

Danish Windmill Quarterly Newsletter

THE BREEZE

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Director's Message:

Dear Members,

It is hard to believe it is already January as 2023 fades away in the rearview mirror. This was a momentous year for us and we're excited to share our closing thoughts on all of it with you.

Inside this issue you will find my reflection on 2023, a summary of this year's tourism highlights and visitor information, updates from this past quarter, a guide to our new website, and more. It has been a very busy year and we have a lot of ground to cover, but we firmly believe that in many ways this is just the beginning of many exciting things to come. There is a lot at stake this year and we need all of the help we can get.




Thank you for supporting the Danish Windmill. We are so appreciative for the passionate following we have built over the years. Your enthusiasm puts the wind in our sails.

Mange tak!

Shaun Sayres, M.A.
Manager

 Nørre Snede, DK 1848-1975

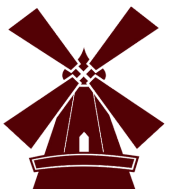
Celebrating
48 years in
Elk Horn

Elk Horn, IA 1976-present 

In 1975, local farmer and Danish-American Harvey Sornson approached the Elk Horn community with an unthinkable idea: to relocate a windmill from Denmark to the United States. It was no easy feat, but to the amazement of most, Harvey's "impossible dream" became reality.

During the winter of 1975-76, an authentic Danish windmill from Nørre Snede, DK was dismantled, ferried across the Atlantic, and transported cross-country to Elk Horn, Iowa. Once arrived, community volunteers set about putting together the pieces one by one until eventually, the old Danish windmill towered over downtown Elk Horn where it remains to this day.

For nearly 50 years, the windmill has stood as a tribute to Danish-American heritage, agricultural history, and the power of community.



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DANISH WINDMILL

Feature Story:

"2023: A Year in Review"

If there is one word to describe 2023 for the Danish Windmill, it is momentous. Picking up where we left off in 2022, business and tourism traffic exploded this past year, reaching plateaus that haven't been met for some time. Our annual sales revenue, grossing at **\$394,669.50** is the highest point reached since 2009, igniting a new push for growth that we can only hope to see continue in 2024. Visitor traffic followed suit. **72,207** visitors, local or not, walked through our doors in 2023, a steep uptick from the remarkable 65,570 we received in 2022. The numbers are nothing short of staggering, and a testament to how far this organization can reach.

At the same time, these months were busy with infrastructural changes. We started the year with a new logo, accounting system, payroll software, membership software, and office computers. We followed that up with a new quarterly newsletter, new breakroom facility, and new bathroom fixtures. Both gearboxes on the windmill received new oil, bearings, and gaskets. To accomplish this, we acquired new tools, equipment, and professional connections. New volunteers helped at the windmill this year. We had new events, hosted new food trucks, and gathered a bunch of new members. There was the new weather station, the new billboards, the new artwork, trips from new schools, and the new Christmas catalog. Although unplanned, we even ended the year with the debut of our new membership website: danishwindmill.org.

Perhaps most importantly, we built new relationships, especially with Møllebygger Petersen ApS. Our grindstones are in good working order, and we've even used them since Erik's visit. And we will continue to do so in 2024 as we work towards building back up the windmill's



Danish Windmill Staff, Left to Right: Tami Jacobsen, Phyllis Hoegh, Julie Nelson, Faye Farley, Joanne Greving, and Shaun Sayres

reputation for being fully-functional. We have the blueprints for all necessary capital projects for the windmill over the next few years, and can plot our way steadily to our 50th anniversary in 2026.

But for now, let's stay focused on 2023. We began the year with some important changes on the backend that are worth glossing over briefly. First, the Danish Windmill began its partnership with Nonprofit Association of the Midlands (NAM), a membership 501(c)6 based out of eastern Nebraska that provides resources to numerous small nonprofits in the region. Like many other organizations, we joined NAM to take advantage of their vast resources and professional connections, including discounted membership rates to various other programs. Partnering with NAM also required shifting to a more modern accounting system and payroll software in addition to their CPA services. This shift has led to critical savings in time and money throughout the year. In October, we capitalized on NAM's discounted rate with USPay, a nationwide credit processor, and through their discounted rates we saved \$780 in credit card processing fees this past quarter.

Another important development in this area was our commitment to WildApricot, a renowned customer resource management (CRM) software to manage our membership program and donations that we managed to fund via grant money from the Pomeroy Foundation. We'll keep the boring stuff to ourselves, but the important message for all of you is that it enables us to completely overhaul our membership program. Memberships can now be self-managed at danishwindmill.org, a new website that comes free as part of our plan with WildApricot. This website wasn't set to debut until mid-2024, but issues with danishwindmill.com forced our hand. Regardless, we're happy to see it out in the wild and hope that our members will enjoy everything it offers including access to fundraising campaigns, volunteering opportunities, educational resources, past issue catalogs and newsletters, and our digital archive which should grow considerably in 2024. And to clarify, danishwindmill.com is not going anywhere for the time being and is still our main website, including our online store, for the foreseeable future. It might be easier to think of it as our business website,

while **danishwindmill.org** caters to our commitments and responsibilities as a nonprofit museum. We continue to build the new site out and encourage everyone to check out all of the features if you haven't already.

The time and money these programs save will be critical to our operation going forward, and we've made the most out of our newfound time out of the office. In the Spring, using funds awarded by the Shelby County Community Foundation, we installed a long-awaited breakroom kitchenette. And with money from the Shelby County Community Chest, we added changing tables to both of our restrooms, complimenting the new toilets that have already cut our water consumption considerably.

The introduction of our new logo in 2023 opened the floodgates to a new line of windmill-centric merchandise. Literally hundreds of t-shirts with windmills on them sold through our gift shop this year, and we supplemented these with a number of new customized products including keyrings, magnets, stickers, tumblers, mugs, bottle openers, and Christmas ornaments – most of which were produced by local Iowa businesses.

The windmill itself also had quite the year. Our lower gearbox broke down just as the Spring winds were picking up and by the time we were able to fix it, the upper gearbox broke down.

It took considerable before the windmill was completely fixed again (late-April to mid-July), mostly due to the scarcity of the bearings needed and the inability to source a local lift tall enough to service them, but we made the most of it. Tivoli came and went, and people enjoyed touring the windmill even though it wasn't spinning. It was still nice to have the fantail working again though, as it was getting too hot in the cap to manually turn it into the wind every day. A number of people were involved in getting the fantail repaired from start to finish: Lisa & Mike Riggs, Mike Howard, Andy Anderson, Chad & Trey Juelsgaard, Steve & Raydene Mathisen, Ben Hassett, and Tim Palmer. We want to thank them all for their help and support.

We are especially grateful for the services and convenience of having a skilled machinist local to us. Mike Mortensen of Mike's Welding (Kimballton) repaired both gearboxes for us with expedience and attention to detail. Mike also donated the labor for the repairs. We're beyond thankful to have such an incredible resource so close to home and appreciate having Mike's skilled services on call for when we will inevitably need him again.

The rest of Summer kept us busy. Locals appreciated the food trucks that we brought into town



Trey Juelsgaard became the 4th-generation Juelsgaard to work on the windmill

this year, and we even found time for new events such as the Family Night we held in August in coordination with Spartan Pizza of Exira. We appreciated the opportunity to keep the windmill and gift shop open a bit later than usual and allow working parents and families to enjoy time at the windmill when we otherwise would have been closed. It was this same energy that we carried into our two Throwback Thor's Day events in the Fall, in which we were able to collaborate with other local businesses to encourage some Danish festivities about town.

Speaking of Danish, we had some interesting visitors this year, too! In August we had a bus tour of Danes stop through Elk Horn on their tour through the rural Midwest. Let by Erik Nørkjær, the Danes enjoyed personal tours of the windmill and Museum of Danish America in addition to forays to local businesses and other sites in the area.

Then in September we had the big visit from Erik Batenburg, written about in our last newsletter. Erik gave Shaun a crash-course on milling and was able to bestow a lifetime of experience with windmills during his short time here. The grindstones were recalibrated, and MP has since produced a long list of suggested or recommended repairs and alterations to take on as capital projects over the next few years. Most importantly, Erik left with the assurance that the grindstones



Our new axe-throwing game was a big hit all Summer

were suitable for use. Shaun held two grinding sessions in October, the first a trial run, and the second a demonstration that locals were encouraged to attend. Many had never seen the stones in action before. They aren't in great shape, but they will do for the time being and we have a few years to begin planning for a new set before one is actually needed.

The rest of the year followed the usual path of preparing for and weathering a busy holiday season. Our holiday catalog received a complete facelift this year, transitioning towards a more image-centric format that especially highlighted the visual appeal of our many collectibles. Customers phoning in their orders kept Julie busy for weeks, constantly switching between praise for the new catalog and disdain that it was compelling them to spend more money!

Leading up to Julefest and Christkindlmarket Des Moines, there never seemed to be a dull moment. Some unusually warm weather had us busy on weekends we normally wouldn't be. Our Denmark shipment was missing, until it wasn't. The donation function on our website crashed, and bolts were flying off the sails during Julefest.

Then December hit and it hit hard. The annual Christmas market we participate in every year, Christkindlmarket Des Moines, was a huge success. Over 4 days, or 30 hours of business, our hut



Our hygge hut at Christkindlmarket, sponsored in part by The Rasmussen Group. Shaun built the Victorian-style light posts. The Danish-design shelving units were built by NextGen Creations in Harlan, IA.

generated over \$26,000 in gross revenue. That is the entire month of August in four cold days. We had an absolute blast this year with the lively crowd and 'warmer' temperatures, and the visitors loved our displays as we won awards for Best Display and Most Authentic.

The buzz of a successful market carried us the rest of the year as December itself turned out to be quite the month for gift shop sales both in-store and online. Despite having to put together the new website, we found enough time to squeeze together an annual appeal and send it out shortly before the holidays. We're thankful to those who gave this past year and want to acknowledge a special donation from Danish Brotherhood Lodge #227 for \$46,739.00. We don't have any special plans for this money as of now. We hope we will, but we need it to cover our operations expenses in 2024.

And that is the inconvenient truth in all of this, that despite a glowing year, uncertainty still clouds around us. We hope to grow, take on fun improvement projects, and further improve the windmill as a living history museum, but we have to prioritize being open, promoting tourism for our community, and keeping Harvey Sornson's dream alive. There are no guarantees, and we move into 2024 carried by the optimism of

ourselves and our supporters. Your passion and energy power our windmill as much as the wind does. Without you all, we would not still be here.

We're thankful to those who contributed to our charity auction this year. We're thankful to those who answered our appeal, with \$1 or more. We're thankful to the visitors that drop their change in the donation box, and we're thankful to those capable of donating enough funds for us to set aside and invest in our growth. Many of the changes we made this year would not have been possible without funds donated by Mike & Lou Howard. For the first time in a long time, we've been afforded the cushion to invest in ourselves and now we have to make the most of it.

That is why 2023 was a momentous year. It can be the beginning of a new era, but only if we seize that opportunity. We cannot let up, we cannot hold back. As hard as everyone worked this year, it will not be enough if our goal is to be self-sustaining. It will take time and patience to get there, but after this year we have, I believe it's possible. And I hope you all do, too.

Shaun Sayres



Our new windmill Christmas ornament.

News & Updates

With Erik's visit over, the windmill ran regularly throughout October and November. At his suggestion, we bolted weights fabricated by Mike's Welding to two of the sails. They worked out perfectly as the sails are no longer unbalanced, and they now turn in just 4-5 mph winds when before we needed at least 10. This allowed us to run the windmill more often than we previously could.

But we did run into one problem. The shutter that previously broke in 2020 had completely split in half as the brace failed due to woodrot from one of the bolts. It required a lift to fix it and thankfully we had extra braces, so it was an easy fix. Tim Palmer assisted with the replacement and we also used the lift for maintenance on the fantail and sails. We installed eyebolts in the fantail, at Erik's recommendation, to better secure it when necessary. On the sails, connections were tightened or greased, and the shutter system moved much better after that.

Our new catalog finally went out in October, and for awhile our Denmark shipment appeared to have been lost between distributors here in the US before it finally arrived. We also switched credit card processors in October which will further help us in cutting down on operations costs.



Mercy Catholic High School students visited the windmill and Danish museum on an ecology field trip



New Christmas lights on the windmill

November and December proceeded to fly by. We changed up Julefest this year by serving aebleskiver instead of havarti cheese, and had both non-alcoholic and alcoholic gløgg for visitors to try. Julefest wasn't as busy this year. It was cold and snow began to come down by Saturday afternoon, but the gift shop still exceeded last year's numbers and the people who did come had more space to mill about.

With Julefest over, Christkindlmarket Des Moines was right around the corner. All of the product we ordered for it came out of the basement and filled a uHaul. From Thursday to Sunday, Julie, Shaun, and Tami ran our hut. Temperatures were more mild this year, and it was the busiest crowd we've ever had. They predicted 80,000 people this year and they definitely came close. You can read more about our experience this year at danishwindmill.org/news. We had a great time and are completely blown away by the success we had this year.

After the market, the year finally begins to dwindle down, but we had another important task to complete. Mike & Lou Howard donated money for us to contract out help for installing Christmas lights on the windmill again in honor of Tom Potts. We updated the lights this year and found a crew to put them up. Aaron Larsen and Dirk Wasson brought their lift to get them installed and Nate Potts stuck around to help and give guidance, too. We're happy to see them up and look forward to keeping the tradition going.

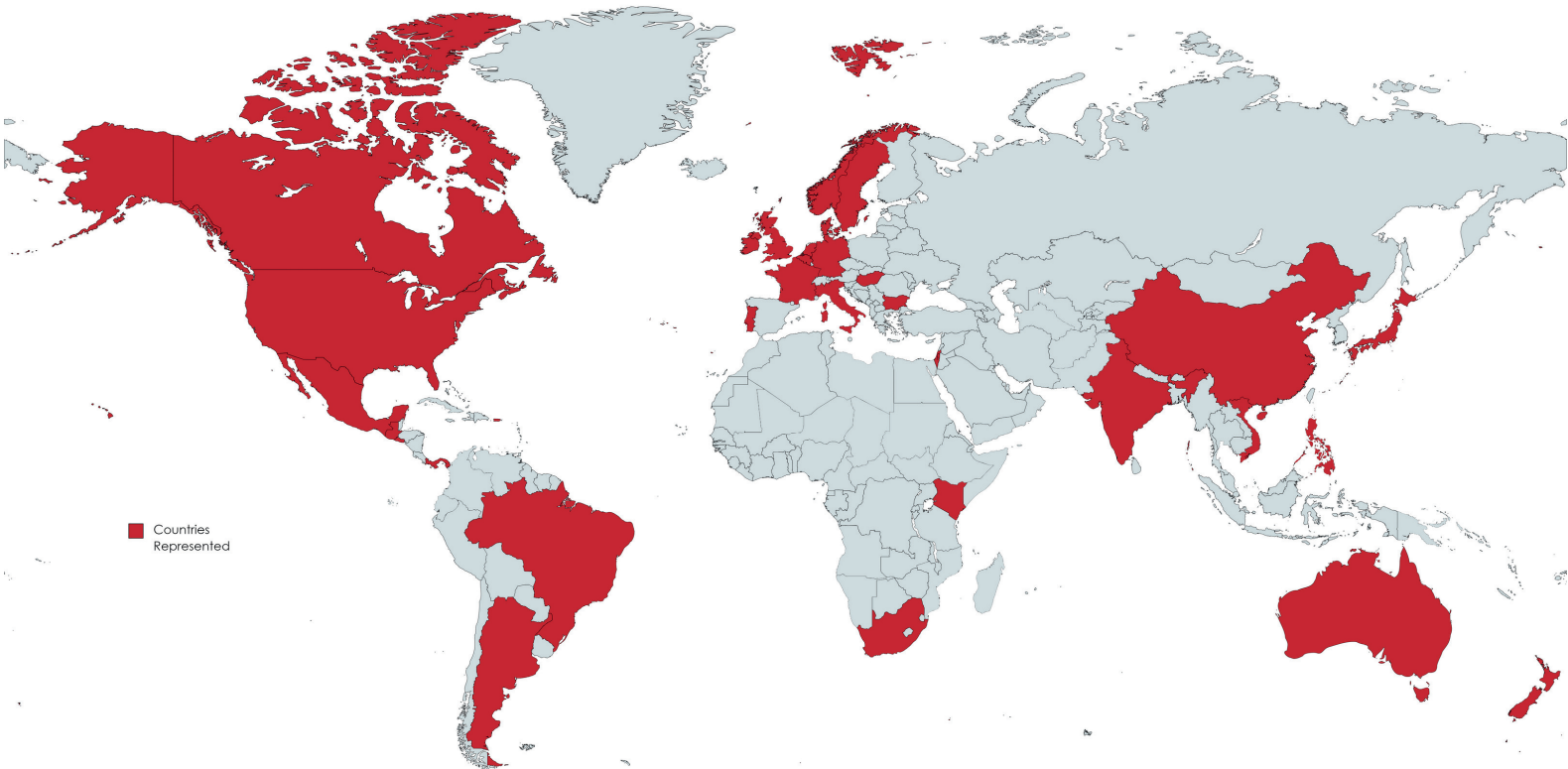
Visitor Information

In 2023 we had visitors from all 50 states by September including Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico! Here are some other fun facts about this year's visitors:

- **21,079** visitors signed our guestbook
- **361** visitors from Denmark, more than Michigan (347)
- **17** group tours visited
- **2** public grinding sessions were held this year

TOP STATES IN 2023			
1	Iowa ★	6	Illinois
2	Nebraska	7	Wisconsin
3	Minnesota	8	Utah
4	Colorado	9	Michigan
5	California	10	Texas

We had visitors from 31 different countries in 2023!



North America

Canada
El Salvador
Guatemala
Mexico
Panama

South America

Argentina
Brazil

Europe

Belgium
Bulgaria

Denmark
France
Germany
Hungary
Ireland
Italy

the Netherlands
Norway
Portugal
Sweden
United Kingdom

Africa

Kenya
South Africa

Asia

China
India
Israel

Japan
Palestine
the Philippines
Vietnam

Oceania

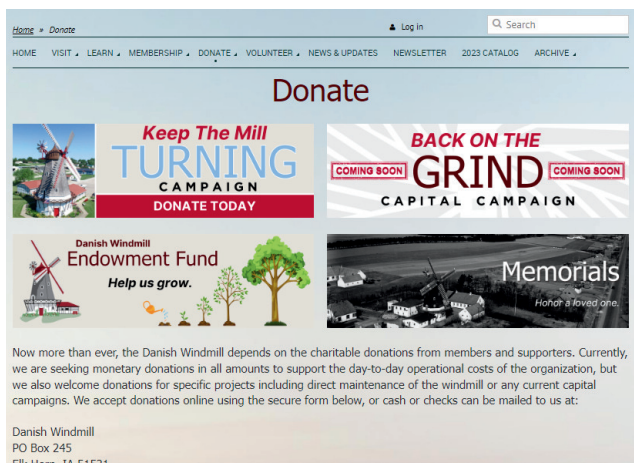
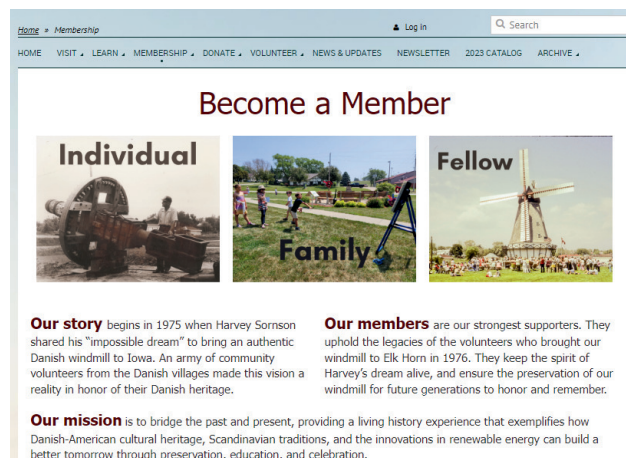
Australia
New Zealand

New Website: danishwindmill.org

Our new membership portal is now online. Visit danishwindmill.org to explore all of the exciting new features and content now offered on an all-inclusive digital platform. We will continue to build up this website over the coming year and we believe this website will be an invaluable resource towards growing our brand and outreach. Please continue to use **danishwindmill.com** for our webstore and other functions. For the purposes of an introduction, we've outlined some of our new features below.

Membership Management

Members can now manage everything involving their membership online including communication preferences, payments, and contact information. This is by no means required, and we encourage current members to continue supporting us in the way they are most comfortable. Still, this is a convenient platform that offers convenience, quickness, and comprehensive information to visitors that might be interested in joining our membership ranks in the future.

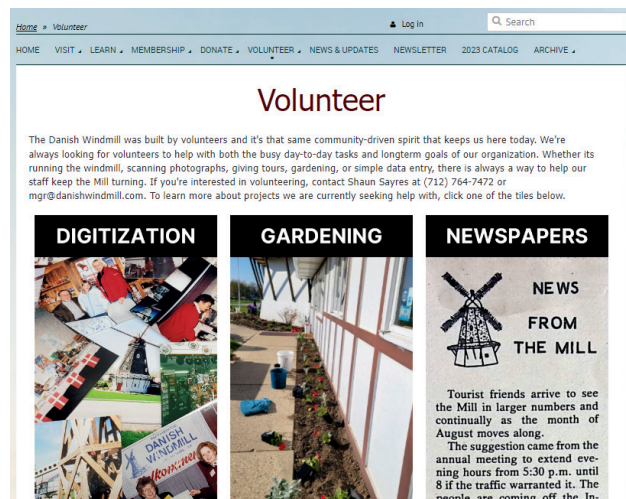


Donation Platform

This website will also now serve as our primary online fundraising platform. Members and guests alike can make fast, secure donations using our online donation form. For the first time as well, all of our major fundraising campaigns are displayed in one place, giving visitors the convenience and information they need for making decisions on how they can best support our organization. A link to donate to our campaigns via PayPal is also posted here.

Volunteer Opportunities

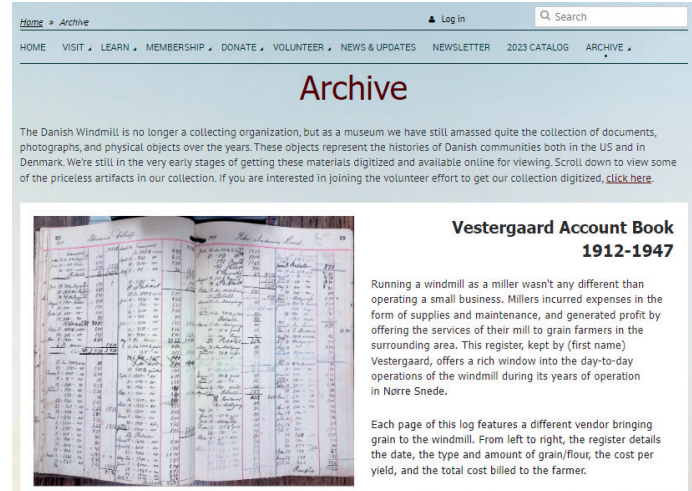
Something that you will hear a lot more about in 2024 are our opportunities for volunteers to engage with and further our mission. There is enormous potential to rebuild and strengthen our volunteer base, and by extension, our organization as a whole. We fully believe that the same volunteerism that brought us our windmill, is necessary to maintain it and ensure its preservation. We hope to spread this message in 2024 by encouraging anyone and everyone to consider the different ways for getting involved whether its digitization and data entry or more hands-on projects like giving tours.



Vestergaard Account Book

For our most dedicated followers and newcomers alike, we have some very exciting news to share. Our Vestergaard Account Book, belonging to the last professional miller of our windmill, has been completely digitized and is now accessible on our new website at danishwindmill.org/archive

Due to the high image resolution, this file is quite large and we don't currently have a way to view the file within our website, but a link is already available there to download the file for personal viewing and use.



The Danish Windmill is no longer a collecting organization, but as a museum we have still amassed quite the collection of documents, photographs, and physical objects over the years. These objects represent the histories of Danish communities both in the US and in Denmark. We're still in the very early stages of getting these materials digitized and available online for viewing. Scroll down to view some of the priceless artifacts in our collection. If you are interested in joining the volunteer effort to get our collection digitized, [click here](#).

Vestergaard Account Book 1912-1947

Running a windmill as a miller wasn't any different than operating a small business. Millers incurred expenses in the form of supplies and maintenance, and generated profit by offering the services of their mill to grain farmers in the surrounding area. This register, kept by (first name) Vestergaard, offers a rich window into the day-to-day operations of the windmill during its years of operation in Norre Snede.

Each page of this log features a different vendor bringing grain to the windmill. From left to right, the register details the date, the type and amount of grain/flour, the cost per yield, and the total cost billed to the farmer.

HELP US SAVE PAPER

To save paper (and postage), you can elect to receive *The Breeze* electronically. If you would like to switch to paperless, give us a call at (712) 764-7472 or email us at info@danishwindmill.com.

Are you a member?

Become a member today and receive direct copies of *The Breeze* by mail or email. Scan the QR code to learn more.

Family memberships now available!

Additional benefits include:

- Free tours of the windmill & vikinghjem
- 10% off in the gift shop and online
- Direct access to news, updates, and catalogs
- Access to our digital archive
- Pride of supporting a local museum



**Become a member today:
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