

Exploring Danish Parish Registers

For anyone setting out to research their Danish ancestry it is important having a basic knowledge of the process of Danish genealogical research procedures. Assuming you already know the specific place your ancestor was born in Denmark, the process is quite straight forward. However, since the records are kept at the parish level, you must, as a general rule, know the specific parish. The records were kept by the local parish priest, and after 1812, a copy was kept by his warden/clerk. We are going to check out the records.

Objective:

This is an introductory class to Danish parish registers. The objective is to help you understand what the parish registers contain, what information can be found in each of the record types, and how the records changed through time.

History of Danish records:

- 1573: Oldest parish register in Hjortkær, Åbenrå co.
- 1645: King Christian IV and the church book resolution
- 1683: Den Danske Lov
- 1812: Printed format and introduction of two copies of parish registers
- 1828: The child's last name ordinance
- 1849: Freedom of religion
- 1891: Formats standardized

Jurisdictions:

- Country
- County
- Herred
- Parish: Record keeping jurisdiction
- Village/Farm

Names:

Patronymics: -sen, -datter

- Jensen, Pedersen
- Jensdatter, Pedersdatter

Naming Pattern:

- Eldest son named for paternal grandfather
- Eldest daughter names for maternal grandmother
- In a man's second marriage, the first daughter will be named after the father's first wife

Transition period: 1870's

Jens Ibsen from Søndergaard had three children: Anne Jens, and Marie. Their last names could be:

- Anne Jensdatter
- Jens Søndergaard
- Marie Ibsen

Language and Handwriting:

- Gothic handwriting
- Danish, German, Latin
- Three additional letters: Æ (æ), Ø (ø), Å (å)—same as Aa (aa). They will be found at the end of the alphabet
- No standardized spelling
- Think phonetically!!

Records changed through times:

Looks of the entry:

- Narrative
- Columns
- Fill-ins

Information found in the entry:

Pre 1812: <u>No standard</u>; and the further back you go, the less information you get

Various record types:

- Birth/christening fødte og døbte
- Introductions Introduktioner/kirkegangs Koner
- Confirmation Konfirmationer
- Engagements/marriages *Trolovelser/vielser/copulationer*
- Death and burials Døde og begravede
- Moving records Tilgangsliste og Afgangsliste
- Absolutions offentlige afløste
- Name registers Almindelige Jævnførelses Register
- Vaccinations Vaccinationer

The Records:

Birth/christening:

During the 1800's and 1900's you will find two dates in the birth/christening record, the birth date and the christening date. As you search back into the 1700's and 1600's you will find one date, and that will be the christening date. The christening was the responsibility of the priest, so the date on which he performed the christening would be the date he was concerned about.

Introductions:

After giving birth the women were considered to be unclean, a tradition that goes back to early biblical times. They had to be re-introduced to the congregation before being allowed back into the church. This took place about six weeks after the baby was born. Because of this rule the mothers were rarely at their own children's christening. Mothers of illegitimate children were (as a general rule) introduced separately.

Confirmations:

Around the ages of 14-17 the youth had to be confirmed. They would meet with the parish priest and study the Lutheran catechism. This was made law ab. 1736. In order to marry, serve in the military, or hold a political office the parishioners had to show proof of confirmation.

Engagement/Marriage:

Going back in time an engagement was considered to be a legally binding contract. There had to be two sponsors/bondsmen which *could* be fathers or brothers, but did not have to be. Banns had to be read three consecutive Sundays before the wedding, to allow for any objections to the marriage taking place.

Death/Burial:

In searching the death/burial dates you will, in recent times, find two dates; the death date and the burial date. As you go back in time you will find <u>one</u> date, and that will be the burial date. Criminals and suicides (and at times un-christened babies) were not allowed to be buried in "sacred" ground, and had to be buried outside the cemetery boundaries.

Moving in and out:

The moving records can usually be found between 1812-late 1800's. As people wanted to move out of the parish they had to have permission (from the landowner- in earlier times) and a certificate from the parish priest in order to do so.

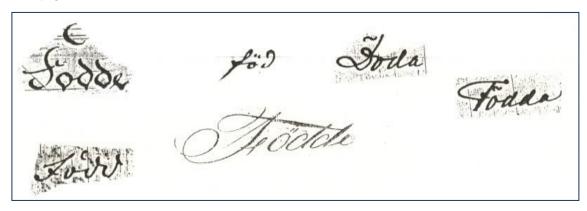
Absolutions:

When parishioners had committed a "sin", they had to be pardoned by the church. They had to stand before the congregation and confess their sin (s). The most common sins were adultery, having illegitimate children, theft, not partaking of the communion, fighting, and drunkenness.

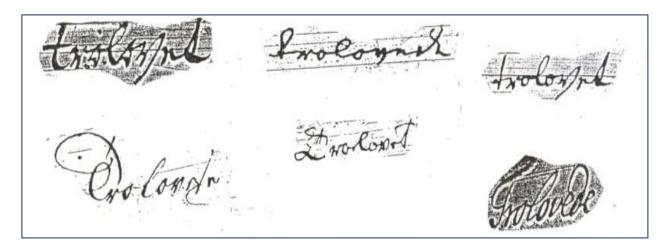
Gothic script:

In order to read the Old Danish (and Norwegian and Swedish) parish records you need a basic understanding of the Gothic handwriting. Here are a few examples of the most common words found in the parish registers, the variations of spelling, and handwriting:

Births:



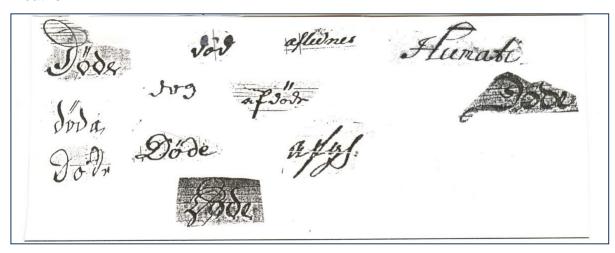
Engagements:



Marriages:



Deaths:



To further your learning:

There are places online where you can find examples and help. FamilySearch Wiki:

www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Denmark_Genealogy www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Danish_Research_Websites www.sa.dk www.ddd.dda.dk

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