

Translated from 'Nordmændene i Amerika' by Martin Ulvestad
History Book Company's Forlag, Minneapolis, MN 1907

Houston County, Minnesota p. 97-98

The first Norwegian in this county was Torkel Aagesen from Stavanger. He settled in the area of Blackhammer in 1853. Knut Olsen from Stavanger as well as Guttorm Olsen and Jens Winjum, both from Urland, Sogn, who also settled in that area in 1853, but a little later in the year, as far as is known.

Hans Nilsen Myra from Hadeland was the first at Spring Grove.

The first in the area of Houston was Hans A. Dahle from Øvre Telemarken.

The land was mainly covered with forest. After this was cleared away they began wheat growing as their main source of income. From 25 to 35 cents a day and board was what a man received for rail-splitting and grubbing in those days. But the farmers did almost all their work themselves. There were not many workers nor did anyone have much to pay with. With the lack of a flour mill nearby, they often had to grind their grain in a coffee mill. Mills were not found any closer than Lansing, Ia., and if one wished to go there, it was a trip of two to three weeks.

Guttorm Guttormsen Øino from Rotnem in Gol, Hallingdal, Ole Evensen Dølehus from Hemsedal as well as the Stutelién brothers and G. G. Kassenborg from Valdres were the first white settlers at South Fork River, but at that time the area was full of drunken Indians and even though they were not hostile, one had a constant fear of them.

About the aforementioned Guttorm Øino, it is told, "After an 18 week trip by sailship, he and his family landed in New York and then they were without money or food. Nevertheless, in the course of the following three weeks they got to Illinois (on a lighter, most of the way) They now had to get out to find some land and one day, as they wandered in a wild area, a terrible storm blew up. But towards evening they found a farmer, who allowed them to overnight in an old tumbledown stable. There his wife became ill - and bore a child in the course of the night - and there they remained in a pitiful state for several weeks, after which she died of childbirth and swamp fever. Her name was Helga Larsdatter from Hulebaklien in Gol. Øino's and the other pioneers' hardships here in Houston County will be for many to consider.

One of Spring Grove's oldest settlers has sent me a long poem instead of an account in prose. I cite a couple of verses in which he speaks of the new builders so:

"First you had a cabin and then a steering yoke,
To that a wagon and then your spirits rose.
You broke up some fields and sowed your seed,
And it bore much fruit and lightened your temper.

You felt so lost and lonely many times
But your spirit never left, you went to work again.

For your and your children, you built a home."

Without help and means in the primitive land. He concludes by saying that the young must be grateful to their elders that they have received everything in good condition from them. And he turns over to the poets of the new generation to correct his poem with all the art's rules since he himself is not and does not pretend to be a poet.

'Norwegian Ridge Congregation', belonging to The Norwegian Synod, was founded in Spring Grove in 1855 and it was the first Norwegian congregation in the county. C. L. Clausen was its first priest. Now there are 7 Norwegian congregations and 7 churches, 5 belonging to The Norwegian Synod and 2 to The United Church.

Ole Knudsen, who was elected County Commissioner in 1856 and who died long ago, was the first Norwegian official in the county.

Jørgen Timansen Quarve, who is also dead, was the first Norwegian who represented Houston County in the State Legislature. He was elected in 1859.

Sven Ellestad published a newspaper with the name 'Spring Grove Posten' for a time.

The post offices Nittedal and Norman, that both got their names from Norwegians, have been closed.

© 2004 All Rights Reserved

Translated by Olaf Kringhaug

Vernon, British Columbia, Canada

Published by Olaf Kringhaug and Margit Bakke at

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~maggiebakke/minnesota.html>

Email: margit@eot.com

The Hadeland Lag of America received permission to offer the Kringhaug translations in this format. No part of the Kringhaug translations may be reproduced or used for any commercial purpose without the written consent of the translator. Noncommercial use of content is permitted, as published or in a derivative work, if a proper citation is included. Proper citation should attribute the translation to Olaf Kringhaug and reference the URL of origin as shown above.