

## *Early History of the Danes in and Around Laurel, Nebraska*

As Told by Ole A. Pedersen

In writing this sketch of our Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church of Laurel, Nebraska, for its Silver Jubilee, it is necessary to go back, not only the twenty-five years of the organized congregation, but forty years, to the very beginning, as our first meeting was held forty years ago.

It was on the day after Christmas in the year 1900 that the Rev. S. Hillerup-Jorgensen of Plainview, Nebraska, came by train to Laurel, after having been informed by a friend that there were some little children around Laurel who had not yet been baptized. When Rev. Hillerup-Jorgensen that day got off the train at the Laurel depot, he inquired as to where he could find some Danish families, and was promptly informed that the one closest to Laurel was the writer of this sketch, who at that time lived a mile west of Laurel. With Rev. Jorgensen was a Mr. Lund and together they started out, following the railroad a mile back west and also found the house which they had already noticed when coming by on the train. Wishing to call a meeting for the evening and being that our dwelling was but a small two-room house which would hardly give ample space for a meeting, and as it was already two o'clock p.m. there was not much time to make arrangements or to impose upon anyone. There was, however, one family upon whose hospitality we could always depend, that of Mr. and Mrs. Peder Nissen, and to them we turned and our proposal was accepted with kindness, the invitation went out and here we met for the first time. The Nissen home was located a mile south of Laurel. There were five families gathered at the first meeting. They were: Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Jensen, Mr. and Mrs. O. R. Cartee, Mr. and Mrs. A. Sorensen, Mr. and Mrs. O. A. Pedersen and Mr. and Mrs. P. Nissen. It was a most delightful and inspiring meeting as some of us had not heard a sermon in Danish for some years. The pastor and Mr. Lund stayed at the Nissen home over night and the next day we again had a meeting and baptism of children.

Rev. Jorgensen also offered to come to Laurel once a month and have a service in some home, if we could meet the expenses which we were glad to do. Thus after that we had services in the different homes once a month, and as it was always stated at the meeting where the next would be held, more people came. Among them I would have to name the Markus Andersens and Matthias Christiansens of Dixon County, who came a distance of twelve to sixteen miles with horses and spring wagons and top buggies, and most of the time with two teams as the families were large. More Danish families moved in, some young emigrants came, also some families from Denmark came and settled in near Laurel. It became necessary to get a more spacious meeting place, and as the United Brethren Church in Laurel was not very much in use, the United Brethren having built a new church in the country, we rented the one in town and, if I remember right, we paid one dollar rent for each meeting.



Rev. J. G. V. Magnussen

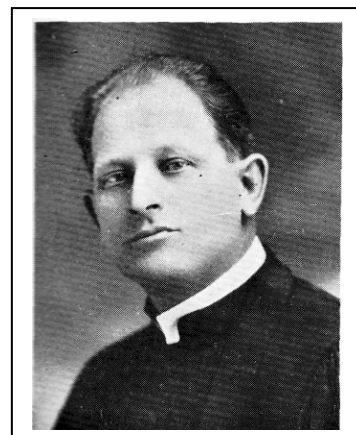
Rev. Jorgensen resigned from Plainview and moved to Mason City. Rev. J. Magnussen, who was called to Plainview, took up the work at Laurel also. A fixed salary was set, I am not sure just how much, but

very likely between \$5 and \$8 a month. Rev. Magnussen drove from Plain-view to Laurel with horses at times and brought his family with him, as did also the pastors later on. This was very much appreciated by the ladies around Laurel. Rev. Magnussen also had the first confirmation class, and at times some of the young people from his Plainview congregation came with him, which also was very much appreciated and encouraging.

But before long Rev. Magnussen left Plainview for Colonization work in Stanley County, South Dakota. Plainview then called Mr. Carl M. Hansen, a student from Augsburg Seminary, Minneapolis, Minnesota, who then later in the summer was ordained into our Synod. Mr. P. Nissen was chosen to go to Plainview to speak to Mr. Hansen and, if possible, make arrangements for him to come to Laurel once a month, and the agreement was made that Rev. Hansen (who then had been ordained) was to come to Laurel for a remuneration of five dollars each trip, which was soon raised to eight dollars.

Rev. and Mrs. Hansen, who had no children, nearly always drove down and stayed two or three days, driving around visiting people, attending the Ladies' Aid on Monday (as near as I can remember the Rev. Magnussen had got a Ladies' Aid started); Rev. Hansen also organized a Young People's Society; but I am not supposed to write about that, thus I will pass that up. Rev. Hansen left Plainview for Denver, Colo., and again we were without a pastor. We did nothing about it, as we had always depended on Plainview. Rev. J. C. Carlsen was called to Plainview and we then made arrangements with him to serve us here at Laurel; I believe for a compensation of ten dollars each trip. Rev. Carlsen had us start a Sunday school in the Danish language, but as we had the church only once a month we gathered in the homes in between and it did not work very well, so after a while it was given up. Rev. Carlsen as well as the former pastors were also serving Winnetoon one Sunday each month. The Winnetoon people went ahead and organized into a congregation and also built a church in 1914, and then they asked for services twice a month, thus it became necessary for Rev. Carlsen to resign from Laurel. At that time there were about twenty-five children of school age in our Danish homes, so we talked it over and decided to have summer school if we could get a teacher. To that end a letter was sent to Dana at Blair, the result being that Student F. G. Rasmussen was recommended to us, and said student was then hired for the three summer months at forty dollars a month. I think that Mr. Rasmussen had forty days of school, and did missionary work the one month. During that time we had service every Sunday, the first time we ever had service each week.

The District President Rev. L. Jensen of Ruskin, Nebraska, had been up here at times and tried to make arrangements so that we could have services, but as there was no pastor available nearby and inasmuch as we had no organization it did not look so good. Up to this time with the small expenses we had, we had paid our own way. Rev. L. Jensen suggested that a pastor be called, who was to live at Laurel, and from here also do missionary work at Winside and Pilger. It was finally arranged and Student I. M. Andersen, who was to be ordained in June, 1915 was called. From the time Student Rasmussen left for school in August, 1914, and during that fall and winter, 1914 and 1915, we were served by pastors from various places and also by student; from Trinity Seminary once or twice a month. This takes us then up to the time when Rev. and Mrs. Andersen came to Laurel, our first resident pastor.



Rev. J. C. Carlsen