

From foreign land they came





*Etlar Kramer Johansen*

# From foreign land they came

History of The Potato Germans

*Fra fremmed land de kom  
Kartoffeltyskernes historie.*  
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Bogen er sat med Palatino  
hos Viborg Maskinsæteri  
og trykt hos Viborg Bogtrykkeri  
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History of the Potato Germans.*  
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# Prologue

On the 1st of May 1760 a group of people came to the Free City of Fredericia, about 100 in all men, women and children. Some came by carriage, but most came by foot. They were heading for the town hall. They were invited by the Danish king and at the town hall should meet the free city's President Hans de Hofmann, who the King had selected to take charge of the strangers, for strangers they were. They came from southern Germany, from settlements around Heidelberg. It had been a long trip. They had left home in the middle of March and were forced to take detours in order to avoid areas where wars were in progress. It was in the midst of the Prussian seven year war. It had also been a tough trip that had taken its toll. A couple of the women had become widows enroute and also some of the children died. Time and again while on their long trip they talked and wondered what the remote districts in the foreign land of Jutland would look like. That is how it was described in the poster that counsellor Moritz in Frankfurt had sent out, and it was also him that had arranged for the travel passes to Denmark. Some of them were able to say that their ancestors had migrated to their home settlements from Switzerland and at that time these settlements were also desolate. That was after the long war that had lasted for 30 years. At that time their home settlements were so ravaged by war that there were few people left there, the farms were burnt and the fields lay uncultivated. That is probably also what it would look like at the destination



*Hoffman's farm in Fredericia 1910*

of their long journey. They were determined that these uncultivated fields should again be meadows.

Moritz had told them that even the previous autumn some families had travelled to Jutland and some of the families would be known to them because they were from the same areas. They also knew that many more would be on the road behind them because in Frankfurt there had been a large gathering that day in March, and they were all going to Jutland. They had been divided into columns of about 100 people and each column had been appointed a leader. Now they were the first group to arrive at Fredericia, but the other three would probably arrive in the following days.

On the days of the first and second of May, 420 people from southern Germany also arrived at Fredericia as expected. There were about 100 families with children and a number of unmarried adults.

At the town hall they were greeted by the president and also a royal official, Andreas Diechmann. Every family was asked about their situation and had to explain what their employment was at home. Already a few days later, the four colony leaders travelled with a couple of other men to their new home area. The two free-city officials accompanied them to the area where they should live. The rest waited with great anticipation in Fredericia for them to return from their journey.

# Denmark in the 1750s

The king was named Frederik, and he was the fifth in the royal line with this name. He wasn't interested in state matters but he was surrounded by clever advisers that he had inherited from his father - Christian the sixth - at his ascendancy to the throne in 1746. The new King was only 23 years old. His closest adviser was Lord Chamberlain Adam Gottlieb Moltke. He had been employed by the royal family since he became a page when he was 10 years old and later it had been his task to take care of the Crown Prince's upbringing. Therefore he had a close tie to the young King and the King had an extraordinary liking for Moltke. Unfortunately the King was a heavy drinker and with the years became an alcoholic. This made him more and more unsure of his royal responsibilities so that Moltke frequently had to make the decisions that should have been made by the King. So, in reality Moltke was the country's regent in the 20 years that Frederik the fifth was king.

The primary occupation in Denmark was farming. 80% of the population lived on the land and in country villages that consisted of 10 - 20 farms, mostly tenant farms under one manor. In 1730 there were 735 estates and this had not changed much by the 1750s. Many of the estate owners had several manors so only a few hundred families owned all the land in the country. In a few villages the farms were operated co-operatively. The cultivated land near the villages was divided into many small fields so that every farm could have





*King Frederik (1746-1766)*

a share of both the good and the inferior soil. Outside the fields lay the excess, uncultivated areas, that was grazed by the village livestock. The number of tenant farms was fairly constant because it was not permitted to divide or combine tenant farms. The population growth brought an increasing number of small holders that lived in villages in houses without land. The people on the land were poor. Agriculture gave little returns. Sickness had some effect and the child mortality was high. The largest part of the population were illiterate.

At the loss of the easterly provinces - Skåne, Halland and Blekinge – in the 1658 peace agreement in Roskilde, a land area was lost that was seen as economically valuable. The Danish state therefore missed some good tax incomes. In the following years the Danish king sought to win these provinces back. These wars were exceedingly expensive. It was a burden that became a heavy weight on the country's population. The taxes were heavy, grain prices had fallen and the return on the soil was meagre. At the end of the big Nordic war in 1720 the easterly provinces had not been returned and the country was poor and the population impoverished.

Only one quarter of the land area was cultivated. In Jutland over half was moor or ruined forest. It was an obvious thought that an increase of the cultivated land area would help the country back on its feet again.

Therefore in 1723 a notice was distributed that contained an offer of a number of concessions for those that would take on the task of cultivating the moors of Jutland. They would be excused from military service, billeting and carrying out other duties. Since the exemption covered all those burdens that weighed heavy on the tenant farmers, it was assumed that

many would be interested, but none applied. None had the courage to take on this task. The farmers hopeless situation had frightened them from trusting in the future. The characteristic that the poet C. Holstrup gave in 1866 of the 1700s tenant farmers was a good description of the situation in 1723:

His senses were dimmed, his energy as dead  
his deeds long time forgotten  
his anguish for kin was heard:  
Forward - peasant - FORWARD!

The matter of the cultivation of the moor was laid to rest for the following 30 years. At his coronation in 1746 the King granted A. G. Moltke the “Bregentved” estate on Sjælland. This brought the living conditions of the tenant farmers into close attention and he immediately saw that Danish farming needed to be reformed. The tradition of open field collective farming was obsolete and the exchange of land and scattering of farms from the villages was gradually realised on a few estates. Moltke also took up the interest in the matter of moor cultivation again. At his suggestion the King instructed, on the 3rd of May 1751, the formation of a commission with the purpose of studying the moors in Jutland with cultivation in mind. Members were:

Count Chr. Fr. Levetzau of ”Store Restrup”  
Mayor Chr. Solberg from Aalborg and  
Regimental scribe Niels Schelde from Randers

In June 1751 the three men undertook a trip to the Alhede (part of the moor) and came to the conclusion that they should

advise the King against the settlement of his part of the moor. In discussions with the owners of the adjoining properties they were informed that these landowners had been using the heath for summer grazing of their livestock and gathering of fuel in the form of peat and heather. The neighbours were allowed to add some areas on condition that they renounced their grazing rights. That part of the moor that was left over, even after being plowed several times would be sour soil and after only a few years use would need many years rest. Clay, which was necessary for building, didn't exist on the moor.

The neighbours reduced access for summer grazing on the moor would bring about stubbornness. There was also a scarcity of water on the heath.

One also believed that it would be difficult to find people who would settle on the heath. Those who already owned something would not be tempted. And those who owned nothing would need to have everything delivered, have maintenance for the family and be excused from payment of taxes and levies. Altogether a costly affair. Even if these difficulties could be conquered one wouldn't make suggestions about it since "this heath's settlement on His Majesty's account is an undertaking of which could be expected neither consistency or need ."

Despite this negative position from the commission, on the 30th November 1751 a royal command was sent out about the heath's cultivation, similar to the proclamation in 1723, with an offer of the same dispensations for those that would settle on the heath.

High Court Judge Fr. Schinkel, owner of the Hald estate, sought to prevent this settlement of the moors by offering in 1753, to buy the King's part of the Alhede. But his offer was refused.

Again in 1751 there appeared to be no interest among the Danish farmers for the King's offer. However, one man did respond, Lieutenant Ludvig von Kahlen, who was born in Sachen-Lauenburg. He was almost 50 years old and he had, until he was 20 years old, been employed in farming. He made a proposal for the establishment of a fund for the cultivation of the moor. The fund's income should come from a stamp duty on playing cards. When the government apparently didn't react to his first proposal, he came up with a new proposition the same year. This time an annual duty with the sole objective being the heath cultivation "Heyde-Groschen" was budgeted, from 2 shillings to 2 rix-dollar. He felt that it would be adequate for the establishment of four farms every year. His suggestions for the layout of the farms and the associated costs were very detailed, and he closed by announcing that he wished to embark on a trip to the Alhede to make closer observations of the localities.

In autumn 1754 the King approved Kahlen's plan to settle himself on the heath and commence the cultivation. Kahlen built a farm in Stordalen (Hjortedalen) immediately east of the country road between Kolding and Skive. Since the construction was paid for by the King, the Danish neighbours called Kahlen's farm the "King's house".

When the farm was completed on the 1st of December 1755, Kahlen travelled to Mecklenburg to recruit helpers for the heath cultivation. In April 1756 he concluded an accord with 3 family heads, who with their families - 12 people in all - proceeded to the "King's house". Already after one week they wanted to return home, because the conditions didn't come up to those they had expected at the settlement of the accord. Kahlen let them move into the Viborg penitentiary. But at a mediation between the partners they agreed that the

Mecklenburgers should have permission to return home again. Alone at the King's House, Kahlen went ahead with the heath cultivation. But at the same time he was employed surveying the moors since he was a professional surveyor.

In the 1750s a larger group started to get involved. Erik Pontoppidan, Chancellor at Copenhagen's University, started in 1757 to publish a periodical called "Economic Magazine". Amongst the subjects that were addressed by the periodical at this time was the topic of the moor cultivation in Jutland and a prize was offered for responses on this subject. The gold medals went to theologian Søren Thestrup and literati Jørgen Andersen Schiøtt. The issue was supported by the people in the capital and a society for the cultivation of the moorland was formed with the objective of establishing a fund as an economic foundation for the continuation of the issue. In the summer of 1757 the society for the moorland reclamation arranged a study trip to the heaths in Jutland. One of the participants on this trip was the proprietor of Skerrildgård estate, Hans de Hofmann. After the trip Hans de Hofmann prepared a "Journal about the moors" with the appendix "A most humble proposal of how the Jutland moors, after detailed study, could best be populated". On the 8th of August 1757 the Exchequer sent an order to the officials in the affected counties about the establishment of land survey commissions. Each commission would comprise two government officers (one being the chief administrative officer of the county) together with a surveyor. Ludvig von Kahlen was attached to the commission to represent Hald county. The principle mission of the commissions was to establish the boundary for that part of the heath which belonged to the King. It was a fundamental rule that the King owned everything that was not private property. Therefore the starting point for the

delineation of the boundary was that the property owner who believed he had claims to the moors should show documentation thereof. Since the commissioners at the same time had the authority to make decisions in cases of doubt, the opportunities for the private owners to make valid claims were very few.

On the occasion of the King's birthday in 1755, an invitation was sent out to the public to write dissertations which would show the way for the betterment of the nation's economy. It was Moltke who had taken the initiative and it was also him that received the dissertations. It led to plans for the establishment of a clothing factory in Odense. Workers would be sought from Germany where they already had such factories. The government invited councillor Moritz from Frankfurt am Main to negotiations. On the 23rd of July 1756 he was named as the Danish counsellor in Frankfurt an Main. One of his tasks was to recruit German workers for Denmark. At this meeting in Copenhagen Moritz was able to tell Moltke that large migrations from the Electoral Principality of Pfalz (Palatinate) had occurred to north America and also to Prussia and Brandenburg. In the following months Moritz came with more suggestions about the settlement of the heaths in Jutland. As a reply to these suggestions, Moltke sent the decrees from 1723 and 1751 to Moritz. He published the announcement in a monthly newspaper in Frankfurt on the 23rd of April 1759 and a month later he sent out a poster in the area with the same content. The announcement from Moritz contained information about the settlement in remote lying areas in the province of Jutland bordering on the Duchy of Sleswig and that anyone interested should contact Moritz to get more information and obtain passes for the trip. At this time Moritz had not been to Jutland and only knew the area to be settled

from written information. The colonists were promised an allowance for travel expenses when they arrived: 30 Danish rix-dollars for men, 20 rix-dollars for women and 10 for children of 12 to 16 years of age. The first travel passes reached Moritz in Frankfurt the 17th of July 1759. A month later the first families joined the trip and 9 families arrived at Viborg on the 17th of October 1759. About the same time 32 families came to Fredericia. Moritz continued with his recruitment of colonists and it went flowingly. Many enrolled and on the 1st and 2nd day of May 1760 the four columns with 420 people came to Fredericia.



# Unsatisfied colonisers

The colonists' representatives, eight men, who had joined commissioners Hans de Hofmann and Andreas Diechmann on the visit to the Alhede, were very dissatisfied when they returned to Fredericia to inform the other colonists of what they had seen and come to know about their future homestead. They had expected to see fields from vacated farms but they saw only heather. They didn't find meadows anywhere. It didn't look attractive and they also felt that there were no possibilities for making a living there. Late in May, Moritz arrived in Jutland and together with him and Hans de Hofmann the colonists representative again visited the Alhede. However it didn't change their opinion. They insisted that they wanted better land. Otherwise they would return home. They had sent a letter to the King with their claims for better land.

On the 5th of July the King was on a trip to Holsten and made a stop in Kolding. The colonists were assembled at Gudsø forest, between Fredericia and Kolding, and the King was present. He made a speech to them and promised them 300 rix-dollar to share if they would move to the moor and settle there. The colonists were not impressed by the meeting with the King and since many of them had sold their houses in their homeland and had a lot of money in their pockets, they were not enticed by promises of money.

On his way back to Frankfurt, Moritz was ordered to return and convince the colonists to move to the moors.

Moritz answered that the dissatisfaction was caused by the situation in Jutland and they couldn't lay this burden on the colonists. He came with a list of suggestions to resolve the problem, amongst them that he should be permitted to appoint a person that, in close cooperation with himself, would take care of the establishment of the colonists in Jutland. At the same time he proposed that the colonists could lease three specific estates in Jutland, cavalry estates, that the state owned and where the fields were starting to be "overrun by heather". Hofmann meanwhile asked for advice from the Exchequer in Copenhagen. He was in a very awkward situation with so many people whom he couldn't get to continue on with the task that they had come to Denmark to solve. The chief of the Exchequer Hans Ahlefeldt responded that they could imprison the leaders of the rebelling colonists in Fredericia prison, on a diet of water and bread. Three days later Hofmann received another letter from the Exchequer in which they proposed that he convince the colonists by offering them money. A thousand rigs-daler (rix-dollar) would be set aside for this purpose while at the same time Hofmann was told to be frugal with the money. Hofmann replied that he had already offered a couple of the head men money that he would pay from his own pocket. But they had responded by offering him money if he could find them positions at the cavalry estates. At the Exchequer they had also become concerned about pushing forward too hard against the head men since they still had not made their oaths of allegiance to the King. Until this was done they should be treated as foreign subjects (guests), but they must be advised that the King didn't want resisting subjects, so they should leave the country. If they didn't do that then they should expect to be punished.

The colonists had, since their arrival, received daily

allowances. 12 shillings for men, 8 shillings for women and 4 shillings for each child. They now ceased payment of the allowance. After 11 days without the daily allowance, six head men were called to commissioner Diechmann, who tried to persuade them to go to the heath. They would not. They wanted to return to their homeland. Now the town commander was called. He took the three head men that the colonists had attached themselves to and put them in prison. Now the other three came and announced that, since they were being forced, they would travel to the heaths. The prisoners were released and the daily allowance was again paid out.

Since they were scared of disturbances among the colonists, they had immediately on the orders of eviction, let four leaders drive out of the town in rented carriages. Three of them admitted that they had forced a fourth, school master Anton Pauli, to write the letter to the King. Even though all the colonists begged for him the authorities were afraid to alter the King's orders.

In the course of the month of August 1760, the colonists were called into the Town Hall where they made their Oaths-of-Allegiance. Eight families wouldn't under any circumstances travel to the moor but wished to leave the country and asked for remission of the daily allowance since they owned nothing. Eighteen families set as conditions that they wanted schoolmaster Pauli back. The authorities weren't prepared to go along with that so they were evicted.

In the course of the month of July a number of the families who arrived at Fredericia on the 1st and 2nd of May 1760, became tired of waiting in Fredericia. They had decided to travel to the moors and so they made their Oaths-of-Allegiance to the King in front of the colony inspector. For the remainder of 1760 and the beginning of 1761 more

German colonists came to Denmark. Altogether 327 German families arrived in Denmark with the aim of cultivating the moors in Jutland.

# Building on the Alhede

Already one week after their arrival in Viborg the nine German family elders travelled to Knudstrup Inn where they met with the Commissioners Hans de Hofmann and Andreas Diechmann from Fredericia. The next two days they travelled around on the moor and agreed to settle in Havredalen. It lay in the county of Silkeborg, so Silkeborg councillor Ditlev Traupaud was assigned to the task. The commissioners now worked out the designs for the farms. Two recommendations were prepared. The one was a suggestion for a farmstead of the Danish building design while the other was of the Palatinate (Pfalz) style. The government decided to construct the farm on the Danish design as it was cheaper than the Palatinate type that the colonists would have preferred.

In January 1760 a meeting to obtain tenders was held at Knudstrup Inn. There were no written bids but estate owner Steensen of Aunsbjerg met and offered to take on the construction. A master builder from Viborg also attended. A few days later the plans were distributed for 37 farms. It was now clear that the farms couldn't be built immediately. The commissioners and three Jutland county councillors met at Klode Mill where they made the decision to construct temporary earth huts for the Germans so that they could get started with the moor cultivation.

In March 1760, the commissioners were advised that they could expect more colonists, about 600 people altogether. It was decided that the state should take on the building of the

farms and an inspector for moor development – H. von Stivitz, who till now had been footman at the Queen Mother’s house, was appointed. He prepared his own new drawings for the farms, so large that two families could live in each dwelling.

Around Denmark on a few estates, farm houses had begun to be moved away from the villages. Since the buildings were going to be new it was recommended that the farms should be spread out over the moor. But the Germans wished to live in villages, in the same way that they were familiar with from their home, so this they were permitted to do. The colonists probably felt safer living in villages in this foreign land because, amongst other things, the moor was regarded with a certain unease.

It was decided to build 30 farms in Havredal and 30 farms further north-west at Grønhøj. The village in Havredal should have the name “Frederikshede” and the village by Grønhøj



*Model of colonial farm made by Jørgen Lind, Frederiks*



*Model of Hauerdal village 1760, made by Jørgen Lind, Frederiks*

should be called “Frederikshøj”. Further south was established a colony with 15 farms in Gråmose that was named “Frederiksmose”. A colony west from there, also with 15 farms was named “Frederiksdal”. Subsequently ideas of using the King’s name apparently lapsed because the last two colonies were named after the queen: “Julianehede” with nine farms and for the crown prince “Christianshede”, a colony of ten farms.

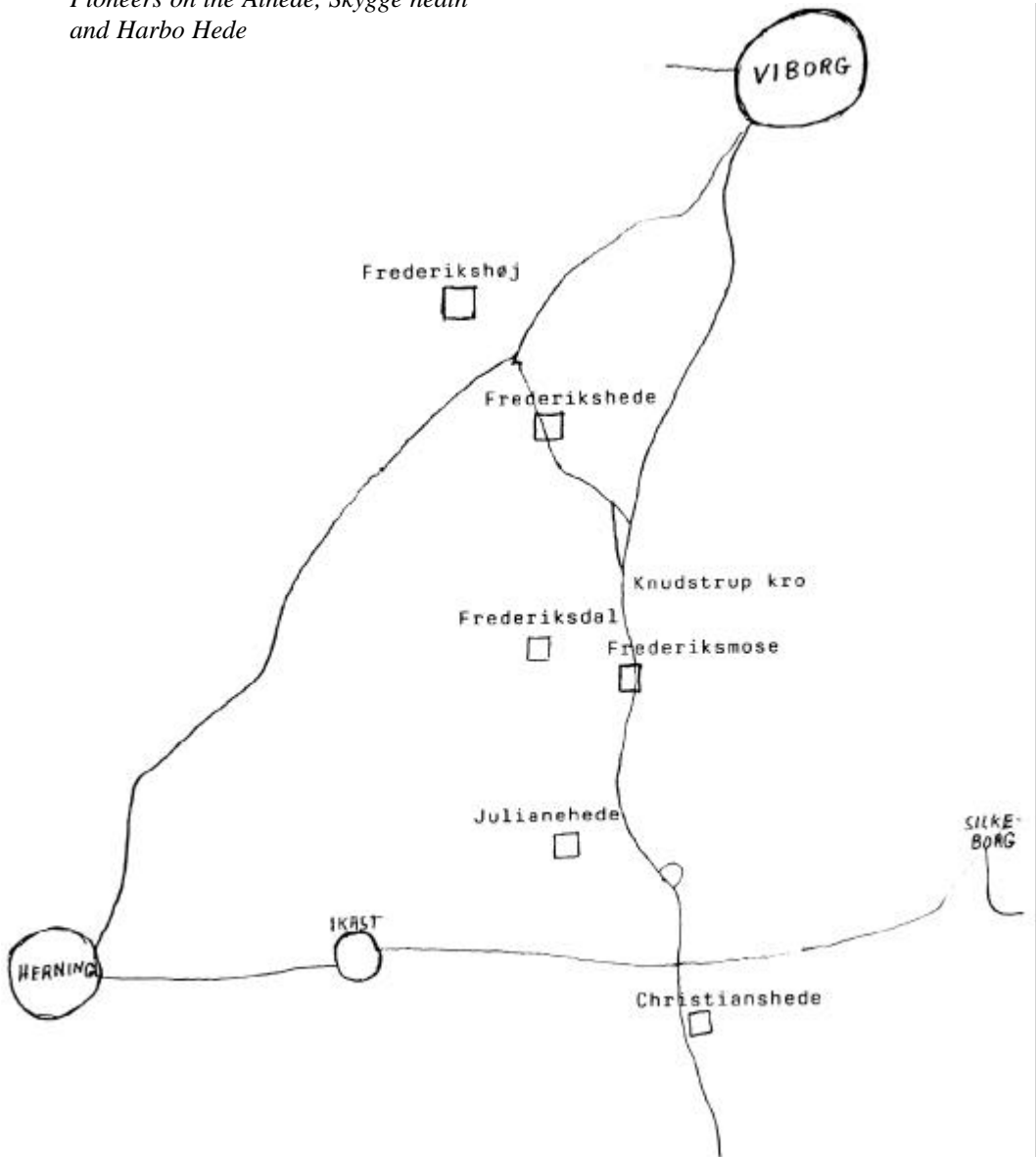
When the construction by Grønhøj was to start, von Kahlen who was engaged in surveying the moor, informed them that vice-principal Jessen in Viborg owned some of the area that was intended for the colony “Frederikshøj”. Vice-principal Jessen was willing to hand the area over to the King without payment if he in return would get the vacant position of Rural Dean at Helliggejst in Copenhagen. He also proposed that the Rural Dean at Budolfi in Aalborg should be

moved to Helliggejst and thereby leave the position in Aalborg to Jessen. This is where he wanted to live because he had friends in this town. The matter went on for many years before Jessen had to accept a cash payment for the moor area.

Inside the area of the Alhede lay a village, Aarestrup, with four farms. It was owned by Steensen of Aunsbjerg. The commissioners wanted this village incorporated into the colony area because, amongst other things, there were meadows there. Steensen was prepared to hand the village over to the King without payment if he and his three brothers would be granted peerages. Meanwhile an appraisal of the farms resulted in only Steensen of Aunsbjerg becoming a peer. The value of the farms could only stretch to one peerage. The King then assumed ownership of Aarestrup and Steensen moved his villagers to another location on the estate. The farms should be built solidly. They were after all royal tenant farms. They should be built on a foundation of stone, so now a message went out to the estate owners who were Alhede neighbours, about delivery of stone. High Court Judge Schinkel, who owned the Hald estate announced that he didn't have any stones for the buildings. Friedenreich, who owned Kærsholm estate, was willing to deliver what was left over after his farmers needs were met. Steensen from Aunsbjerg was willing to deliver stones but he wondered why Schinkel from Hald had announced that he didn't have stones because at Sjørup, which belonged to Hald, lay a large pile of stones, several wagon loads, that probably had been there for the last 100 years. He also didn't understand Friedenreichs reason, because his tenant farmers were always complaining about the abundance of stones in their fields, so many that it was often late in the spring before they could plant their crops. The estate owners refusal was most probably their way of showing



*Pioneers on the Alhede, Skygge heath  
and Harbo Hede*



unwillingness towards the King's construction on the Alhede.

The timber for the houses should be oak and therefore an order was sent to the chief forester at Silkeborg forests about delivery of oak timber. Meanwhile, he replied that he wasn't in a position to deliver such large amounts of oak timber without completely ruining the forests. They then purchased pinewood from Norway.

In the middle of all this activity a peculiar man appeared on the Alhede. He is Johann Gottfried Erichsen. He is a qualified medical doctor from Halle in Germany, who had been a pharmacist in Bergen in Norway and is now working on an experiment - called a saltpetre factory - that will manufacture a particular fertiliser, produced from horse manure from the royal stables and seaweed from the beaches. He lives in north Zealand but was sent by the King to the Alhede to undertake soil samples. He is a very enterprising man who immediately becomes engaged in the building on the Alhede. He applies for the establishment of brick works in Skrå and Hvam because the panels in the timber frames shall be filled with bricks. Again a proof of the desire for solid buildings. Erichsen also brought a man from Horsens to show them where to dig wells. Since placement of the villages was already settled, talk was that the wells would have to be deep.

The Germans were accustomed from their homes to have vegetables and flowers near their houses. This was not normal for the Danish farmsteads in this community, where there were only cabbage gardens by the houses. Erichsen insured that the colonists had garden seeds and he also obtained seed potatoes from Slesvig. After the end of his work on the Alhede he became colony inspector in Slesvig, where they were busy setting up other colonies. There had simply come so many interested from south Germany, that there was no

more room for so many on the moors in Jutland. In addition to the above mentioned colony villages on the Alhede and the adjoining southerly moors, three colonies were also established at Randbøl moor. As a help for colony inspector Stiwitz, a theological candidate, Søren Thestrup was hired to function as cashier. After nearly one year at the Alhede, Stiwitz was ordered to the Duchy to observe the colonists there. Then Søren Thestrup also became inspector. Meanwhile he was, in the opinion of the commissioner, too pliable. So Lucas Kloch became the inspector while Thestrup continued as cashier. Kloch had been innkeeper at Knudstrup Inn which was owned by Friedenreich from Palstrup.

# Potato Germans

The construction on the Alhede encompassed about one hundred farms. At the end of 1760 only one quarter of the farms were habitable and it was only in the beginning of 1762 that the buildings were finished. Between the colonists all was not peaceful. The first annual reports about the individual colonist families show that quite a lot of them had moved from farmstead to farmstead. On their way from Knudstrup Inn some colonists got into a brawl. It ended with one of the colonists becoming so ill that he died shortly thereafter. Three colonists were arrested and sentenced to death but after the trial at the Hinge district court they managed to escape on their way to the prison in Viborg. Relations with their Danish neighbours was also not good. The Danish tenant farmers, who were plagued by large tax burdens, looked sideways at the colonists who were exempt from taxes, as well as having everything given to them and also receiving daily allowances. The survey of the moors became dragged out. With this came opportunities for strife, where the boundary between the King's property and private property was still not resolved. To the Danes, the colonists were very strange. Not only did they speak a language that wasn't understood but their dress and life style was also different. The situation is noted by a Registrar from Viborg in a letter in 1761 to the government, here translated to modern Danish:

”- to have good days - NB (notabene) with the King’s money - must particularly suit these folk. While other struggling farmers have to suffer and put up with daily pain and many other difficulties, and have to obtain their daily necessities for themselves, while these colonists have sent to them without cost, whatever they need.

Is it appropriate for a farmer when he comes to town to seek out the wine houses and there drink one bottle of wine after another? Isn’t it appropriate to eat the blessed ryebread that is made here in the land? It is milled and baked before being kneaded, into small- or fine bread. No, it isn’t right. It isn’t done by the town folk and even less by farmers and such rough people.

Though these colonists are so delicate and posh, but I fear and believe firmly, that once the King’s money runs out, then they will be forced to change their taste”.

The first grain harvest on the Alhede was poor, only 2 yield (measure). On the other hand the potatoes gave 6 yield. Since there wasn’t enough bread grain they took to potatoes and found that these could be eaten, in fact they tasted good. Later the colonists also found that they could be sold. They took them to the market in Viborg. The town’s residents were probably a little sceptical about these root vegetables but they liked the taste. From the colonists they learnt about the potato and valued it. It was therefore obvious that they named the colonists after the potato and called them “Potato Germans” (Kartoffeltyskere).

It must be a myth that the colonists brought the potato to Denmark. In Fredericia they had cultivated potatoes since the 1720s. It was the reformed French Huguenots that made the potato known. Even then, forty years later the potato still

wasn't known in mid-Jutland. It is unlikely that the Germans had brought seed potatoes with them from their home country. On a walking trip of almost six weeks one probably brings only the necessities and not a sack of potatoes. The potato was also hardly known in the place where they came from. Only three to four years before their departure for Denmark did the potato figured among goods for taxation. It is also documented that the seed-potatoes that Erichsen obtained for them from Slesvig, were freighted by ship from Flensburg to Aarhus.

The commissioners in Fredericia continually had to make decisions on the colonists problems. It was clear that Moritz, at the recruitment of the colonists, had not been particularly critical. Many of them were unsuited to the task they had come to solve: cultivation of the moors. The placement of two families in each farm house eventually became a big burden.



Something had to be done, but how could one solve the problem? The commissioners directed an appeal to the government, and they suggested that those colonists that don't appear to be suited for the moor cultivation and farming, should be expelled. This was also consistent with the considerations of the King's advisers. They were starting to get concerned at the large expense they incurred because of the colonists in Jutland, where the colonists still received daily allowances. Also the Danish estate owners were obligated to a levy of winter fodder for delivery to the colonies. An exceedingly unpopular measure. On top of this came war threats from Russia which set claims for increased military expenditure.

# 1763 the fateful year

The commissioners now proceeded with an evaluation of every individual family so that they could find those that should be expelled. The families were divided into two categories. - “not useful” and “somewhat hopeful”. The result was that 112 families were called “not useful” - that is, one third of all the colonists. The government found this number suspiciously high in that they knew the project on the moors was a fiasco. They then asked the commissioners for a new evaluation. At the same time the commissioners were advised that the expenses for the colonists in future should be held within 10,000 rix-dollars and the daily allowances from July should be reduced to half in the period to Mikkelssday (29th September) and thereafter completely removed. The new list included 68 families that were described “found unskilled” and in the beginning of July they were instructed to leave. Despondency now spread among the colonists and all work stopped. Many felt very close to the 68 families. They had shared the travel difficulties and the first years on the heath with all the troubles that they had to overcome together. Some were tied by family bonds or they came from the same village in their homeland. The prospect of the cessation of the daily allowances made many of those that were not expelled consider leaving the colonies also. There were rumours that the King would sell the farms to Danish estate owners. Precisely at that time many of the royal cavalry estates were sold to private owners in order to raise money for rearmament,



so the rumours had a certain backing. An animal sickness had seriously thinned the livestock on the farms so the future of the colonists looked fairly hopeless. A large number of the colonists voted to follow those expelled. In the course of the summer and autumn about 150 families departed the Jutland moors.

Something had to be done for those that remained. The question of payment of daily allowances was raised again. The deadline for cessation of the daily allowance was extended one year, although it would be halved for those that had grown rye. They were given a promise that forage would be handed out for the next two years and that they would also get seed grain for those fields that now were fit for use. Furthermore they should now get issued the promised deeds of tenure.

In the same year the colonists on the Alhede got a new overseer (he was called 'koloniforvalter'). His name was Hans Kjærsgård. Søren Thestrup was still the cashier. He had acquired the farm Nørlund in Bording parish but shortly afterwards sold it to the state who put up new buildings. Søren Thestrup died a few days after moving in.

The many family departures resulted in there being only one family in each farm.

# From potato Germans to Volga Germans

In Russia the Empress had taken power. Katharina II pulled her troops back from north Germany and therewith removed the threat of war against Denmark.

Katharina invited people to come to Russia to fertilise the steppes by the Volga river. She offered those interested a long list of exemptions, in fact more than the Danish king had offered the German colonists a few years earlier. The invitation from the Russian tsarina awoke interest with the German colonists on the heath in Jutland. They didn't see any future for themselves on the Jutland moors. After five years their position was almost worse than when they arrived. Now they were also advised that payment of the daily allowance would stop at the end of the year 1765, and that they no longer could expect delivery of forage.

Unfortunately the Frederiksdal colony was located on shifting sand and had to be moved eastwards. Also, the farms on the colony Frederiksmose (Frederiks swamp) had to be moved. Nearly all the settlers in the two colonies asked for travel passes to Russia. Thirteen colonists in Frederikshøj, three colonists in Frederikshede and thirteen colonists in Julianeheide and Christianshede had the same wish. From Randbøl moor came an application from twenty three colonists about exit permits and by the end of 1765 a total of 72 families from the colonies on the Jutland moors were issued with travel passes to Russia.



*David Pauli's house in Zurich, Volga district, 1914 and 1990*



Now there were only 59 families left on the heath. Most were back at Frederikshede, where all the farms were still occupied, but now with only one family on each farmstead. In Frederiksdal and Frederiksmose there was a single German family remaining in each place. A couple of German families still remained in Julianhede while all had departed the farms in Christianshede. On Randbøl moor there were only a few German families left. The vacant farms now became occupied by Danish farmers except in Frederikshøj. Here half of the farms stood empty, but the colonists received assurances that their children could take over these farms when establishing their own homes. Those remaining should therefore, until that time, take care of the cultivation of those fields that belong to the vacant farms.

Many of the German families that received travel passes to Russia came to an area near the Volga river. Colonists also arrived here directly from Germany. They preserved their German language and culture in the foreign land, but their descendants experienced a fate that was completely different from the fate that was dealt the colonists on Alhede. While the colonists on the Alhede and their descendants came to live in safe and peaceful conditions, in the 1900s the Volga German descendants experienced violent events. First the World War that ended in the revolution of 1917. Then they had to adapt to the new times of the Soviet Union, where they were forced into collective farming. The religious situation became confusing, because congregational life was banned and in the schools the children were educated in a new ideology. In 1924 the Volga Germans did, however, get permission to form their own autonomous republic, and the method whereby they organised their farm collectives was emphasised as a pattern to follow. A few years later came the

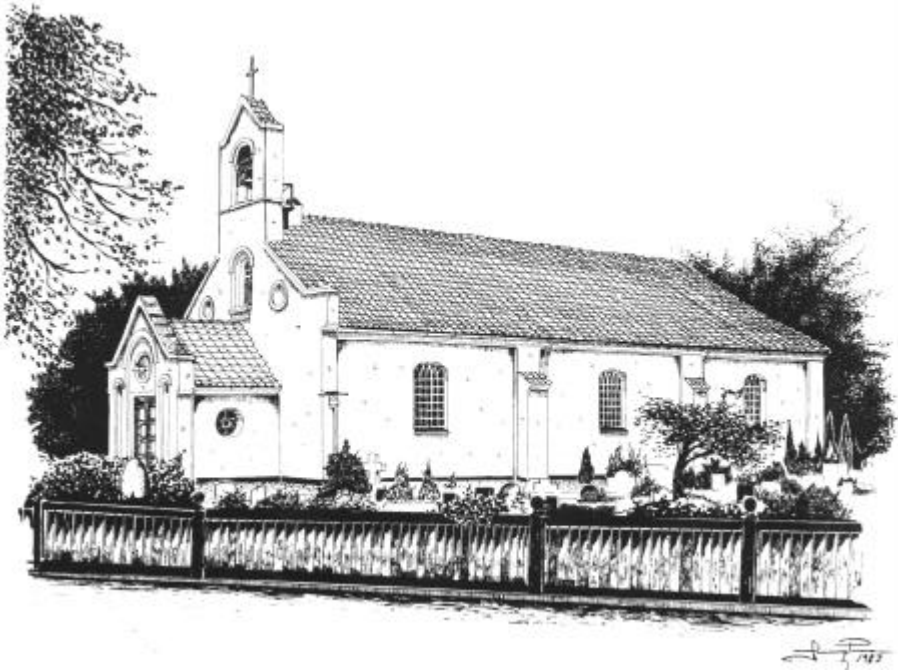


*Church in Zurich, Volga district, 1988. In soviet time used as corn store.  
Rebuilt 1990, but destroyed by fire in 1997.*

famine, when many died of starvation and sickness. But far worse was when the Soviet Union in 1941 was at war with Nazi Germany. From that moment the Volga Germans were considered as the Soviets' enemy. In the course of the summer of 1941 they were deported to Siberia and Kasakstan where they had to live in work camps. A large proportion of them buckled under. The few that, after the war, had opportunities to return to the Volga area found their churches destroyed and their houses occupied by Russians. After the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991 many Volga Germans got opportunities to come to Germany where they now seek to establish a life in the land that their ancestors left 230 years earlier.

# Frederiks church, the German church on the Alhede

Now the time had come when the colonists on the Alhede should have their own church. Most of them belonged to the Lutheran church which of course was the Danish national church. But half of the settlers in Frederikshede were followers of the Reformed Church. The Lutherans were served by the pastor from Thorning and they engaged an unsalaried assistant pastor for services and christenings. The Reformed were served by the pastor at the Reformed Church in Fredericia. He should travel to the Alhede twice a year and take Holy Communion as well as come when there were burials. In 1763 a Reformed Church pastor was engaged on the Alhede. A year later the Lutheran congregation also got their own pastor, but they still didn't have a church. The authorities probably wanted to know how big the exodus from the colonies would be before undertaking the expense of a church. It was placed exactly half way between the two colony villages Frederikshede and Frederikshøj. When the church was to be built there was talk of reuse, in that the builder was instructed to make use of the roof from the warehouse at the brick works in Skræ. This roof then determined the size of the church. The church was consecrated on the 16th of April 1766 by the Rural Dean Windfeldt of Thorning. It should be used both by the



Lutheran and the Reformed congregation, so two services were held there every Sunday. In the beginning the church didn't have any altar piece. That suited the Reformed well because they didn't want pictures in the church. On the other hand the Lutherans missed an altar piece. They wrote to Hans de Hofmann in Fredericia asking for an altar piece with the explanation.. "so that one should not believe that we are all Reformed." Hofmann then donated an altar piece to the church. By the beginning of the 1800s the number of Reformed in the two colony villages had become so low that there was no longer any basis for a pastor. Many of the Reformed had become married to Lutherans so the transition to solely a Lutheran congregation was not a problem.

The services were held in German but towards the middle of the 1800s the Danish national sentiment and anti-German

attitude began to be felt so it was decided that the German schools should be closed and those children who were born in 1849 and after would go to Danish schools. From 1856 they also started to have Danish services in the church. In the beginning only a few each year but later the services were in Danish and German every second Sunday. From 1870 the German services in Frederiks church stopped altogether.

Apparently the transition from the German to Danish language didn't cause any particular problems. The colonists still talked German in their homes but with the Danes around them they spoke Danish, or more correctly, Jysk (Jutland-ish) for that was the language that was used in the area. In sentiment they were Danish. One has to assume that the links with their home districts in Germany had long since ended. At the time when they ceased using the German language in school and church it was, after all, the third generation following the pioneers who were starting to take over the farms. The last of the pioneering generation were dead.

The colonists were very faithful to their church. For a number of them the strained religious situation in their homeland had been a contributing reason for choosing to emigrate. Pastor Johann Peter Købke who was pastor at Frederiks church from 1796 to 1800 writes as follows: - "They were good to meet with, good and obliging to their pastor, diligent churchgoers and respectful members. Their singing in the church was exceedingly beautiful and they used Petri Church's (German) song-book. So regularly beautiful was their song that travellers often came to the services and even families from Viborg in the summer visited me to hear the church singing". In 1838 St.St. Blicher wrote, "Their church songs are clear and beautiful and better than the songs in many Danish city churches".



The church's external presentation stands unaltered since the construction. Inside the church there have been, over time, different alterations, most to do with the church's inventory. Hans de Hofmanns altar picture is still in the church. It hangs on the north wall in the choir while a newer altar piece has taken its place.

The graveyard headstones carry a resemblance of the German colonists. The German family names are dominant. Until our time it has also been customary that Grønhøj has its graves north of the church while the dead from Haverdal are buried south of the church. In 1959 a stone monument inscribed with the German family names, was erected behind the church.



# Cultivation of the moor

The colonists purpose was to transform the moorland to agricultural land. There were only few of them who had knowledge of how this should be done and from the authorities side no directions were given. Every family was given the required tools. Moreover, every family received ten sheep, one cow and two oxen. The colonists had the idea that the ground would become covered in grass if the heather was burned off, but this did not make the soil suitable for sowing of grain. The difficult task of soil preparation had to be done. The only fertiliser at hand was the ash from the burnt heather. It was no wonder that the first grain crop was so poor. A crop of two yields ('fold' in Danish) was only half of the four to five yields which was the norm at that time. Only potatoes were successful in that meagre soil. The grain types in the first years were mainly rye and barley. After that came buckwheat.

The feed on the moor could sustain the sheep but they had to be closely watched because there were wolves on the heath. The harvest of grain and hay was not sufficient for the cows and bullocks, so they had to have forage delivered from outside. The authorities had to take care of this. There was no prospect that the colonists would be able to survive without the daily allowance. This therefore resulted in the large exodus from the moors in 1763 and 1765.

Since the Germans had wished to live in villages the land was divided in such a way that the fields came to lay in a star formation from the village. Every single farm's fields

therefore started at the farmhouse and stretched far out into the moor. The large need for land meant that it was a long way from the farmstead to the outer fields, often as much as a couple of kilometres. In 1778 relocation of farms from the villages to smaller colonies of two to four farms was started. Ten farms were moved from Frederikshøj, four farms towards the south and this new colony was named “Firehuse” (Four houses). Two farms were moved north: - “Tohuse” (Two houses) and four farms to the west. There was already a settlement here with the name “Resenfelde” so this became the name of the new colony. At the same time similar moves away from Frederikshede of ten farms:- five to Aarestrup – two to Ulvedal (Wolfdale) and three towards the east where they were named “Trehuse” (Three houses). In 1793 a further five farms moved from Frederikshøj towards the south and the east to the localities of “Benslehøj” and “Sandkærgårde”.

A survey of the colonists’ homes was undertaken in 1798. The twenty year exemption from payment of taxes was



*Kriegbaum's farm in Resenfelde, painted by Hans Smidth in 1908. The four farms in Restedfelde were moved from Grønhøj in 1779 and were for nearly 200 years occupied by the families Herritz and Kriegbaum.*

extended a couple of times but now the time drew near when even the colonists on the Alhede had to start paying taxes. The new survey was aimed at fixing the value of the single properties with a view to taxation. The agricultural land value was reckoned in 'hardkorn', originally a measurement of what the tenant farmers should pay on grain in manorial dues to the estate owner. The valuation of the land on the Alhede was set very low because of the soils poor yielding capacity. At this time the largest part of the available land still lay idle as moor. Altogether only 11% of the Alhede was cultivated. That would therefore have to be taken into view at the valuation. St. St. Blichers descriptions of the Viborg county in 1838 reveals that most of the tenant farms were valued at about one tønner 'hartkorn' and the tenant farms on fairly good land had an area of about thirty tønner land cultivated. In the Alhede the farms were rated at a production of one tønner 'hartkorn' while the land areas consisted of almost 200 tønner per farm. The cultivated areas were different from place to place. Thus the three farms in Benslehøj had cultivated 34.3%, while the three farms in Trehuse only had cultivated 17.2%. In Frederiksmose and Frederiksdal the cultivation was under 10%.

Eventually as the population increased new farms were built out in the moor, often in such a way that the grown children occupied the new places. These places were then divided from the original property and separately registered.

Frederik Carl Carstens who was pastor on the Alhede from 1832 to 1845 wrote a book in 1839 that describes the conditions on the Alhede in great detail, particularly farming. He established that since 1815/1818 the situation on the Alhede went seriously backwards. Whilst in the period 1815-1818 on most farms there were two horses, by 1837 there were

*Fr. Carl Carstensen*



no horses. The number of steers in many places were halved. The number of cows had gone down from three to one per farm and the number of sheep had also halved. On a few farms the grain harvest had also gone backwards while the potato harvest on the whole hadn't changed. He gave a list of grounds for the reversal and he found that the lack of fertiliser was a substantial cause. The large areas require a lot of fertiliser but ash from burning the heather is still the principle source. In the winter lack of fodder forced many colonists to let their livestock be stabled with Danish farmers and therefore they missed out on the animal waste that also had a big impact on soil preparation. As the burnt moor areas could give a yield for at most two to three years and thereafter was exhausted, it had to be set aside uncultivated. The heather takes over again and many years pass before sufficient soil has formed so that cultivation can be recommenced. Lack of

shelter is also a substantial cause of the backtrack, and the pastor urges planting of shelter belts and plantations and himself goes ahead with this objective. He comes with many good suggestions for improvements and encourages the authorities to increase their supervision of the colonists and makes inquiries about welfare payments for the colonists, but presumably they didn't take him seriously and the reversal continues. Only after the establishment of "The Danish Heath Society" in 1866, that collects information about the moor cultivation, does it start to go forward. In particular the possibility for introduction of marl (soil consisting of clay and lime used as fertiliser) to the Alhede became important, but that only started to occur in the beginning of the 1880s.

Neither the pioneers their children, nor their grandchildren lived to see that it became a success.

That way the potato Germans became pioneers in regards to heath cultivation. But alas, they didn't participate in the development which followed in this region. To the contrary, the first generations only experienced setbacks. In 1852 the Danish government decided that the farms on the Alhede should no longer be tenant farms but should be transferred to private ownership. The price for the farms was set at 150 rix-dollars per tønd (0.55 hectares, 1.36 acres) hartkorn (Danish unit of land valuation based on estimated productivity). The tenant farmers could decide either to pay outright or let the sum stand as a debt to the state over the property. The debt was interest free but then they should continue to pay a sum that was comparative to the tenant payments. That portion of the tenant payment that was over 4% of the debt would be deducted from the debt. They should continue to be free from payment of tithes to the church and school.

# The colonists origin in Germany

At the time that the colonists came to Denmark, Germany was not a nation state as we know it today. It consisted of nearly 700 autonomous regions of principalities, counties and towns. Most of the colonists came from a region with Heidelberg as the centre and a radius of about 50 km. The families that remained in Denmark almost all came from a province north east of Heidelberg called Odenwald. It really can't be called mountainous since the highest point only reaches a little over 500 meters above the ocean, but it consists of a row of narrow valleys and forest covered slopes and high points with castles and castle ruins. Towards the west the scenery is divided by the wide river valley of the Rhine and towards the south along the narrow river valley with the river Neckar, a tributary to the Rhine. Towards the north another tributary to the Rhine, the Main river, marks the border. Where the hilly countryside rises from the Rhine valley a country road runs between Darmstadt in the north and Heidelberg in the south. Along this country road, like pearls on a string lie the old middle aged towns and behind them up the slopes, the wine fields. Behind them again on the high points, are castle ruins with wide views over the Rhine valley. It is a beautiful countryside with a mild climate, also a fruitful area completely different from the moors that became their new home in Jutland.

Today the region lies partly in Hessen and Baden-

Württemberg. But at that time it belonged partly to the Principality “Kurpfalz’s” four counties and with Erbach as original seat of the reigning monarch. At a distribution between the four sons four counties were established that took their names from the new town seats. Many of the colonists came from the county of Erbach-Schönberg. At the registration in Denmark their home town was recorded as Erbach even though they really came from Schönberg and other small towns in the Lauter valley.

What was the reason that they abandoned this beautiful area to come to “remote laying areas” in Jutland? A few simple answers are probably not adequate. There were many reasons but three conditions are obvious:

There was a population surplus. The area where the principal occupation was agriculture had been built up and used without possibilities for expansion. There were many children in the families. Only one of the children could continue the parents business. The others had to find other occupations that didn’t exist in the community. It was a situation similar to that which we had in Scandinavia in the period 1870-1920 when there was a large migration to America.

Often their home soil was the stage for military operations that brought with them plundering and burning of farms. The story goes that the colonists said: “Could we get the harvest two or three years then the enemy took the next harvest” or “When we sowed we didn’t know if we were able to harvest”. At the time when the colonists travelled to Jutland the Prussian seven year war was raging and even though it didn’t directly touch their home country nobody knew if the war would reach them. The trip to Denmark had to be planned with consideration of the war. For many colonists it was





*Village of Gronau, origin of the Marquart family.*



probably a serious factor that they could come to live in a place where they didn't have to constantly fear the threat of war .

For many colonists an important reason for seeking a new homestead was also the religious situation. In the principality of Kurpfalz the majority of inhabitants were Protestant, either Lutheran or Reformed Church, but the Prince was Catholic and therefore he worked towards bringing the population back to the Catholic church. To the Protestants their beliefs meant a lot. In their homeland they had experienced severe discrimination to the advantage of the Catholics. Their religious functions were limited by restrictions. In the town of Ladenburg where the Lutheran congregation in the beginning of the 1700s had finally acquired their own church building, they were not allowed to have a church bell. And they were not allowed, as was their custom, to sing at funerals on the way to the church yard. Congregational life was thereby restricted to take place only within the church walls. In Denmark the colonists were promised religious freedom and for many of them it would be very significant that they were allowed to live their lives in accordance with their beliefs without restriction or discrimination and without worry that this freedom would be reduced.

## Two portraits

Amongst those men that worked on the project to settle the moors of Jutland by German colonists, there are two that deserve particular attention. The one is the King's Lord Chamberlain, Adam Gottlieb Moltke, who was the real regent in Denmark in King Frederik the fifth's reign. The other was the president of the free city of Fredericia, Hans de Hofmann. The King assigned him the task of taking care of the colonists establishment on the moors. They both had a large influence on the progress of the project which, when measured in expenses in comparison with the combined state budget, was a very big investment.

### *Adam Gottlieb Moltke*

He was born on the 10th of November 1710 in Walkendorf, Mecklenburg and came as a 12 year old to the Danish royal house as a page for crown prince Christian, but before the crown prince became King in 1730. Later he became a page for Prince Frederik who was born in 1723. He was entrusted with the upbringing of the young Prince and he still stood by the Prince's side when he became King Frederik the Fifth. The King had unlimited liking for Moltke who returned this liking with a loyalty that was often put to a hard test because of the King's unrestrained demeanour in the Copenhagen night life. It could lead to big problems when the inebriated

King issued orders and promises without previous consideration. In a description that Moltke made in his later years about the time of the King's reign, he never mentioned one word about the King's alcoholism and instability, even though it often affected Moltke. A long time after Moltke's death notes appear that the King wrote to Moltke "on the day" with many excuses about the previous days affairs and promises about improvements.

In the above mentioned account about the time of King Frederik the Fifth's reign, Moltke writes about the matter of the heath cultivation:

"When one in the meantime didn't think that one could find the necessary number of people here, and one also thought about how it could be necessary to attract people from the kind of lands where agriculture was carried out excellently and where the hard work was well carried out, so through their example and diligence it could be shown our farmers that they could become clever at working the soil, then one would endeavour to get people from foreign lands. With counsellor Mauritz's efforts they also succeeded in recruiting about 4 - 500 people. Even though the King at great expense got these people into the country, let them build houses in the uninhabited places and moors and gave them all advance money whereby they should be in a position to work the land in return for the King's gracious disposition, the vision was only partly reached because many of these people didn't understand farming and others were inclined to boozing and laziness, so the continuation of this important work only progressed slowly. The industrious who also had an understanding of farming, in the meantime did their duty

and there was a considerable portion of the land area in Jutland and Slesvig, that in a number of years, they cultivated and made fertile. I am of the opinion that if this undertaking is supported as best as possible in the future, with the poor residents removed and replaced by good ones, this will in many ways have a large benefit and good will follow.”

At the King’s coronation in 1746, Moltke was appointed Lord Chamberlain and in 1750 the King bestowed on him the position of Count Bregentved on Sjælland (Zealand).

When the King in 1749 wanted to build a new suburb in Copenhagen the construction began on the site of the burnt down Amalienborg palace. Four similar palaces should be constructed surrounding a square. The sites would be granted to those who would build and one of those was Moltke. Following the drawings of architect Nikolai Eigtvnd the four palaces were constructed and Moltke then came to live in one of them. He was very interested in art so many of the art pieces of the time eventually decorated the palace vestibule and halls. The palace stayed in the family’s ownership until Crown Prince Frederik, after Christiansborgs’s fire in 1794, bought it as a residence for his sick father King Christian VII. It was given the name of “Christian the Seventh Palace”. Recently this palace, after a thorough restoration, has been brought back to its original appearance and layout.

At the King’s death in 1766 Moltke was dismissed without a pension but two years later he was engaged in the government. When Struense came in 1770 Moltke was again dismissed without pension. After Struenses’ fall he was issued a pension.

Moltke was Evangelical, characterised by that form of



*Adam Gotlob Moltke*

evangelism that Count Zinsendorf stood for, the Moravian Brethren.

Moltke was the owner of a row of estates on Zealand and Fyn, including the estate Glorup on Fyn where many of his objects of art are held.

Moltke died on the 25th September 1792 at Bregentved and was buried at the chapel at Karise church.

### *Hans de Hofmann*

He was born on the 10th of July 1713 on Skerrild farm twenty kilometres east of Vejle. From the time he was four years old he was raised by his maternal grandmother in Copenhagen where he, after passing private school leaving certificate, studied languages and law and took the judicial exams in 1734. After that he went on a study trip to Leipzig, Leiden, France and Belgium. In 1737 he began to work with genealogical groups. Through marriage he came into the wealthy Bering family in Horsens and was able to buy the Skerrildgård estate from the father. In the “Economic Magazine” that was first issued in 1757, he wrote proposals for the cultivation of the moors in Jutland. It resulted in him being appointed to take receipt of the German colonists and take care of their establishment on the moors. From March 1760 he was appointed President of the Free City of Fredericia. With this the town became the seat of administration of the German colonists establishment on the moors in Jutland.

In his book “Fæstning and fristed” (Fortress and sanctuary) about the Free City of Fredericia, Hugo Matthiessen in 1850 writes about Hans de Hofmann and paints him as “fine formed, experienced and a competent man, with a spirit of obligation, loaded with energy for work, honest and unbribable in all his demeanour and burning with enthusiasm to benefit society and fellow people”. Therefore a man with such a vision was voted to the extremely difficult task that the moor colonisation should prove to be and it must be attributed to him that this matter, despite the many problems, was carried through so that a total fiasco was



*Hans de Hofmann*

avoided. In his book Hugo Matthiessen refers most about Hofmann's influence as the free town's president, but many of those things that were brought forward could also be seen as consistent with his job as commissioner for heath reclamation. Time after time he used his private means when a problem



needed solving and he also led others with a good example when money had to be collected.

Hofmann's farm in Fredericia formed the framework for many initiatives. Every fourth Sunday the town's "good families", also with their children, met at the president's home. He gave the citizens access to use his library and when there were difficulties getting the books back again he would place an advertisement in the newspaper. On one specific day of each week the door stood open for the county's tenant farmers. When they had an argument about something they sought Hofmann who helped them to agree, so they avoided the "procurator and process". After the farmers had talked to him he generally led them out into the garden to show them a flood of fruit trees and explained to them the need for them to acquire their own. This happened rarely so that he, with a sigh, had to determine that "the nation is in part lazy by nature and they would do nothing without immediately reaping the fruits".

Besides his official duties he worked on the collection of documents. When his brother-in-law (pro)chancellor Erik Pontoppidan died in 1764 in the middle of his work with the "Danske Atlas", Hofmann completed this large work. It is not surprising that an author who knew him said that "he knew Denmark inside out, whatever position one points to".

In 1773 Hofmann was appointed as chief administrative officer of Koldinghus county but he continued living in Fredericia and here he died on 3rd February 1793. He was interned in the chapel at Nebsager church.

# The descendants

The first generation of children on the Alhede were nearly all married with colonist children, so the inhabitants in the colony villages in the first two to three generations were all of German ancestry. The colonists generally had many children and in the following generations most of them left the Alhede and were married with Danes. The living descendants of the colonists six to eight generations from the pioneers are numerous and spread all over the country. In the course of the 1800s a large sprinkling of Danes also came to the Alhede. As a result of the Danish sentiment in the middle of the 1800s, a strange situation came about with regard to the family names on the Alhede, in that one departed the German names and formed family names following the customary Danish pattern with a “sen” after the father’s first name. Since the German men all had first names “Johan Jacob”, “Johan Georg”, “Johan Peter” etc., many descendants of the Potato Germans got the family name “Johansen”.

A celebration was held in 1959 to commemorate the 200 year anniversary of the German colonists’ arrival to the Alhede and the stone monument in the Frederik church yard was erected. In the King’s house memorial park which the Danish Heath Society set up for the memory of the moor cultivation, the German family names also appear on a couple of monuments to the memory of the pioneers. Again in 1984 a celebration was held: 225 years. At this occasion a sculpture “The Potato Girl” was unveiled in Frederiks and the potato



*Outing on 2nd September 1990.*

was described as “her bread”. At the same time there was a renewal of interest in the unique history of the area.

Some descendants had, in 1981 and 1982, arranged bus tours to south Germany where they visited the districts where their ancestors had come from. In 1985 they took the initiative to establish a society of descendants. It was named “The Potato Germans on the Alhede” (Kartoffeltyskerne på Alheden) with the objective of arranging annual family meetings in Frederiks and bus tours to Germany in order to gain knowledge of the area and ancestors. The society in 1998 can count 420 members and the annual bus tours to Germany are always well attended. The first president of the society was a former mayor of Karup commune, Karl Bitsch.

Family research in Germany carried out by Jan Hyllested from Randers, has meant that the home locations for most of the families that are associated with the pioneers to the Alhede



*President presents certificate of life membership to the society's founder and first president, past mayor Karl Bitch, Frederiks (center).*

after the large migration in 1765 are known. Great support for this research was yielded by a German genealogist Rudi Scheid who lives in Dreieich near Frankfurt am Main. He was resident in Denmark in 1940-1945 as a German soldier and learnt the Danish language. At his death in 1996 he was a life member of the society. Another German citizen, Ingo-Rudolf Pauli, has contributed towards the study of the pioneer families. After retiring from his position in the German Federal Defence he took a stay at a Danish high school where he learnt the Danish language. He is descended from a Volga German family and has participated in making the Volga German history known in Denmark. He is now a life member

of the society.

On the trips to Germany connections have been established with residents in the districts where the pioneers came from. Many of them carry the same family names as the German colonists on the Alhede. Moreover the contacts with the ancestral areas has meant that the society now has a rich collection of material about the history of the area. Together with the information from Germany about the colonists ancestry the society has been in a position to offer help for genealogical research. The church books on microfilm, census and genealogical tables of a number of families are accessible at the annual family meeting in Frederiks.

Committee of the society

“Kartoffeltyskerne på Alheden” 1998:

Etlar Kramer Johansen, Silkeborg – president

Anna Dürr, Viborg – secretary

Verner Dürr, Viborg – cashier

Jan Hyllested, Randers

Asger Gantzhorn, Frederiks

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# Epilogue

You stand as a hero in the heather's dark land  
among your forefathers old forgotten graves.  
You found your bread in the deserts' rough sand  
where behind fence and garden the green fields now stand.

Your fate was poor but your goals were lofty  
for wife and child you were ready, to offer yours  
and you took your battle as mission, not duty  
behind bullock team and over the brown moors.

You - man and women - built the heritage bridge  
and stubborn land you forced to prosper  
The moor you breached with plough - Your trust in doubt  
for work's master and soul's dawn.



The “few years” - became a hundred years  
but step by step the heather did retreat  
until Jutland’s moor “as a corn field stands”  
Ten thousand homes did add to Denmark’s wealth.

Against resistance you held out - like old Job  
in spring, when storm whipped seed with sand  
with broken hopes for harvest golden bounty.  
With hunger and yearning for home - only suffered all else.

Now with smile the harvest mounts - where often cried  
that bind flower wreath with father’s memory.  
Where child with mother slumbers secure and satisfied  
the bread-grain grows - while summer days rolls by.

Written by Jørgen Johnsen, Almind 1959  
Melody: My birthplace is the heather’s brown land.



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