

# BRÆNDEKILDE – CULTURAL VILLAGE

## RASMUS RASK – LINGUIST



An account of the sepulchre 1844/2016.

Rasmus Rask is considered one of Denmark's most eminent linguists and scholars.

### Early life

Rasmus Rask was born 22 November 1787, the 3<sup>rd</sup> child to a shoemaker and his second wife.

A monument in memory of Rask was erected, after his childhood home had been demolished:



Rasmus Rask skolen

However, a painting from 1880 by the painter H.A. Brendekilde depicts his childhood home.

### Primary school and education

Rask was homeschooled, his father not being on friendly terms with the village teacher and clergyman.

He learned to read and write from the Bible and history books.

He became fluent in German, a language the father had been taught when a soldier.

From 1801-1805, Rask completed his upper secondary school at Odense Cathedral School. Here he became familiar with Greek and Latin.

His first notes on the vernacular languages of farmers from Funen

and Icelandic tribes can be traced back to this period.

From 1805-1807, Rask became an assistant tutor at Odense Cathedral School.

In 1807, Rask was admitted to the University of Copenhagen.

### Academic achievements

In 1811, Rask published his work *A Survey of the Icelandic or Old Norse Languages*.

From 1813-1815, when Rask visited Iceland, he wrote the book *Investigations on the Origin of the Old Norse or Icelandic Languages*. During these years, Rask laid the theoretical foundation for his comparative approach to languages.

From 1818 to 1823, Rask travelled extensively across Sweden, Finland, Russia, Iran and India, learning Indian as well as Arabic languages en route. His travelling took a heavy toll on his health, however, and Rask was ill on his return to Copenhagen.

Over an 8-year-span, from 1823-1831, Rask published works on:  
- the Danish language (among other things he suggested a

spelling alteration in Danish with *aa* to be substituted with *å*);  
- the Italian, Spanish, Lappish, and English languages.

Rasmus Rask died on November 14 1832, and was buried on the Copenhagen Assistens Cemetery.

A monument in memory of Rasmus Rask can be seen on Dante's Square in Copenhagen.

A commemorative plaque to celebrate the linguist has been installed on the walls of Odense City Hall.

