

## THE GROWTH OF THE SCANDINAVIAN FACTOR IN THE POPULATION OF IOWA

In the preceding articles of this series the earliest immigration to Iowa from the three Scandinavian countries has been discussed. In that survey the Norwegian immigration has been traced to the year 1853, the Swedish to 1855, and the Danish to 1867. These years may be taken as dividing the period of the early beginnings of the immigration of the three Scandinavian nationalities into Iowa from the period of the later and most extensive immigration, which continues down to about the year 1885. We have located the earliest settlement of Norwegians at Sugar Creek in Lee County, Iowa, in 1840, that of the Swedes in New Sweden, Jefferson County, Iowa, in 1845, and the first actual colony of Danes in Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa, in 1850 and the years following.<sup>1</sup> It thus appears that the earliest Scandinavian settlers located in Southern Iowa, the part of the State which both by foreign and internal immigration had received the largest share of the incoming population.

From the foregoing discussion it will have been noticed also that the coming of the three nationalities into Iowa is in each case a distinct event in the immigration history of the State. The settlements of these three nationalities bear no relation to one another; and only in a very limited extent do we find any mixture of nationality. Thus, in Clayton,

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<sup>1</sup> A Danish family had, however, located in Muscatine as early as 1837.—See above p. 233.

Allamakee, Winneshiek, Fayette, Lee, Mitchell, and Story counties the Norwegians had by 1856 formed settlements aggregating 2,732 persons. In these counties there were in that year only 21 Danes and 137 Swedes; and a majority of the latter resided in a Swedish settlement in Allamakee County.<sup>1</sup> The Swedes have a total population of 731<sup>2</sup> in the counties of Boone, Des Moines, Jefferson, Wapello, and Webster; while in these counties the total Norwegian population is only 23, and the total Danish population 39. The Danish settlements are similarly isolated from both the Norwegian and the Swedish. To some slight extent the first Danish immigrants settled in Norwegian communities. The causes for this are largely linguistic.<sup>3</sup> The Norwegians had formed extensive and flourishing colonies long before the Danes arrived; and when the latter came it was natural that they should join their own kinsmen, the Norwegians, among whom the language of literature and the church was so nearly like their own.

While, however, the three nationalities located first in the southern part of the State their history belongs more particularly to the northern and the west-central counties. The Norwegians organized their most extensive settlements in the northern and north-central counties, while the Danes are more particularly associated with the more western counties of Shelby, Audubon, Cass, and Pottawattamie. Of the

<sup>1</sup> See *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for January, 1905, p. 614.

<sup>2</sup> Not including Allamakee County where 84 Swedes resided.

<sup>3</sup> It should be said, however, that this influence was largely indirect—through the church. Without elaborating the point in this connection I merely wish to say that from the standpoint of the living speech of the great majority of the Scandinavian immigrants of those days the Norwegians and the Swedes stood closer together than the Norwegians and the Danes or the Swedes and the Danes.



three nationalities it is the Swede who has contributed most to the development of the southern part of the State; but they too have located in considerable numbers in the central and the northwestern parts—in Boone, Webster, Buena Vista, Cherokee, Kossuth, and Woodbury counties.

The geographical location of the three nationalities in Iowa will, then, be found to correspond very closely with their relative position in the country at large. The Norwegians locate farthest north; and their extensive settlements are very largely in the northern portions of the "Scandinavian Northwest."<sup>1</sup> The Danes have developed their most prosperous communities in a more southerly locality, but may be found also scattered in the north. The Swedes occupy an intermediate position; but in isolated cases they have located almost as far north as the Norwegians, while to the south in the Danish line of settlement they have formed some of their most prosperous settlements (as in Illinois, southern Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas). The relative location of the three nationalities is explainable largely by their relation to earlier settlements in the East, and in accordance with the tendency of the westward going settlers to go directly west. This consideration will explain the location of nearly all of the early Scandinavian settlements in Iowa.<sup>2</sup> For instance, on Map II, illustrating the centers of dispersion and course of migration of the Norwegians, it has been shown that the Norwegian settlements in northeastern Iowa are mainly descended from those in

<sup>1</sup> See *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for January, 1905, pp. 87-89, and *Scandia*, Groningen, Holland, I, 109.

<sup>2</sup> The settlement of New Sweden in Jefferson County will be an exception—but see *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for October, 1905, pp. 601-603.

Dane, Rock, and Racine counties in southern Wisconsin.<sup>1</sup> Further, the map also shows that the early settlements in central and southeastern Iowa were made by immigrants who came from the old Fox River settlement in Illinois, founded in La Salle County in 1834.

Among the early settlements in Iowa in direct line west from La Salle County are those of Norway, Benton County, and of Story County, as shown in the map referred to. In this connection a few words may properly be added regarding some of the first settlements between 1853 and the taking of the first State census in 1856.

The small settlement in Florence Township, Benton County, Iowa, dates back to the year 1854. The first Norwegian in the county was Sara Darnell.<sup>2</sup> The founder of the settlement was Jonas P. Nordland,<sup>3</sup> who came to America in 1853 and located first at Leland, Illinois. In the spring of 1854 he removed to Benton County, Iowa. In company with him at that time were Lars Strand and Sigbjörn Rosdal.<sup>4</sup> Osmund Tuttle and Elling Ellingsen came during the summer and settled at the same place. These were the first Norwegians in the county. Jonas P. Nordland lived at Norway, Benton County, until his death which occurred on August 23, 1902.<sup>5</sup>

The settlement in southern Story County, centering around

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

<sup>2</sup> She was married to an American. She had probably come to the county a year or two earlier.

<sup>3</sup> Born in Strand, Stavanger County, Norway, January 17, 1819.

<sup>4</sup> These two, however, returned to Illinois soon after.

<sup>5</sup> His son, L. T. Nordland, postmaster at Norway, Benton County, has kindly sent me a detailed account of the coming of his father and the first Norwegians to Benton County, which, however, I am not able to include in this sketch.



Cambridge and Slater and extending down into Polk County, was founded in 1854 by immigrants from Lisbon, Illinois. The first Norwegians in the county were Osmund Sheldal, Ole Fatland, Ole Apland, and Osmund Johnson, who were sent out from Lisbon, Illinois, in September, 1854, to select a site for a colony somewhere in Iowa. Upon their return a large number decided to go to Iowa. During the winter preparations were made; a congregation was actually formed which was given the name Palestine Congregation (undoubtedly significant as an expression of their expectations). Ole Anderson was elected its minister, Erik Sheldal, deacon, and K. A. Bange, master of its parochial schools. On May 17, 1855, one hundred and six persons left Lisbon, taking with them twenty-five yoke of oxen and teams of horses and a large number of cattle. The party arrived in southwestern Story County, Iowa, on the 7th of June.<sup>1</sup>

To the same period belongs the formation of the very large Norwegian settlement of Story City and surrounding country. Like that of southern Story County, this is also a daughter settlement of the La Salle colony in Illinois. The account of its formation is in brief as follows:—Highly favorable reports had come from those who had visited Story county in quest of a fitting place to settle in the fall of the preceding year. A large number began making plans to leave for Iowa; but, desiring first to have more reliable facts relative to Iowa, the intending emigrants appointed Jonas Due, Mons Grove, Paul Thompson, Lars

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller account, see *Decorah-Posten* for February 6, 1906, under the caption *Lidt Nybyggerhistorie*, by H. Rued Holand. The same writer has an account of *Koshkonong* (in Wisconsin) in the January, 1906, number of the quarterly publication of *Det norske Selskab* (The Norwegian Society).

Sheldal, John N. Tarpestad, John Erickson, Jakob Erikson Aske, Torris Mehus, and Ola Öine as an advance committee to visit Story County and report the results of their investigation. These left Lisbon in June, 1855. They drove across the country in prairie schooners, following the overland trail. Because of church differences they had been instructed to select a site not immediately adjacent to the settlement that had already been formed by those who had moved thither in the spring of that year.<sup>1</sup> Arriving at Newton, Story County, they made a halt; but because of the lack of woods they believed that locality to be undesirable, and so they continued their journey to the northwestern part of the county. Here they selected a site for a settlement and purchased land for themselves and many of the party who had remained at Lisbon. Thereupon they returned to Illinois. In the fall of that year Thor O. Hedlund and Lars Grindem moved to Story County, and thus became the first settlers. In the summer of 1856 there was an extensive emigration from the Fox River settlement to Story County. A writer in *Skandinaven* for Saturday, July 14, 1900, says of the expedition that "nearly all were men with families and when they moved west they made up a train of twenty-four immigrant wagons,<sup>2</sup> of which the twenty were drawn by so many yoke of oxen, while the last four were drawn by horses. They took with them among other things a flock of one hundred and fifty cattle. The journey took three weeks." They arrived at their destination on

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<sup>1</sup> The settlement in southern Story County was formed by members of the Norwegian Synod; that in northern Story County by people of Hauge's Synod.

<sup>2</sup> The State census of 1856 does not, then, seem to be correct.



the 15th of June,<sup>1</sup> being almost exactly a year after the expedition to southern Story County. Immigration to this locality continued down to the eighties. To-day the settlement extends into Hamilton and Hardin counties and is one of the largest of Scandinavian communities in the Northwest. By the census of 1900 there were 3,890 persons in the settlement who were born in Norway and 8,200 of Norwegian parentage, making a total Norwegian speaking population of over 12,000. There is also a considerable Danish and Swedish population in these counties and in neighboring settlements, aggregating a total of 6,675 according to the census of 1900. The total Scandinavian speaking population in this part of Iowa<sup>2</sup> in 1900 was 24,000.

The first Norwegians to settle in Worth County were Gudbrand O. Mellem and wife who came in the summer of 1853. They came from St. Ansgar, Mitchell County, where Rev. C. L. Clausen had just founded a settlement. With them came at the same time Ole Færgerboken, Aslak Larsen and his son Lars, but these soon returned to St. Ansgar.<sup>3</sup> The actual founding of the settlement of Northwood and vicinity is of a later date.<sup>4</sup> The county in Iowa which has

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<sup>1</sup> The same writer, Knut Takla, of Story City, gives a very interesting account of that expedition and of the early days of the settlement.

<sup>2</sup> The counties of Story, Boone, Hardin, Hamilton, Webster, Humboldt, and Wright.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Mellem was born in Hallingdal, Norway, in 1829; he emigrated to America in 1849, settling first in Rock County, Wis. See also *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for July, 1905, p. 382. For facts regarding Worth County I am indebted partly to Mr. C. O. Gunderson, President of *Edda*, and partly to Hon. G. N. Haugen, of Northwood, according to letter of August 19, 1905.

<sup>4</sup> This prosperous community of Norwegians has given Iowa her Representative in Congress from the fourth district, Mr. G. N. Haugen, now serving his third term.

to-day proportionately the largest Norwegian population is Winnebago. The first settlement was formed in Norway Township and the year was 1856. In June of that year six Norwegian families, namely, those of Lewis Nelson, Colburn Larson, Hans I. Knudson, Ole Tornen, Narve Grönhovd, and Hendrick Larson came from Rock County, Wisconsin.<sup>1</sup> Other early settlers were John Johnson, John Iverson, and Christian Anderson.<sup>2</sup> The settlement remained small, however, until the late sixties, since which time it has grown rapidly.<sup>3</sup>

By 1856 nuclei of settlements had been formed by the Swedes in several other counties, as Henry,<sup>4</sup> Wapello, and Webster; while in smaller numbers Swedes are found in Buchanan, Dubuque, Lee, and Monroe counties, and Norwegians in Butler, Chickasaw, and Mills.

No actual settlements were made by Swedes in 1856. It may be noted, however, that Des Moines, where to-day they make up the chief element in the foreign born population, received its first Swedish settlers in that year. These were P. J. Anderson<sup>5</sup> and Frank Hultman. Both of these men came direct from Östergötland, Sweden. As far as I have

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<sup>1</sup> Facts given me by C. L. Nelson, of Forest City, the son of Lewis Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> Names furnished me by Rev. J. M. Dahl, of Lake Mills.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Rev. J. M. Dahl, C. L. Nelson, and T. K. Kingland for many facts relative to Lake Mills and Forest City which space does not permit including here.

<sup>4</sup> The Swedish settlement at Swedesburg, Wayne Township, Henry County, was not founded until 1864, as I am informed by Rev. A. Norrbom, of Swedesburg, in a letter of August 29, 1905. The first settlers were G. A. Fridolph, Math. Anderson, S. P. Swanson, Mons Anderson, L. M. Rapp, Oliver Stephenson, and John Sandahl.

<sup>5</sup> Died in 1891. His widow is still living at 11th and Mulberry Streets, Des Moines.



been able to ascertain they were moreover the only Swedes in Des Moines until 1865, in which year Anton Nordenson came from Stockholm.<sup>1</sup> With this brief survey we have brought the history of Scandinavian settlements down to 1856, the year of the first State census.

The following table is here offered to illustrate the extent and exact distribution of the three Scandinavian nationalities in the State by counties according to the State census of 1856. It will also illustrate the distribution of the three Scandinavian nationalities in the different parts of the State. The counties where actual settlements had been made are given in alphabetical order. To this is appended a table illustrating the growth of the Scandinavian factor by decades since 1850.

TABLE I

COUNTY	NORWEGIANS	SWEDES	DANES	TOTAL
Allamakee	506	84	6	595
Benton	10		1	11
Black Hawk	3	9		12
Boone	19	70		89
Clayton	274	13		287
Clinton	14	24	21	59
Des Moines	2	227	39	268
Fayette	139	1		140
Henry	10	38	1	49
Jefferson		294		294
Lee	68	19	10	97
Mitchell	188	9	4	201

<sup>1</sup> Facts obtained from A. S. Carlson, of Des Moines, in a letter of August 19, 1905. Mr. Carlson has kindly given me a full account of early Swedish settlers in Des Moines which I hope to publish elsewhere in connection with other facts on the Scandinavians in Des Moines.

COUNTY	NORWEGIANS	SWEDES	DANES	TOTAL
Monroe		18		18
Page <sup>1</sup>	1			1
Polk	10	9		19
Pottawattamie	1	2	3	6
Scott	2	17	7	26
Shelby			5	5
Story	107			107
Wapello		22	1	23
Webster	2	70		72
Winneshiek	1,451	11	1	1,462
All other counties	98	130	32	260
	<hr/> 2,904	<hr/> 1,067	<hr/> 130	<hr/> 4,101

TABLE II

Showing the extent of the Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish factors in the State from 1850 to 1905, according to the United States census, supplemented by the Iowa State census for the years 1856 and 1905.

YEAR	NORWEGIANS	SWEDES	DANES	TOTAL
1850	361	231	19	611
1856	2,904	1,067	130	4,101
1860	5,688	1,465	661	7,814
1870	17,554	10,796	2,827	31,181
1880	21,586	17,559	6,901	46,046
1890	27,078	30,276	15,519	72,873
1900	25,634	29,875	17,102	72,611
1905	23,953	28,396	17,290	69,639

The decade of greatest increase in immigration from Norway is from 1860 to 1870. Table I illustrates the distribution of that nationality in 1856; the proportions remain

<sup>1</sup> See below p. 278.



about the same for 1860. The counties in Iowa which gained most during that decade of extensive immigration from Norway are Allamakee, Clayton, Winneshiek, Mitchell, and Story. In 1870 Winneshiek alone had a foreign born Norwegian population of 5,524.<sup>1</sup> Wright, Emmet, and Palo Alto counties were first settled by Norwegians in the late sixties<sup>2</sup> and early seventies. The considerable decrease in the counties in the eastern part of the State during the last twenty years indicates that there has not only been a cessation of immigration to these parts, but also that in addition to natural decrease by death there has evidently taken place a removal from the older counties to the counties farther west.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, between 1890 and 1905 a considerable decrease is to be noted in most of the counties that belong to the central group of settlements. Between 1900 and 1905 there are fair increases only in Black Hawk, Emmet, Hardin, Howard, Lyon, Polk, Webster, and Woodbury.<sup>4</sup>

The largest increase from the Swedish immigration comes somewhat later. While relatively the highest percentage of increase took place between 1860 and 1870, the largest

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<sup>1</sup> We have a recent contribution to Winneshiek County history in *The Pioneer Norwegians*, by Hon. Abr. Jacobson. This book deals especially with the Norwegian pioneer history of Springfield Township, Winneshiek County.

<sup>2</sup> Wright County was settled by Norwegians in 1869. In the spring of that year Hans H. Farsen, C. B. Johnson, and Fredrik Simerson settled in Belmont Township. The settlement later extended into Norway and Lake townships in Wright County and Amsterdam Township in Hancock County.

<sup>3</sup> The great decrease in Lee County between 1870 and 1880 is due to similar causes. The removal in this case was mostly to Marshall County.

<sup>4</sup> Fort Dodge, Webster County, was first settled by Swedes in 1869. The founders of the colony were: G. Alstrand, C. J. Peterson, C. F. Holmdahl, from Melby, Nerike, and Vexjö, Sweden, respectively.—Letter from Rev. C. S. Resenius.

number absolutely came between 1880 and 1890. The counties that received the largest accessions during these years were: Boone, Buena Vista, Des Moines,<sup>1</sup> Kossuth, Montgomery, Page,<sup>2</sup> Polk,<sup>3</sup> Webster, and Woodbury, although some of these had been extensively settled before 1880.<sup>4</sup> Among the settlements that show a noteworthy decrease since 1890 may be mentioned the early ones in Boone, Henry,<sup>5</sup> Jefferson,<sup>6</sup> Lee, and Wapello; while from 1900 to 1905 there is an increase for some counties in the western part of the State—as Adair, Appanoose, Black Hawk, Cass, Lyon, and Mills.

The heaviest immigration from Denmark took place in the later eighties and in the early nineties. Thus the settlements in Audubon, Shelby, Pottawattamie, and Black Hawk counties increased most rapidly during these years.<sup>7</sup> The Danish foreign born element is the only one among the Scandinavian nationalities that shows an increase in the 1905 census over that of 1900. The total for the three nationalities by the 1905 census is 69,639. The Scandinavian-speak-

<sup>1</sup> The City of Burlington.

<sup>2</sup> The Swedish Colony of Essex, Page County, dates back to 1870.—Letter from A. Wendstrand of August 30, 1905.

<sup>3</sup> The city of Des Moines.

<sup>4</sup> In the vicinity of Chariton, Lucas County, a considerable Swedish settlement was also formed after 1869. The first settlers were P. J. Lindquist, J. F. Ekfelt, and the *Zerlandsen*, *Hasselquist*, and *Slattengren* families, writes Rev. J. P. Borg of Chariton. They were from *Västergötland* and *Småland*, Sweden.

<sup>5</sup> The largest Scandinavian population was in 1890, when it numbered 616. It is now 362.

<sup>6</sup> Jefferson County had 880 in 1870, 671 in 1880, and at present has 490.

<sup>7</sup> One of the most prosperous of Danish communities in the State is that of Waterloo and vicinity and Cedar Falls in Black Hawk County. It dates back to 1869, in which year Lars Thompson and wife from Tuse near Holbæk and Anders Peterson and wife from near Holbæk located in Waterloo.



ing factor in Iowa may be measured approximately by the sum total of the foreign born and foreign parentage Scandinavian population, the total of which was 148,967 by the census of 1900.<sup>1</sup>

Tables III-V are here appended to illustrate the growth by counties since 1870, the distribution of the Scandinavian population in 1905, and the increase in the three Scandinavian nationalities in the second generation according to the last available census.

TABLE III

Showing the extent of the Scandinavian factor by counties from 1870 to 1905 in counties which have at one time had a Scandinavian population of over 1,000.

COUNTY	1870	1880	1890	1905
Allamakee	2,187	1,727	1,477	992
Audubon	4	207	1,127	1,526
Black Hawk	284	385	711	1,018
Boone	1,246	1,820	2,601	2,283
Buena Vista	196	818	1,991	1,967
Clayton	1,366	941	787	541
Clinton	759	1,123	1,778	1,433
Des Moines	1,104	1,273	2,162	1,801
Emmet	285	302	785	1,101
Hamilton	624	1,633	2,460	2,210
Humboldt	115	515	1,336	1,374
Kossuth	76	361	990	1,057
Lee	1,267	508	622	490
Marshall	338	728	1,213	917
Mitchell	1,008	1,207	1,041	824
Monona	261	491	1,212	1,165

<sup>1</sup> The census reports for natives of foreign parentage in 1905 are not available at the present time.

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COUNTY	1870	1880	1890	1905
Montgomery	278	1,278	1,511	1,520
Page	156	1,004	1,261	1,079
Polk	803	1,628	2,884	3,406
Pottawattamie	604	1,100	2,585	2,395
Shelby	208	971	1,611	1,514
Story	1,354	2,049	2,202	2,309
Webster	1,362	1,910	3,027	3,261
Winnebago	625	1,862	2,178	2,291
Winneshiek	5,524	5,009	3,409	2,669
Woodbury	372	870	5,060	4,106
Worth	894	2,002	2,153	1,819
Wright	60	201	775	1,005
All other counties	7,821	12,013	21,924	21,566
Total	31,181	46,046	72,873	69,639

TABLE IV

Showing the Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish population by counties having a Scandinavian population of 1,000 in 1905.

COUNTY	NORWEGIANS	SWEDES	DANES	TOTAL
Allamakee	853	125	14	992
Audubon	15	42	1,469	1,526
Black Hawk	42	68	908	1,018
Boone	115	2,061	107	2,283
Buena Vista	446	977	544	1,967
Clinton	213	411	809	1,433
Des Moines	16	1,625	160	1,801
Emmet	580	102	419	1,101
Hamilton	1,369	544	297	2,210
Humboldt	973	42	359	1,374
Kossuth	271	511	275	1,057
Monona	454	226	485	1,165
Montgomery	20	1,486	14	1,520



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COUNTY	NORWEGIANS	SWEDES	DANES	TOTAL
Page	13	1,055	11	1,079
Polk	548	2,496	362	3,406
Pottawattamie	106	436	1,853	2,395
Shelby	109	43	1,362	1,514
Story	1,900	100	309	2,309
Webster	927	2,134	200	3,261
Winnebago	1,925	245	121	2,291
Winneshieck	2,584	58	27	2,669
Woodbury	1,354	1,990	762	4,106
Worth	1,613	102	104	1,819
Wright	725	121	159	1,005
Other counties	6,680	11,639	5,560	23,879
Total	23,953	28,396	17,290	69,639

TABLE V

Showing the total Scandinavian population of foreign birth and foreign parentage in the State by the U. S. census for 1900.

Norwegians	{ foreign born	25,634	} 59,127
	{ foreign parentage	33,493	
Swedes	{ foreign born	29,875	} 57,230
	{ foreign parentage	27,365	
Danes	{ foreign born	17,102	} 32,610
	{ foreign parentage	15,498	
Total 1900			148,967

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