875 . He was an eloquent preacher , resourceful , and became involved in community activities throughout the area . He quickly assumed leadership and thus , in a sense , became the founder of Danebod . One of the pastor 's six children , Sigurd Pedersen , described their first arrival in Danebod in his autobiography : " It was a chilly morning , when the committee stood on the platform to bid welcome to the new pastor and his wife , trailed by six children , and the rear held up by the trusty hired man , Søren Olsen , who was to keep count of the straying flock and see that the last luggage was not forgotten . Friends invited us over for breakfast in the home of H. J. Nelsen , the merchant . Then the committee guided us to a small house on the corner just west of the present @-@ day Chevrolet dealer , where businessman Carl Cold Sorensen brought the first automobiles to the area in the early 1900 's . The committee had left no kindling in this small house , but Søren Olsen soon discovered that the kitchen range was in place and claimed to be able to manipulate the same if kindling could be provided . Across the street was a large general store , and father sent us there to beg Mr. Lauritsen for some kindling . We were given old boxes to break up , and we soon had our arms full and Søren had a blazing fire in a few minutes . " In September 1888 , it was decided at a convention in Elk Horn , Iowa , to give the congregation at Danebod 77 acres (0 @.@ 31 km2) of land , and the Danebod Lutheran Church was dedicated on Sunday , June 16 , 1895 . Pedersen died in 1905 , and the Reverend Thorvald Knudsen succeeded him at Danebod .

Pastor H. J. Pedersen , like most early pastors in the synod , had received his training in a folk school , and he was convinced that the success of the new congregation and colony depended on the establishment of such a Danish @-@ speaking folk school . Danebod Folk School opened December 1 , 1888 , with Pedersen as president . Other teachers were Carl Hansen and Christian Hansen . Among the first students were Niels Petersen and Kristian Klink , both Danish immigrants . Klink was a stonemason educated in Denmark , and he helped pastor Pedersen in building the Stone Hall . It was built of native rock . Farmers hauled rocks from the shores of Swan Lake just south of Danebod , and Klink and his helpers split and shaped the rocks . The Stone Hall was finished in the fall of 1889 , and the first public gathering in the Stone Hall was at Klink 's funeral in November 1889 . The Stone Hall quickly became the center of the new colony , and Sunday services were conducted here , as well as numerous weddings , baptisms and funerals . The students at the Danebod Folk School used the building as a gym hall , and young people would meet here to socialize , meet up with friends , and participate in singing games . Three years later , the Stone Hall was now too small for worship services . It was decided to build a new church , and the Cross Church at Danebod was dedicated on Sunday , June 16 , 1895 .

= = = Early 20th century = = =

A Ladies ' Aid society was established on July 15 , 1903 , with board members Marie Hovgaard , Anna P. C. Petersen , Henrietta Hansen , and Sine C. Jensen . At first , Sunday school was conducted an hour prior to the church services on Sunday , but in 1907 it was decided to hold Sunday school during the time of worship service . As early as 1904 , the synod had discussed the possibility of establishing a children 's home at Tyler . On November 1 , 1906 , a children 's home opened in the residence of K. H. Duus , who temporarily moved to Askov , Minnesota . A Folk School Association was organized in 1912 . As early as 1888 , the colony organized its first Danish elementary school for its children , Børneskolen , which was in use until 1939 . In her travel diary entitled My Big Adventure of 1915 ? 1916 : The joys and hazards of motor touring in 1915 , Danebod local Ragna C. Olson (1905 ? 2007) described the average school day in 1914 : " We had an hour of religion , then learned how to read and write Danish , some history , and the last hour we girls learned work such as knitting , crocheting and embroidery . In the afternoons , they taught us English , writing , reading and arithmetic . " Ragna Olsen (previously Sorensen) was the daughter of the Danish pioneers Johanne Marie Sorensen (1877 ? 1947) and Carl Cold Sorensen (1879 ? 1967) , both of whom hold a place in Danebod history for bringing the first motorized vehicles to Tyler in the early 1900s .

On Sunday , February 25 , 1917 , Danebod Folk School burned to the ground . Fortunately , the fire burned slowly . The students and the quickly summoned neighbors had time to rescue much of the furniture and other items of high value . Nearby buildings were saved , but the Folk School was beyond rescue . In the fall of 1917 , nine months after the disastrous fire , a new and larger Folk School was dedicated . Speakers at the dedicatory exercises were Pastor Knudsen , C. P. Højbjerg , Aage Møller , P. Rasmussen , and Kristian Østergaard . Meanwhile , a terrible epidemic of influenza swept the county , and all churches and schools were temporarily closed in an effort to halt the deadly disease ; but many people died . Another catastrophe followed on August 21 , 1918 , when a devastating tornado tore through Lincoln County . It was the fourth most deadly tornado in Minnesota history and took the lives of 36 people and injured a dozen more .

= = Culture = =

Danebod has continued to be a haven for Danish culture through the 20th century and into the 21st . The elementary school , university , library , newspapers , and church services remained Danish language for decades (and remained the most widely spoken language until the 1940s) . Danebod remains a predominantly Danish @-@ American town . It is customary to fly the Danish flag , Dannebrog , and Danish cuisine , music , cultural celebrations , language , literature , and the Evangelical Lutheran religious tradition remain important parts of life for the more than 200 inhabitants . Until 1947 church services were held solely in the Danish language , but has since offered one weekly service in Danish . Danebod is sometimes referred to as " the home of the Nissemaend , " a reference to the mythological tomte of folklore . There is a sign on Tyler Street saying : " Welcome to Tyler . Home of the Nissemaend " .

During the 1930s , a combination of financial pressure and low enrollment forced the Danish @-@ language based Danebod Folk School to close down . The building was re @-@ opened in 1946 and has since 1947 offered annual summer family camps . Danebod Folk Camp offers Danish cuisine , Danish folk dance , Danish art , and other Danish cultural experiences . In the spirit of the Danish Folk School system , camp attendees sing Danish songs , dance traditional Danish folk dance , work on crafts and have Danish @-@ based lectures throughout the day .

There are several annual Danish @-@ inspired celebrations in town , including the town parade , Grundlovsdag (Danish Constitution Day) , Fastelavn , and Æbleskiver Days . Æbleskiver are traditional Danish pancakes in a distinctive spherical shape . Æbleskiver Days is one of the town 's top attractions , and has been held annually by Danish descendants for more than a hundred years . During this two @-@ day festival held on the 4th weekend of every July , Danebod celebrates its Danish heritage and community . During this festival , there is a parade inspired by Danish traditions and culture that goes down Main Street with floats made by the various neighborhoods . Traditional Danish foods such as medisterpølse , frikadeller , rabarbergrød , rødkål , cream wafers , cinnamon

sticks , rosettes , kisses , as well as æbleskiver , smørrebrød , Danish coffee , liver @-@ pâté , and sweets are also popular during the festival . Other activities during Æbleskiver Days include traditional Danish folk dancing , Danish art displays , Danish folk song singing , children 's activities , and the fairground fair called Tivoli The Scandinavian tradition of singing and dancing around the Christmas tree still takes place at the center of the Gym Hall during Christmas time . Some families keep up the tradition of celebrating Christmas Eve on December 24 . There is a town fair on the Danish Constitution Day , June 5 . There are still quite a few Danish speakers , especially among the elders .

= = Danebod Historic Complex = =

Recognized for its architectural and cultural significance , the Danebod Historic Complex , at 101 Danebod Court , was listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places on June 30 , 1975 . The complex includes four historic buildings : the Folk School (built in 1888 , rebuilt in 1917) , Stone Hall (1889) , Cross Church or Danebod Lutheran Church (1893) , and Gym Hall (1904) . Most of these buildings survived the disastrous fire of 1917 , except for the Folk School , which burned down and was rebuilt the same year . These buildings also stood through the devastating 1918 tornado , which killed 36 people in the community .

All four structures were built in a simplified Greek Cross floor plan to signify a religious purpose . Closest to Lake Danebod stands the Folk High School , a three @-@ story wooden building with eight gables . Next to the Folk High School stands the multipurpose Stone Hall , and across the street stands the Gym Hall with its iconic twin towers . Danebod Lutheran Church is located on the town 's main street , appropriately named Tyler Street , and is in the shape of a Greek cross on the outside .

The Danebod Lutheran Church (also known as the Cross Church at Danebod) was dedicated Sunday , June 16 , 1895 . It is a cruciform clapboard building with a square placed obliquely in the center . The tower in the middle is carried at a 45 degree angle to the arms of the cross . The outside and interior detailing of the church is Eastlake . It was built largely with volunteer labor and money pledged by the early settlers , who had little to give . Points of interest include the altar chairs , kerosene lamps , architectural structure , wainscoting walls and ceiling , porthole windows as in a ship , hand @-@ carving on the altar , pulpit and railing , the candelabra and altar cloth , hand @-@ carved stone baptismal font , the Star of Bethlehem in the ceiling , Bertel Thorvaldsen 's statue of Christ , the Celtic cross , and pictures in the narthex . The church is located at 101 Danebod Court . The church was established by the organization that later became the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (DELCA) . This organization later merged into the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) in 1962 and then into the largest Lutheran church in the U.S. in 1988 : the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) . Danebod Lutheran Church remains a part of the ELCA still today .

The Danebod Stone Hall was built in 1889 and is a single @-@ floor stone building in the form of a Latin cross . Its entrance wing features medieval @-@ inspired crenellations , but the rest of the building with its pedimented windows are closer to being Greek Revival . It was built from native field rock hauled in by farmers and split and shaped by a Danish stonemason named Kristian Klink . The Stone Hall was used as the first church , later as a gymnasium and assembly hall . Points of interest are the outdoor old bell from the former children 's school , fresco from the Gym Hall , the old chandelier from the Cross Church , old photographs , and handcut field stone in the structure . The Stone Hall is now a museum housing a collection of photographs , publications and objects important in Danebod history . It is also a venue for activities , lectures and discussion groups , and is typically open for public viewing during the Danebod Family Camp sessions .

The Danebod Gym Hall was erected in 1904 and is a cruciform clapboard building . The two sides of the entrance arm project forward to the eaves , and the sides plus a small roof enclose the entrance . It was originally built as a space for Danish gymnastics , folk dancing , music , theatrical performances , larger social gatherings , and worship for the Folk School students and other locals . Every year in the Gym Hall , the Danebod Lutheran Church upholds the Danish tradition of dancing

around the Christmas tree . The basement is also commonly used for crafts such as stained glass and woodworking . In 1928 it was enlarged with a stage , basement and furnace . Many home talent plays were presented there , and it is still used for an occasional play , and is also used by the camps and retreats for folk dancing . Points of interest are the statue with an original canvas curtain with advertising , bars used years ago by gymnasts (on the south wall) , and the original wainscoting on the walls .

The Danebod Folk School was first built in the year 1888 , but it burned to the ground on February 25 , 1917 . It was soon rebuilt , and nine months later the current school building was completed . A three @-@ story brick building , it has gable ends carried up as parapets . The four @-@ story crenelated corner tower and the pointed arches at the entrance are from Gothic and native Danish architecture . The Folk School was renovated in 1946 and is now used by the Danebod Lutheran Church for camps and retreats , and as a meeting place for local groups and clubs . Points of interest are the hand @-@ carved podium in the lecture hall , the picture behind the podium , the hand @-@ carved wooden cross on the podium , collection plates made by Dr. Thomsen , and also the statuary in the lecture hall and sitting rooms , pictures in the sitting rooms , and the small podium in the dining room . Early settlers of the colony founded a residential school in the Danish tradition of folk High Schools and fostered the concept of " learning for living " , by which individuals sought to become enlightened and thoughtful citizens . The Folk School Building stands as a testament to these values , and continues to serve as a place for fellowship and lifelong learning . Each dormitory style room is unique in plan and decoration . A large kitchen and dining area provide a perfect setting for group meals and activities . A lecture hall and several classrooms allow ample space for programming .