

**Cass County, North Dakota** p. 158-160

Bernt Anderson from Hedemarken and Christian O. Bye from Røraas, were the first Norwegian settlers in Cass County. Anderson we find mentioned in connection with the pioneers on the other side of the Red River (Clay Co., Minn.), since he came with them. But Bye must be dealt with here. He left from Wilmington, in the southeast corner of Minnesota, with his wife and children and his household goods in a wagon drawn by 4 oxen. A man by the name of Ole Hovland accompanied him as far as Otter Tail County (Minn.), where he got off, while the aforementioned continued the trip to the Red River Valley, as he had intended. He crossed 'the red stream' with his oxen, his family and all his movable property and settled in Wild Rice (N. D.) in the spring of 1870. Next after him came his brother, John O. Bye (from Røraas), Ole Hersgaard, Peder Hersgaard, H. Haagensen and Ole Nelson, all from Hallingdal, A. P. Bordrud, B. Trongsrud and Ole Tuskind, all from Solør, Ole Herbrandsen from Nummedal, Hans Bjerke and Halvor Olsen from Toten, Henry Clemensen from Lillehammer (or Fredrikshald?), C. O. Brink from Kristiania, Ole Holmen and J. Holmen from Værdalen, J. G. Nelson, P. Nelson and N. Nelson (Walla) from Øier, Gudbrandsdalen, Halvar K. Strand from Valdres, Conrad Moe from Namsos as well as Jens Olson, P. Dustrud and C. Glasrud, whose birthplace is unknown. It is evident that they spread out over a large area, numerous as they were.

They took up wheat growing and mixed farming. The new settlers' nearest marketplaces were Alexandria and Morris, Minn., which places were between 60 to 80 miles from the respective farmers' homes. Many of the Norwegian settlers in the Red River Valley, however, obtained employment aboard the steamboats, that had a route between Fort Abercrombie and Winnipeg. Better men than Norwegians one could hardly find for that type of work, it was as if they felt at home on the water. But, nor were they without skill on the land either.

That the Norwegians love everything that is true Norwegian they have shown by raising monuments to Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Henrik Wergeland. At the State Agricultural College at Fargo they have also built a Norwegian museum.

C. Fredriksen is responsible for the following account, "I was a child of 7, when with my mother, I left St. Ansgar, Iowa to the barren North Dakota. That was in September, 1871. By rail we could not get any further than Morris, Minn., where my father met us and from where we continued the journey by ox cart ca 160 mile up over the wild prairie.

Now we had thus, come a good bit beyond civilization. That we experienced in many ways. Mail was received very seldom, such that news was often 3 months late. It was taken between Fort Abercrombie and Fort Totten and ca 10 miles from our settlement, there was a stop for the postal carrier. The landlord at this stop was a half-Indian, who could not even read, so the settlers themselves had permission to go through the mail when they expected letters and that they did always. The last to come, naturally, had to be satisfied with what was left. Though, I do not think anyone blamed anyone else for theft. But one can understand that such a mail system was unsatisfactory. Nowadays, it would absolutely not be tolerated.

Has anyone heard stories about North Dakota blizzards? - as they were, not as they are. Now the weather conditions in North Dakota are not the same as they were in that time (before the land was cleared and forest planted). Often one could not see 5 feet

ahead. It was so, one March in 1872, when Arne Skjei was going to fetch the mail for the settlers in the neighborhood. The weather was lovely in the morning and he set off on skis thinking he would get back the same day. But in the afternoon the wind blew up suddenly and within a half hour, it was so hazy that he could not see ahead of his skis. This was where he could use some sound advice. However, there was only one way he could expect to save his life. Since there were no settlers within many miles, he did not try to reach any of them, he dug himself into the snow until the storm's fury was over. The next day he came home in good form, to everyone's joy and amazement." The author of this historical collection himself experienced something similar, one cold and wet fall night out on the Dakota prairie, far from people and impossible to find his way.

"Sheyenne Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation" was established at Norman in 1872 by Pastor Torjus Wetlesen, belonging to The Norwegian Synod. The first serving priest was J. A. Hellestvedt. The first Norwegian church in the county was built by the 'Pontoppidan Norwegian Evangelical Congregation' in Fargo in 1879. The latter congregation belonged to The Conference. In 1905, there were 19 Norwegian congregations and 16 churches in Cass County, 6 congregations belonging to The United Church, 6 to The Norwegian Synod, 3 to The Evangelical Free Church and 1 to the Baptist Church.

The first Norwegian (in Cass County), honored with an official position was Martin O. Hexom. He had a seat in the Dakota Territory Legislature (in Yankton) in 1877. P. P. Nokken who was elected as County Treasurer in 1878, was the first Norwegian county official here.

The aforementioned John O. Bye represented Cass County in the first North Dakota State Legislature (1889-90). For detailed information about these and others, see the section, 'Norwegians in official positions in America.'

For information about 'Red River Posten' (started 1879), 'Norsk-Amerikaneren', 'Amerikaneren', 'Fargo-Posten', 'Vesten' 'Fargo-Posten og Vesten', 'Dakota', 'Fargo-Posten' (no. 2) and 'Fram', see the section, 'Norwegian-American newspapers and periodicals'.

A business school with Norwegian H. H. Aaker as superintendent, was established in Fargo in 1902.

And a Norwegian hospital in the same city dates from 1904.

In former years there were three post offices with Norwegian names in Cass County: Norman, Trysil and Saunders (named after the Norwegian Ole Sanders).

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