

The Old Thorning School

In “Viborg Amt Yearbook 1938,” pharmacist A. Raunholdt (Nr. Nebel) gave a depiction of school conditions in Thorning around 1745:

During King Kristian VI’s reign (1730-47), the value of the enlightenment of the common people was recognized, and many reforms were undertaken within the school system. On January 23, 1739 a fairly comprehensive regulation was issued for the school districts in Denmark and Norway. It appointed church bishops and county stewards to supervise the creation of common schools where conditions allowed, so that even the poorest children could get an education. In most cases, the landlords had to pay the costs of school activities, and many of them objected to these burdens, so even though the squires were charged in April 1740 with deciding “where and how many” schools to build, the work of creating schools in the country progressed very slowly.

However, there were some landlords who had a deeper understanding of the matter. Janus Fridenreich, who owned “Palstrup” and “Kjærsholm”, was one of them. On July 20, 1745 he issued a charter containing provisions for how the schools should be organized on his estate.

These original school charters were discovered in a thorough search of various papers in the attic of the old school building in Thorning. A portion of them is so damaged as to be unreadable. Fundamentally they state that there will be two schools in the parish, one in Thorning and the other in Ungstrup (Biskole).

Janus Fridenreich then left the matter to the residents of Thorning and Ungstrup. The property owner in Thorning received payment of 6 tdr. rye and 3 tdr. barley, and 13 marks and 12 shillings paid in advance, to which 16 rigsdaler (an old Danish coin) was to be added on each high festival. Moreover, he would receive “free fire from the town’s heat”, a cheese on St. Hans Day and 10 eggs on easter. In addition, he was entitled to hay and straw for winter fodder of one cow, and 6 sheep along with summer grazing together with the “Thorning town chiefs”.

The school charter contained, among other things, School Instructions, in which it specified how the teaching would take place. The teacher was to inspect the students each morning to ensure they were clean, had their nails clipped and had clean clothes, and if this was not the case, the parents were to be notified. Girls and boys sat separately

and sang a morning hymn, after which one of the older children would alternately read a morning prayer, and it finished with a verse and a hymn. The teacher would watch carefully that the children conducted the song and prayer in an “Orderly and Genuine Manner.”

The Biskole in Ungstrup consisted of a seven-room house, to which three rooms had been added that contained the school rooms. These three rooms were to be maintained by the owner of Kjærsholm, but the owner himself would maintain the residence portion of the house.

There were many different teachers in the Old Thorning School. One of them was Søren Sørensen Kirkegård, who was the teacher from 1822-1861. He was born in Elsborg on October 12, 1798 and married around 1822 to Christine Christensdatter Raun, who was born in Sjørlev on March 26, 1800. She was the sister of Niels Christian Raun, who built “Ravnsborg.” Søren S. Kirkegård was the owner of “Overkjærsholm,” from which the land for “Ravnsborg” was subdivided in 1838.

“Kirkely” - Thorning’s Old School, matr.nr.2c

In A Raunholt’s book, “Thorning Sogn,” the following description of Thorning’s old school is given:

It was erected in 1745 and consisted of three buildings, namely the Main House, Barn and Sod House. The first was constructed of 9 half-timber sections, and at its northern end was a sheep barn of 5 half-timbers. At the southern end were the school rooms, 3 half-timbers. On the main house’s west side was an outbuilding of 2 half-timbers, and on the east side out by the yard, where the entrance was, another outbuilding of 1 half-timber. The barn was built with 9 half-timber sections, the sod house of 4.

The owner’s residence stood next to the churchyard, and at the northern end of the main house, along the graveyard’s southern side, was a small cabbage-patch, 45-1/2 cubits long, 28-1/2 cubits wide at the east end and 14 cubits wide at the west. Between the pond and the main house there was another garden, 45-1/2 cubits long and 10 cubits wide.

The schoolroom inventory consisted of: a wood stove, a longboard made of fir, 3 fir benches, and a shelf. For teaching materials there were: a Bible, “Bibelske Kjerne,” “Hyben’s Bible Stories,” six New Testaments, six “Pontoppidans Explanations,” six “Rombachs: The Greater Goal,” six Lutheran Catechisms, six ABC books, two “Rombachs Handbooks,” and an Anatomy Catechism. Reading and writing instruction took place with the help of sandboxes in which the children wrote with sticks. At the end of the 18th Century the goose feather quill came into use. The clerk restricted these to the oldest students, who practised the art of writing according to regulation on thick pieces of paper.

The land that belonged to the school lay between the parsonage and “Kauergård,” which bought it in the 1920’s. In 1918 the straw roof was replaced with cement roof tiles, and in the years up until 1980 there were many modernisations both outside and in, including new floors and windows, and Thorning’s Old School appears today as a lovely house in a beautiful setting.

Frederik Bertelsen (b. 1849) bought the house in 1905, and in 1932 bequeathed it to his son Bertel and his daughter Sine, who in 1936 sold her portion to Bertel. In 1963 Edith Bertelsen bought the house and sold it in 1969 to Frederik Bertelsen (b. 1906).