

TOP KAREN'S PRIS



The story of
"Top Karen's Pris"
"Top Karen"
and "Tophuset"




The
REBILD
NATIONAL • PARK
SOCIETY, INC.
An Illinois Non Profit Corporation

Edited by:
Helle Agerbak Lyngaa
og Peter Ørum
Design by ReklameBureauet



Karen “*Top Karen*” Marie Andersen

born Nielsen

Danish “*traktørkone*” in “*Tophuset*” in Rebild

Born wednesday the 23. of august 1843 in Rebild

Died saturday the 28. of december 1929 in Rebild



“Tophuset” is known of anyone who has been in Rebild. It was the region’s first tea garden licensed for the serving of boiling water. “Top Karen” was an old stalwart woman, who ran the little oasis for visitors and hikers in Rebild. Everybody loved Karen in “Tophuset”. Top Karen ran it from 1900 until her death in 1929, when she was 86 years. “Sodavand, Øl, og Kaffe, det kan Karen skaffe!” - was written on a sign at the entrance and she lived up to taht. When The Rebild Society in 1912 began to celebrate the American Independence Day on July 4th, this house was the only one in the hills. With the annual event for Danish-Americans her business increased. She achieved great popularity - especially in connection with King Christian X’s visit. In the old low-ceilinged rooms the walls tell the history like a gallery of photos and documents depicting the experiences of people through times. Today, “Tophuset” again is operated as a tea garden by Top Karens relatives. Restore has been done by collaboration with The Rebild National Society.



The story of Top Karen and “TopHuset”

Rebild National Park Society and its history have had a significant impact on these parts of the country, especially on the Rebild Municipality. Throughout history especially one name mentioned in connection with Rebild has been significant, the name of Top Karen.

Top Karen and her husband Top Jens were living under strained circumstances up until the time where Rebild National Park was established in 1912. At the same time as the first national park of Denmark was established in Rebild, tourism came to town, an industry that Top Karen rapidly turned into a business.

Originally she only sold boiled water to the coffee beans the tourist brought themselves. After a short while, however, she quickly expanded her “enterprise”, and in time she was mentioned - with respect - as a great local personality. She met both King Christian X and Queen Alexandrine of Denmark and also became a person known in USA.

When a person has to be honored for doing something special for The Rebild National Park Society no better name can be given to the award then the Top Karen prize. Hopefully the recipients, both now, in the past, and in the future, will be honored.

Karen Marie Andersen or Top Karen, as she was affectionately called, was born in 1843 and died in 1929 at the age of 86. She was a small, determined and hard-working farmer’s wife who with her initiative has left a significant mark on the area.

Long before a group of Danish-Americans purchased a part of “Rebild Bakker” and donated the magnificent moor area to the Danish state, Top Karen and her husband Top Jens were allocated a lot on the top of the sandy heath. In 1882 they build a small cottage with thatched roof and painted it yellow.

With the opening of the main railway between Randers and Aalborg in 1869, the Rold Forest and “Rebild Bakker” rapidly became a known destination. The number of guests increased after the first Danish-American festivities in “Rebild Bakker” in 1912. The event received a lot of publicity in the local papers at the time.

The inrush of guest, coming to take a walk and enjoy their picnic, was monitored by Top Karen from “Tophuset” (The Top House). She had the idea to sell boiling water to the visitors, so they could make themselves a hot cup of coffee or tea.

Later on Top Karen got a license to run a tea room in the garden of Top-Huset where they build small pavilions with tables and benches, serving coffee, homemade cakes and openface sandwiches (smørrebrød). Top Karen even got her own slogan: *”Sodavand, øl og kaffe, det kan Karen skaffe”*, (*softdrinks, beer and coffee, Karen can get you*), which was painted by a travelling artist on a board placed as an entrance portal to “Tophuset”.

Continued on page 5



Henrik Bugge Mortensen

"Saa'n nøj gratværk..."



- historien om Top-Karen
og Tophuset i Rebild Bakker



The book
"Såå'n nøj gratværk ..."
- The story of Top Karen
and "Tophuset" in
"Rebild Bakker".
Buy it in the
Lock Cabin museum



Top Karen
in the finest
of garments

Top Karen and
Top Jens in
front of
"Tophuset"

When King Christian X and Queen Alexandrine came to the Rebild festivities, they also came to “TopHuset” to have their coffee. Having the King as a guest, however, didn’t fluster Top Karen. Without any hesitation she used the informal “du” (you) instead of His Majesty, causing quite a stir, to which Top Karen replied “When I can address The Lord “you” in my evening prayers, I can call the King the same”.

For many Danish-Americans visiting their old homeland after many years in America, the Tophus was a symbol of the many small poor cottages, that hundreds of thousands emigrated from in the period between 1850 and the beginning of WW1. Lots of them came into Top-Huset for a cup of coffee, having Top Karen eagerly listening to their tales from across the Atlantic .

The place is currently a memorial, kept in the manner of Jens and Karen, with the entrance portal “*Sodavand, øl og kaffe, det kan Karen skaffe*“ outside. And the house is now run again also as eatery and even of Top Karens great-grandson and his wife.

Visit: www.topkaren.dk

On the right hand side, between “Hyltgaardsminde” and “TopHuset”, there is a sculpturepark “Friendship Lawn” with busts of amongst others Victor Borge and Max Henius and a sculpture of an emigrant family. On the left the memorial grove for the leader of the resistance movement Jens Toldstrup and for the allied flyers who died why they dropped weapons and supplies to the Danish Resistance in WW2 1943-1945.

The Rebild National Society Picnic

The surroundings in Rebild is perfect for a picnic, and therefore it was natural that in connection with the Rebild celebration there also was a picnic. The Picnic started in 1912, but why and when it stopped, we are not shure. After a break in these Picnics they were resumed in 1997, when there was again arranged a picnic in Rebild on 2. July. This was before the ”Tophuset” again became an eatery. Therefore the picnic was held on the lawn by ”Hyltgaardsminde”, where the 80 participants attended. But the weather was not cooperating, and the has to hastily move to the big tent. Here the lunch was enjoyed with much ”hygge”, singing and folk dancing. Since then, the 2. July the Picnic has been held at Top Karens house and garden for happy danes and americans. Here the picnic lunch is served by Top Karens great-grandson, Erik Eriksen and his wife Vivian. This includes Danish akvavites, beer and entertainment and singing and the announcement of this year’s Top Karen’s prize.

In 2002, the decision on the introduction of Top Karen’s Prize decided and this is 2003 annually given to worthy recipients from both America and Denmark.



Erik - Top Karen's great-grandson:

Dear Friends!

Welcome to Rebild - and not the least to Top Karens House - Top Karen was my great-grandmother.

Today I run - definitely in the Top Karen spirit - a small tea garden, where you can get, not just hot water for coffee, but actually the coffee.

History of Top Karen . . . (See page 3)

The history of the Tophus . . . (See pages 3 and 4)

So I am now turning this over to the Rebild Society President, who will talk about Top Karens Pris.

The President of The Rebild Society:

In 2002, at The Rebild Society 90th anniversary, a decision by the Rebild National Park Society and the former Skoerping Municipality, to institute the "Top Karens Pris".

The prize will be awarded each year on July 2nd at the picnic.

In the year 1905 in Racine in America, there was a small group of Danish-Americans gathered to start an association or group which could be the link between Denmark and Danish-born Americans and their descendants. It was here the idea first came up to buy a piece of land - in the country that could not feed them and the generation before.

Only seven years later the grand idea, became a reality. The most remarkable thing about the meeting was that Ivar Krirkegaard also proposed to hold an annual folk festival in Denmark.

Max Henius was not present in Racine in 1905, but he had gathered about 20 people for the first outdoor picnic, held in July 1911 - here in Rebild.

The first 4th of July celebration was held the following year in 1912. At that time Top Karen and Top Jens lived here. Top Karen later became a celebrity whose life was closely associated with the National Park of Rebild. "Top Karens Pris" was given the first time in 2003.

I now turn over to the mayor of Rebild.

The Mayor of Rebild Municipality:

As the president just told us, the Skoerping Municipality, now Rebild Municipality - in association with The Rebild National Society - instituted the "TOP KARENS PRIS".

The Rebild National Park Society and its history has been very important to the whole Rebild area and thus Rebild Municipality. In the story, especially a name that is associated with Rebild has been significant - namely Top Karen.

Top Karen and her husband Top Jens lived in very modest circumstances until Rebild National Park was established in 1912. While Rebild was Denmark's first National Park, it brought also a significant tourism to the area - a tourism which Top Karen quickly as a business in.

She started by selling boiled water for the coffee beans, which the tourists brought with them. She quickly increased its "Geschaeft" and was with great respect a very mentioned personality in these parts. She greeted the king and queen and was also known in the United States.

So when today we must honor someone who has done something special for The Rebild National Park Society, then such a prize does not have a better name than "TOP KARENS PRIS" and we hope that it will be of great honor for those who get the prize today and in the future receive it.

Conditions for receiving “TOP KARENS PRIS” the Secretary General will now tell you about.

I hereby turn over to the Secretary General of The Rebild National Society.

The Rebild Society Secretary General:

The conditions for being nominated to Top Karens Award is:

1. The candidate must have been a valid member of Rebild National Park Society Inc.
2. The candidate cannot have had any grievances with the Rebild National Park Society Inc.
3. The candidate should have a bright and open mind.
4. The candidate must care for the Rebild spirit and have a thorough knowledge of the Rebild National Park Society Inc.
5. The candidate must have basic knowledge of USA and Denmark.
6. The candidate must be nominated by a member of the Rebild National Park Society Inc.

This year’s recipient is nominated by more people.

I will now ask the President, who is chairman of the “Top Karens price-committee”, come up here and tell you about the setting and reveal who should receive the award this year.

The President of The Rebild Society:

This year’s recipient of the TOP KARENSs PRIZE is decided by several members of The Society. He/she fully lives up to the 6 formal requirements that our Secretary-General has just undergone.

Now I guess I can no longer hide the fact that this year’s recipient of
“TOP KARENS PRIS” 2019:

“NAME ON THE LEGAL WINNER”

Details of the award winner . . .

. . . So that X is a worthy recipient of the “Top Karens Pris”.



Recipients of "Top Karens Pris"

"Top Karens Pris" was initiated by The Rebild Society in cooperation with the municipality of Skørping (now Rebild) in connection with the Rebild Society's 90th anniversary in 2002. The prize is given as an honor to a Danish-American (until 2011, where it for the first time was given to a dane), who has contributed significantly within the Danis-American community in the US, in general - and in behalf of the Rebild Society, in particular.

2003

Palle
Vraast-Thomsen
San Fransisco
Chapter
San Fransisco, USA



2009

Sune Frederiksen
Kentucky Chapter
Berea, USA



2015

Ketty Bisgaard
Chapter Nord
Hjallerup, Denmark



2004

Grethe Jensen
Southern
California Chapter
Los Angeles, USA



2010

Ester Fesler
Upper
Midwest Chapter
Minneapolis, USA



2016

Jørgen Nøhr
Chapter Nord
Attrup, Denmark



2005

Tom Paulsen
Seattle Chapter
Seattle, USA



2011

Svend Erik Pedersen
Chapter East
Copenhagen
Denmark



2017

Jørgen Korsgaard
Andersen
Californien Chapter
?, USA



2006

Carl Christian
Wilhelm
Delaware
Valley Chapter
New Jersey, USA



2012

Pia Ringheim
Jensen
Utah Chapter
Salt Lake City, USA



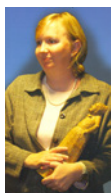
2018

Tove Hanibald
Chapter Nord
Vodskov, Denmark



2007

Linda Steffensen
Chicago
Midwest Chapter
Chicago, USA



2013

Karl K. Nielsen
Chapter Midt-Vest
Varde, Denmark



2019

Ed Bladt
Delaware Valley
Chapter
Lumberton , USA



2008

Carlo Christensen
Southern
California Chapter
Los Angeles, USA



2014

Peter Ørum
Chicago
Midwest Chapter
Chicago, USA



2020

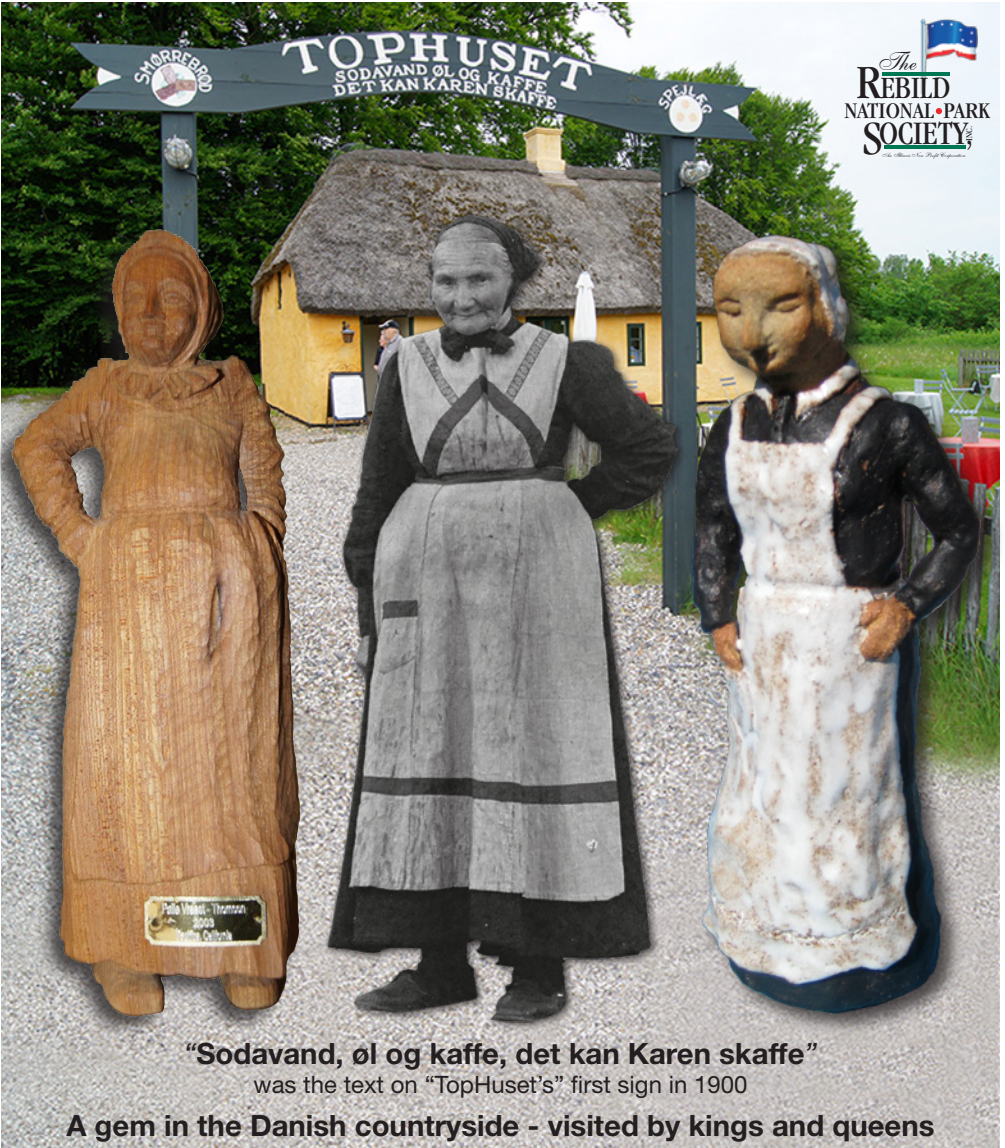
No appointment

*Congratulations to all
winners
of the "Top Karens Pris"
They have all done much
to promote the
Danish-American relations*

TOP KAREN'S PRIS



2003 to 2020



“Sodavand, øl og kaffe, det kan Karen skaffe”

was the text on “TopHuset’s” first sign in 1900

A gem in the Danish countryside - visited by kings and queens