

## THE COMING OF THE NORWEGIANS TO IOWA

NORWEGIANS IN THE UNITED STATES BEFORE 1825. THE SLOOP  
PARTY AND THE ROCHESTER SETTLEMENT. OTHER SET-  
TLEMENTS PRIOR TO THE FOUNDING OF THE FIRST  
NORWEGIAN COLONY IN IOWA IN 1840.  
THE COURSE OF MIGRATION TO IOWA.

Our data regarding Norwegian emigration to America prior to 1825 are very fragmentary; but it is possible to trace that emigration as far back as 1624.<sup>1</sup> In that year a small colony of Norwegians was established in New Jersey on the site of the present city of Bergen.<sup>2</sup> While it is not known that the names of any of these first colonists have come down to us, we do have the name of one Norwegian who visited the American coast on a voyage of exploration in the year 1619, that is, the year before the landing of the Mayflower. In the early part of 1619 King Christian IV of Denmark fitted out two ships for the purpose of finding a northwest passage to Asia. The names of the ships were Eenhjørningen and Lampreren, and the commander was a Norwegian, Jens Munk, born at Barby, Norway, in 1579. With sixty-six men Jens Munk sailed from Copenhagen, May 9, 1619. During the autumn of that year and the early part of the following year he explored Hudson Bay and took possession of the surrounding country in the name of

<sup>1</sup> The Vinland voyages in the 11th-14th centuries do not come within the scope of this article.

<sup>2</sup> It seems that this city was so named by the colonists after the city of Bergen, Norway.



King Christian, calling it Nova Dania. The expedition was, however, a failure, and all but three of the party perished from disease and exposure to cold in the winter of 1620. The three survivors, among whom was the commander, Jens Munk, returned to Norway in September, 1620.<sup>1</sup>

In the early days of the New Netherlands colony, Norwegians sometimes came across in Dutch ships and settled among the Dutch. The names of at least two such have been preserved in the Dutch colonial records. They are Hans Hansen and Claes (Claus?) Carstensen. The former emigrated in a Dutch ship in 1633 and joined the Dutch colony in New Amsterdam. His name appears in the colonial records variously as Hans Noorman, Hans Hansen de Noorman, Hans Bergen, Hans Hansen von Bergen, and Hans Hansen von Bergen in Norwegen. Hans Bergen became the ancestor of a large American family by that name.<sup>2</sup>

About the year 1700 there were a number of families of Norwegian or Danish descent<sup>3</sup> living in New York. In 1704 a stone church was erected by them on the corner of Broadway and Rector streets. The property was later sold to Trinity Church, the present churchyard occupying the site of the original church.<sup>4</sup> Mr. R. B. Anderson says that these people were probably Norwegians and not Danes, for those of their descendants with whom he has spoken have all claimed Norwegian descent. The pastor who ministered to the spiritual wants of this first Scandinavian Luth-

<sup>1</sup> Anderson's *First Chapter of Norwegian Immigration*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Bergen Family*, by Teunis Bergen.

<sup>3</sup> More probably both Norwegian and Danish.

<sup>4</sup> Anderson, citing Rev. R. Anderson, who has given this subject much study. See *First Chapter of Norwegian Immigration*, p. 22.



eran congregation in America was a Dane by the name of Rasmus Jensen Aarhus. He died on February 20, 1720.

In 1740 Norwegian Moravians took part in the founding of a Moravian colony at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and in 1747 of one at Bethabara, North Carolina.<sup>1</sup> At Bethlehem these Norwegian (and Swedish and Danish) Moravians came in contact with their kinsmen, the Swedish Lutherans of Delaware and adjoining parts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The Swedes on the Delaware had lost their independence in 1656. New Sweden as a political state existed but sixteen years. Ecclesiastically, however, the Lutherans of New Sweden remained subject to the state church at home for one hundred and fifty years more, and linguistically the colony was Swedish nearly as long. In the church records of this colony there appear not a few Norwegian names, particularly in the later period. There can be little doubt that Norwegians in some considerable numbers came to America and joined the Delaware Swedes in the eighteenth century. Gothenburg, which lies not far distant from the province of Smaalenene, was at the time and has continued to be the regular Swedish sailing port for American-bound ships. Among the founders of the Bethabara colony appears the name of Dr. John M. Calberlane,<sup>2</sup> from Trondhjem, Norway, who came to New York in 1753.

The names of several Norwegians are recorded who served in the War of the Revolution. Under John Paul Jones there served Thomas Johnson, from Mandal, Norway.<sup>3</sup> An-

<sup>1</sup> See *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for January, 1905, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> See *Decorah-Posten* for September 9, 1904, p. 5. The name was originally Hans Martin Kalberlahn.

<sup>3</sup> See account of Thomas Johnson in the *New England Historical Register*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 18-21.



other Norwegian by the name of Lewis Brown (Lars Brun?) also served under John Paul Jones. At a little later date some other names also appear, but the ones given are the earliest of which we have any record. We shall now pass on to the "Sloopers" of 1825, whose sailing inaugurated the emigration movement from Norway in the nineteenth century.

We have already mentioned the Stavanger emigrants of 1825 and noted some of the circumstances that seem to have led to the departure of the sloop party in that year.<sup>1</sup> The director of the expedition and the chief owner of the boat was Lars Larsen i Jeilane; and the captain was Lars Olsen. The company consisted of fifty-two persons, all but one being natives of Stavanger and vicinity, the one exception being the mate, Erikson, who came from Bergen. On the 4th of July, 1825, the party of emigrants set sail from Stavanger in the sloop "Restaurationen," a boat of only forty-five tons capacity. After a perilous voyage of fourteen weeks they landed in New York, October 9th.<sup>2</sup> In New York the emi-

<sup>1</sup> *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for January 1905, pp. 68-69.

<sup>2</sup> An account of the voyage, which was, it seems, a rather adventurous one, was given by the New York papers at the time, and may be found in *Billed-Magazin* from which it has been reprinted in other works.

The arrival of this first party of Norwegian immigrants, and in so small a boat, created nothing less than a sensation at the time, as we may infer from the wide attention the event received in the eastern press. One of these notices I take the liberty of copying from Anderson's *First Chapter*, pp. 70-71. It is one which appeared in the *New York Daily Advertiser* for October 12, 1825, under the headlines of *A Novel Sight*:—

"A vessel has arrived at this port with emigrants from Norway. The vessel is very small, measuring as we understand only about 360 Norwegian lasts or forty-five American tons, and brought forty-six [should be fifty-two] passengers, male and female, all bound to Ontario County [should be Orleans County on the Ontario], where an agent who came over some time ago purchased a tract of land. The appearance of such a party of strangers, coming from so distant a country and in a vessel of a size apparently ill calculated for a voyage across the Atlantic, could not but excite an unusual degree of interest. They have had a voyage



grants met Mr. Joseph Fellows, a Quaker from whom they purchased land in Orleans County, New York. It seems to have been upon the suggestion of Mr. Fellows that they were induced to settle here, although it is possible that the land had already been selected for them by Kleng Peerson, a Quaker who had left Stavanger in 1821 and who was in New York at the time. The price to be paid for the land was \$5 an acre, each head of a family and adult person purchasing forty acres.<sup>1</sup> The immigrants not being able to pay for the land, Mr. Fellows agreed to let them redeem it in ten annual installments.<sup>2</sup> For the further history of the colony, with which we are here not so much concerned, the reader is referred to Anderson's *First Chapter of Norwegian Immigration*.<sup>3</sup> The colony was in many respects unfortunate, it did not prosper and has never played any important part as a colony in Norwegian-American history. But a few years later a daughter colony was established in La Salle County, Illinois, which became the first extensive

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of fourteen weeks and are all in good health and spirits. An enterprise like this argues a good deal of boldness in the master of the vessel as well as an adventurous spirit in the passengers, most of whom belong to families in the vicinity of a little town at the southwestern extremity of Norway, near Cape Stavanger. Those who came from the farms are dressed in coarse cloths of domestic manufacture, of a fashion different from the American, but those who inhabited the town wear calicos, gingham and gay shawls, imported we presume from England. The vessel is built on the model common to fishing boats on that coast, with a single mast and top-sail, sloop-rigged. She passed through the English channel and as far south as Madeira, where she stopped three or four days and then steered directly for New York, where she arrived with the addition of one passenger born on the way. It is the captain's intention to remain in this country, to sell his vessel and prepare himself to navigate our waters by entering the American Merchant Marine Service and to learn the language."

<sup>1</sup> *Scandinavia*, Vol. I, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson's *First Chapter of Norwegian Immigration*, p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> Or to Knud Langeland's *Nordmændene i Amerika* (published by John Anderson & Co., Chicago, 1889), pp. 10-19.



Norwegian settlement in the Northwest and a central point from which numerous other Norwegian settlements in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa were formed.

Very few Norwegians immigrated during the following ten years. Those who came generally located in Orleans County, but rarely remained there permanently. The northwestern States were then just beginning to be opened up to settlers. At this time the trend of migration from the eastern States was directed particularly to Illinois. Good government land could be had here for \$1.25 an acre. The very heavily wooded land that the Norwegian immigrants in Orleans County had purchased proved very difficult of improvement; and many began to think of moving to a more favorable locality. In 1833 Kleng Peerson, who seems to have lived in Kendall at this time, made a journey to the West, evidently for the purpose of finding a suitable location. He selected La Salle County, Illinois, returning in the same year to Kendall, New York. The next year several of the sloopers removed to La Salle County and settled in Mission, Rutland, and Miller townships. The names of these first Norwegian settlers in the Northwest are: Jakob Anderson Slogvig, Knud Anderson Slogvig, Gudmund Haugaas, Endre Dahl, and Thorsten Olsen Bjaaland.

In 1835 Daniel Rossadal and family, Nels Nelson Hersdal and family, and Kari Hauge, widow of Cornelius Nelson with a family of seven children, moved to La Salle County. The sloop, Thomas Madland, had died in 1826, and in 1835 his widow and family of seven moved to Illinois. George Johnson also removed in 1835. Nels Thompson with wife and four children seems to have settled in La



Salle County in 1834. In 1831 Gjert Hovland had come from Hardanger, Norway, and settled in Orleans County, New York. In 1835 he sold his land and removed to La Salle County, Illinois. Many of these purchased land in La Salle County in June, 1835, entry of which appears in the county records for that year. Others came from Kendall to La Salle County and settled in 1836.<sup>1</sup> Before 1836 there seems to have been a colony of about thirty Norwegians settled principally in Mission and Rutland townships, La Salle County, Illinois, all of whom had come from Kendall, Orleans County, New York, in 1834-35. Thus was formed the nucleus of what grew to be the most prosperous rural community in Illinois, and which at present extends into the neighboring counties of Lee, De Kalb, Kendall, and Grundy.

In 1836 the colony received important accessions from southwestern Norway. The chief promoter of the immigration of that year was Knud Slogvig, who had come in the sloop in 1825, and who, we have seen, settled in La Salle County in 1834. In 1835 he returned to Skjold, Norway, and there married a sister of Ole O. Hetletvedt, a slooper whom we find as one of the early pioneers of La Salle County. While there people came to talk with him about America from all parts of southwestern Norway; and a large number in and about Stavanger decided to emigrate. Slogvig's return may be said to have started the "America-fever" in Norway, though it took some years before it reached the central and the eastern parts of the country. Slogvig intended to return to America in 1836, and a large

<sup>1</sup>Among them was Gudmund Sandsberg, who had emigrated from Norway in 1829.—See *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for January, 1905, p. 64.



party was preparing to emigrate with him. In the spring of that year the two brigs, *Norden*<sup>1</sup> and *Den Norske Klippe*,<sup>2</sup> were fitted out from Stavanger. The former sailed on the first Wednesday after Pentecost, arriving in New York, July 12, 1836. The latter sailed a few weeks later. They carried altogether two hundred emigrants, most of whom went direct to La Salle County, Illinois. These were followed in the next year by one ship, *Enigheden*,<sup>3</sup> commanded by Captain Jensen, from Egersund and Stavanger, carrying ninety-three passengers. The larger number of these also went to La Salle County.

By this time we find the desire to emigrate taking definite form in the districts directly east and north of Stavanger as far as Bergen. About the same time that the *Enigheden* left Stavanger in the spring of 1837, the ship *Ægir*,<sup>4</sup> commanded by Captain Behrens, sailed from Bergen, carrying eighty-four passengers to New York. The beginning of the emigration from western Norway, or more particularly from South Bergenhus Province, seems to be due chiefly to N. P. Langeland, a school-teacher from Samnanger (a little east of Bergen) and one of the passengers in the *Ægir*. He settled in Lapeer County, Michigan, and seems to have been the first Norwegian to locate in that State. He seems to have been one of the many who traveled long distances to talk with Knud Slogvig during his visit at home in Skjold in 1835. The passengers on the *Enigheden* went for the most

<sup>1</sup> The North.

<sup>2</sup> The Norwegian Rock. The majority of the passengers on these two ships were from Hardanger.

<sup>3</sup> Unity.

<sup>4</sup> The name of the old Norse sea-god.



part to the Fox River settlement, as the settlement in La Salle County came to be known. Nearly all early emigrants from Stavanger and vicinity went to La Salle County. Those in the *Ægir* seem also to have intended to settle in the same locality, but in Chicago were advised by two Americans not to go there. They were also partly influenced by Norwegian immigrants who were dissatisfied in La Salle County, and who recommended Iroquois County as a desirable location for a new settlement. To this place about fifty of the passengers on the *Ægir* went, settling about seventy-five miles south of Chicago at a place called Beaver Creek. This is, then, the third Norwegian settlement. Besides the one hundred and seventy-seven immigrants who came to America from Stavanger and Bergen in 1837, there was a considerable number who embarked from Gothenburg, Sweden. These came mostly from Numedal and Tellemarken in the south central part of Norway.

Among the emigrants of 1837 we must mention particularly four: the brothers Ole and Ansten Nattestad from Numedal, Ole Rynning and Hans Barlien from the province of Trondhjem. Ole Rynning wrote a book which perhaps had more influence than any other one thing in promoting emigration from the province of south central Norway.<sup>1</sup> Ansten Nattestad may be regarded as the father of the emigration movement from Numedal, Norway, from which some of the most successful Norwegian settlements in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa were later recruited. His brother, Ole Nattestad, became the founder of one of these settlements, that of Jefferson Prairie, in Rock County, Wis-

<sup>1</sup> See *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for January, 1905, p. 72 and note.



consin (also extending into Illinois); while Hans Barlien became the founder of the first Norwegian settlement in Iowa at Sugar Creek, Lee County.<sup>1</sup>

The first city colony in the West was that in Chicago, which dates back to 1836. The earliest Norwegian settlers seem to be Nils Røthe and his wife Thorbjør, from Voss. They are also the first emigrants from that district in Norway. In the fall of 1836 Halstein Torrison from Fjeldberg,<sup>2</sup> County of Stavanger, and Johan Larsen settled there. In 1839 some emigrants from Numedal and Voss, Norway, located in Chicago. In 1844 Rev. J. W. C. Dietrichsen writes in his *Travels*<sup>3</sup> (page 89) that on a missionary visit to Chicago in that year he found a considerable number of Norwegians, who for the most part were located only temporarily, intending later to go to the settlements in Illinois or Wisconsin. There were, he says, about one hundred Norwegians permanently settled in Chicago. This was in 1844. In 1860 there were in Chicago 1,313 Norwegians; in 1880, 9,783; and in 1900, 22,011.

In 1837 Kleng Peerson, Jakob and Knud Slogvig, Anders Askeland, Andrew Simonsen, and about ten others left the Fox River settlement, went to Missouri, and founded a small settlement in Shelby County, which, however, proved unsuccessful, principally on account of the lack of a market.<sup>4</sup> The settlement was practically broken up in 1840,

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 368.

<sup>2</sup> His first house, says Langeland, was on Wells street, on the ground now occupied by the Chicago & Northwestern depot.

<sup>3</sup> *Reise blandt de norske Emigranter i de forenede nordamerikanske Stater*, af J. W. C. Dietrichsen, Stavanger, 1846.

<sup>4</sup> B. L. Wick, in *Republikaneren* (Story City, Iowa) for February 9, 1900.



when most of the settlers removed north to Lee County in Iowa. The fifth settlement was established in 1839 in Waukesha County, Wisconsin, this being the first Norwegian settlement in Wisconsin.

By the year 1839 emigration from Norway begins to assume larger proportions, and certain districts which hitherto had sent very few now begin to contribute the larger share of the number of emigrants to America. This year may very properly be said to have inaugurated the second period in Norwegian immigration history. Down to 1839 the emigration movement in Norway had not really gone beyond the provinces of Stavanger and South Bergenhús in southwestern and western Norway. Indeed, nearly all of the emigrants had come from these sections. In fact, before 1836 the movement was almost confined to Stavanger and vicinity. In that year it reaches Hardanger, and in 1837, Bergen. It does not reach Voss properly before 1838, although Nils Röthe and wife had emigrated from there in 1836. In 1837, as we have seen, the first ship of emigrants, the *Ægir*, left Bergen with eighty-four passengers. Before 1839 we meet with occasional individual emigration from provinces to the east and northeast. Thus Ole Rynning from Snaasen in Trondhjem diocese emigrated in the *Ægir* in 1837. The first emigrants from Telemarken also came in 1837. They were Erik Gauteson Midboen, Thore Kittilsen Svimbil, and John Nelson Rue.<sup>1</sup> These three all had families and came from Tin parish in Upper Telemarken, evidently by way of Skien and Gothenburg. They settled in La Salle County,

<sup>1</sup> Thore Svimbil later moved to Blue Mounds, Dane County, Wisconsin, while John Rue moved to Winneshiek County, Iowa.



Illinois.<sup>1</sup> An unmarried man, Torsten I. Gulliksrud, also came at the same time.

The fathers of the movement in the next county, Numedal, were the two brothers, Ole and Ansten Nattestad, who also came in 1837.<sup>2</sup> These together with Halsten Halverson, failing to secure passage in Stavanger after walking across the mountains on skis from Rollaug in Numedal to Tin in Telemarken and then over the hills and through the forests to Stavanger (as one of the party writes), secured passage at Tananger and came via Gothenburg and Fall River, Massachusetts. Among the emigrants from other parts of Norway prior to 1837 must be mentioned also Johan Nordboe, from Ringebo in Gudbrandsdalen, who came in 1832 and resided for some time in Kendall, New York, later going to Texas; and Hans Barlien<sup>3</sup> from Trondhjem County, who came to La Salle County in 1837. Neither of these two men, however, were instrumental in bringing about any emigration movement in Gudbrandsdalen and Trondhjem. It is not until a much later period that these two districts are represented in considerable numbers among emigrants. Nor was the departure of the three families from Telemarken in 1837 followed by others until 1839, and then it seems not directly influenced by these, although their letters may have had something to do with the exodus from Telemarken which began in 1839. Nor did the movement start in Numedal before 1839; but here at any rate it was directly promoted by one of the emigrants of 1837.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Scandinavia*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for January, 1905, p. 79, note.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 355.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 355. On this subject see Knud Langeland's *Nordmændene i Amerika*, pp. 33-36.



Similarly, the year 1839 marks a change also in the movement of the course of settlement. Down to this time all emigration from Norway stands in direct relation to the movement which began in Stavanger in 1825, and which in the years 1834-36 resulted in the formation of the Fox River settlement in La Salle County, Illinois. This settlement then became the center of dispersion for what may be called the southern line of settlements. All through the forties and the fifties the southern course of migration westward, which includes southern and central Iowa, stands in direct relation to early Norwegian colonization in New York and Illinois—that is, the first period of Norwegian emigration from the provinces of Stavanger and South Bergenus (and in this province only as far north as Bergen, Voss being excluded) in southwestern and western Norway. In 1839 the first settlement is formed in Wisconsin on the shores of Lake Muskego in Waukesha County; and in Rock, Jefferson, and Dane counties in 1839-40. These settlements then became the northern point of dispersion. From here we have a second northern line of settlement westward and northwestward into northern Iowa and Minnesota.

The leaders of the emigration from Telemarken were the Luraas family, which was represented by four heads of families—in all about twenty persons out of a party of forty, composed almost exclusively of grown men and women. These all came from Tin and Hjertdal parishes in Upper Telemarken. They embarked at Skien, May 17, 1839, sailing by the way of Gothenberg, Sweden, and Boston. The voyage across the Atlantic took nine weeks; and the journey to Milwaukee lasted another three weeks. The



latter led by way of New York and then by canal boats pulled by horses to Buffalo; thence by way of the Great Lakes to Milwaukee. This was a common westward route for the early settlers. It was the intention of the emigrants to settle in La Salle County, Illinois; but in Milwaukee they were induced to remain in Wisconsin, and a site for a settlement was selected near Lake Muskego in the southern part of Milwaukee County, about twenty miles southwest from Milwaukee.<sup>1</sup>

In the selection of this first locality the colonists were not fortunate; for the land was low and the conditions very unhealthful. But in the following year the settlement was extended south into Racine County where, especially in the townships of Norway, Waterford, Raymond, and Yorkville, there grew up one of the most prosperous of early Norwegian settlements in Wisconsin. Thus Dietrichsen writes in 1844<sup>2</sup> that the population was six hundred. The founders of this South Muskego, or Racine County settlement were John N. Luraas, Torger O. Luraas, Halvor O. Luraas, Knudt Luraas, Sören Bache, Johannes Johanneson,<sup>3</sup> Mons Aadland, Nelson Johnson Kaasa and his brother Gjermund Kaasa.<sup>4</sup> The last two were from Hitterdal in Upper Telemarken, while Bache and Johanneson came from Drammen and Aadland from Bergen. All these came in 1839, although Aadland lived a year in the Fox River settlement before he came to Muskego. Among the prominent pio-

<sup>1</sup> At that time a town of only a few hundred inhabitants.

<sup>2</sup> In *Reise blandt de norske Emigranter*.

<sup>3</sup> There seems to be some uncertainty as to whether Bache and Johanneson settled in Racine County late in the fall of 1839 or in the following spring.

<sup>4</sup> The two Kaasa brothers settled in Winneshiek County, Iowa, in July, 1850.



neers of this settlement should be mentioned John J. Dahle from Bergen, Norway, and also the Haugian lay preacher, Elling Eielson Sunve,<sup>1</sup> from Voss, Norway.

About the time of the founding of the Muskego settlement, that is, in the fall of 1839 (but evidently a little later) was formed the so-called Jefferson Prairie settlement somewhat farther west. The location of this latter settlement was Clinton township in southeastern Rock County and the town of Manchester in Boone County, Illinois. As early as 1838 Ole K. Nattestad<sup>2</sup> had located in Clinton township. He is, therefore, probably the first Norwegian to settle in Wisconsin. For a year Nattestad was the only Norwegian in the settlement. His brother Ansten Nattestad<sup>3</sup> had returned to Norway upon a visit in 1838. His return to Norway gave the first impulse to the emigration movement in his native province of Numedal.<sup>4</sup> In the following year he brought back to America with him, by way of Drammen and New York to Chicago, one hundred emigrants;<sup>5</sup> and most of these went to Jefferson Prairie. The founders of this settlement were, besides the two Nattestad brothers: Hans Gjermundson Haugen, Thore Kirkejord, Jens Gudrandson Myhra, Gudbrand Myhra,<sup>6</sup> Thorsten

<sup>1</sup> Eielson emigrated in 1839 and settled first in La Salle County, Illinois (Nelson's, *History of Scandinavians*, p. 177), with which settlement he is most closely associated.

<sup>2</sup> Ole Nattestad emigrated from Vægli in Numedal, Norway, in 1837, and lived a year in Beaver Creek, Illinois, see above, p. 358. See also Nelson's *History of Scandinavians*, Vol. II, p. 107; and *Scandinavia*, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> He had come in 1837.—See *Scandinavia*, Vol. I, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 355. Nattestad writes that many came twenty Norwegian miles to talk with him about America.

<sup>5</sup> Each emigrant paid a passage of \$33.50.

<sup>6</sup> Jens and Gudbrand Myhra removed to Iowa, settling in Mitchell County.



Kirkejord, Erik G. Skavlem, and Kittel Kristopher Nyhus, all of whom were from Numedal.

At the close of the year 1839 a colony was established in Rock Run, forty miles southwest in Stephenson County, Illinois. This was closely related with the Jefferson Prairie settlement on the north. The founder of the settlement was Klemet Stabæk. From the same time also dates the Luther Valley or Rock Prairie settlement in Plymouth, Newark, Avon, and Spring Valley townships in southwestern Rock County, Wisconsin. The first settlers here were chiefly men who came in Nattestad's party.<sup>1</sup> Particularly prominent in the earliest history of the colony is the name Gullik O. Gravdahl.<sup>2</sup> He was one of the first to locate on Rock Prairie, and he built the first log-house in the settlement. The party that followed Gravdahl to this colony seem to have been mostly of the Haugian belief; the majority came from Numedal, Land, and Hallingdal, but a few were from Sogn and Valdres. Among them were Lars Røste (from Land), Gisle Halland, Goe Bjöno, and Hellek Glaim.

The last in this group of early Wisconsin settlements, and dating back to 1839-40, is the well known one on Koshkonnong Prairie in Dane County. This lies about forty miles north of the Rock Prairie settlement and eighty miles west from Milwaukee. Actual settling did not take place before 1840, but a party of Norwegians, namely, Nils S. Gilderhus, Nils Larsen Bolstad, and Od. J. Himle,<sup>3</sup> visited Chris-

<sup>1</sup> It may be regarded as a western extension of the Jefferson Prairie settlement.

<sup>2</sup> He emigrated from Vægli, Numedal. He was born 1802 and died in 1873, a very wealthy farmer in Rock County.

<sup>3</sup> He returned to Jefferson Prairie in 1839.



tiana and Deerfield townships late in 1839. These two men, along with many of the earliest settlers on Koshkonong, were from Voss, Norway.

To emigrants from Voss belongs the credit of having located this garden spot in Wisconsin where later grew up the most prosperous and influential of Norwegian (perhaps of Scandinavian) rural communities in America. The first settlement was formed in 1840. In that year the two named Vossings, Nils Gilderhus and Nils Bolstad, located in what is now Deerfield township;<sup>1</sup> and Anders Finno and Magne B. Bystøl settled in Christiana township. Another settler of that year is Gunnul O. Vindeig,<sup>2</sup> who named the town Christiania<sup>3</sup> after Christiania, Norway. The town of Albion was also settled that same year by Norwegians, the first of whom were: Amund A. Hornefeld, Björn Anderson Kvelve,<sup>4</sup> Thorstein O. Bjaaland and Lars O. Dugstad. Bjaaland we have already met with among the sloopers of 1825. He is the only one of the sloop party who later settled in Wisconsin. He and Hornefeld and Kvelve were, as far as can be ascertained, the only immigrants from Stavanger County among the early settlers on Koshkonong. The Stavanger immigrants belong very largely to the southern line of settlements. It was principally Voss and Numedal, Sogn and Telemarken that contributed to the Koshko-

<sup>1</sup> See *Bydgeomvning*, Madison, 1902, p. 42. Article by Nels A. Lee on the Vossings in America.

<sup>2</sup> Gunnul Vindeig came from Numedal as did many others of the founders of the Dane County settlements. The year he settled in Dane County was not 1838, as given in *Scandinavia*, p. 66.

<sup>3</sup> Later shortened to Christiana.

<sup>4</sup> Björn Kvelve was from Stavanger. He is the father of Rasmus B. Anderson, author, and minister (under Cleveland) to Denmark. At present he is editor of *Amerika*, Madison, Wisconsin.



nong settlements. In general these may be said to extend from the Rock County line through the eastern half of Dane County as far as the village of Deerfield, and east into the adjacent towns of Jefferson County. Among Koshkonong's early pioneers I may name also John H. Björge, Jens Pedersen Vehus,<sup>1</sup> and Hans Funkelien.<sup>1</sup> Finally, among the emigrants from Voss, whose representatives hold a very prominent place in the early history of the settlement, especially in the town of Deerfield, I wish to name Kolbein Saue, Störk Saue, Lars Davidson Rekve, Anfin Leidal, Lars Ygre, Gulleik Saue,<sup>2</sup> and Anders N. Lee.<sup>3</sup>

A Vossing colony was at the same time established in Chicago; and Chicago and the town of Deerfield in Dane County became Vossing centers in the early days. No section of Norway has contributed sturdier stock to the American population than Voss, and they hold a very important place in Norwegian-American History. Of prominent descendants of these early immigrants I shall here name only Senator Knute Nelson of Minnesota, Professor Lars S. Reque, Decorah, Iowa, Ex-Consul to Holland, Hon. Torger G. Thompson, Cambridge, Wisconsin, Victor F. Lawson (Larson), publisher of the *Chicago News*, and John Anderson, publisher of *Scandinaven*,<sup>4</sup> Chicago. The Sognings and the Telemarkings of the Wisconsin settlements, have also contributed many names to the honor roll of prominent Norwegians in America. Congressman Martin N. Johnson,

<sup>1</sup> These two came from Numedal in 1842.

<sup>2</sup> A son, Hon. Torger Thompson, is still living on the old homestead.

<sup>3</sup> Lee and Saue lived for some time in Chicago as did many of the Vossings.

<sup>4</sup> Norwegian weekly, bi-weekly, and daily. *Scandinaven* is politically probably the most influential Norwegian paper in the country.



of North Dakota, is a Telemarking,<sup>1</sup> as are B. Anundson,<sup>2</sup> publisher of *Decorah-Posten*, Decorah, Iowa, and P. O. Strömme, author and well-known journalist; while Hon. Atley Peterson and Governor James L. Davidson, of Wisconsin, came from Sogn.<sup>3</sup> Among early settlements those of Koshkonong deserve special notice partly because of the very important place they hold in Norwegian-American history,<sup>4</sup> but especially, and that which is more immediate to our purpose, because they (together with the Rock County settlement) stand in such close relation to the earliest Norwegian colonies in Northeastern Iowa, the section which has ever been educationally and culturally the center of Norwegian influence in the State.<sup>5</sup>

The Norwegian settlements that were formed before 1840 and that antedate Scandinavian colonization in Iowa are then in order: (1) 1825, Orleans County, New York; (2) 1834-35, La Salle County, Illinois; (3) 1837, Iroquois County, Illinois; (4) 1837, Chicago, Illinois; (5) 1839, Milwaukee and Racine counties, Wisconsin; (6) 1839, Eastern Rock County, Wisconsin, and Boone County, Illinois; (7) 1839, Stephenson County, Illinois; (8) 1839, Western Rock County, Wisconsin; and (9) 1839-40, Dane County, Wisconsin. From the last eight as centers of dispersion, took

<sup>1</sup> Congressman Johnson is a son of Nelson Johnson Kaasa, who settled in Racine County, Wisconsin, in 1839. He became in 1850 one of the founders of the first Norwegian settlement in Winneshiek County, Iowa—the Washington Prairie settlement.—See above, p. 360, note 4. M. N. Johnson's mother was from Voss.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Anundson moved from La Crosse, Wisconsin to Decorah, Iowa in 1868.

<sup>3</sup> On early immigration from Sogn, see article by John Ollis in *Bygdejævning*.

<sup>4</sup> A short account of the Norwegians in Wisconsin appeared in the *Minneapolis Tidende* for April 7, 1905, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> I shall elsewhere at a later time discuss more fully the contribution of the various provinces of Norway to Norwegian-American cultural history.



place all subsequent early colonization in northern Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, and northern Wisconsin, as Iowa and Minnesota at a later date furnished the large share of colonists to Nebraska, northwestern Minnesota, and the Dakotas.

A glance at Map II will indicate the course of migration into the territory west of the first settlements. It will show that the northern tier of counties in Iowa forms a continuous westward line of settlement with principally the sixth, eighth, and ninth settlements (see above) in southern Wisconsin as their point of departure. The southern and the central colonies in Iowa trace back to the old Fox River settlement as the starting point. Those in the second tier of counties, beginning with Clayton, are in part from both, but more especially from the State line settlements between Illinois and Wisconsin (six, seven, and eight above). In the western part of the State these three lines of settlement meet in Webster, Humboldt, Pocahontas, Buena Vista, and Cherokee counties.

THE EARLIEST NORWEGIAN SETTLEMENT IN IOWA—ITS FOUNDERS, ITS CHARACTER, ITS GROWTH, AND ITS RELATION TO LATER WESTWARD COLONIZATION

We have above<sup>1</sup> referred to the fact that in 1837 a party of colonists from La Salle County, Illinois, traveled southwest as far as Shelby County, in northwestern Missouri, and founded there a small settlement. The same restless Kleng Peerson, who left Norway four years before the departure of the "Restaurationen" in 1825, who probably

<sup>1</sup> Page 356.



made a journey to the then wild West as much as a dozen years before the planting of the first Norwegian colony in the West, and who selected the site of the Fox River settlement in 1833, was also the leader of this movement.<sup>1</sup> In company with him were the two brothers, Jakob and Knud Slogvig, Anders Askeland, Andrew Simonsen, and about ten others. The locality had evidently been chosen by Peerson on an excursion into Missouri the preceding year. At that time, it seems, he passed through southeastern Iowa,<sup>2</sup> and was, therefore, probably the first Norwegian to visit Iowa. The Missouri colony received some accessions from Norway in 1839. These came with Kleng Peerson, who in 1838 made a journey to Norway for the special purpose of recruiting the colony. The locality was unfavorable, chiefly on account of the distance to a market; the country was also low and the settlers were much afflicted with sickness at first. As early as the spring of 1840 the colony began to break up.<sup>3</sup>

Iowa had been organized as a Territory in 1838. The settlers in Shelby County, Missouri, were dissatisfied, and having heard of the natural resources of the Territory of

<sup>1</sup> A sketch of his life was first printed in *Billed-Magazin*, 1875. See also *Scandinavia* (Chicago), January, 1884, p. 64. A fuller account containing an interesting letter from Mrs. Bishop Sarah A. Petersen, of Ephraim, Utah, is printed in *First Chapter of Norwegian Immigration*, pp. 179-193. Mrs. Petersen was the daughter of the slooper, Cornelius Nelson, and a niece of Kleng Peerson. Peerson's last name was Hesthammer, which he dropped in this country. He was born in Tysvaer, Skjold Parish, near Stavanger, Norway. He lived for a time in the Swedish communistic colony at Bishop's Hill, Henry County, Illinois, and removed, probably 1849, to Texas. He died at Norse, Bosque County, in that State, December 16, 1865.

<sup>2</sup> B. L. Wick, in *Republikaneren* for February 9, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> Jakob Slogvig and Askeland had returned to La Salle County, Illinois, in 1838.



Iowa immediately to the north and that good land with a near market could be had in the southeastern part of the Territory, they decided to move to Iowa. Going northeast into Lee County, Iowa, they located at a place six miles northwest of Keokuk, known as Sugar Creek. Andrew Simonsen and most of the settlers in Shelby County came at that time; but Peerson remained in Missouri. Here, however, they found a colony of Norwegians who had, it seems, but recently established themselves. With the exception of one to be mentioned below, it is not known who these earlier settlers were, and I have not been able to ascertain where they came from.

Kleng Peerson has been accredited with being the founder also of the Sugar Creek settlement, but there is no proof that he previously selected the site or even that he was with the party who located there in 1840. Indeed the evidence goes rather to show that he never actually settled at Sugar Creek. His home in the following years was probably chiefly in Shelby County, Missouri; in 1847 he sold his land there and joined the Swedish colony in Henry County, Illinois, which had been founded in 1846.<sup>1</sup> Nor does it seem to me that Hans Barlien was a member of the Missouri colony, as Professor Anderson suggests. No mention of Barlien can be found in connection with the Shelby County colony or any other settlement. It seems more probable that he went to the Fox River settlement when he came from Norway in 1837; but with a few others left in 1840, coming to Lee County somewhat before the party

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 356, note; and *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for January, 1905, p. 67 and note.



that came with Andrew Simonsen from Shelby County. They may originally have received their knowledge of this locality from Peerson. Barlien himself may have been in La Salle County when Peerson in 1837 returned from his journey through that very part of Iowa and into Missouri. It was, then, Barlien and a few immigrants with him whom Andrew Simonsen and others from Shelby County found already settled at Sugar Creek in the spring of 1840. If this is correct then the first Norwegian settler in Iowa and the real founder of the first Norwegian colony in the State is Hans Barlien, who was born at Overhalden in the province of Trondhjem about 1780.<sup>1</sup>

As far as known, the first settlers who came with Andrew Simonsen from Missouri were: Omund Olson, Knud Slogvig,<sup>2</sup> Lars Tallakson, Jacob O. Hetletvedt, Peter Gjilje, Erik Öie, and Ole Öiesöen. Lars Tallakson settled there about the same time, but he came from Clark County, Missouri, where he had located in 1838. Gjermund Helgeson<sup>3</sup> and Eric Knudson, who had settled in the Muskego Colony, Wisconsin, in 1839, were also among the earliest settlers.

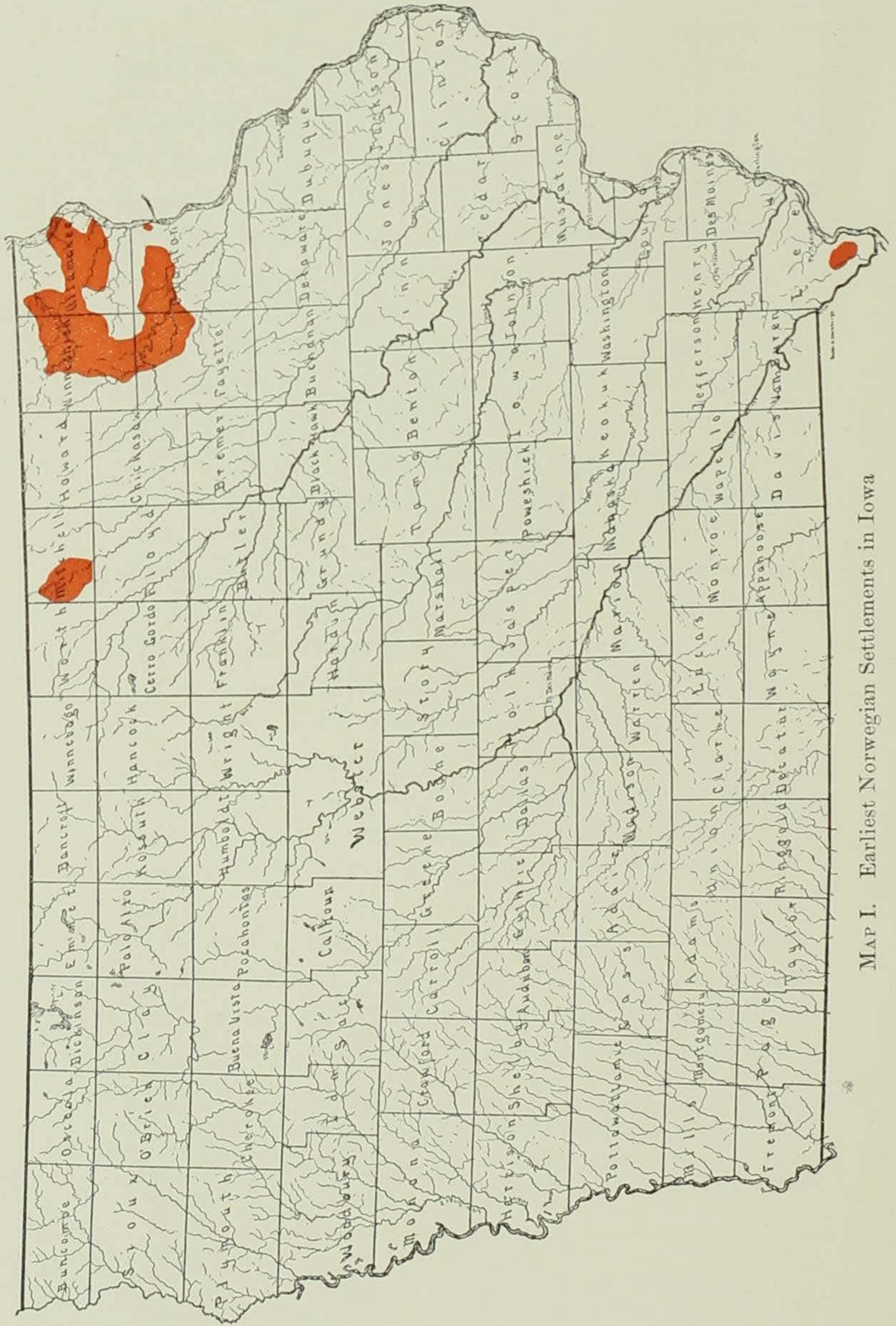
The leading spirit in the colony was undoubtedly Hans Barlien. He was a man of great natural endowment, and he had a fair education. In Norway he had been a pronounced nationalist of the Wergeland direction and had taken part in the first peasant uprising. He was for a time a member of the Storting (the national parliament). In

<sup>1</sup> Jakob Slogvig was also among the first settlers; but see note 3, p. 367.

<sup>2</sup> Helgeson may have come with Barlien from Illinois.

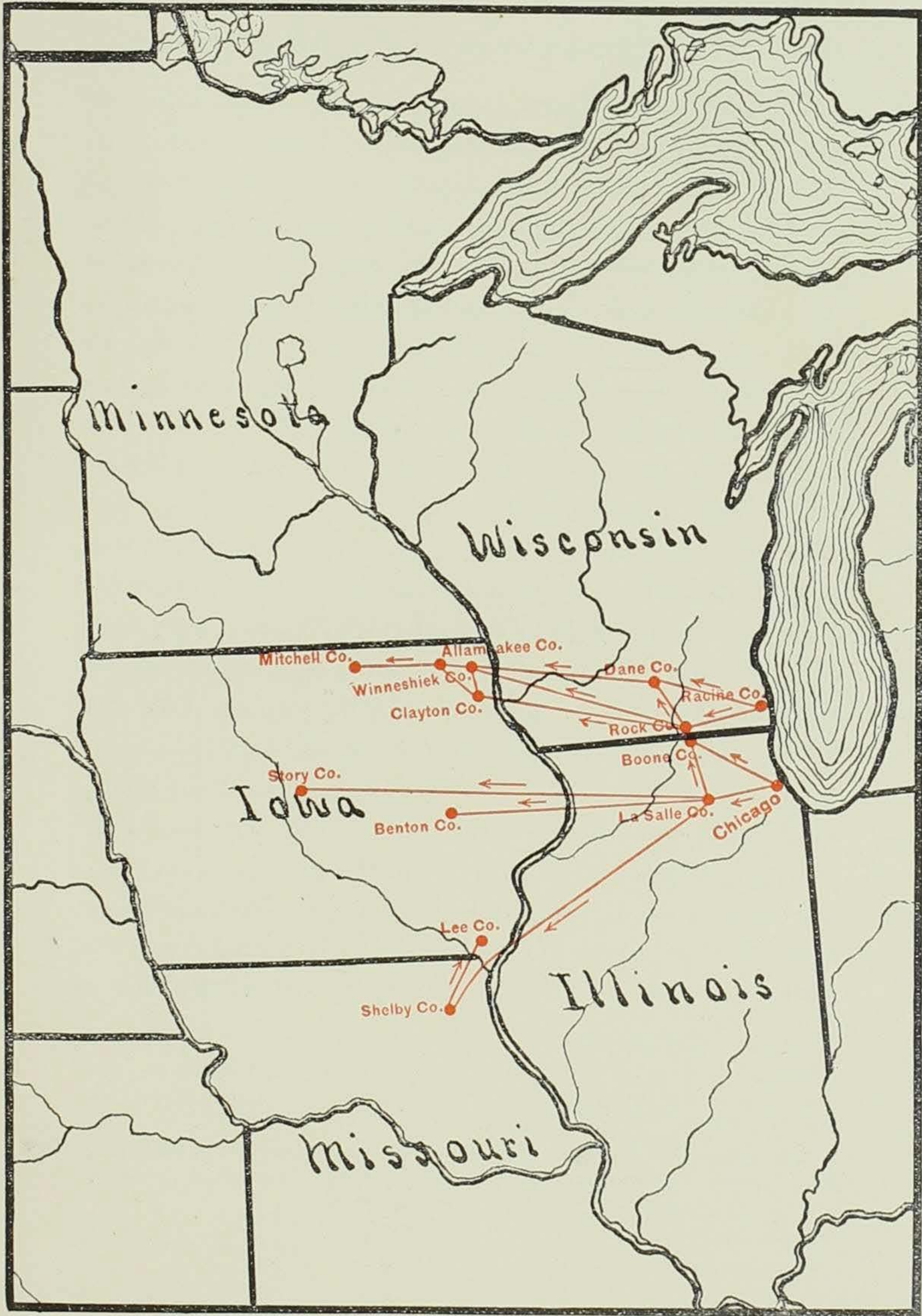
<sup>3</sup> According to a letter from his widow, Hannah Knudson, now residing in West Branch, Cedar County, Iowa.





MAP I. Earliest Norwegian Settlements in Iowa





MAP II. Centers of Dispersion and Course of Migration of the Norwegians



religion he was a liberal, which aroused the hostility of the clergy; while his radical political views called forth the enmity of the official class. He owned a printing establishment at Overgaarden, and published a paper<sup>1</sup> in which he did not hesitate to give expression to the principles for which he stood. This frequently involved him in litigation; and, feeling himself persecuted, he at last decided to emigrate to America in 1837.<sup>2</sup> Barlien seems to be the second Norwegian emigrant from Trondhjem.<sup>3</sup> Lars Tallakson came from Bergen, while the rest of the colonists were mostly from the region of Stavanger.

Lee County was but little settled at that time;<sup>4</sup> land was bought of the Indians for a nominal price, but it often became expensive enough in the end since it proved very difficult for many of the settlers to obtain a clear title from the United States. This is one reason why the settlement did not grow, though probably not the chief cause.<sup>5</sup> In 1843 there were between thirty and forty families, writes John Reier-son,<sup>6</sup> but in 1856 there were according to the census of that year only sixty-eight Norwegians in the county. This number had in 1885 decreased to thirty-one. In the fifties many of the settlers moved to other localities, but throughout the forties there was a prosperous colony that contributed not a

<sup>1</sup> *Melkeveien*, the Milky Way.

<sup>2</sup> See J. B. Wist, in *Bygdejævning*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1903, p. 158; also *First Chapter of Norwegian Immigration*, pp. 235-236, and *Republikaneren*, February 9, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> The first was Ole Rynning. See *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for January, 1905, p. 72, and *Nordmændene i Amerika* by Knud Langeland, pp. 26-29.

<sup>4</sup> The first postoffice was established in Lee County in 1841.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 373.

<sup>6</sup> *Veiviser for Emigranter*, 1843.



little to the development of the community and the county in that early period. The settlement is of special interest in that it was the first Norwegian settlement in Iowa. Its founding inaugurated Norwegian colonization in the State which, particularly in the fifties, resulted in the establishment of a score of extensive settlements in the central and the northern counties.

There are many reasons why the Sugar Creek settlement did not grow as did the later settlements north and west. First of all, land was not of the best in Lee County. And then, the locality was rather too far south—Norwegians have everywhere in America thriven best in the more northerly localities.<sup>1</sup> Again, the tide of emigration from the Stavanger province was not sufficiently heavy to recruit the various settlements already established by immigrants from that region. The majority of those who came went direct to the Fox River settlement in northern Illinois, which offered unsurpassed natural advantages. To be sure, the Shelby County (Missouri) and the Lee County settlements might have been recruited from other districts in Norway. But it must be remembered that such other districts as had begun to take part in the emigration movement had their attention directed just at this time in another direction. The other provinces in question are Voss, Telemarken, and Numedal. It was representatives of these that founded the Wisconsin settlements in 1839-40, and in them the great majority of immigrants from those provinces located in the following decade.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for January, 1905, pp. 87-88.

<sup>2</sup> See discussion of those settlements above, pp. 362, 363.



This is also true of those who came from Sogn,<sup>1</sup> Hardanger, and from western Norway in general.

There is still another reason why the colony did not grow. Beyond the common desire of material betterment, there was too little of community of interest. It is enough to mention that several different religious sects were represented in the little settlement, chief among which were the Quakers and the Latter Day Saints. Just across the Mississippi was the town of Nauvoo,<sup>2</sup> which was a Mormon center at the time. When the Mormons who did not believe in polygamy established themselves at Lamoni some years later, many Norwegians of that belief went with them.<sup>3</sup> And not a few of the Quakers joined American Quaker settlements farther north, as in Salem, Henry County. In the later fifties a prosperous colony was founded at and south of Legrand in Marshall County. A few of the early pioneers, however, remained and their descendants live in Lee County to-day. Finally, the difficulty of securing a title to the land upon which many Norwegians had settled, to which reference has been made above, undoubtedly drove many to seek homes elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Immigration from Sogn began in 1842 and was at first directed almost exclusively to Dane County, Wisconsin.

<sup>2</sup> In the Fox River settlement in Illinois many Norwegians joined the Mormons and later moved to Utah. Bishop Canute Peterson was one of these.

<sup>3</sup> The Mormons first moved into Iowa in 1839, having received assurance of protection and the liberty to practice their belief from Governor Lucas in that year. They located in Lee County not far from Sugar Creek. The town of Nauvoo, Illinois, had been bought by them. The name was changed from Commerce.

<sup>4</sup> The question has been investigated somewhat by Mr. B. L. Wick. See *Republikaneren*, February 9, 1900, to which article the reader is referred.



NORWEGIAN IMMIGRATION INTO NORTHEASTERN IOWA. THE  
FOUNDERS OF THE EARLIEST SETTLEMENTS. OTHER COL-  
ONIES ESTABLISHED BETWEEN 1850 AND 1853. THE  
COURSE OF SETTLEMENT. CONCLUSION

The Fox River settlement in Illinois had been formed in 1834-35. The exodus from southwestern and western Norway in 1836-40 brought hundreds of immigrants to the colony. In a few years the best lands had been taken and many began to look about in search of new localities farther west. A similar movement took place farther north a few years later. Between 1840 and 1850 the south Wisconsin settlements, established in 1839-40,<sup>1</sup> developed into prosperous communities. For a decade they continued to receive accessions from western and south central Norway; but the principal period of immigrant colonization was the years 1839-50. In later years these settlements became stations-on-the-way for a very large number of immigrants who came and located farther west and north. Several new colonies had in the meantime been formed—as for example in western Dane County, and at Mineral Point and Wiota in Iowa County.<sup>2</sup> Between 1849 and 1860 the westward movement of Norwegian immigration was directed especially to northern Iowa and southwestern Minnesota—in Iowa from Allamakee and Clayton counties on the east to Forest City and Lake Mills in Winnebago County on the west. During the same years, but beginning a little later, there was also established a number of settlements in central Iowa. In their early history, however, these stand entirely isolated from those

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 360-61.

<sup>2</sup> These and a few farther north are given by Dietrichsen, p. 24.



in the northern counties. Finally those in the western part of the State are, for the most part, the result of internal immigration from the older to the newer parts of the State.

The first county settled by Norwegians in northeastern Iowa was Clayton. The earliest settler was Ole Valle. He came in 1846 and located in Reed township a little south of the present St. Olaf. In 1846 Ole Tollefson Kittilsland came and located in Reed township.<sup>1</sup> The period of settlement does not actually begin, however, before 1849. In the spring of that year Ole Herbrandson and family settled in the same place. The Clermont settlement in the western part of the county was begun in June, 1849; the first settler was Halvor Nilson.<sup>2</sup> This settlement soon grew westward into Fayette County and northward through Fayette into Winneshiek County. To Clermont in the same year came Tallak Gunderson and family, Knut Hustad, Jens A. Holt, Brede Holt, Halstein Gröth, Kittel Rue, Abraham Rustad, and several others; while Helge Ramstad and wife, Ole Hanson and wife, Thorkel Eiteklep, and Embrigst Sanden located in the Norway settlement in Reed township.<sup>3</sup> At present Norway and Clermont form one continuous settlement westward into Fayette County.

The founders of these settlements all came from Wisconsin, particularly from Rock County,<sup>3</sup> where they had lived the first few years after coming from Norway. In the years 1850-53 a large number of immigrants joined the colony,

<sup>1</sup> See article by Rev. Jacob Tanner on *En kort Beretning om 50 Aars Kirkeligt Arbeide i Clayton Co., Iowa*, in *Lutheraneren*, 45 (1901). These names are taken from Rev. Tanner's article.

<sup>2</sup> In Reed township.

<sup>3</sup> Tanner's article.



but in the very beginning of this period the movement was directed to the counties in the northern part of the State—*i. e.*, to Allamakee and Winneshiek counties. The immigration of Norwegians into Clayton County had practically ceased by 1855, the chief reason for this probably being that the Germans came in very large numbers, particularly to Clayton County, during the early fifties and soon occupied all the best land.<sup>1</sup> Northeastern Iowa was but little settled, and the development of the wilderness had only begun. Clayton County had in 1850 a population of three thousand eight hundred and seventy-three, while Fayette had only eight hundred and twenty-five, and Allamakee seven hundred and seventy-seven. The population of Winneshiek County had reached four thousand nine hundred and fifty-seven.

Allamakee was the next county in order of settlement.<sup>2</sup> This county was opened to settlement in 1848, but land was not put upon the market before 1850.<sup>3</sup> In the summer of that year a considerable number of Norwegians had come from Wisconsin and settled on the prairie north of Paint Creek, living in their canvas covered wagons until houses were built.<sup>4</sup> The early settlers of Allamakee and neighbor-

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Tanner writes: "When we look at this Norwegian settlement as it was then and is to-day largely, it immediately strikes us that it was wood and water the colonists looked for, and therefore they let the prairie lie and chose the hills along the Turkey River. Not until later did they learn to understand the value of the prairie, but then the Germans had taken most of it."

<sup>2</sup> The Fayette County settlement about Clermont is a western extension of the second settlement in Clayton County; its beginnings have been referred to above.

<sup>3</sup> The first entry of purchase appears under the date of October 7, 1850.

<sup>4</sup> There were, it seems, Norwegians in the county as early as 1849 or perhaps 1848; but I have not been able to ascertain their names or any facts with regard to them. The earliest settler in the county was Henry Johnson, after whom Johnsonsport was named, but I do not know to what nationality he belonged.



ing counties experienced all the trials and hardships of pioneer life in an unsettled country. There was no railroad nearer than Milwaukee. At McGregor there were a few stores where the necessaries of life could be had.<sup>1</sup>

The process of home building and the clearing of the forests was slow and often attended with many difficulties. The pioneers generally brought with them no other wealth than stout hearts and strong hands, and it was only by industry and severe economy that they were able to make a living for themselves and their families. Those who hired for pay to others received very small wages, and as there was little money among the pioneer farmers it was paid in large part in food or other articles. It may serve as an illustration that in the winter of 1850-51 a pioneer in Clayton County<sup>2</sup> split seven thousand rails of wood for fifty cents a hundred; for this he was paid \$3.50 in cash and the remainder in food. The Red Man was the White Man's neighbor in those days, but the Scandinavian frontiersman was never in all the history of colonization molested by the Indian. He succeeded in a remarkable degree in gaining the Red Man's confidence. And so, whether as a colonist in New Sweden in the seventeenth century or a pioneer in the forests or on the prairies of the West in the nineteenth century, he never had the difficulty which many have experienced in preserving pacific relations with the natives.

Most of the Norwegians who settled in Allamakee County came from Dane County, Wisconsin; but I believe, some

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<sup>1</sup> In the Clermont settlement there was a log-cabin store at Clermont.

<sup>2</sup> This pioneer is still living.—See Tanner's article.



came a little later from Winneshiek County where a settlement had been formed in June, 1850. Several, however, came from Norway by way of New Orleans and the Mississippi, as did Gilbert C. Lyse in 1851.

In 1856 there were in the whole county five hundred and five Norwegians; one hundred and eighty-one of these had settled in Paint Creek (then Waterville) township, the rest being located mostly in the neighboring towns of Center, La Fayette, Taylor, Jefferson, and Makee. In the meantime a new settlement had been established in the northwestern part of the county, in Hanover and Waterloo, which soon extended into Winneshiek County. But the earliest Norwegian settlement in Winneshiek was formed on Washington Prairie in June, 1850,<sup>1</sup> when a number of families moved in from Racine and Dane counties, Wisconsin. Eastern Winneshiek County received in the following year a large Norwegian population. In a few years the eastern, northeastern, and central part of the county grew to be the chief Norwegian community in that section of the State, and it has ever since held a very prominent place among Norwegian settlements in Iowa. Through the location of Luther College<sup>2</sup> in 1862, it became an educational center for a large part of the Norwegian northwest.

Those who came in June, 1850, and settled on Washing-

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<sup>1</sup> White people first settled in the county in 1848. The county was organized in 1850, and the first term of court convened on October 5, 1851.

<sup>2</sup> The chief educational institution of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran synod. The Norwegian Lutherans in America are divided into several branches, of which the United Norwegian Lutheran Church of America and the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod of America are in order the largest.



ton Prairie were: Erik Anderson (Rudi),<sup>1</sup> the brothers Ole and Staale Torstenson Haugen, Ole Gullickson Jevne, O. A. Lomen, Knut A. Bakka, Anders Hauge, John J. Quale, H. Halvorsen Grove, and Mikkel Omli. These came from Racine and Dane counties, Wisconsin. In the following month Tollef Simonson, Knud Opdahl, Jacob Abrahamson,<sup>2</sup> Iver P. Quale, and the two brothers, Nelson Johnson<sup>3</sup> and Gjermund Johnson Kaasa settled in Springfield and Decorah townships. These settlers were chiefly from Voss, Telemarken, Sogn, and Valdres, Norway, and most of them had emigrated in 1848-49.<sup>4</sup>

From the towns of Springfield, Decorah, and Glenwood the settlement soon spread into the neighboring towns—north into Canoe, Hesper, and Highland, where it united with the settlement in northwestern Allamakee County, and south through the towns of Calmar and Military, uniting with the settlements in north central Fayette County (Dover township). This last settlement extends through Pleasant Valley southward into Clayton County. Together these settlements form one connecting link from the eastern part of Clayton County, west through Fayette, and north through

<sup>1</sup> Erik Anderson, who is still living in Decorah, had come from Norway in 1839, learned the printer's trade in Chicago, and was the one who set the type for the first Norwegian paper in America, *Nordlyset*, (The Northern Light) published first in Norway, Racine County, later in Racine, 1847-1851.

<sup>2</sup> The father of Hon. Abraham Jakobson.

<sup>3</sup> The father of Martin N. Johnson, member of Congress from North Dakota. Nelson Johnson was one of the founders of the Muskego settlement in Wisconsin in 1839. He later entered the Methodist ministry and was for two years, 1855-57, pastor of the Norwegian M. E. Church in Cambridge, Wisconsin. With the exception of these two years he lived in Winneshiek County until his death in 1882.

<sup>4</sup> Letters from Hon. Abraham Jakobson, to whom I am chiefly indebted for facts on the early settlement of Winneshiek County.



Winneshiek to northern Allamakee. In Allamakee it extends as far as Harpers Ferry and Lansing.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of the population, however, resides in Winneshiek County. The principal Norwegian townships are at present, Greenwood, Decorah, Springfield, Highland, and Madison. About half of the population of the county is of Norwegian birth or descent.

Mitchell County was first settled by E. Olson Stovern in 1851, near the present site of St. Ansgar. It was, therefore, the sixth county in the order of settlement. The real founder of the extensive colony which was soon established at this point was, however, Rev. C. L. Clausen<sup>2</sup> who with twenty families, besides a number of unmarried men, came from Rock County, Wisconsin, in the spring of 1852.<sup>3</sup> Rev. Clausen was, with Rev. A. C. Preus<sup>4</sup> and Rev. H. C. Stub,<sup>5</sup> the founder of the first organization of Norwegian

<sup>1</sup> The intermediate strip of territory including northern Clayton County and the northern tier of townships in Allamakee has only scattered Norwegian settlers.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Clausen was a Dane by birth but he is identified exclusively with Norwegian-American history. He was born in Fyen, Denmark, in 1820, came to Norway in 1841, and emigrated to America in 1843.

<sup>3</sup> See Biography of Rev. Clausen in Nelson's *History of Scandinavians*, Vol. I, pp. 387-391. There is also a sketch with portrait of Rev. Clausen in Anderson's *First Chapter of Norwegian Immigration*, pp. 417-420. Nelson gives the following interesting account of the coming of these settlers:—"Clausen had visited Iowa in 1851, and the next year in the spring, he and about twenty families, besides several unmarried men left Rock County, Wisconsin. In order to avoid confusion in marching such a large number in one body the crowd was divided into two sections, Clausen himself and family, being the only persons who rode in a carriage, led in advance. The caravan consisted of numerous children and women in wagons, men on foot, and two or three hundred cattle—all obeying the command of the leader. Most of these immigrants settled at St. Ansgar, Mitchell County."

<sup>4</sup> From Agder, Norway—came to America in 1850.

<sup>5</sup> From Strileland, Norway—came to America in 1848.



Lutherans in America on Rock Prairie, Wisconsin, January 4, 1851.<sup>1</sup> This organization developed into the Norwegian Lutheran synod of America in East Koshkonong Church, Dane County, Wisconsin, February 5, 1853.<sup>2</sup>

In June, 1853, Gudbrand Olson Mellum and wife, and three others, went west from St. Ansgar, going as far as the Shell Rock River, where they secured one hundred and sixty acres of land, embracing a part of the present site of Northwood.<sup>3</sup> They were the first white settlers in Worth County.<sup>4</sup> In the spring of 1854 came Simon Rustad, Christian Ammandson, Ole Lee, and Aslag Gullickson.<sup>4</sup> Among the early settlers were Nels and Carrie Haugen, who came from Rock County, Wisconsin.<sup>5</sup> Since 1856 Worth County has received a considerable accession of Norwegian settlers; to-day it has the fourth largest Norwegian population among the counties of the State.

Winnebago County, the next county to the west, was first settled in 1855, but received no important accessions until 1865. At present, however, it has next to Winneshiek County, the most extensive Norwegian population in the State.<sup>6</sup> The very important settlements in Story and sur-

<sup>1</sup> See *Kort Uddrag af Den norske Synodes Historie*, by Rev. Jacob Aal Otteson, Decorah, 1893, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> In 1851-53 Rev. Clausen was its President or "Superintendent."

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Mellum is still living. Ole Mellum, son of Gudbrand Mellum, was the first white child born in Worth County.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Mr. Gilbert N. Haugen, from Northwood, Iowa.

<sup>5</sup> They immigrated from Hallingdal, Norway, in 1846, settling in Rock County, Wisconsin. They were the parents of Hon. Gilbert N. Haugen, Member of Congress.

<sup>6</sup> Many of the early settlers in Worth and Winnebago counties came from Hallingdal. This province has contributed some of the most honored names to Norwegian-American History—as Gilbert N. Haugen, Member of Congress from



rounding counties date back to 1855 and the years following; while Florence township, Benton County, was first settled by Norwegians in 1854-57. These settlements, therefore, are not within the period covered by this brief sketch.

The settlements we have discussed soon developed into prosperous communities. In 1856 their total population was 2,529; and in the meantime new settlements were growing up around them and the lines of settlements in central Iowa had been established.

We have in these pages traced the beginnings of Norwegian colonization in Iowa from 1840 to 1853. In the later fifties and the sixties most of the counties to the west were settled by Norwegians, the western parts of the State being settled as late even as the eighties. The period of heaviest immigration into Iowa was, however, closed long before that date.<sup>1</sup> Since the early nineties Norway has contributed comparatively little to the population of Iowa. The westward course of migration has carried the Norwegian immigration beyond the borders of the State of Iowa; a new generation has sprung up to enjoy the fruits of the labors of Iowa's sturdy pioneers.

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Iowa; G. S. Gilbertson, of Forest City, Iowa, State Treasurer of Iowa; and Prof. Lauritz S. Swenson, of Albert Lea, Minn., Minister to Denmark.

<sup>1</sup> The State census for 1895 shows a larger population of foreign born Norwegians than for the preceding or the following census, but the increase is slight since 1885. The figures are 24,107 for 1885, while for 1895 they reach 27,428. But according to the United States census in 1900 they are only 25,634.