

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

**Waukesha & Racine Counties, Wisconsin** p. 22-24

The Muskego settlement, that we will deal with here, stretches over the southern part of the former and the northern (the adjoining) part of the latter county.

While some settled in Muskego (Waukesha County), others settled in Yorkville Prairie (Racine County). Then, as people came, they spread out through the woods and across the prairie. The settlement came to cover a large area and it was rather far between neighbours.

I shall cite something from a letter from Mr. J. W. Johnson (of Racine), whose father was one of the first Norwegians to set foot on Wisconsin soil. He writes:

"In 1839 came John Nelson Luraas, John Evensen Molee, Halvor Thompson, Ole Hellicksen and others from Tinn, Telemarken as well as Anders Flørand and my father Nils Johnson from Hitterdal. My father and Ole Hellicksen settled in Yorkville Prairie, the others in Muskego. As mentioned, this was in 1839. Mons K. Aadland from Samnanger near Bergen, came here from Calumet, Ill. in 1840. About the same time came Hermond Nilsen from Hallingdal and some others, some direct from Norway, some from Illinois. The majority were family people - mainly from Telemarken, Stavanger and Voss. Father, who then was a bachelor, was later married to Anna Nilsdatter Selem who came to Racine in 1841, together with Anders Kløve, Tollef Grane and others from Voss.

Ole Johnson Lansverk, one of the very first settlers, lived on his farm until 1901 when he died at an age of 94. This spring (1905) the last of the first settlers died, namely Goute Gundersen Midbøn, who came here with his father Gunder Midbøn in the 40s."

From other sources I have obtained the names of a number of the other pioneers in this area, namely, Even Heg and ? Skosstad from Lier near Drammen, James Reymert from Farsund, Søren Backe and Johannes Johannesen from Drammen as well as Germund Johnson, Helge Helgesen, Gunerius P. Ducleth, Ole Larson, Rolf Rolfsen Flaten, Mr. Danielsen, Aslak Simonsen, Elling Spillum, Tyge Hendriksen, Hans Barlien, former parliamentarian Hans Gasman and N. Tufte. The two last ones and others settled at Pine Lake.

Ole Nilsen, who also came to this area early but now lives in New Centerville, Wis. writes that in the first years at Pine Lake, he drove to Milwaukee (40 miles) with oxen, he had to go there to deliver his farm products and there he bought life's necessities. It was, however, the road's length that was worst, the worst was that there was no road!

These settlers experienced a rather sad existence. That they were poor, that their life style was frugal and that they had to undergo all the struggles the new pioneer life normally brought, was not their problem. They could withstand the Indians, even though they were terribly close and annoying. But what they could not easily avoid was - disease. There was too much of it in the Muskego settlement. It robbed men of their spirit and strength and took many lives.

As an example of how common it was, it can be mentioned that, in the fall of 1843, there was only one family in the whole settlement that had avoided it. All the other families had been visited by it, either ague or bilious fever. (One will find more about this in letters from those who moved from here to other places. These letters are included under the counties where these persons now live). I have been sent a newspaper clipping - without author's name - from New York, in which the adventurous side of the aforementioned James Reymert's life is described. The article contains many truths. Although, as most readers will understand, it is coloured a bit. I will make these comments, since it is my duty. In a historical work one should not include anything other than that which is fully trustworthy, unless one points out the possible exceptions. The article reads so:

"The, some years ago deceased Norwegian-born lawyer, James D. Reymert of Los Angeles, an uncle to the lawyer August Reymert of New York, had many adventures in his younger years. Here in New York he belonged to one of judicial profession's best firms and August received his first training at the brilliant lawyer's office in New York.

About the manner in which James D. Reymert found his first bride is recounted: In 1840 a sloop entered New York harbour after 16 day's sailing. Aboard the sloop was Fencing and Dance Master Hansen from Fredriksværn and his wife, five daughters and three sons. In the 1840s, Wisconsin was the emigrant's Mecca. It was still a territory, the primeval forest's sons and daughters slipped through the quiet, wild forest on soft moccasins, but the land was given free to those who would accept it. And Fencing and Dance Master Hansen from Fredriksværn rented a river boat and set off up the Hudson River to Albany with his wife, his three blossoming daughters and three strong sons. From Albany they went in a caravan westwards and found the richest piece of land and built a blockhouse.

One day, Fencing Master Hansen from Fredriksværn and his three sons were busily occupied with taming a pair of recently captured horses when they saw five riders galloping toward them. Hansen and his sons went into the blockhouse and prepared for any eventuality, loaded their guns with double loads. But the five riders shot their guns in the air far away and stopped in front of the blockhouse, and the five young, blossoming daughters fought over the gun ports to peek at the five riders outside, who were handsome, tanned young men, when the youngest of them waved his hat and called out in good Norwegian if this was not Waukeshon and did this blockhouse not belong to Fencing and Dancing Master Hansen from Fredriksværn?

Yes, came the answer from inside the house and the doors opened wide. The young men sprang from their horses and asked if they could see his five daughters. They came from the other side of the forest and it was rumoured that five young Norwegian girls lived here. Hansen invited the boys in, they were all of an age of 20 to 25 and anxious to get married. And the girls were young and lively. The eldest, Caspara, was 21 years old and she agreed to the eldest of the young men, James D. Reymert, brother of the deceased Brigade Surgeon Reymert of Kristiania. And the other four quickly united with their own young man. And Fencing and Dance Master Hansen, in one day, acquired five sons-in-law, the Norwegian Reymert and the Americans John M. Watson, Charles E. Jenkins, William Hilles and Johnes.

The young men took up land around their father-in-law they helped each other in building blockhouses and clearing the land. The years passed and the land and wives were very fruitful and young strength drew riches out of the land. The government wished to build a road through the primitive forest. Reymert took on the job. He sent word to all the new, young Norwegian emigrants to come, built a sawmill with his brothers-in-law, cleared a path through the forest and laid a plank road over the morass through it. When the government wished to build a railroad through Wisconsin, Reymert took on the building. Now, Wisconsin became a populous territory and Hansen's sons-in-law agreed that it should become a State.

Now, they are all dead. But large families, many generations of descendants, handsome, healthy people took hold, where their tired hands let go.

And today the State of Wisconsin has more than 200,000 inhabitants of Norwegian origin - according to 'Norge i Amerika.'

The first Norwegian to settle in Racine City was Torbjørn Gunleiksen. He started a little boarding house there in the 40s. Racine was a very small town at that time.

The first Norwegian congregation in Wisconsin was established at Norway (in the Muskego settlement) in the fall of 1843 by Pastor C. L. Clausen. And they built the first Norwegian church in America the following year (1844). A short time ago they moved it to St Anthony Park, Minn., where the United Church Seminary is and where the little log church stands as an antiquity.

Now there are 10 Norwegian congregations and 8 churches in these two (Waukesha and Racine) Counties, 7 belong to The United Church, 2 to The Methodist Church and 1 to The Norwegian Synod.

'Nordlyset', the first Norwegian newspaper in America started in Norway, Racine C. in 1847. For detailed information of this and 'Demokraten', 'Maanedstidende for den norsk lutherske Kirke i Amerika' etc, see the section, 'Norwegian-American newspapers and periodicals.'

James Reymert, who at that time lived in Norway, Racine Co., was elected a Member of Wisconsin's Legislative Assembly in 1847 and is obviously the first Norwegian that held public office here, he was the first in the County and the first in the State. For detailed information about him and others who were honoured with positions of trust of a political nature, see the section, 'Norwegians in public positions in America'.

Norwegian place names: as mentioned above in the first Norwegian pioneers' days, there was a post office called Norway, later the name was changed to Wind Lake. Norway Ridge is also gone. But Norway Township still exists. And there is a post office called North Cape (Nordkap), that refuses to die. It was raised in 1860 on a suggestion by Editor Knud Langeland, who was a Member of the State Legislature. Knud Adland was named the postmaster of the same. After that many post offices have been raised with Norwegian names - they are found spread out over all of North America - but are collected in this book with proper regard for the memory for the emigrated part of the Nordic people.

It will also be seen that a great number of Norwegians over here were installed in the same office as Knud Adland in 1860, and like him, served long and well.

#### FOOTNOTE:

Rock County is shown first, next Waukesha, Racine and Dane, since the Norwegian immigration to the State began here. The other counties are listed alphabetically so the readers can easily find what they seek. It may, however be of interest to see which direction and order the immigration occurred, therefore the years are added:: Rock '38, Wakesha, Racine and Dane '39, Green and Milwaukee '40, Iowa and La Fayette '41, Walworth '42, Dodge '43, Columbia and Fond du Lac '45, Brown, Jackson, Jefferson, Manitowoc and Winnebago '48, Monroe, Vernon, Trempeleau, Pierce, Portage and Richland '49, Door, Crawford, Juneau,

La Cross, Waupaca and Waushara '50, Adams '51, Burnett '52, Kewaunee and St. Croix '54, Buffalo '56, Chippewa '57, Dunn and Polk '59, Eau Claire ca. '60, Warren '63, Shawano '68, Outagamie '69, Clark '70, Ashland '72, Oconto and Wood '73, Marinette '75 etc. If one also takes the accompanying map, one will be able to see a quick but certain grasp of the course of the pioneer path.

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Translated by Olaf Kringhaug

Vernon, British Columbia, Canada

Published by Olaf Kringhaug and Margit Bakke at

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

Email: [margit@eot.com](mailto:margit@eot.com)

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